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STUDIA NUMISMATICA UPSALIENSIA

5

“...achieved nothing worthy of memory”

Coinage and authority in the Roman empire
c. AD 260–295

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Abstract

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This study examines how the Roman emperors c. AD 260–295 attempt at maintaining their power-bases through legitimation of their claims to power, with reference to various potentially powerful groups of society, such as the military, the inhabitants of the provinces and the senate in Rome. The purpose has been to discern the development of 'Roman imperial ideology' in an age which has frequently been referred to as an 'age of military anarchy.' Focus is on how claims to power could be expressed through visual media. Of such media, mainly the coins struck for the emperors c. AD 260-295 have been studied. A close investigation has been made of the iconography of these coins. Furthermore, the ways in which coin-images are modified and combined with various legends are studied. An additional purpose of this investigation has been to provide a comment on the general potential of conveying visual imagery and messages on objects such as coins and medallions.

The study argues that novel, intricate and multi-layered images were created on the coins struck for the emperors c. AD 260-295. Furthermore, it is suggested that these coin-images were created to assume the function of larger-scale expressions of imperial authority, such as triumphal arches and imperial statues. This adaption of coinage was made because there was a need for intensified communication of imperial authority. This need arose due to the incessant warfare of the age, and a process of regionalization of the empire, which was connected to this warfare. The conclusion is that these coins provide an illustration of the development of the Roman empire in the second half of the third century. This was a development by which the city of Rome lost its importance in favour of regional capitals, and ultimately in favour of Constantinople.

Keywords: Roman empire, soldier-emperor, crisis, propaganda, language of images, authority, legitimacy, communication, coinage, coin-imagery, war, military, court, Rome, regionalization, consecration, dynasty, divine sanction

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
NOTES ON SOURCES AND TRANSLATIONS	ix
INTRODUCTION: “ONE OF THE BEST ATTESTED, BUT MOST IMPROBABLE EVENTS...”	1
1. APPROACHING THE THIRD CENTURY	5
1.1. “By the weakness of the emperors”	5
1.2. The crises of the third century: departure points	6
1.3. Remnants of a narrative – written sources (or, the lack thereof)	10
1.4. Communication and legitimacy: towards a theoretical framework	14
1.5. Introducing a ‘language of images’	21
1.6. Imperial coinage as a visual medium	27
1.7. Grammar and syntax of a ‘language of coin-images’	34
1.8. Crossing boundaries: chronological scope of the thesis	39
1.9. Patchwork: research on third century coinages	42
2. <i>VIRTUS AUGUSTI</i> : THE EMPEROR GOES TO WAR	50
2.1. The year 260: year zero in the Roman empire	50
2.2. The image of military power	52
2.3. The <i>virtus</i> of a soldier-emperor... ..	57
2.4. ...that leads to victory	67
2.5. The importance of being <i>invictus</i>	73
2.6. ‘Waging peace’	76
2.7. A promise of order	80
2.8. Restoring the world	84
2.9. War as ritual and monuments of war	86
3. ... <i>ET FRATRES SUI</i> : EMPERORS, SOLDIERS AND OFFICERS	91
3.1. “Be harmonious, enrich the soldiers...”	91
3.2. Being one of the men	93
3.3. The legions: an armed society?	96
3.4. ‘From the curule seat to the horseback’	106
3.5. Conceiving a ‘military court’	113
3.6. Colleagues in arms?	120

4. <i>ROMAE AETERNAE</i> : THE EMPEROR AND THE <i>URBS AETERNA</i>	124
4.1. All roads lead... ..	124
4.2. The gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples: searching for the soldier-emperors in the city of Rome	126
4.3. <i>Providentia Augusti</i> : coins for the city of Rome	136
4.4. Paying tribute to <i>Roma Aeterna</i>	145
4.5. "...the place, to which each emperor had come..."	151
4.6. The revolt of the moneyers: a counter-reaction?	161
4.7. <i>Salus provinciarum</i> – imperial coinage in Gaul	164
4.8. Maintaining Roman order in Britain	169
5. <i>DEO ET DOMINO AVG</i> : DYNASTIC POLICIES, DEITIES, AND DIVINITY	174
5.1. A death in the family... ..	174
5.2. A god in death: <i>consecratio and pietas</i>	175
5.3. (Attempts at) founding new dynasties	180
5.4. The 'cult of Sol Invictus'	190
5.5. Receiving the world from Jupiter	194
5.6. The other gods	213
5.7. Being like the gods... ..	217
5.8. ...and being a god.	223
6. ON THE THRESHOLD TO THE FOURTH CENTURY	229
6.1. ' <i>Neque quicque dignum memoria egit</i> '?	229
6.2. Summary: coinage and authority	230
6.3. The creation of a language of empire	236
APPENDIX: A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY, c. AD 260–295.	243
BIBLIOGRAPHY	245
INDEX	265

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Uppsala, February 2008,

Ragnar Hedlund

NOTES ON SOURCES AND TRANSLATIONS

The quotes and translations from the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* have been taken from the Loeb edition (*The Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, with an English translation by D. Magie, in three volumes, I–III, London 1932 and later).

The quotes and translations from the *Panegyrici Latini* have been taken from the edition and translation of Nixon and Rodgers (*In praise of later Roman emperors. The Panegyrici Latini*. Introduction, translation, and historical commentary with the Latin text of R. A. B. Mynors, ed. by C. E. V. Nixon and Barbara Saylor Rodgers, Berkeley 1994).

The translations quoted from the works of Aelius Aristides and of Pseudo-Aristides are those of C. A. Behr (P. Aelius Aristides, *The Complete Works, Volume II. Orations XVII–LIII*, Leiden 1981. The Greek original text quoted is the one edited by B. Keil (*Aelii Aristidis Smyrnaei quae supersunt omnia*, vol. II, Berlin 1898).

The quotes and translations of the works of Dio Cassius and Ammianus Marcellinus are those of the Loeb editions (*Dio's Roman history*, with an English translation by E. Cary, in nine volumes, vol. IX, London 1926; and Ammianus Marcellinus, with an English translation by J. C. Rolfe, in three volumes, vol. II, London 1940 and later).

Finally, the translation of the *Breviarium* of Eutropius is that of H. W. Bird (*The Breviarium ab urbe condita of Eutropius, dedicated to Lord Valens Gothicus Maximus & perpetual emperor*, translated with an introduction and commentary, Liverpool 1993); while the Latin original text quoted is the one edited by F. L. Müller (*Eutropii breviarium ab urbe condita : Eutropius, kurze Geschichte Roms seit Gründung (753 v. Chr.–364 n. Chr.), Einleitung, Text und Übersetzung, Anmerkungen, Index Nominum a) geographicorum, b) historicorum*, Stuttgart 1995).

Abbreviations of sources are those that can be found in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd ed.

INTRODUCTION: “ONE OF THE BEST ATTESTED, BUT MOST IMPROBABLE EVENTS...”

In AD 275, the Roman empire was in a dire state. The emperor Aurelian had just been murdered. Once again, the empire was threatened to be plunged into chaos after having been restored to its former glory through the efforts of Aurelian.

What now – according to some sources – happened was something quite extraordinary: the army appealed to the senate to elect an emperor. The senate refused and referred the matter back to the army. This, however, persisted in not wanting to act as kingmaker once more, as it had so often done in the preceding decades. Three times the appeal was sent back and forth between the senate and the army. While this was happening, an interregnum followed. And during this, extraordinarily enough, the Roman state continued to function as if it actually had an emperor.

Edward Gibbon, with one of his memorable phrases, characterized this as “one of the best attested, but most improbable, events in the history of mankind.” A similar situation had occurred after the death of Romulus, but this time, the event was even more fantastic; the “decline of the Roman state, far different from its infancy, was attended with every circumstance that could banish from an interregnum the prospect of obedience and harmony”. However, “the discipline and memory of Aurelian still restrained the seditious temper of the troops, as well as the fatal ambition of their leaders.”¹

The claim of the first half of this statement, which is so typical of Gibbons’s style, has been disputed for long. The nature of the written sources treating the third century AD² is well known. The only source of some length is the notorious *Historia Augusta*, of which Sir Ronald Syme acidly quipped that it had ‘turned from an enigma into a nuisance’ and that its creator was a ‘master in the art of historical fiction.’³ In fact, the ‘interregnum’ is actually anything *but* well attested. Careful historians that have attempted to reconstruct the chronology of the years of the 270s have more or less literally hacked the interregnum to pieces. A widely accepted conclusion is that if an interregnum did occur, it could not have lasted longer than a few weeks, and at most a little more than a month.⁴

¹ Gibbon I.XII (ed. Bury 1946, vol.I, 249f). All further page-references to Gibbon’s *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* will refer to this edition.

² Henceforth, all chronological references will be AD, unless otherwise is explicitly stated.

³ Syme 1968, v.

⁴ Cf. Chastagnol 1980, 80; Johne 1991, 145; Kienast 1996, 234f. and 250; Drinkwater 2005, 53.

The verdict of Gibbon about the third century still looms high over our views of this period in the history of the Roman empire. The century is still usually referred to as an ‘age of military anarchy,’ or as the ‘age of the soldier-emperors.’ This ‘age’, then, has often been understood as one when the Roman empire was more or less literally trampled under the *caligae* of the legionaries. From that point of view, an event such as the proposed interregnum and comeback to power of the senate indeed must seem to be ‘one of the most improbable events in the history of mankind.’ It is all too easy to discard the event as a fiction, concocted by later nostalgic Roman historians, because it *could* not have happened. The interregnum of 275 simply does not fit into the conventional historical framework.

However, was the interregnum really such an unlikely event? Most likely, we will never be able to find out if the interregnum *did* happen. However, considering the situation in the Roman empire at the time, *could* such a thing as a negotiation of power between two fractions of the state, which the story of the interregnum suggests, have occurred? This begs another, more general question: which was the relationship between the emperor, the army and the senate during this age?

In effect, three historical problems are implicated by this question. Firstly, it lies close at hand to assume that the traditional role of the *princeps* was weakened during this age of many emperors and subsequently reconstructed under the tetrarchs. Therefore, the development of the role of the emperor in the last decades before the establishment of the tetrarchy under Diocletian should be examined. Secondly, it might also be convenient to assume that the role and status of the senate, and of the city of Rome, was seriously weakened during the age. This issue too should be addressed. Thirdly, the most obvious issue characterizing the age is that of the role of the army. Again, it could be taken for granted that the influence of the army during this age was an all-important one. This study, therefore, also attempts at examining the nature of this influence on Roman politics in the later third century.

This is an investigation about the soldier-emperors – or, rather, some of them. Obviously, many such investigations have been done by scholars and scavengers, who have visited the third century hunting for pieces of history. In 1938, Franz Altheim published his seminal *Die Soldatenkaiser* where the phrase was coined (to use an unavoidable pun). Even before then, and most certainly after, the soldier-emperors have been a favourite topic among scholars. Pioneering work was made by Andreas Alföldi⁵ and above all from the 1970s by scholars such as Ramsay MacMullen.⁶ Influential studies from the same decade include that of Luttwak, where the concept of the ‘grand strategy of the Roman Empire’ was introduced, and that of Lukas de Blois, who presented a renewed approach to the period of the soldier-emperors with his

⁵ The most important works of Alföldi have been collected in Alföldi 1967; as far as I know, a number of articles in *Numizmatikai Közlöny*, one of the most important of which is Alföldi 1935–36, have not been reprinted.

⁶ The most important works of MacMullen in this respect include MacMullen 1976 and *idem* 1988.

study of the age of Gallienus.⁷ The same decade also saw the emergence of important works on the '*Krise des dritten Jahrhunderts*' by Geza Alföldy.⁸

These days, the corpus of works dedicated to the third century is huge. The noticeable number of more recent additions to the debate testifies to a maintained, and even renewed, interest in the age. Many of the most recent studies demonstrate that an astounding amount of work can still be done. It is further evident that a re-evaluation of the third century has taken place: repeatedly, arguments have been presented claiming that the 'age of the soldier-emperors' does not merely represent lost decades or some age of darkness in the transition between the late principate and the early Constantinian age.⁹

Impressive as this body of scholarly work is, many recent works still share a problematical tendency. This is that many approaches to the study of Roman history that have been offered in the last decades are often not taken into account, or at least not as much as could be possible. One such approach which is not explored to its full extent is that offered by the adaption of historical theory. Another is that offered by a number of studies focusing on the relations between the emperor and Roman society.¹⁰ A third is the approach offered by the idea of a decentralisation of the Roman empire that has been the focus of much interest lately. This idea is connected with an important discussion of Roman culture in the provinces, and the emergence of 'Roman provincial identities.' The phrase *romanitas* has been much used in this context.¹¹

A most important contribution to the studies of the third century is that which has been made in the field of numismatics. From the 1990s onwards, a number of studies on the coinages struck for the emperors of the later third century have been published.¹² However, it seems as though much scholarship treating the third century fail to take full advantage of the possibilities that these numismatic publications present. Similarly, numismatists frequently do not seem to be particularly inclined to take into account the various theoretical approaches that could be used. This means that the full potential of the numismatical material remains unexplored.

For these reasons, I maintain that there is reason for undertaking yet another visit to the age of the soldier-emperors. In this study, I will aim at combining results from the fields of research that have been outlined above: the changed approaches to the third century, recent publications of empiric material – above all numismatic material – and certain bits of theory and more recent theoretical discussions. It is my hope that, in the intersection between these fields of research, this study of imperial authority in the later Roman empire might find a place.

⁷ Cf. Luttwak 1976 and de Blois 1976.

⁸ Cf. Alföldy 1975b; cf. also Alföldy 1989.

⁹ Strobel 1993 and Johnes (ed.) 1993 may be mentioned. More recent additions include Körner 2002, Kreucher 2003, Berrens 2004 and Eich 2005.

¹⁰ Important works include Flaig 1992, Pabst 1997 and Winterling (ed.) 1997.

¹¹ Woolf 1998 remains of fundamental importance for this discussion; cf. further chapter I.IV.

¹² Cf. Göbl 1993 and *idem* 2000; Estiot 1995, *eadem* 1999a and 1999b; *eadem* 2004; Gricourt 2000.

The investigation presented here does not primarily treat the coinages of the soldier-emperors as such. Rather, it treats the soldier-emperors themselves and their age. That which will be discussed in the following 280 pages or so ultimately treats what might be said about certain aspects of the rules of the soldier-emperors, judging primarily from the coins struck for them. There is no reason to choose numismatic evidence, other than that, simply, to a large extent, coins are all that there is left from these emperors. Other evidence will be taken into account, whenever possible; however, it is inevitable that coinage plays a major, if not the major part, of the following narrative.

Further, the discussions of coins in this study do not treat the numismatic material as such. Rather, the study will discuss possible *interpretations* enabled by recently published numismatic evidence. Hopefully, however, this discussion may also provide suggestions for other research on the third century or Roman coinage. Nevertheless, it is my hope that these suggestions may also be of relevance for more general topics, such as the functions of visual media in different societies.

This is a work about ancient history, of sorts. The study attempts at being not only an investigation into the history of the third century, but also into the possibilities and impossibilities of writing ancient history. The investigation discusses not so much the evidence as such as which kind of history of the third century could be written through the combination of the most recent evidence presented by coinage, with the theoretical approaches that have been discussed in the more recent scholarly debate. Moreover, rather than providing a new or 'more trustworthy' reading of the history of the Roman empire in the third century, I would like to propose some new directions that future research could take.

It is inevitable, then, that this study aims at being a study of numismatics, written for non-numismatists. Similarly, the study aims at providing a commentary on certain theories used of lately in ancient history, written for non-historians. This, necessarily, has consequences for the style in which this study is written: it contains some discussions on topics that may be obvious, and therefore may be tedious, to numismatists. Likewise, it contains some discussions on the uses of theory in ancient history that may be overly familiar to scholars on ancient history.

The first chapter discusses various ways of approaching the third century. More specifically, it addresses the possibilities of arranging the scant empiric material in more or less elaborate theoretical frameworks. In the chapters that follow, this framework will be put to the test. This 'test' consists in a number of discussions of certain aspects of the rules of the emperors of the later third century. A key issue is the way in which the developments in the second half of the third century can be related to the situation in the empire around 300 and the evolving of a 'Roman empire of late antiquity': as a conclusion, that issue will be discussed in the last chapter.

1. APPROACHING THE THIRD CENTURY

1.1. “By the weakness of the emperors”

...the animating health and vigor were fled. The industry of the people was discouraged and exhausted by a long series of oppression. The discipline of the legions, which alone, after the extinction of every other virtue, had propped the greatness of the state, was corrupted by the ambition, or relaxed by the weakness, of the emperors. The strength of the frontiers, which had always consisted in arms rather than in fortifications, was insensibly undermined; and the fairest provinces were left exposed to the rapaciousness or ambition of the barbarians, who soon discovered the decline of the Roman empire.¹³

In the history of the Roman empire, few ideas have such a firm place as that of the crisis of the third century. This is a view which to no mean extent has been shaped by Edward Gibbon. Truly, there is much to be said in favour of this view. In the 50-odd years between *circa* 235 and 284, the Roman empire suffered a number of invasions. The empire was ruled by a number of emperors that were acclaimed by the soldiers; hence the frequent reference to them as the soldier-emperors¹⁴. An all-time low occurred when the emperor Valerian was captured by the Sasanid king Shapur in 260 and died in captivity; Roman imperial authority seemed to have come to an end. However, as Gibbon also remarked, it is rather astounding that the empire survived this crisis. Why is this?

This chapter discusses theoretical and methodological approaches to that question. Additionally, the main material, the coinage of the soldier-emperors, will be presented. Firstly, I think that if you want to account for the fact that the Roman empire survived the turmoil of the third century, the ‘crisis of the third century’ should not be understood as one single, all-encompassing crisis. Rather, I agree with research that has argued that society must have been exposed to different *crises*. One such apparent crisis was an economical crisis; another possible crisis which has been discussed is a ‘spiritual crisis.’ However, to understand the endurance of the Roman imperial

¹³ Gibbon I.VII.III (ed. Bury 1946, vol. I., 152).

¹⁴ A term first used by Franz Altheim in his influential *Die Soldatenkaiser*, which first was published in 1939.

structures, one should concentrate on a third question, that of a crisis of imperial authority.

How should this ‘crisis’ be approached? I think that an understanding of the problem may be reached through the use of theoretical models. A key to these is a set of concepts such as legitimacy and authority. I suggest that legitimacy, from a Roman imperial point of view, should be understood as something that must be repeatedly proven, that is as a continuous *practise*. The activity that is called for in order to legitimize rule is a certain kind of communication between the emperor and his (would-be) subjects. Further, I suggest that such a communication aims at expressing mutual assertions of loyalty.

Who were the actors in this interaction? I suggest that we should first look for negotiations of power and loyalty between the emperor, civilian society and the army. As for the language used, we may understand it as what has in the last decade or so often been referred to as a ‘language of images.’ For this language, various visual media may be used. As for the age of the soldier-emperors, by far the most sizeable material existing from this age of soldier-emperors is the bulk of coins that were struck for them. These coins, then, the often complex imagery they feature, and the various possibilities to draw historical information from them, stand at the centre of this thesis.

1.2. The crises of the third century: departure points

The notion of a crisis of the third century is certainly not undeserved. The empire suffered from a number of invasions in addition to never-ceasing political turmoil. Some provinces such as Dacia and the occupied areas on the other side of the Rhine had to be abandoned. Invasions, however, were not only the concerns of the frontiers of the empire. Even the very core of the classical civilisations, such as the city of Athens, became a victim of the calamities as it was plundered in 268.¹⁵ To make things worse, the Roman empire suffered a series of epidemics of plague during the decades from 250 to 280. The demographical consequences, however, are difficult to ascertain.¹⁶

The empire, further, suffered from monetary devaluation. In the 260s, the metal value of the Roman currency collapsed totally. From having had a silver content of around 47.7 % in 238, the silver content of the antoninian (by then the standard coin), was reduced to 2.7 % and even below that in the reign of Claudius Gothicus (268–270).¹⁷ This inability to keep a steady currency was to plague the Roman state for quite some time.

These problems may undoubtedly have been dire and immediate. Whether they were actually experienced as a crisis is a somewhat different matter. First, if the third

¹⁵ For an overview, cf. Drinkwater 2005, 46f.

¹⁶ de Blois 2002, 214.

¹⁷ de Blois 2002, 215. The *antoninianus* was issued for the first time in 214. It is usually assumed to have been a double denarius, cf. Jones 1990, 19f.

century was an age of crisis, was this an empire-wide crisis? Second, one may ask in which way invasions of the frontiers were experienced in the city of Rome. Third, one may also question to which extent an accelerating inflation must by necessity be a sign of an economical crisis. If coins, that with reference to their metal value were all but worthless, were still accepted as regular payment, was the debasement really significant?

Until the 1970s, the idea of a third century crisis was undisputed.¹⁸ Since then, the crisis has become focus of repeated discussions and re-evaluations. Ramsay MacMullen challenged the idea of a crisis of society in a number of influential works. MacMullen argued that the processes of the third century should be understood as a phase of transition or of change, rather as of crisis.¹⁹ The traditional view, on the other hand, was vigorously defended by scholars such as Andras Alföldy and Geza Alföldy in numerous works.²⁰ Since the 1990s, a new school of research has argued that the developments of the third century should be understood neither simply as a ‘crisis’, nor as a period of ‘change’, but rather as a more complex pattern of varying situations. Different strata of society may have experienced different aspects of the crisis/crises. Further, a number of recent additions to the debate draw attention to the importance of regional variations.²¹ A continuing interest in the dynamics of changes and crises in the third century is indicated by the observation that the third century is a recurring theme at the Impact of Empire-workshops and is also the subject of the major research project *Die Zeit der Soldatenkaiser*.²²

Still, the idea of the third century crisis still holds much force. And, as Christian Witschel has put it in a recent important addition to the debate, this has brought problematical consequences. As the crisis tends to be understood as a proven fact, instead of as a debated problem, the crisis is used as a backdrop for interpretations of various kinds of evidence. Therefore, much ‘research’ runs the risk of producing circular evidence.²³

¹⁸ de Blois 2002, 204.

¹⁹ Cf. MacMullen 1976 and *idem* 1988.

²⁰ Cf. Alföldy 1975a, 140: “Die Krise war total. Sie zeigte sich am deutlichsten in der katastrophalen außenpolitischen Lage des Reiches. ... Ebenso katastrophal war die innenpolitische Lage. Der Machtanspruch der Kaiser wurde bis zum Äußersten gesteigert.” Cf. further Charanis 1975, 552f.

²¹ An observation already made by MacMullen (1988, 5): “...the ‘Rome’ that ‘declines’ is thus not one single thing but many things, and the search for any one cause across the board is futile.” Cf. further Johnes 1993. Strobel 1993 studies the idea of contemporary awareness of a crisis. Bar argues that a crisis was not experienced in Palestine; cf. Bar 2002. de Blois stresses the experience of crisis in the areas subject to military activities; cf. de Blois 2002. Witschel questions the existence of a crisis in the western parts of the empire; cf. Witschel 2004.

²² The Impact of Empire workshops have to date resulted in seven conference volumes, of which one was published in 2006 and two in 2007; it has not been possible for me to consult these volumes. A publication of the project *Die Zeit der Soldatenkaiser* is Johnes, Gerhardt & Hartmann 2006.

²³ Witschel 2004, 252: “Its existence is almost unquestioned, and it tends to serve as an explanation for almost every change observable between the High Empire and late antiquity... Especially noteworthy is the fact that our sources tend to be evaluated within the parameters of a crisis which is now taken as given.”

It is not necessary to claim that the third century crisis did *not* exist, or that it is merely a construction by modern authors. However, it does seem reasonable to adopt the view that the crisis is not necessarily to be understood as one single entity, as one single and coherent process encompassing all aspects of society – or all parts of an empire – at once. In the following discussion I will assume that the third century was characterized by a number of different processes that may have been regarded as crises.²⁴

The ‘economical crisis of the third century’, to begin with, is a problematic issue. Discussions of Roman imperial economy have been shaped by the tensions between a ‘modernist position’ represented by Rostovtzeff and the ‘primitivist position’ of Finley. The debate has not only been confined to economical matters, but has also addressed more general views of Roman society.²⁵

Numismatics and their relevance for the development of Roman Imperial economy in the third century has been the focus of much research. The idea of a collapsing currency and rampant inflation especially in the 260s is well established.²⁶ Witschel is right in arguing that inflation theory, developed for a modern market economy should only be applied with caution to ancient societies, and that many economic models that could be used to describe the collapse remain theoretical.²⁷ On the other hand, the debasement of the Roman Imperial coinage is well asserted.²⁸ Admittedly, who actually suffered the consequences of this may be another matter. Witschel argues that only the money wage earners, which was not a very numerous class, may have been affected.²⁹

Further, the issue of the extent to which the Romans had an understanding of the workings of coins, and to which extent economy was dependent on the use of coins, still remains a complex problem. For instance, one of the most dire problems the provinces suffered from in the third century was over-heavy taxes. However, it is not obvious that all tax was levied in coin.³⁰ Michael Crawford early suggested that coin-use was actually limited; in a recent addition to the debate, Harris argues that the use of credit in the Roman economy must have been more widespread than hitherto assumed.³¹ As evident, the question of an economical crisis during the third century is inextricably entangled with even more complicated issues of Roman economy.

Secondly, there is the question concerning in which way a crisis was experienced by contemporaries. Did contemporary viewers experience that they were living in an

²⁴ Cf. Witschel 2004, 253f.

²⁵ A recommendable overview is provided by de Blois, Pleket & Rich 2002, ix–xiii. An overview of the ‘post-Finleyan debate’ is provided by Scheidel & Von Reden 2002.

²⁶ The seminal study is that of Callu; cf. Callu 1969. A shorter abstract is provided by Callu 1975. For a more recent synthesis, cf. Howgego 1995, 136–140.

²⁷ Witschel 2004, 258.

²⁸ de Blois 2002, 215f. provides an overview; for a detailed account, cf. Callu 1969.

²⁹ Witschel 2004, 258.

³⁰ MacMullen 1976, 103; cf. *idem* 1988, 41–44.

³¹ Crawford 1970; cf. Harris 2006.

age of anarchy and crisis; in other words, did they perceive the ‘third-century crisis’ about which some scholars are so fond of talking? The evidence has been interpreted in quite contrary ways by different scholars. Geza Alföldy argued that there was indeed a *Krisenbewußtsein*. Alföldy admitted that many of the problems that were experienced were not regarded by contemporaries as new; however, in the third century, these problems had become immediate. Among other factors, the Christians were seen as part of the problem.³²

MacMullen argued, *contra* Alföldy, that the various voices telling of a crisis were heavily influenced by a Christian world-view. This ‘crisis’ should rather be understood with references to different apocalyptical traditions, and concepts of a vanishing golden age.³³ Later, in a direct reply to MacMullen, Alföldy conceded that there did not exist a ‘systematical or thorough analysis of the crisis,’ but that this awareness of crisis must remain an essential part of the third century crisis.³⁴ In a third approach to the problem, Strobel took some steps towards restating the position of MacMullen. Strobel argued that there is, indeed, an idea of a decline among contemporary viewers. However, this should not be understood as *Krisenbewußtsein*, or as a recognition of living in a changing world, but rather as a conviction of living in a world experiencing a more fundamental decline.³⁵

A third crisis would seem to be evident. That is the one suggested by the large number of emperors that were ruling the Roman empire in this period, and the numbers of usurpers challenging them. Does this imply a crisis of the system of government – did the repeated failures of emperors mean that imperial power had failed? First, let us state that the workings behind the frequent usurpations and acclamations can be more complex than initially apparent; the impression of disorder may be somewhat misleading.³⁶ After all, the empire and the imperial authority survived year-long experiments with many emperors in various parts of the empire. But the idea that *the empire should still be ruled by an emperor* does not seem ever to have been challenged. Thus,

³² Alföldy 1975b, 123–125.

³³ MacMullen 1976, 8: “The pattern is plain enough: it was no appreciation of Rome’s total agony that drew forth a litany of laments – real though they were, some of them. Rather, it was the agony of Christians that caused them to see everything around them as the scene of the world’s end, an end likewise embracing and punishing their pagan oppressors.”

³⁴ Alföldy 1989, 346: “In der Schlussfolgerung stimmen MacMullen und ich überein: es hat im 3. Jahrhundert keine systematische und befriedigende Krisenanalyse gegeben...Aber sonst kann ich die Meinung MacMullens in mehrfacher Hinsicht nicht teilen...Die bedeutendsten konstituierenden Elemente dieser Krise waren m.E. nicht nur die Labilität und der ‘beschleunigte Wandel’ (J. Burckhardt) des Römischen Reiches, sondern auch die Erkenntnis oder zumindest das Gefühl der Labilität und des Wandels.”

³⁵ Strobel 1993, 322f: “Es war nicht das damahlige Zeitgefühl, in einer Zeit des beschleunigten Wandels und Umbruchs zu leben, sondern in einem Zeitalter, das als ein grundsätzlicher Niedergang, der schon vor der eigenen Gegenwart eingesetzt hatte, zu betrachten war und dessen Erfahrung von einem teilweisen Mangel an statischem Beharren und statischer Stabilität geprägt wurde.”

³⁶ Various mechanisms of ‘*Herrscherwechsel*’ with special reference to the actions of the military have been treated in a number of studies; cf Hartmann 1982, Flaig 1992 and Pabst 1997.

if it was not a crisis of imperial authority, how should then the mechanisms of imperial authority underlying the ‘careers’ of the soldier-emperors be understood?

1.3. Remnants of a narrative – written sources (or, the lack thereof)

One additional aspect of the concept of the ‘third century crises’ should be discussed. This is the crisis which is implied by the nature of the sources. Literary sources for the third century are certainly dire by comparison with almost any other century of the Roman empire. There is only one source which to any relevant extent ‘treats’ the third century. This is the infamous collection of biographies of the Roman emperors, which appears to be written by a collective of writers. These are known as the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*; usually the collection is referred to simply as the *Historia Augusta*. The biographies treat the emperors from Hadrian to Carus and his family (who reigned in 283–285).

It should be noted that the lack of sources is really a lack of *extensive* sources; certainly there are none that can be compared with the sources provided for the two first centuries of the imperial age. This, however, is not to say that there are no sources at all. Various editions have contributed to making more important sources more easily accessible;³⁷ recent work has also, to great effect, demonstrated that impressive work can be done, provided that one is prepared to delve into the collections of not so readily accessible material.³⁸ During the last decade, some of the most important sources have been re-edited in new, critical and thoroughly commented editions. Most prominent are those made by the publishing company Les Belles Lettres.³⁹

There is no need here to make a digression on the composition of the bulk of extant sources, as this has been presented very thoroughly elsewhere.⁴⁰ Suffice it here to mention the main sources as far as the scope of this thesis is concerned, and to comment on some of the most relevant problems concerning these sources.

A survey will shed some light on the ways in which they have shaped the concepts of various crises of the third century.⁴¹ Beginning with the *Historia Augusta*, this must be regarded as one of the most troublesome sources in the whole bulk of written evidence from classical antiquity. With its sometimes bewildering descriptions of more or less picturesque tyrants and usurpers, it must clearly bear much of the blame for the image of the third century as a chaotic age of weak emperors.

³⁷ Recommendable compilations of selections and excerpts from the most important sources are provided by Lorient & Nony 1997 and Badel & Béranger 1998.

³⁸ As examples of this, the works by Strobel and Körner may be mentioned; cf. Strobel 1993 and Körner 2002.

³⁹ Callu 1992, Paschoud 1996 and *idem* 2001.

⁴⁰ A recommendable overview of the textual sources for the later half of the third century is provided by Kreucher; cf. Kreucher 2003, 14–39.

⁴¹ Cf. Witschel 2004, 255f.

The modern critical approach to the *Historia Augusta* derives from the seminal studies by Dessau, who suggested that behind the six biographers lay in fact one single writer. This is a conclusion that has since become commonly accepted.⁴² The immediate result of this work was a number of critical treatments of the *Historia Augusta*, which, in turn, have since been followed by a vast amount of studies dedicated to the *Historia Augusta*.⁴³ The result of this is that, for a long time, the most common approach to the *Historia Augusta* has been an extremely cautious one. Indeed, some scholars seem to have been inclined to discard the *Historia Augusta* completely.

The increased interest in the third century has been followed by a recognition that considering that there is no other extensive source for the third century, if one is to approach the third century there is simply no way around the *Historia Augusta*. Most present work on the *Historia Augusta* concentrates on how the biographies can be used despite their by now well-known weaknesses. One much-liked method has been to assert the reliability of various passages in the *Historia Augusta* by postulating which sources have been used for each passage. The most famous of these must be the hypothetical, lost source which was suggested by Enmann to have existed and has since been referred to as the *Enmannsche Kaisergeschichte*.⁴⁴ Obviously this strategy only produces another question – namely on which terms one can deem certain sources as reliable. This seems to me like a strategy that can only be attempted at with extreme caution; the research on the *Historia Augusta* may to an outsider seem curious and, as a discourse, rather secluded.⁴⁵

Another important group of sources consists of the compilers of the fourth century. Together with the *Historia Augusta*, these constitute what is frequently referred to as the Latin tradition. The works of the compilers are the *Caesares* by Aurelius Victor; the *Breviarium* of Eutropius; the anonymous *Epitome de Caesaribus*; and the *Breviarium rerum gestarum populi Romani* of Rufius Festus. The notes of the soldier-emperors in these works are of a very general nature and can in most cases only be considered to corroborate information from other sources. To some extent, the compilers can assess the reliability of the *Historia Augusta*. It should in this respect be remembered that the *Historia Augusta* as well as the compilers are assumed to have used the *Kaisergeschichte* as a common source. All share a well-known pro-senatorial bias; this bias has surely been of some importance for our understanding of the third century as an age troubled by a conflict between the senate and the military.⁴⁶

⁴² Cf. Dessau 1889 and *idem* 1892.

⁴³ The works of Sir Ronald Syme and the bulk of works by Klaus-Peter Johné may be mentioned. For further reading on the subject, the two conference volume series that have been produced by the Bonner Colloquia (Bonn 1966–) and the *Historiae Augustae Colloquia* (Bari 1991–) contain much of the most important studies dedicated to the *Historia Augusta*.

⁴⁴ Enmann 1884; cf. Rohrbacher 2002, 44f.

⁴⁵ Cf. Nollé 2002, 669: “Außenstehende, die nicht zum engeren Zirkel der ‘Historia Augustaner’ gehören, gewinnen häufig den Eindruck, daß nicht der vermeintlich eine Verfasser der ‘Kaisergeschichte’ ein Mystifikator war, sondern ein ganzer Trupp moderner Mystifikatoren sich ans Werk gemacht hat.”

⁴⁶ Cf. Johné 1998, 638; for Aurelius Victor, Festus and Eutropius, Rohrbacher has provided a useful

The counterpart of the Latin tradition is a corresponding ‘Greek tradition.’ Most important in this are the works of two Byzantine scholars, the early sixth century scholar Zosimos, and the 12th century scholar Ioannes Zonaras. These two sources, curiously, represent two extremes concerning the state of modern editions. The *Historia Nova* of Zosimos has been the subject of several modern editions.⁴⁷ The *Epitome Historiarum* of Ioannes Zonaras, on the other hand, has been rather neglected. This is regrettable considering the importance of this work. Since the edition of Dindorf of the Greek text, published in the 19th century⁴⁸, not one single more recent edition or translation of the bulk of Zonaras’ work has appeared.

In addition to the works of Zosimos and Zonaras, there is a number of Byzantine historians in the works of whom various more or less short notes on the soldier-emperors appear. Of those, Ioannes Malalas, Georgios Synkellos and the chronicle by Eusebius, finished by Jerome, may be noted.⁴⁹ Some of the most interesting evidence is provided by certain sources that are lost but of which fragments have been preserved. Most important of these are the fragments preserved from the works of Publius Herennius Dexippus. Some biographical facts about him are certain. Dexippus is known to have been a magistrate in Athens at the time of the barbarian invasions in the 280s. Only fragments remain of his work, the importance of which make it all the more regrettable that the bulk of his work is lost.⁵⁰

For the scope of this study, the value of political rhetorics and panegyrics is great. The panegyric Εἰς Ρώμην (‘To Rome’) by Aelius Aristides is obviously important for discussions concerning the esteem in which the city of Rome was held in antiquity.⁵¹ The value of this speech, as far as this study is concerned, is somewhat more difficult to assess. This is because the speech was delivered in the second century; the views expressed by Aelius Aristides may not be valid for the later third century. Some importance should also be attributed to the panegyric Εἰς Βασιλέα (‘to the ruler’). This was believed to have been a work of Aelius Aristides and was thus incorporated in the works of Aristides; this is an opinion which has since been refuted, and it has become common to simply refer to the unknown author as the Pseudo-Aristides. The work is usually assumed to be of a later date than the works that can be attributed to Aelius Aristides. Most likely it should be dated to the earlier half of the third century; one suggestion is that the panegyric is from the reign of Philippus Arabs and addressed to Philippus.⁵²

As far as this study is concerned, we must consider the *Panegyrici Latini* to be the most important panegyrics. Of these, the panegyrics no. 8–11, which can be dated to

introduction; cf. Rohrbacher 2002.

⁴⁷ Cf. Ridley 1982, Voh & Rebenich 1990 and Paschoud 2000.

⁴⁸ Leipzig 1868–1975.

⁴⁹ Cf. Kreucher 2003, 31–39.

⁵⁰ For an overview of the life and works of Dexippus, cf. Millar 1969.

⁵¹ Aristid. *Or.* 26; cf. Edwards & Woolf 2003, 3–5.

⁵² Aristid. *Or.* 35; cf. Behr 1981, 399f.

the reigns of Diocletian and Maximinian, could in one sense be regarded as the most important ones, as they are the most contemporary.⁵³ However, this whole corpus of panegyrics can, taken together, also be regarded as the most important piece of literary evidence regarding views of emperor and empire in the later Roman empire. These orations have been of fundamental importance for those scholars who would want to regard the third century as an age of shifting imperial authority, rather than as an age of crisis.

The question which worth can be attributed to the rescripts in the *Codex Theodosiani* and *Codex Iustiniani* is a rather obvious one. As far as the *Codex Iustiniani* is concerned, the number of rescripts from the soldier-emperors is a notably modest one. From the emperors Valerian to Numerian, there is a mere 125 rescripts, which can be compared with 880 rescripts from the Severan age and a staggering 1200 from the age of Diocletian. Some of the more short lived emperors such as Tacitus and Florian are not represented at all, although they undoubtedly issued rescripts.⁵⁴ Obviously, this lack of rescripts could be a reason for a rather heavy verdict on the soldier-emperors and their governments.

The writings of Christian writers of the third century have been the focus of much attention; even more than the *Historia Augusta-Forschung*, the studies of early Christian writers and church fathers form a field of research of its own. It is only natural that these writings have been much taken into account in studies treating the third century, considering that they make up the most solid body of (trustworthy) literary evidence from this age. It should come as no surprise that the field of research on which these sources has had a decisive influence is that of the 'contemporary experience of crisis.'⁵⁵ However, the extent to which this bulk of material can be brought to bear on the problems that are the focus of this thesis is another matter.

There is a decline of epigraphical habits in the third century. De Blois refers to this as a sign of crisis. Against De Blois, Witschel argues that in some cases, regions that experienced the serious decline in epigraphy from other points of view seem to have been remarkably prosperous. As a possible alternative explanation for the decline, Witschel suggests changed habits in communication and representation.⁵⁶ To conclude, prosopographical studies have shed much light on questions of socio-historical interest, such as the fates of senatorial families and development of the *ordo equestris* in the third century.⁵⁷ Such studies largely contribute to our understanding of the issue of a crisis of society in the third century.

⁵³ Cf. Nixon & Rodgers (eds.) 1994. A valuable commentary to the *Panegyrici Latini* has also been provided by Rees; cf. Rees 2002.

⁵⁴ Körner 2002, 160 (from where figures are also quoted).

⁵⁵ MacMullen 1976, 8; Cf. further Strobel 1993.

⁵⁶ de Blois 2002, 215; cf. Witschel 2004, 257: "We must thus make a negative determination: the absence of inscriptions seems not (necessarily) to have constituted any reflection of social, economic or demographic events." The surviving body of inscriptions from the soldier-emperors was examined in a dissertation by Pond. Unfortunately this work was never published; cf. Pond 1970.

⁵⁷ Cf. Barbieri 1952 and Christol 1986; for a recent study of the *ordo senatorius*, the *ordo equestris* and

How certain is, then, this lack of written sources as an indication of crisis? Obviously, the absence of sources may be regarded as a sign of decay in itself. Written records that existed may have been destroyed during the tumultuous events of the age. One may also suggest that the cultural standards of this age were so low that it was later deemed that nothing of any worth was written; therefore nothing was saved. On the other hand, there is an apparent risk of arguing *e silentio*; an absence of evidence is, as one scholar has pointed out, not evidence of absence.⁵⁸

1.4. Communication and legitimacy: towards a theoretical framework

The approach of Moses Finley to the study of history was one of constructions of theoretical models. These were then subjected to critical analysis. In the second edition of *The Ancient Economy* Moses Finley explained his approach in the following manner:

In the absence of meaningful quantitative data, the best that one can do is to judge whether or not a model, a set of concepts, explains the available data more satisfactorily than a competing model. (The still prevalent antiquarian procedure of listing all known discrete 'facts' is no method at all.)⁵⁹

Although many of Finley's views on ancient economy have been questioned, his approach to the methodology of research seems to have been of more durable influence. Keith Hopkins – one of Finley's pupils – more recently defined the historical model as “a sort of master picture, as on the front of a jigsaw puzzle box; the fragments of surviving ancient sources provide only a few of the jigsaw pieces.”⁶⁰

The troublesome lack of literary evidence for the third century has been noted above. Admittedly, recent investigations of hitherto little-studied material open up some new possibilities. Still, it may be doubted whether, really, anything new can be attained through ‘listing all known discrete facts’ or through twisting and turning old familiar jigsaw pieces once again.

It has become quite fashionable to amend for lack of evidence with an extensive use of theoretical models to ‘fill in the blanks.’ Let us not be tempted to assume that a clever use of theoretical models will provide a universal remedy to all our pains. Nevertheless, the theoretical approach to ancient history proposed by Finley does seem to open up at least one possible passageway to the problems of the third century: it can prove fruitful to re-arrange known facts in theoretical frameworks.⁶¹ Therefore, I

their influence over the government of the Roman empire in the third century, cf. Eich 2005.

⁵⁸ Gradel 2002, 199.

⁵⁹ Finley 1999, 194.

⁶⁰ Hopkins 2002, 192.

⁶¹ Two examples of such approaches are those of Strobel and Eich; cf. Strobel 1993 and Eich 2005.

propose to study certain aspects of the political development in the later third century with the help of a well-defined theoretical model.

Roman auctoritas

As a point of departure in the previous sub-chapter, I have proposed a focus on the question of imperial authority. This has often been analysed with the help of various models of political legitimacy. The issue how this concept is to be understood in a Roman sense has been much discussed. Initially, it should be made quite clear that one should be careful when using modern concepts such as authority and legitimacy to describe the workings of Roman politics and imperial rule. The closest one might come to a Roman equivalent is *auctoritas*.⁶²

In an often-quoted essay, Max Weber defined three ideal types of legitimate rule. These were, firstly, traditional rule, which is based on dynastic inheritance; secondly, legal or bureaucratic rule, based on a professional class of state employees; and thirdly, charismatic rule, based on the personal qualities and achievements of a political leader.⁶³ Weber's views have been widely influential. In a recent article, Tonio Hölscher has suggested that at least as far as states of antiquity are concerned, a fourth category should be considered. This might be referred to as ideological rule – power and rule based on a political ideology. Hölscher suggests that it is as such that we should understand at least Roman imperial rule, since political values in Roman society were not based around any individual emperor. Instead, these values formed a pattern of ideals that concerned every emperor. Each emperor was expected to meet these ideals, with certain expressions and in certain ways.⁶⁴

Weber's concept of legitimacy has been the focus of sharp criticism. Beetham criticises Weber's three modes of rule as too rigid, as they define three different types of legitimacy, each resting on one specific set of beliefs.⁶⁵ Further, some of the terminology, as well as that used for the 'rule based on political ideology' suggested by Hölscher may perhaps seem somewhat anachronistic.

However, Weber also stresses the importance of *enactment* to legitimate rule.⁶⁶ This notion seems to point to a solution. Let us assume that legitimacy cannot be defined according to a certain number of fixed modes, but is instead characterized by being in a state of constant redefinition: it is an ongoing process. It follows from this that in order to attain and regain legitimacy, the arguments by which someone claims access to legitimacy must similarly constantly be renewed: governments do not possess legitimacy, but rather *claim* legitimacy. Accordingly, it would be more proper to

⁶² Malmberg 2003, 104.

⁶³ The essay *Die drei reinen Typen der legitimen Herrschaft* was probably written in 1917–1920 and published in *Preußische Jahrbücher* 1922; it is easily accessible in Whimster (ed.) 2004.

⁶⁴ Hölscher 2003, 16f.

⁶⁵ Beetham exposes the theses of Weber to detailed and sharp criticism; cf. Beetham 1991, 7–25.

⁶⁶ Cf. Whimster (ed.) 2004, 134.

talk of *legitimation* instead of legitimacy.⁶⁷ If not as actual modes of rule, I propose that Weber's three types of rule could at least be regarded as arguments to which a ruler may resort in order to attain legitimacy – *strategies for legitimation*.

Weber also observed the importance of the hoped-for reaction to the use of the above-mentioned strategies – what Weber defined as *Anerkennung*.⁶⁸ This, an *acceptance* of the validity of strategies of legitimation, has repeatedly been established as crucial for the attaining of legitimate rule.⁶⁹ I would therefore like to establish two parameters that might be used to describe the concept of *auctoritas*. Firstly, that it is an observable practise that the Roman emperors engage in, and can be seen to engage in, through which they claim a specific monopoly of the right to rule of legitimacy⁷⁰; and secondly, that this calls for public expressions of consent.⁷¹

How should we define this practise? In a very influential study from the late 1990s, Greg Woolf explored the issue of 'Romanisation', or 'how to become Roman.' Becoming Roman, as suggested by Woolf, should not be understood as an acquiring of a 'fixed package of thoughts considered to be Roman.' Rather, it meant receiving access to a grid or set of rules within which one could act in various 'Roman' ways.⁷² We should therefore, as Woolf argues, not expect that there was only one way of being Roman. Being Roman, rather, meant acting in Roman ways: Woolf concludes that there "were so many kinds of Romans to become that becoming Roman did not mean assimilating to an ideal type, but rather acquiring a position in the complex of structured differences in which Roman power resided."⁷³

Woolf's understanding of how to become Roman has been much discussed. In line with the notion that becoming Roman may have implied different experiences in different parts of the empire, Dyson discerns a quite different Roman experience on Sardinia. Studies of the eastern parts of the empire also seem to yield different results.⁷⁴ A second point of criticism is that the model puts too much emphasis on elite culture.⁷⁵ In order to reach a wider understanding of what the Roman experience can imply, various alternative models to that of Woolf have been suggested. The concept of creolization has been introduced, as have models based on concepts of identity.⁷⁶

Still, Woolf's basic model seems to bring us further with the issues discussed here. I have defined legitimacy – or rather legitimation – as a process of practises. Further,

⁶⁷ Barker 2001, 2: "What characterises government, in other words, is not the possession of a quality defined as legitimacy, but the claiming, the activity of legitimation." Cf. Beetham 1991, 103–108 and Flaig 1992, 12.

⁶⁸ Whimster (ed.) 2004, 140.

⁶⁹ Wallace-Hadrill 1982, 40. "Every autocrat needs constant reassurance of power." Cf. also Beetham 1991, 90–97.

⁷⁰ Barker 2001, 24.

⁷¹ Beetham 1991, 94f.

⁷² Woolf 1998, 238–241.

⁷³ Woolf 1988, 245.

⁷⁴ Dyson 2000, 196; Cf. Alcock 2000, 221f.

⁷⁵ Mattingly 2002, 539; Mattingly 2004, 6.

⁷⁶ Mattingly 2004, 7–9; this article provides a recommendable introduction to the debate.

I would like to suggest that such a legitimating practise for the purpose of this thesis – following Woolf – may be defined as an activity in one way or other recognisable as ‘Roman.’ It should be valid within a framework of Roman codes of behaviour and in correspondence with a certain mode of ‘Romanness.’ Moreover, we should look for activities of the emperor. The activity of legitimization is an activity that concerns the rule or the person of the ruler; accordingly, it is primarily the emperor as a person who must legitimate himself.⁷⁷

Which were then the strategies of personal activities to which the emperor should adhere, in accordance with the ‘codes of Roman behaviour’? Fergus Millar’s study on the manner of rule of the Roman emperors has been very influential. Millar stressed the idea that in theory, as well as in practise, the emperor ruled personally. As *pater familias* of the whole empire, the emperor was – or was at least assumed to be – personally responsible for the rule of the empire.⁷⁸ Consequently, much imperial rule was done through written correspondence and through consultations.⁷⁹ This would explain pieces of evidence such as the famous correspondence between the emperor Trajan and Pliny. It seems then that a most important concept as far as legitimating imperial activities is concerned, would be to establish a mode of functioning *communication*.

One of Millar’s key ideas was that of the ‘reactive rule.’ This meant that the emperor was passive, ruling through responding to petitions. Such may be spoken – taking the forms of delegations that are granted consultations – or written.⁸⁰ If one regards imperial propaganda, such as the *Res gestae divi Augusti*, one reaches the impression that the emperor is rather active – or at least, the emperor wishes to be seen that way.

However, as consent can also be defined as a practise, this must also reach visual expressions. In an important study, Clifford Ando has understood the rule of the Roman emperor as a two-way communicational process. Following Jürgen Habermas, Ando argues that the most important notion, in order to establish a functioning conversation, is that both parties must agree on the contents of the communicated values. The contents of the values can only be affirmed by repeated confirmation. Accordingly, the maintaining of the legitimacy of the Roman emperor can be understood as a continuous communication of the legitimacy of the ruler to groups of interest.⁸¹ What is one trying to express with this communication? Ando argues that, in order to retain loyalty, the Roman Emperor must at all times be prepared to affirm that he *deserves* loyalty. There must be a continual process of validation. This validation was recipro-

⁷⁷ Barker 2001, 32: “It is in the first place persons not systems, rulers not regimes, who are legitimated.”

⁷⁸ Millar 1977, 6: “The emperor was what the emperor did.”

⁷⁹ Cf. Millar 1977, 213–228.

⁸⁰ Millar 1977, 6f.

⁸¹ Ando 2000, 77: “For a society like that of Rome, which believed that its legitimacy as a normative order and, indeed, its good relations with the divine derived directly from the *consensus* of its participants, communication as a process for reaching understanding was of the utmost importance.”

cal; thus a sophisticated interplay was created, through which ruler and ruled affirmed the position of the other.⁸²

I therefore suggest that the enacting of Roman imperial legitimacy can be understood as an ongoing communication, the point of which is the continuous affirmation of loyalty. The participants in this communication are the emperor and...someone else. But who?

Emperors and courts

It is well known that the emperor was surrounded by a number of persons, delegations and groups of people.⁸³ It lies close at hand to assume that these circles were places where power could be wielded; Barker refers to this place as the ‘secret garden of government.’⁸⁴ Perhaps one can be more precise, and find out just who were invited to the secret garden of the Roman emperors.

It has been suggested conclusively that this ‘secret garden,’ as far as Rome is concerned, started taking shape in the *domus* of the important politicians of the Late Republic.⁸⁵ Likewise, the government of the emperor began to form in the routines of the *domus Augustana*. The house of Augustus became the stage for ceremonies such as *salutationes* and *convivia*. These ceremonies assumed an official character as rituals of state; thus, the house of Augustus became something greater than a house.⁸⁶ Among the visitors to this ‘extended house,’ an inner circle gradually developed.⁸⁷

Around the unstable position of the emperor, this circle formed a stabilizing and controlling structure in the shape of what could be defined as courts. It stood outside the traditional social order, as this was based on the *domus* on one hand, the *res publica* on the other, and the dichotomy between them. This dichotomy was nevertheless recognized as the founding stone of the Roman state.⁸⁸

As the court thus lacked a formal position in the state, an element of tension was created within Roman imperial society. While the imperial court assimilated the political functions of the old republican institutions, traditional ways of attaining prestige in society – that is, outside the court – still held force. The emperor could for instance influence the composition of the senate, although it was still the old magistracies that provided the prestige as such; the emperor could influence to whom prestige would be given, but not the giving of prestige in itself. Thus, the court could not *become* a state.⁸⁹ Thus, Winterling argues that the authority of the emperor came to rest on two

⁸² Ando 2000, 135: “And if the active *consensus* of the ruled empowered the ruler, so the regular affirmation of that *consensus* sustained their subjugation.”

⁸³ Cf. Millar 1977, 59–61.

⁸⁴ Barker 2001, 58–61.

⁸⁵ Rilinger 1997, 74f.

⁸⁶ Winterling 1997b, 94–96.

⁸⁷ Winterling 1997b, 101–104.

⁸⁸ Winterling 1997b, 106f.

⁸⁹ Winterling 1997b, 111f.

pillars. New political structures of organisation were constituted, such as secretariats at the court, the equestrian administration and the senatorial imperial service. However, the old republican institutions such as the senate and the magistracy still existed, and accordingly, a duplication of political structures arose.⁹⁰

The constitution of power within the Roman empire may thus be described as a triangle, with the emperor as the top and the court and senate as the two lower corners. I would now like to assume that in the age of the soldier-emperors, the army functioned as a 'court'. There would seem to be good reason for this assumption. Throughout the empire, the army was ready to act as kingmaker. It could aid or thwart an emperor, considering which their interests were. The praetorian guard had the most obvious connections to imperial power in the first decades; repeatedly, however, the legions of the army also proclaimed emperors.⁹¹ In the third century, this happened repeatedly. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to suggest that in the case of the soldier-emperors, the legions and their hierarchies assumed the functions of informal structures of power that Winterling discusses.

According to Winterling, the court is firstly and pre-eminently the place where the ruler is. It is further, in a social sense, the following of the ruler. The word can also refer to the way of life that is conducted around the ruler and a manner of behaving when near the ruler.⁹² All these semantic definitions seem to be appropriate for a description of the military camp. This is a place where the commander is, where his nearest officers hold council, a certain life is lived and certain rituals are held in respect.

Crucial to the functions of a court is the function of *interactions*, which require *presence*. The persons who are most frequently present form an inner circle, while more temporary visitors constitute a group one step further down in the hierarchy. Needless to say, *communication* takes place within and between these groups; an important value that is communicated is *grace*. A hierarchy is created, made up of persons more and less favoured by grace. This reliance on grace, that enables the ruler to raise and fell at will, causes an element of instability in the system.⁹³ This makes the court a powerful instrument of politics; as no member of the court can ever be completely sure of his or her position, they must be ready to act on their own. In extreme cases, the court can therefore function as kingmaker.⁹⁴

At court, *opportunistic behaviour* can thus be recommended. There is also an element of *organisation*, as various offices can be created. The court is also obviously a centre for *politics*, a place where power that reaches outside the court is wielded.

⁹⁰ Winterling 2001, above all 110 f. Cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1982, 32f.

⁹¹ In his influential study, Campbell investigated the ways in which the Roman emperors gathered support from the troops; cf. Campbell 1984, 374–382. In an intensified study of the relations between the emperor and the army, Flaig analyses what could cause military support to fail. From a sociological perspective, he analysed the mechanisms which produced mutinies and usurpations in the first century; cf. Flaig 1992, 503–511.

⁹² Winterling 1997a, 13f.

⁹³ Winterling 1997a, 15f.

⁹⁴ Winterling 1997b, 101.

Because of this, the power of the emperor who is surrounded by a court is extended; simultaneously, it also gets more difficult to control that same power.⁹⁵ In order to secure the position of the prince and avoid rivals, people with power of their own are kept away from the court. Finally, a court should be socially and structurally *representative*.⁹⁶

I suggest that the military camp may well fulfil the functions of the court, as this is conceived by Winterling. A court requires presence: in the camp, this follows automatically. A court will gather an inner circle: a military commander is surrounded by his most high-ranking officers. The members of a court must be ready to act as kingmakers; similarly, soldiers repeatedly mutineer and depose their commanders; on a higher level legions can be seen to rebel against the emperor. Here we may find a structural reason for the emergence of (military) usurpations of the power of soldier-emperors. A court, finally, requires some sort of organisation, which indeed an army camp also constitutes.

However, it is also apparent that the ‘military court’ can become an unstable court. This is because the informal power wielded at the court can be expected to come into conflict with the formal hierarchical structures, and above all formal structures of promotion, within the army. This notion, I think, provides a key to the unstable positions of at least some of the soldier-emperors (cf. further chap. 3.5).

Winterling’s second pillar, on which imperial power came to rest, is constituted by the senatorial aristocracy. This acted as custodian of republican traditions. As far as the first century is concerned, this seems to be a sound assumption. As long as imperial communication with very few exceptions took place in the city of Rome, the interplay between the emperor and members of the *ordo senatorius* was of fundamental importance for the position of the emperor.⁹⁷ However, in the later second and the third centuries, this is not so obvious, as the emperors often did not reside in the city of Rome. In the later third century, there are many cases where emperors actually only were in the city of Rome once or twice.

I will therefore assume that the function of the senatorial aristocracy was replaced by a new support. This consisted in a general reference to the city of Rome and the importance of the traditional civilian Roman structures. Admittedly, this is an unsatisfactory assumption, as it is very vague. There are several groups who can claim to represent Rome – except for the senate the *plebs urbana*⁹⁸ and, as we will see, even provincial citizen. On the other hand, however, I believe that the very vagueness of this reference to ‘Rome’ is what could have made it appealing (cf. *further below*).

⁹⁵ Winterling 1997b, 17–21.

⁹⁶ Winterling 1997b, 22–25.

⁹⁷ Flaig presents a model for such an interplay, in arguing that in the empire, a possibility was created for members of the *ordo senatorius* to compete for closeness to the emperor; cf. Flaig 1992, 107–126.

⁹⁸ Flaig presents a thorough analysis of the political capacity of the *plebs urbana* and its relations to the emperor; cf. Flaig 1992, 38–93.

Further, this ‘Rome’ was seen as one of the fundamentals on which imperial power rested; this is attested by the use of the phrase ROM ET AVG.⁹⁹

1.5. Introducing a ‘language of images’

To sum up the points of the argument brought forward so far: my aim in this study is to ascertain the attempts of the soldier-emperors to legitimize their positions through a communication of shared values. These shared values are references to the military on the one hand and to Rome on the other. Through which different means can such communication be established?

The issue of art as a means of communication has been treated by a number of important scholars, for example H.-P. L’Orange and András Alföldi.¹⁰⁰ The works of Erwin Panofsky and Rudolf Wittkower have also been very influential.¹⁰¹

From the 1980s, Tonio Hölscher and Paul Zanker made important contributions to the debate.¹⁰² In particular, Zanker’s *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder* has been extremely influential. In the following paragraphs, I will attempt at describing the methodology, deriving mainly from the works of Hölscher and Zanker, which will be used in the present study in some detail. The reason for this is that I attempt to explore the limits to the ways in which coins, with their various features, can be suited to the function as carriers of visual imagery. Such an attempt is possible since recent publications have enabled us to undertake much more detailed studies of coins than previously.

A key notion for Hölscher was that ancient images of art should not be seen as objective reproductions of an ancient reality. Rather, they should be understood as ideological statements and messages from the persons involved in the production of the piece of art in question. This person is obviously, in a direct sense, the artist responsible, but also the person ordering the piece of art. The messages that become the results are created in a certain historical situation, for a certain audience and with a certain intention: images do not represent reality, but *construct* reality. Accordingly, they must be regarded from the point of the culture in which the image is created.¹⁰³ Therefore, images can be interpreted as representations of the values, of a collective identity.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Cf. Mannsperger 1974, 926: “Das staats- und religionspolitische Hauptthema der kaiserzeitlichen Münzen ... läßt sich mit der numismatischen Formel ROM. ET. AVG. umschreiben.”

¹⁰⁰ The articles by Alföldi (Alföldi 1934 and, to some extent, *idem* 1935) are still in many respects unsurpassed. The many works of L’Orange (for instance L’Orange 1947 and *idem* 1953) constitute a very important contribution.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Panofsky 1987 and Wittkower 1977.

¹⁰² Hölscher 1984 and *idem* 1987 should be regarded as the most important works of this scholar. Paul Zanker’s main work is Zanker 1987.

¹⁰³ Hölscher 2000, 147–149.

¹⁰⁴ Hölscher 1987, 13 and *idem* 2000, 159.

Fundamental for this argument is the assumption – which was explored by Panofsky – that images should be understood as signs, and that these signs can be associated with various ideas. The analysis of signs, and the associations that these signs enable the viewer was described as *iconography* and *iconology*. The more knowledge the viewer possesses, the more associations he or she will be able to make.¹⁰⁵ The tripod is an example: the sign of a tripod, on a basic level, depicts a simple object used in the cult of Apollo. However, in the age of Augustus, the tripod also represented renewed piety and the new era that had begun.¹⁰⁶

It is one thing to assume that a work of art can be understood as a message in a communication. To whom, then, is this message directed? It has a sender and a receiver, both of which shape the form of the message.¹⁰⁷ Art has *different* receivers, and images were shaped according to the self-view of these receivers.¹⁰⁸ Hölscher argues that, consequently, different pieces of art were conceived exclusively for different groups of society, according to their interests, ‘self-view’ and references. For instance, great state monuments had a symbolical content on a high conceptual level. These could be assumed to have been conceived for the intellectual elite. With these, Hölscher compares objects such as altars for the *lares* that can be found in private settings. These objects expressed the same functions as simple, slogan-esque symbols and images. However, they were produced in huge amounts and aimed at the middle and lower classes.¹⁰⁹

It seems to me that one must not necessarily make this assumption. Rather, the potential of the language of art is such that one piece of art can contain various conceptual levels at once: it can work on many different levels.¹¹⁰ In other words, I would instead suggest that complex pieces of art, for instance state monuments, could be read and understood as carriers of meaningful contents by upper and lower classes alike. In any case, the point is that an imperial language of images was created, which was adapted to reach a wider audience: socially to slaves and the *liberti*, geographically to the far corners to the empire. The effect was that the various parts of the empire were integrated into the community that was Rome.¹¹¹

We can arrive at the conclusion that in order to communicate with art, there is a need for certain choices of form – or rather, of strategy on how to use forms. The form itself may dictate the use of strategy: to some extent, ‘the medium itself is the message.’¹¹²

¹⁰⁵ Panofsky 1987, 53–58 and 65–67; cf. Wittkower 1977, 174–178.

¹⁰⁶ Zanker 1987, 92–94.

¹⁰⁷ Hölscher 1984, 7f.

¹⁰⁸ Hölscher 1984, 10–16. Cf. for the perception of works of art, the works of Jás Elsner, who explores the ancient experience of art from a sociological point of view; cf. Elsner 1995.

¹⁰⁹ Hölscher 1984, 26–32.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Grunow-Sobocinski 2006, 596f.

¹¹¹ Hölscher 1984, 33–35.

¹¹² This famous phrase was first quipped by Marshall McLuhan; cf. McLuhan 1964, 7–9. Cf. also Zanker 1987, 5.

Basic principles of a 'language of images'

I suggest that a 'strategy of communication with art' can be constructed around a limited number of principles. A first principle is that of *simplicity*. Effective images should be easy to understand. This was one of the particular features and most apparent novelties of the symbolism in the visual language adopted by Augustus. By comparison with the often obscure imagery of the Late Republic, the visual language of Augustus was characterized by simplicity and clarity.¹¹³ One effect of this was the use of personifications: figures of gods, personifications and heroes, which represented more and more sloganistic abbreviated statements.¹¹⁴

Simplicity, further, implies *abstraction*: a certain image, such as that of *libertas*, was no longer the visual conception of a divinity represented as a person. Rather, fundamentally the image became reduced to being an attribute for a more abstract idea. Likewise, the image of two clasped hands could represent the idea of *concordia*.¹¹⁵ This can also mean that images can contain a certain degree of *ambiguity*. Images should not only be simple: by way of their simplicity, they should also be able to convey many meanings and make possible wide arrays of associations.¹¹⁶

This might seem as a contradiction of the first principle; this contradiction, however, is only illusory, as a simple image can also be very non-specific. For example, Augustus had an irritating lack of actual military victories. In his imagery, the solution to this problem was to reduce the message of victory to one of nonspecific and abstract symbols of victory.¹¹⁷ Such ambiguity can be achieved when images are used flexibly; it is important that a certain type of image is not bound to the depiction of a certain type of concept.¹¹⁸ Ambiguity is also possible when images have a *generalized and universal character*. As Zanker points out, Augustan imagery was characterized by its broad spectrum of general, and on the same time vague, connotations of different symbols.¹¹⁹ This could lead to confusion – but a sense of confusion could be exactly the message that was intended.¹²⁰

It should also be possible to reduce these images to a *limited number*: a language of images should concentrate on a few basic principles. This also means that *combinations* of symbols became a fundamental characteristic of the new pictorial language.¹²¹

¹¹³ Zanker 1987, 90.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Hölscher 1987, 53.

¹¹⁵ Hölscher 1980, 275–277.

¹¹⁶ Zanker 1987, 254.

¹¹⁷ Zanker 1987, 88.

¹¹⁸ Hölscher 1987, 54.

¹¹⁹ Zanker 1987, 182: 'Weite Assoziationshorizonte, allgemeine Bedeutungsträchtigkeit der einzelnen Zeichen, aber vergleichsweise vage Aussagen im konkreten Einzelfall sind charakteristisch für diesen Bereich der augusteischen Bildersprache.'

¹²⁰ Wallace-Hadrill 1986, 72.

¹²¹ Zanker 1987, 102 and 118.

This enables complex stories to be told in a very limited space: as in the pictorial language of Augustus, mythological cycles could be reduced to a certain few images.¹²²

The possibility of combining images implies that these images can be arranged in series to form broader patterns and networks of images. The result is not so much a portrayal of a real chain of events, but of representations. In this way, the depiction of complex events such as war can be reduced to a few key images.¹²³ Furthermore, as stated, in such a series, an idea can be given a new meaning in combination with other concepts.¹²⁴ Such series transcend reality. They are not so much depictions of a reality as visualizations of systems of values and ideas.¹²⁵

From the points above it follows that the same images could – and should – be used again and again: constant *repetition* should be regarded as an important principle.¹²⁶ One final characteristic may be noted. This is the demand for *visibility*. This might be regarded as an obvious prerogative. However, this demand demonstrates one of the possible weaknesses of the system. In order to function at all, a visual language must be just that, visible. Moreover, it must also be visible for all at any time. The piety of Augustus, for instance, was put on display for every Roman to see.¹²⁷

For this strategy, I have chosen to use the term ‘language of images.’ Perhaps one may ask whether it could not be termed a ‘grammar of propaganda.’ This term is a bit too much connected with the 1930s (cf. below), and seems to refer to something which is rather blatant. As Peter Burke puts it, the term propaganda implies a strategy that simply aims at persuasion.¹²⁸

Instead, I have been trying to discuss a strategy that is a mode of communication, aiming for mutual expressions of consensus. This is a more subtle practise that aims at more complex results. Zanker points out that in the age of Augustus, that which in retrospect may appear as a subtle program was in fact the result of an interplay between the emperor and his surroundings, including the images that the emperor himself projected, and the honours that were bestowed upon him more or less spontaneously. This process evolved naturally over a long period of time.¹²⁹ It established a link between ruler and *populus*;¹³⁰ a link that would enable communication over geographical and social borders in the Roman empire.¹³¹

¹²² Zanker 1987, 209 and 252.

¹²³ Hölscher 1980, 295.

¹²⁴ Hölscher 1980, 302–305.

¹²⁵ Hölscher 2003, 15.

¹²⁶ Hölscher 1984, 16f; cf. Zanker 1987, 118 and 123f.

¹²⁷ Zanker 1987, 132.

¹²⁸ Burke 1992, 5.

¹²⁹ Zanker 1987, 13.

¹³⁰ Zanker 1987, 140.

¹³¹ Cf. Zanker 1987, 152f.

All of this is of course not to say that a language of images cannot be turned into propaganda: the point is the reaction of the receiver. As Marshall MacLuhan put it, “propaganda ends where dialogue begins.”¹³²

Qualifications of the method

The methods of Hölscher and Zanker have had much influence on the understanding of classical art and history. In the following, I will discuss some issues where the concept of a language of images can help us to ‘reach out,’ and enable investigations still largely untried. A challenge is presented by the geographical and chronological limits to the studies of Hölscher and Zanker. Chronologically, they largely focus on the Late Republic and the early Augustan age. The study of Classics has long been fond of this focus. In a sense, this is only to be expected, as such a large percentage of our empiric evidence, both literary sources and archaeological evidence, is from this age.

Still, it leaves us with the question of developments in the later Roman empire. In his *Staatsdenkmal und Publikum*, Hölscher was inclined to maintain that the system created under Augustus remained static at least for the first two decades of the imperial age. Zanker adopted a similar position.¹³³ However, before Hölscher and Zanker, a number of studies had focused on imperial ideology during the first two centuries of the empire. These studies of a longer perspective present a view of an empire that was far from rigid. Rather, it was highly dynamic and displayed a power to change repeatedly. The ‘post-Augustan empire,’ according to this view, represented a continuous process of renegotiations of power.¹³⁴

Nevertheless, in certain studies which treat ‘Augustan culture’ in various ways, this view seems to have been replaced – quite unnecessarily so – by an image of rigidity. This is something for which it would be rather unfair to blame Hölscher and Zanker. However, the debate does tend to become somewhat self-confirming. There is a risk that it will evolve into a circular argument. Ironically, this would be peculiarly similar to that of the ‘third century crisis.’

Concerning geographical limits, the methods of Hölscher and Zanker rely heavily on minute analyses of monuments in the city of Rome, and of some well-known monuments outside the city of Rome. To some extent, this is owing to the fact that the studies of Hölscher and Zanker were firmly rooted in a rather traditional school of analyses of Roman sculpture and monumental art. However, this also means that the results are mostly applicable to the city of Rome. This would not only imply geographical limitations to the analyses, but more importantly, it would also involve ideological limitations. Zanker argues that in the provinces, all ideological stimuli in the imperial age came from the city of Rome.¹³⁵ However, is the city of Rome all

¹³² McLuhan & Fiore 1967, 142.

¹³³ Hölscher 1987, 65; cf. Zanker 1987, 332.

¹³⁴ Cf. for instance Alföldi 1934, *idem* 1935; cf. also Fears 1977 and MacCormack 1981.

¹³⁵ Zanker 1987, 302f.

that matters? Just as there has been a focus on the Augustan age, there seems to have been a similar focus during the nineties on the importance of ‘*Roma Aeterna*’ for the well-being of the empire (the reader will already have noted that this study is largely influenced by this idea).¹³⁶

One may ask to which extent it is due to the nature of the evidence that an emphasis has been put on the investigation of similarities with the city of Rome. Nevertheless, other cities apart from Rome gained importance in the imperial age. Not least, an increasing importance of these other cities must be regarded as one of the key developments of the third century. Moreover, in this century, most of the action seems to be everywhere but in the city of Rome. Therefore, for this study there is a need for a widened chronological and geographical scope.

An attempt at elongating the chronological scope was attempted by Niels Hannestad in his ambitious *Roman art and imperial policy*. This study aimed at spanning the whole Roman world and age.¹³⁷ Unfortunately, no doubt because of the sheer enormity of the material that needed to be taken into consideration, the study of Hannestad remains somewhat superficial. Moreover, to some extent it tends to give way to rather conventional interpretations.

During the late nineties, some important contributions have also been made by R.R.R. Smith. Smith approaches functions of Roman art from the same viewpoints as Hölscher and Zanker. However, Smith works in quite a different time and place, that is with Roman sculpture and architecture from Greece and Asia Minor in the later empire. Most notably, he has focused on the famous portrait-sculpture from late-antiquity Aphrodisias in Asia Minor.¹³⁸

With his novel focus, Smith has been able to make many valuable contributions to the debate. One of them is an investigation into how individual pieces, for example sculptures, can relate to large-scale statements, such as a monument. One such example is the analysis of the sculptural programme in the famous library of Celsus in Ephesus.¹³⁹ Smith also expands the array of analytical tools; for instance, Smith emphasises the importance of the *choice of strategy* as a vital tactic in visual rhetorics. Smith argues that if during a specific age, various modes of expression can be found, we should not necessarily assume that there is a continuous development. Different modes of expression can exist simultaneously. Accordingly, there exists a possibility to choose between strategies and modes of expression.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ For an introduction to the issue of the symbolical importance of the city of Rome, cf. Hope 2000.

¹³⁷ Cf. Hannestad 1986.

¹³⁸ Cf. for instance Smith 1997, *idem* 1998 and *idem* 2002.

¹³⁹ Cf. the analysis of the library of Celsus in Ephesus (1998, 73): “The statue was here no metaphor. But in its context, it was simply one element, one sentence of a clearly balanced programme statement.”

¹⁴⁰ Smith 1998, 92: “The variety and range of Roman private portraits in the second century cannot adequately be accounted for on prevailing models of linear development and the workings of the imperial period-face. ... Distinct concurrent strands of self-representation can be isolated ... The main point is that these images are to be explained in terms not of chronology or biography but of cultural choices.”

The works of Smith compel us to address one last issue that will lead us to the next part, namely that of source material. The approach of the Hölscher/Zanker-school relies rather heavily on analyses of sculpture and monumental architecture. This, as mentioned, is only natural, as its roots are in traditional (German) art history, and its emphasis on minute analyses of sculpture and architecture. Naturally, the large-scale state monuments would have been the most visible expressions of imperial ideology.

This, for one thing, can lead to a focus on the experiences of upper classes. However, it has also been stated that a language of images should be ubiquitous. More importance should be attributed to small-scale everyday objects and the middle and lower classes. It should be asserted that both Hölscher and Zanker have greatly emphasized the importance of all kinds of smaller objects. Not least, they attribute great importance to the analysis of coins.¹⁴¹ However, frequently, numismatic evidence tends to be used only to corroborate what is gathered from analyses of other types of empiric evidence, and only to a lesser extent in its own right. It is therefore to this issue that we will now turn.

1.6. Imperial coinage as a visual medium

Studies of the third century frequently tend to become numismatic studies. Indeed, the present study testifies to that phenomenon. This is by necessity, rather than by any other virtue, as there is simply not much other empiric evidence left from this century. To begin with, there are next to no traces of monumental architecture left from the age of the soldier-emperors. The most impressive construction project left for posterity is that of the walls, started under the reign of Aurelian, surrounding the city of Rome, but hardly anything of the circumstances of the building project. Moreover, the walls were subject to frequent refortifications and strengthenings already in antiquity. This means that it is extremely difficult today to comment on the original project (cf. further chap. 4.2).

However, examples of representative art of a more monumental character are provided by the imagery featured on the large number of sarcophagi dated to the third century. The so-called battle sarcophagi are of particular interest. Of these, the famous Ludovisi sarcophagus must be regarded as the most important piece.¹⁴² Further, the third century is an important age, as far as Roman portraiture is concerned. However, with the notable exception for Gallienus, only a very limited number of sculptures of soldier-emperors are known (cf. further chap. 3.2, 4.4 and 5.7).

Moreover, there are the coins. From the soldier-emperors, coins are preserved in huge numbers. Even from emperors and usurpers known to have been extremely short-lived, coins are known. It follows that the striking of coins must have been one

¹⁴¹ Hölscher 1980, 269 and Hölscher 1984, 12f.; Zanker 1987, 61–65.

¹⁴² For an introduction to this important piece of Roman art, cf. Ramage & Ramage 1991, 250f; for a discussion, cf. Hamberg 1945, 181–85.

of the first measures by a newly acclaimed emperor. This, in itself, may be regarded as an indication of the value of coins for imperial authority. Obviously, it is also close to assume that the imagery on coins could have been designed to express imperial propaganda. For these reasons, coinage is the main medium through which I will examine the 'imperial language of images' conceived for the soldier-emperors.

A number of well-known and frequently cited passages in ancient literary texts testify that the images and texts featured on Roman coins were recognised and understood. The most famous of these is surely the parable of Jesus regarding tribute to Caesar as related in the gospel of Matthew.¹⁴³ On a somewhat lighter note, Suetonius relates that it was regarded as an offence to carry a coin featuring the image of the emperor into a brothel.¹⁴⁴ Further, Arrian in his *Discourses of Epictetus* argues that if one finds the mark of Trajan on a coin, one should keep it, whereas if it has the stamp of Nero, one should throw it away.¹⁴⁵ That not only the 'general content' but also single coins could be understood is indicated by the fact that Dio Cassius mentions the famous coins featuring the legend EID MART, struck by Brutus and Cassius after the murder of Caesar. The *anonymus de rebus bellicis*, dated to the fourth century even suggests a few new coin types to the emperor.¹⁴⁶

However, as far as the scope of this thesis is concerned, there are certain texts that are even more interesting. These texts quite explicitly suggest an intimate relationship between imperial authority and the striking of coins. All of these are found in the *Historia Augusta*. The most interesting text is from the biography of Firmus:

For you know, my dear Bassus, how great an argument we had but recently with Marcus Fonteius, that lover of history, when he asserted that Firmus... was not an emperor but merely a brigand, while I, and together with me Rufius Celsus... argued against him, maintaining that Firmus had both worn the purple and called himself Augustus on the coins that he struck, and Archontius Severus even brought out certain coins of his and proved, moreover, from Greek and Egyptian books that in his edicts he had called himself emperor.¹⁴⁷

Admittedly, these statements refer to a view of coins and their functions in the late fourth century when the *Historia Augusta* was compiled.¹⁴⁸ Still, I think one may dare

¹⁴³ Cf. Matthew 22.15–21.

¹⁴⁴ Suet. *Tib.* 58.

¹⁴⁵ Arr. *Epict. Diss.* 4.5.15–17.

¹⁴⁶ Anon. *de rebus bellicis* 3–4. For an overview of ancient sources mentioning coins, cf. Price 1979; for a more thorough discussion of the issue, cf. Wolters 1999, 308–320.

¹⁴⁷ SHA, *Firmus Saturninus Proculus et Bonosus* 2.1: "Scis enim, mi Basse, quanta nobis contentio proxime fuerit cum amatore historiarum Marco Fonteio, cum ille diceret Firmum ... latrunculum fuisse non principem, contra ego mecumque Rufius Celsus ... contenderent, dicentes illum et purpura usum et percussa moneta Augustum esse vocitatum, cum etiam nummos eius Severus Archontius protulit, de Graecis autem Aegyptiisque libris convicit illum αὐτοκράτορα in edictis suis esse vocatum." Cf. also SHA *Tyranni triginta* 26.2–3 and *Tyranni triginta* 31.3.

¹⁴⁸ Howgego 1990, 21.

assume that similar views of coins had been current even in the earlier centuries. Exactly how much can be inferred from this?

Coins as messages – arguments and counter-arguments

For some decades, the issue of to which extent the imagery on ancient coins could function as a language of images was intensely debated. In earlier research, the view that Roman coinage could be read almost literally as a language of images was a very influential one. In the first edition of the first volume of the monumental *Roman imperial coinage*, Harold Mattingly and Edward A. Sydenham, using an analogy that would become often cited, argued that Roman coins could be regarded as ‘newspapers of the day.’¹⁴⁹ This was a view that seems to have remained unchallenged until the mid-20th century.

An article by A.H.M Jones, published in 1956, represented a reaction against this view. Jones argued that numismatists had read too much into coin-imagery. Jones questioned the point of making analyses of the imagery on Roman coin types; he doubted that the “elaborate messages deduced from coin types by numismatists were intended to be conveyed by them, and still more questionable whether they were generally understood.” With an analogy that would become much cited, Jones instead suggested that the pictorial value of ancient coins were to be compared with those on modern postage stamps.¹⁵⁰ Jones concluded his argument with the following challenge:

If numismatists wish further to assist historians, I would suggest that they pay less attention to the political interpretation of the coins. In this once neglected sphere a vast amount of valuable work has been done by numismatist in the last thirty years, but latterly the value of the numismatic evidence has tended to be overstrained, and its interpretation has become over-subtle.¹⁵¹

The provocative scepticism of Jones prompted immediate responses, for instance from Humphrey Sutherland.¹⁵² However, the points of view first expressed by Jones would later be echoed and further developed by the important scholars T.V. Buttrey, Andrew Wallace-Hadrill and Michael Crawford.¹⁵³ Their criticism has focused on a few key arguments: first, that ancient sources lack references to the images on coins; second, that there is no evidence that imagery on coins was understood; and third, the

¹⁴⁹ *RIC* I, 22.

¹⁵⁰ Jones 1956, 15: “If a modern analogy is to be sought for the varying types and legends of Roman imperial coins it is perhaps to be found in the similar variations in the postage stamps of many modern countries other than our own.”

¹⁵¹ Jones 1956, 32.

¹⁵² Cf. Sutherland 1959, 49–55.

¹⁵³ Buttrey 1972, 101–109, Wallace-Hadrill 1981a, 36f. and Crawford 1983, 50–59.

use of the word *propaganda* has been questioned. A final issue is that of who actually chose the coin types.

Michael Crawford examined a wide scope of literary texts of the kind discussed above. He argued that the sources only support the conclusion that if any imagery on coinage was noticed at all, it was that of the issuing authority. Further, Crawford suggested that there is no evidence to support the view that the coin imagery ever represented any 'official interest.'¹⁵⁴ Crawford's question was why, if coins were such an important medium as present day scholars deem them to have been, ancient historians do not mention them nearly as often as one would expect them to. As for the cases where writers – for example Dio Cassius – do mention actual coin types, Crawford argued that these writers had not actually seen the coins, and had only second-hand knowledge of them.¹⁵⁵ In an immediate reply, Christopher Ehrhardt pointed out that such an extremely sceptic view verged on the unreasonable, in view of the evidence.¹⁵⁶

However, the questions raised by Crawford remain important to consider. Sutherland suggested that one reason for the lack of references to coins can be found in the tradition of ancient writing of history itself. Ancient historians were annalistic rather than analytical. For one thing, coinage itself was no systematic annalistic phenomenon. Secondly, many ancient historians were outspokenly hostile towards the emperor which the coins represented, and therefore would have had reason to ignore coin images.¹⁵⁷ The latter suggestion may be a circular argument, as it implies that the coins actually *were* understood as representations of imperial authority. Nevertheless, it is a valid objection.

Further, in a more recent addition to the debate, Ada Cheung has argued that ancient historians may not have felt compelled to provide evidence in their writing; this may also account for the apparent lack of references to coins. Generally, Cheung argues, one should not expect historians to record what was obvious in their surroundings. Literary sources are not only quiet about coins, but also about statues, reliefs, inscriptions and monumental architecture. These were all distinct part of the physical world. Coin types seem normally to have been viewed by ancient authors as even more superfluous to their material than monumental architecture.¹⁵⁸

A second – and somewhat more curious – argument is that the people on the receiving end could not possibly have understood what was written and engraved on coins. Because of this, there would have been no reason for ancient states to put any imagery on coins. Ehrhardt recalls that Sir Ronald Syme commented that the only people that would have been able to read on coins would have been soldiers between 20 and 40 years of age; most of those over forty probably had too feeble eyesight to

¹⁵⁴ Crawford 1983, 57–59.

¹⁵⁵ Crawford 1983, 51f.

¹⁵⁶ Ehrhardt 1984, 42f. Cf. also Wolters 2003, 193–195.

¹⁵⁷ Sutherland 1986, 86f.

¹⁵⁸ Cheung 1998, 60f.

discern the legends and types.¹⁵⁹ Jones further argued that the Latin legends would have meant nothing to the majority of the inhabitants of the Roman empire, and that those to whom it may have done so were indifferent. Similar views were expressed by Crawford.¹⁶⁰

There are a number of arguments against this view. Sutherland maintained that even if the language on the coins was not understood, the iconography featured on the coin, or the imperial portrait, could not so easily be misinterpreted.¹⁶¹ Further, it has been argued that those recipients that were most important – including the higher strata in the cities and the soldiers – actually were literate.¹⁶²

On a more general note, the main tenor of both these arguments, that no ancient sources explicitly state that ancient coins could function as a language of images and that they therefore did not do so, represents a dead end. As Ehrhardt expresses it, it reveals a belief that, “if something is not attested, it therefore cannot have existed.”¹⁶³ Above all, the ‘ultra-sceptic view’ only takes us back to square 1: we are left with a huge bulk of coin images, and no way of explaining them.

A third – and ultimately more productive – point of criticism is that of the use of the term *propaganda*. Wallace-Hadrill stated that a generation of numismatists in the use of coins had seen the work of a ‘Nazi propaganda machine.’¹⁶⁴ Sutherland retorted that this was “a view from which it (or at any rate the majority of its participants) would certainly wish to be dissociated”;¹⁶⁵ Coinage however, must at least be regarded as “a continuous exercise in self-justification”.¹⁶⁶ Similar views have been adopted by the majority of scholars: Roman coins are not to be understood as newspapers, as ‘the voice of big brother,’ or as a *Regierungsprogramm*; however, it is reasonable to assume that they aim at telling us something about the activities of the government, and at expressing imperial authority.¹⁶⁷ As Meadows and Williams put it in one recent addition to the debate, coinage aimed at reminding the Romans of their rulers, not to persuade them. Echoing a similar earlier suggestion by Ada Cheung, Meadows and Williams propose that coins were intended as ‘monuments in miniature’, erected as a reminder of what the leaders of Roman society had achieved.¹⁶⁸ Other scholars have

¹⁵⁹ Ehrhardt 1984, 47.

¹⁶⁰ Jones 1956, 14f: “Latin legends meant nothing to the eastern half of the empire, where anyone who was literate could read Greek only. ... The educated classes had something better to read than two or three words on a denarius.”

¹⁶¹ Sutherland 1959, 53f.

¹⁶² Ehrhardt 1984, 47; Cf. Howgego 1995, 77 and Wolters 2003, 189f. and 193–195.

¹⁶³ Ehrhardt 1984, 53.

¹⁶⁴ Wallace-Hadrill 1981a, 20: “...a generation of numismatists (the same generation that witnessed the activities of Goebbels in Nazi Germany) saw the work of an imperial propaganda machine.”

¹⁶⁵ Sutherland 1983, 73.

¹⁶⁶ Sutherland 1983, 79. It is understandable that numismatists did not like being accused of seeing a nazi-esque propaganda machine at work; it may seem more curious that they should feel the same aversions against the more harmless pastime of stamp-collectors.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1981a, 36f.

¹⁶⁸ Meadows & Williams 2001, 49: “...the word propaganda has far too many inappropriate and anach-

suggested different terms to characterize this strategy of ‘reminding,’ all more or less influenced by contemporary society – Barbara Levick suggested the use of the term *publicity*; Olivier Hekster in a recent contribution to the debate prefers to regard coin images as ‘brands’.¹⁶⁹

To sum up, it seems justified to assume that there was an intention behind the choice of imagery on Roman imperial coins, and that these intentions could be fully understood, at least by some. The issue whether they actually always *were* fully understood is more uncertain. Undoubtedly, in many cases, they were not. However, this is not reason enough to doubt that choices of imagery were made: they were, as P.J. Casey quite fittingly commented, “telephone messages on a very poor line”.¹⁷⁰

What is said – and by whom?

What, then, is the content of these “telephone messages” – do the coins speak of the reality or of ideals? In earlier research, a rather straightforward approach is evident. As an example, the recurring use of imagery referring to the cavalry on the coins struck for Probus might be interpreted as a reference to the fact that Probus supported his power on the cavalry: there is a causal explanation for the coin-imagery. Another interpretation is that these coins instead aim at *convincing* that Probus was supported by the cavalry; according to this view, the explanation of the coin images should be interpreted as strategic. From this point of view, the coins really only speak of one thing: that the cavalry was *important* under Probus. If he did not actually enjoy its support, in any case Probus was compelled to convince that he had this support. I am rather inclined towards this strategic explanatory mode. Therefore, in the following texts I will as much as possible avoid the assumption that coins indicate which support the soldier-emperors *actually* enjoyed: instead, I will try keeping to one simple notion. This is that the imagery featured on a coin indicates which values and groups were relevant at the time of the striking of that coin.

A fourth important issue is that of who actually ‘made the calls’ – who was responsible for the choice of images. The question is, simply stated, whether the coinage represented the views of the emperors or rather of the persons responsible for the minting. Sutherland early advocated the view that imperial coin types were the result of official interest – otherwise, there would be no reason for their existence.¹⁷¹ However, T.V. Buttrey in an important examination of the coinage of Vespasian concluded that the choices of images were made by the mint-masters. These, further, were

ronistic connotations attached to it. Romans did try concertedly to diffuse facts and ideas about themselves, not however in order to *persuade* an audience of a particular political or ideological viewpoint, but in order to *remind* people of their appearances, of their achievements in war and politics, their virtues and their reknown.” Cf. Cheung 1998, 61.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Levick 1982, 106, and Hekster 2003, 24.

¹⁷⁰ Casey 1994, 12.

¹⁷¹ Sutherland 1959, 52–54; Sutherland restated this view repeatedly; cf. for instance Sutherland 1983, 81. Cf. also Lummel 1991, 103f.

guided by “antiquarian tastes” rather than by concerns for the day-to-day interests of the emperor.¹⁷² Similar views were expressed by Wallace-Hadrill and Crawford, who both suggested that the coins were the outcomes of “mints doing their best for their patron”.¹⁷³

Barbara Levick offered an interesting alternative view to both these positions. Levick suggested that our views of the creation of an imperial language of images must be turned around. Imperial coins, in Levick’s view, do not represent an effort from the emperor to communicate – whether through the mint-masters or not – with his subjects. Rather, they should be understood as an effort from the mint-masters to communicate with the emperor.¹⁷⁴

A problem with this suggestion is that too little is known of how the mints were organized.¹⁷⁵ It has further been argued that coinage cannot only have functioned as mere flattery: there were easier and more direct ways of attaining this.¹⁷⁶ Thus, as it has also recently been pointed out, it should not be assumed that the coins were some kind of *Fürstenspiegel*.¹⁷⁷

Nevertheless, Levick’s view remains attractive; I will return to it. However, most recent additions to the debate suggest that the choices of imagery must have been made in cooperation – as it were, some kind of dialogue – between the emperor and the mints.¹⁷⁸ All types must have been designed to be acceptable to the princeps, since whoever chose the imagery on imperial coins, the results were regarded as official: the emperor gave the coins *auctoritas*.¹⁷⁹ Accordingly – and this is a fundamental point – when an image or a legend did not correspond with the wishes of the princeps, the princeps would correct this: coins that could be misunderstood were recalled, or at least not continued.¹⁸⁰

It should be remembered that the impression one gets of the workings of the imperial mints depends on which period one chooses to analyse. Surely, it is only to be expected that analyses of coinages from the Late Republic, the Augustan age, the age of Vespasian and from later emperors will yield quite different results. One should

¹⁷² Cf. Buttrey 1972, 96.

¹⁷³ Crawford 1983, 59: “In other words, the model I propose is a largely ascending one; of course, an emperor may have issued a general directive to ensure that his coinage represented his ‘personality’ and the model may thus far be a descending one; but the pattern for the most part is surely one of a mint doing its best for its patron.”

¹⁷⁴ Levick 1982, 107: “...the idea of ‘publicity’ should be turned round...types were intended to appeal, not to the public, but to the man whose portrait as a rule occupied the obverse of the coins: they were a public tribute to a great individual.”

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Sutherland 1986, 88f.

¹⁷⁶ Cheung 1998, 53.

¹⁷⁷ Wolters 2003, 187, n. 31.

¹⁷⁸ Wallace-Hadrill 1986, 79: “The *tresviri monetales* were young men at the start of their career, probably appointed by imperial favour, and dependent on imperial favour for future advancement. They knew how to read the signs.” Cf. Sutherland 1983, 21 and Cheung 1998, 58f.

¹⁷⁹ Wallace-Hadrill 1986, 73 and Burnett 1987, 70. For more recent additions to the debate to the same conclusion, cf. Howgego 1995, 70, Ando 2000, 221f, Levick 1999, 45, and Wolters 2003, 185.

¹⁸⁰ Wolters 2003, 188f.

allow for the possibility that in this respect, as in so many others, Roman society was prone to change. The result of this would be different conditions for the production of coinage.

It is somewhat unfortunate that – just as seems to be the case with sculpture and architecture – most scholars have focused on coinage from the early imperial age. This focus is connected with a danger of neglecting the issue of possible developments during the course of the imperial period.¹⁸¹ However, this is only a minor remark. I conclude that the imagery of the Roman imperial coinage presents a possible passage-way to the Roman world:

...there was nothing baffling about coinage. It presents in image and words, in four dimensions, thinking about power within the state and thinking by the very men who were engaged in the struggle for power; they would have been able to say what the types and legends ‘meant’. ... we have the tough, intricate, but possible task of unravelling the elements of the Romans’ thinking.¹⁸²

1.7. Grammar and syntax of a ‘language of coin-images’

I will assume, then, that in the Roman empire, coins could be used to ‘say something about the empire’ and that, at times, they were. Which are the various possibilities and limits for ‘saying something’ in such a compressed medium as the coin?

One thing should at once be made clear: usually, in discussions of whether coins could be regarded as propaganda or not, the reference is usually to the reverse images. Quite often, a few famous coin-types are mentioned repeatedly. For example, it is only to be expected that scholars arguing that coins could have functioned as carriers of messages refer to the famous coins struck after the murder of Caesar with the legend EID MART. One could also refer to the coins featuring the legend IVDAEA CAPTA, which were struck under Vespasian and Titus.¹⁸³ Only a few coins can be interpreted as such direct propaganda; Sutherland referred to such coins as examples of ‘topical coinage’.¹⁸⁴ Similarly, it is to be expected that sceptics have referred to the almost infinitely larger number of more standardized images, such as the imperial ‘virtues’. It should also be stated from the beginning that, possibly with one or two noteworthy exceptions, no coins such as the EID MART-denarii are found in the third century.

However, coins consist of more than their reverse images. They feature obverse and reverse images, consisting of various insignia, and obverse and reverse inscriptions. These features make for virtually endless amounts of combinations of various components: the portrait with its insignia, the reverse image and the titulature. There-

¹⁸¹ A noteworthy exception is presented by the works by R.-Alföldi; cf. R.-Alföldi 2001.

¹⁸² Levick 1999, 58.

¹⁸³ Cf. Crawford 1974, 518, no. 508/3, and *RIC* II, for instance 73f., nos. 489–491 respectively.

¹⁸⁴ Sutherland 1959, 51; for a thorough overview, cf. Wolters 1999, 278–287.

fore, even ‘normal’ or ‘conventional’ coins can be carriers of an imperial language of images, which is more complex than may be assumed initially.

The most important – and most obvious – feature on coins is the obverse portrait. Even if one may ask to which extent the full range of images and symbols on coins were detected and interpreted, the function of this image as a sign of the issuing authority is clearly indicated by extant sources.¹⁸⁵ Of these images, the imperial portrait was the most powerful symbol of authority; furthermore, it was the most common one.¹⁸⁶

The creators of coin portraits seem to have followed the trends established for other forms of art. What makes the coin portraits special is the way that visual triggers, used in other visual media such as monumental sculpture, were adapted for use in a small-scale medium. In this way, with the imperial portraiture, a highly stylized language of images could be created.¹⁸⁷ One noticeable trend is that, throughout the course of the imperial age, coin portraits depicting the emperor tend to focus increasingly on the role of the emperor, rather than himself as a person. This is indicated by an increasing emphasis on the depiction of various signs of imperial authority, such as clothing and attributes. Cathy King discerns four basic types of such ‘portraits focusing on the role of the emperor’: civic, dynastic, military and religious types.¹⁸⁸

Secondly, then, there is the reverse imagery. Not only does the reverse present the possibility of shaping another image, additional to that of the obverse. A further dimension is added to the imagery of the coin by the combination of the images on the two sides of the coin. Crawford, conceding that the image of coin-obverses must have been significant, argued that the imagery of reverses only represented the artistic creativity of individuals, using the blank space.¹⁸⁹ This, as Andrew Wallace-Hadrill replied, would create a “strange imbalance” between an obverse side, loaded with significance, and an ‘empty’ reverse side. Against Crawford, Wallace-Hadrill argued, rightfully, I think, that both obverse and reverse sides represented images of authority, and that both were value-laden. The combination of obverses and reverses needs to be seen as a whole.¹⁹⁰

Wallace-Hadrill suggested some broad themes under which the reverse images could be grouped. A first group is that of what Wallace-Hadrill referred to as the “personal badges” of the ruler. These were above all introduced by Augustus; the badges of Augustus gradually became institutionalized and came to symbolize imperial rule

¹⁸⁵ Wallace-Hadrill 1986, 68.

¹⁸⁶ Wallace-Hadrill 1986, 72f.

¹⁸⁷ King 1999, 127. “Their major contribution – and it was a significant one – was in encoding onto a small-scale medium a set of visual triggers associated with the portrait image, which had the effect of displaying, with economy and immediate impact, the emperor as he wished to be seen.”

¹⁸⁸ King 1999, 131: “In a very real sense the ‘personality’ of the emperor as depicted in this sort of coin portrait becomes of lesser importance than his clothing, his attributes, and his associations, which can stress actual and/or symbolic aspects of imperial power.”

¹⁸⁹ Crawford 1983, 59.

¹⁹⁰ Wallace-Hadrill 1986, 69.

in general. A second group is that of honours, which were ambiguous in the sense that they could be interpreted as tributes to the emperor, as well as advertisements of the success of the emperor. A third group is the very broad one that consists of deities and personifications of virtues. These are much in use in the imagery of Roman coinage. These types of images constitute one of the most important means with which a flexible imperial language of images was created. Gods and goddesses were used to represent ever increasingly abstract values in a highly stylized way. The result was a set of simple ambiguous but expressive images that were extremely versatile.¹⁹¹

A third component is the obverse and reverse legends, i.e. the written text that added increased depth or clarity to the portrait; it “glossed the image”.¹⁹² As Wolters points out, the obverse legend could also have a “*Nachrichtencharakter*”; the imperial titles that made up the legends would represent an overview of the political developments, at home and abroad.¹⁹³ It has also been suggested that the longevity of the coin images would be increased by certain legends, as these could enable later generations to understand the image on the coin.¹⁹⁴

Further, the combination of image and legend – just as the combinations of obverse and reverse images – enabled a wider range of expressions. This is one of the more important assets of coin images. What set Roman coin portraits apart from other types of portraiture was exactly this, that they were normally paired with a name, and more or less detailed titlature.¹⁹⁵ One reason for this may be that images became so complicated and stylized that they necessarily needed to be accompanied by legends. This created a chainreaction between image and legend.¹⁹⁶

A coin featuring a particular combination of one specific legend – or variations of a legend – with one specific motive – or variants thereof – is what I will in the following refer to as a *coin-type*. For the sake of simplicity and clarity, I will refer to coin-types by their legends: for example, a ‘*Virtus Augusti-type*’ is a coin-type featuring the reverse legend VIRTUS AVG, or variants thereof.

The coin-emission as an instrument of analysis

A further dimension to the language of coin-imagery is added by the possibility of adding several coin-types to larger groups of coins that for one reason or other can be assumed to ‘belong together.’ The coin-issue can be said to represent such a group. The issue – or the emission, as it is also referred to – is certainly a most important instrument of analysis. Since the publications of the Roman coinages in the volumes of the *Roman imperial coinage*, it has been recognized that the discerning of emissions

¹⁹¹ Wallace-Hadrill 1986, 76f; cf. Hölscher 1980, 273–279 and Hölscher 1987, 51–53.

¹⁹² Wallace-Hadrill 1986, 74.

¹⁹³ Wolters 1999, 286f.

¹⁹⁴ Cheung 1998, 58.

¹⁹⁵ King 1999, 124.

¹⁹⁶ Hölscher 1980, 279f.

is fundamental to our understanding of Roman coinage. The basic recognition is that coins are not struck continually but in ‘batches.’ Robert Göbl defined these ‘batches’ as the basic units, technically as well as organisationally, of the provision of money for a certain group of receivers. An emission implies an amount of various obverse and reverse image types. This, in its turn, implies a choice of certain images for the emission. An emission may thus be regarded as a ‘basic programme.’¹⁹⁷

In practise, there are several reasons why such a ‘basic programme’ may not have been particularly effective. One such reason is that coins are known to have been in circulation for quite some time, in some cases more than one hundred years.¹⁹⁸ This means that, in some cases, there would have been much older coins on the market, and that a new emission of coins would soon enough become ‘diluted’, and mixed up with older coins. The ordinary Roman would have had no chance of acquiring as many coins from the same issue as was needed to discern any programme. In a recent important addition to the debate, Reinhard Wolters argues that the Roman viewer would be able to discern a programme of sorts in the coins given to him or her. However, this would not necessarily have any bearings on programmes intended or conceived by the imperial authority. Accordingly, Wolters argues, it is not possible to assume that any intentions of communication were connected with the emissions of coins.¹⁹⁹

A number of objections can be raised against this argument. Undoubtedly, in many cases, a new emission of coins would not be noticed. Still, this would not necessarily imply that Roman authorities neglected the opportunity to create coin-series characterized by a common *Leitmotif*.

A second, more important objection is that Wolter’s argument is based on another of his claims. This is that during the Julio-Claudian age, the fact that coins were struck intermittently must imply that payments were done in old coins.²⁰⁰ The fact that coins were struck intermittently does not imply that there were large quantities of old coins in circulation; indeed, at least some cases are known where there was instead a shortage of coins. The frequent copying of asses struck for Claudius may be a sign of this.²⁰¹ Sometimes, older coins were withdrawn.²⁰² However, still more important is that this result only really can be valid for the Julio-Claudian age. There is nothing to say that this was the normal way to bring coins into circulation.

It seems reasonable to assume that substantial numbers of coins were brought into circulation in connection with *congiaria* or *donativa*, i.e. ceremonial events where

¹⁹⁷ Göbl 2000, 41f.

¹⁹⁸ One drastic example is that of the large issue of denarii struck for the legions of Mark Antony before the battle of Actium. Coins from this issue are known to have remained in circulation until the third century; cf. Jones 1990, 165.

¹⁹⁹ Wolters 2003, 199f: “Emissionen und ihre Programme sind nur für uns rekonstruierbar, sie waren es nicht für die Mehrheit der Zeitgenossen.”

²⁰⁰ Cf. Wolters 1999, 243.

²⁰¹ Cf. Sutherland 1974, 158.

²⁰² Howgego 1995, 71.

gifts of coins were handed out to the Roman people or to the soldiers.²⁰³ Estiot argues that in the third century, all gold coins were struck for donatives.²⁰⁴ Further, it seems not too far-fetched to assume that emperors and their magistrates would take the opportunity of donatives to emit new coins. These, then, might feature some kind of message referring to the emperor who was handing out the money. The initial recipient of these coins – the recipient who always mattered the most – would then have had the chance of discerning a theme uniting the new coins that he or she had just received.

General themes in Roman Imperial coin-imagery

The risk that old and new coins would sooner or later inevitably be mixed need not have presented a problem. Most coin imagery was conceived in a way so that it could also adhere to broader themes, which would always be ‘relevant’. All such themes primarily refer to the emperor himself. It has already been argued that the most important message of the coin was that of the issuing authority. The overwhelming power of the emperor could be expressed in manifold ways.²⁰⁵ More specifically, various groups of images refer to the various aspects of imperial rule. One key theme is that of the emperor and his special relationship with the divine. Already in the Republic, it had become common by statesmen to pursue their claims to power by referring to lineage from a certain god. In the imperial age, it became common under various emperors to present certain gods as special ‘protection gods’. In the later empire, these were very frequently presented as the *comites* or *conservatores* of the emperor. Further, it also became popular to express imperial authority by depicting the emperors with divine attributes, ‘lent’ from various gods.²⁰⁶

If the emperor could claim backing from the gods, this meant that his family also enjoyed divine support; a further common theme on images became the family members of a ruling dynasty. Depicting them could also be a way of indicating valid succession. However, valid succession could also be illustrated by way of references to other ways of receiving acknowledged power. For this purpose, the personification of *providentia* was handy; with this, it could be shown that the emperor had received his power by the foresight of the gods. This could also for instance be illustrated in the way that the emperor received a globe, the sign of authority, from a god.²⁰⁷

One very prominent theme is that of various military aspects of imperial rule. This is linked to the relations between the emperor and the gods inasmuch as victory is one of the most precious gifts of the gods to the emperor; it is a sign that the emperor

²⁰³ Cf. Jones 1990, 66 and 103 respectively.

²⁰⁴ Cf Estiot 1999a, 51f.

²⁰⁵ Crawford 1983, 58; cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1986, 72.

²⁰⁶ Howgego 1995, 78f. For a more thorough treatment of the topic, cf. R.Alföldi 1999, 42–60.

²⁰⁷ Howgego 1995, 80–82; cf. R.Alföldi 1999, 62–67 and Wolters 1999, 273f.

is worthy of rule.²⁰⁸ Military images can be very general, and very specific; they can refer to certain victories or triumphs, or to certain groups or units in the army;²⁰⁹ the images created for such references can very well be characterized as ‘badges’ in the sense of Wallace-Hadrill.

As one final broad group of group of images, one may characterize that referring to the relationship between the emperor and *Roma Aeterna*.²¹⁰ The respect and *pietas* that was expected of the emperor towards the Roman state can be expressed through the depiction of the emperor performing various rituals,²¹¹ or with the depiction of the objects used in the rituals themselves; these objects then function as *pars pro toto*.²¹² Further, more explicit references to the workings for the *res publica* can be made. One could make general references to ceremonies such as *largitiones*, that is the handing out of gifts of money to the plebs urbana. One could also make more specific references, for instance to buildings that were constructed.²¹³ A special category is that of what Sutherland referred to as “topical coins”, that is coin images referring to unique events – that are identifiable as such – such as tax deductions for cities that have suffered from earthquakes. These all referred to a theme which could be characterizes as ‘the benevolent rule of Rome’.²¹⁴

To sum up, the coin seems to be a medium well suited to the expression of a language of power. The coins represent an ideal medium for the creation of *simple* and *abstract* images. In Roman coinage, there is enough room for *ambiguous* and *universal* images; a limited number of images are *combined* in a rather limited way, and as these coins were struck in endless amounts, these images were *repeated*. Finally, it can be assumed that these were *visible*, at least enough visible to have been taken notice of. All these contributed to making the coin one of the most powerful media for communication between emperor and subjects.

1.8. Crossing boundaries: chronological scope of the thesis

Before presenting an overview of the actual numismatic material that will be studied in this work, I should comment on the chronological scope of the thesis. The chronological limits I have set define which coins will be relevant to the study.²¹⁵

As indicated at the outset, it is often customary to regard the age of the soldier-emperors as the period of *circa* 50 years spanning the period from the death of Severus

²⁰⁸ R.Alföldi 1999, 83–86; cf. Fears 1977, 44f.

²⁰⁹ For overviews of this topic, cf. Wolters 1999, 274f and R.Alföldi 1999, 90–97.

²¹⁰ Mannsperger 1974, 925–928; Howgego 1995, 83.

²¹¹ R.Alföldi 1999, 117–120.

²¹² As a comparison Östenberg examines how spoils and weapons became symbols of victory in triumphs; cf. Östenberg 2003, 19–29. Cf. also Zanker 1987, 92f.

²¹³ Wolters 1999, 273–277 and R.Alföldi 1999, 125–131

²¹⁴ Wolters 1999, 280–284 and Howgego 1995, 84–86.

²¹⁵ For a more detailed chronology of the second half of the third century, cf. Kienast 1996, 214–279.

Alexander in 235, to the proclamation of Diocletian in 284. This period of some 50 years can, in turn, be divided into shorter phases. In the period of some 25 years following the death of the last emperor of the Severan dynasty, internal tensions and external threats resulted in a number of short-lived emperors rapidly succeeding one another. Above all, in the east, the Sasanid kingdom, which was to become the arch-enemy of the Roman empire, rose to power. An important event in this period is the 1000th anniversary of the birth of Rome, which was celebrated in 248, under the reign of Philippus Arabs. One effect of the tensions was the persecutions of Christians that followed the sacrificial edicts issued under the emperor Decius in 249–251.²¹⁶

In the decade following 260, however, the empire all but collapsed. The defeat and capture of the emperor Valerian by the Sasanid king Shapur was followed by a number of usurpations and rebellions. The effect was that the empire was, in reality, divided. The nucleus of the empire was ruled from the city of Rome by the emperor Gallienus. However, in Gaul, the military officer Postumus was proclaimed emperor in 260; he subsequently ruled in Gaul independently. In the east, the city of Palmyra also adopted a more autonomous policy under the leadership of Odaenathus. To make things worse, the inflation escalated frantically and the silver value of the antoninian collapsed.²¹⁷

The joint reign of Valerian and Gallienus, and the sole reign of Gallienus, are by far the longest of any rules during this period. They are curious for a number of reasons. One such reason is that the art of the period features a distinct style of its own; not unfittingly, the age has sometimes been referred to as the ‘Gallienic renaissance’.²¹⁸ The ‘Gallienic age’ can therefore be regarded as an episode of its own in the age of the soldier-emperors.

In 268, however, Gallienus was murdered and a military officer by the name of Claudius was proclaimed emperor. The new emperor managed to deal invading Goths a crushing defeat at Naïssus on the Danube frontier in 269; for this victory, he was awarded the honorary title *Gothicus*. After only two years, however, Claudius Gothicus succumbed to plague and was succeeded first by Quintillus and then by Aurelian. The reign of this emperor was marked by a number of significant events. The construction of walls protecting the city of Rome began. The unity of the empire was restored: Palmyra was defeated in two campaigns in 272–273. After this, the usurpers of Gaul were also defeated. These victories were celebrated with a triumph in Rome in 274, whereby a famous temple dedicated to Sol was also inaugurated.²¹⁹

Despite the military successes, Aurelian was murdered in 275. A period of some confusion – the interregnum mentioned in the prologue – followed, after which Tacitus was proclaimed emperor. He immediately prepared renewed campaigns against

²¹⁶ For an overview, cf. Drinkwater 2005, 28–39.

²¹⁷ Cf. Drinkwater 2005, 44–48; for a more detailed account of this period, cf. de Blois 1976, 1–22.

²¹⁸ Cf. Mathew 1943, 65.

²¹⁹ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 35.5–7; SHA *Divus Aurelianus* 39.2. For an overview of the reigns of Claudius Gothicus and Aurelian, cf. Drinkwater 2005, 48–53. For a more detailed overview of the reign of Aurelian, cf. Estiot 2004, 7–25.

the east, but died in the spring of 276, after only some 6 months in office. In his stead, Florian was proclaimed emperor in Asia Minor; his claims to the purple were accepted by the major part of the empire. However, in the east, he was challenged as a military officer by the name of Probus was also proclaimed emperor. During the following confrontation between Florian and Probus, the former was killed by his own troops, who then acclaimed Probus as emperor. This happened sometime in the autumn of 276.²²⁰

The reign of Probus was characterized by continued – and successful – fighting on the northern and eastern frontiers of the empire. The victories of Probus were celebrated with a triumph in Rome; this probably took place towards the end of 281. However, despite these successes, Probus was murdered by his own troops in 282.²²¹ As successor, a certain Carus was proclaimed emperor. He assumed power together with his two grown-up sons, Carinus and Numerian. Carus and Numerian immediately set out on a campaign to the east, where Carus died in Ktesiphon in 283. The circumstances of his death were apparently unclear; sources suggest disease or lightning. Numerian then remained in the east, but returned to the west the following year. However, he too died *en route* under mysterious circumstances.²²²

After the death of Numerian, Carinus became sole emperor. In the autumn of 285, he met and defeated the forces of Diocletian, who had been proclaimed emperor towards the end of 284. Despite this victory, Carinus was killed by his own soldiers; these then instead acclaimed Diocletian as emperor. One of the first actions of Diocletian as emperor was to take Maximian into office as colleague; this military officer was proclaimed co-emperor of Diocletian on the first of April 286.²²³

For the rest of the 280s and much of the 290s, Maximian would be much occupied with persistent military conflicts in the west. In Britain, the military officer Carausius was proclaimed emperor sometime in 286–288. A naval expedition sent by Maximian to deal with this problem towards the end of the 280s ended in a disaster: the usurpation in Britain was not finally dealt with until 296–297, when Allectus, the successor of Carausius, was defeated by the troops of Constantius Chlorus and killed. It could be noted that this happened some years *after* the creation of the first tetrarchy in 293.²²⁴ For the first ten years of the reign of Diocletian, then, his reign did not differ much from those of the previous soldier-emperors.

In this thesis, the period from 260 to *c.* 295 will be studied; for the sake of simplicity, I will henceforth refer to this period as ‘the age of the later soldier-emperors.’ There are several reasons for the choice of this period. During the 260s, certain military reforms were undertaken, in order to adapt the empire to the new and more

²²⁰ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 36.1–37.2; SHA *Tacitus* 14; cf. Drinkwater 2005, 53f. For a more detailed treatment of this period, cf. Estiot 2004, 25–36. For the reign of Florian, cf. also Sauer 1998.

²²¹ Cf. Drinkwater 2005, 54–57; for a detailed account of the reign of Probus, cf. Kreucher 2003, 126–186.

²²² SHA *Carus Carinus et Numerianus* 8.1–5 and 12.1–2; cf. Drinkwater 2005, 57.

²²³ Cf. Drinkwater 2005, 57f; Bowman 2005, 68f.

²²⁴ For an overview of this period, cf. Bowman 2005, 70–80.

immediate threats. Although the actual nature of these reforms is much debated, one of the main effects seems to have been an ever increased importance of the troops – above all cavalry units – for the imperial power. Another effect seems to have been that the army gained a more direct influence on society than before (cf. further chap. 3). As the focus of this thesis is the communication between the emperor, the army and civilian society, this seems like a convenient point to start. It lies close at hand to investigate whether this development led to a changed tenor in the dialogue between the emperor and the army.

Another logical departure point would be an investigation of to which extent the emergence of the successful usurpations in the early 260s shape imperial visual language and self-images. As mentioned, these usurpations are not finally dealt with until 296–297. This was at a time when the first tetrarchy – and the novel experiment in Roman imperial power that this implied – was already in power, as it had been proclaimed on the 1st of March 293. In 294, this was followed by a coinage reform. New, large bronze coins, the so-called *folles*, were introduced.²²⁵ The years around 295, then, brought with them drastic changes to the empire, more so than 284. In the period of 35 years between 260 and 295, the empire experienced a phase of turmoil and sometimes drastic development. The imagery on Roman Imperial coinage also reached a point of variedness never seen before or after. This is valid for the coins struck in the city of Rome as well as for those struck by various usurpers, which provides for interesting comparisons.

The more general aim of this chronological scope is to depart from the chronological limits often set to the age of the soldier-emperors, and to study perspectives connecting the age of the soldier-emperors and the age of the tetrarchy. In this way, I hope to be able to break free from traditional views of the third century. Rather, I would want to regard the latter half of the third century as a period of continuous development in the later Roman empire, and as a period pointing towards ‘late antiquity.’

1.9. Patchwork: research on third century coinages

Our understanding of the patterns of coinage to a great extent depends on coin finds. One problematic issue concerning these finds is that the extant material is very extensive, but at the same time patchy and uneven. A large number of coin finds from the period from c. 260 to 295 have been made in what was then the Western Roman empire. Accordingly, many important discoveries depend on coin finds made in Britain, France and Germany. This is due to a wide range of circumstances. Such include thorough archaeological investigations, both methodological investigations of known Roman sites and investigations for instance in connection with roadworks. The circumstances also include amateurs searching for coin treasure with metal detectors and legislations that encourage these ‘coin hunters’ to report their finds to the

²²⁵ Cf. Bowman 2005, 74–77.

government.²²⁶ A further result of this is that coin finds from these countries are excellently published.²²⁷ The publication of some of the largest finds from Western Europe has been of decisive importance for the studies of third century coinage. Such include the large finds from Cunetio, Normanby and La Venèra.²²⁸ Smaller finds can also prove to be very important, such as the gold find from the Mediterranean Sea off Corsica.²²⁹

As for the eastern parts of the empire, the material is worse, due to circumstances as unfavourable as they are favourable in the present Western Europe. Obviously, in the present Middle East the situation is not least much affected by political conditions. The result is that single finds, such as the one from Nahr Ibrahim in Syria, can prove to be exceedingly important.²³⁰

These are circumstances that should be kept in mind as we, for instance, discuss issues of 'Romanisation;' the evidence simply produces a much more vivid image of the Western provinces. It may be repeated that the concept of Romanisation as it was conceived by Greg Woolf was based on archaeological records from Gaul, and that finds from other parts of the empire – and not least Eastern provinces – can yield different results.

Coins found obviously represent only a part of the total number of coins produced. Postulating numbers of coins struck at various occasions and using the results in studying ancient history has long been a much-liked method in numismatics. The method would be relevant to the scope of this study: obviously, if a coin-type featuring certain imagery can be demonstrated to have been struck in large quantities, one may assume that this imagery likewise became widespread. Michael Crawford suggested that the total amounts of coins struck during the Roman republic could be postulated through counting the dies used for striking the coins and assuming each die had been used for a number of about 30 000 coins.²³¹ This method became much in vogue but was sharply criticized in the beginning of the nineties by T. V. Buttrey.²³² Suffice it here to establish that the calculation of coin numbers remains a speculative method. Even if it were not, as far as the coinage of the later third century is concerned, it would be extremely difficult – if not impossible – due to the patchy evidence. Moreover, as far as this study

²²⁶ Great Britain introduced a Treasure Act in 1996. By this act, it became easier to classify hoards of ancient coins as treasure. It also became mandatory to report hoards of base-metal coins; this had not been obligatory before the introduction of the Treasure Act. As a result of the Act, the number of coin finds that were reported was effectively doubled; see Abdy, Leins & Williams (eds.) 2002, 7. Even so, illegal collecting of ancient coins remains a problem.

²²⁷ For the publication of Roman coin finds from Great Britain, cf. the series *Coin Hoards from Roman Britain* (London 1979–); from France, *Trésors monétaires* (Paris 1979–); from Germany, *Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Deutschland* (Berlin 1960–).

²²⁸ For the coin find from Cunetio, cf. Besly & Bland 1983; for the find from Normanby, cf. Bland & Burnett 1988 and for that from La Venera, cf. Estiot 1987, *eadem* 1995, Giard 1995 and Gricourt 2000.

²²⁹ Cf. Huvelin & Lafaurie 1980.

²³⁰ Pink 1963, 16–18.

²³¹ Crawford 1974, 694.

²³² Buttrey 1993, *idem* 1994.

is concerned, there is no need for this: the dimensions of certain finds and frequency of certain coin-types give enough indication of the (relative) numbers struck of certain coins and hence of the abundance of certain motives.

The presence of coin finds, and the uncertainties regarding the numbers of coins struck, are connected with the issue of the circulation of coins in antiquity. Certainly, this is of the highest relevance for studies of the value of coins as propaganda. Who would have used the coins and, accordingly, had the chance of viewing the imagery the coins featured? Not surprisingly, this issue has also been rather hotly debated. Rostovtzeff argued that the use of coins in the Roman world was in fact limited; Heichelheim, on the other hand, assumed that the Roman empire was highly monetized.²³³ The views of Rostovtzeff were later supported by Crawford.²³⁴ Next, in 1980, following the important studies of Finley, in an article that was to become much debated, Keith Hopkins postulated a widespread circulation and use of coins in the Roman world.²³⁵ *Contra* this, Richard Duncan Jones proposed a ‘minimalist’ view, arguing that coins were struck primarily as payment for legions, were sent to the legions and thereafter circulated locally, primarily in cities.²³⁶ As a reaction, Christopher Howgego has sought to strike a middle way between the two opposite models, arguing that coin circulation at least to some extent must have featured wider patterns.²³⁷ I will assume that, at the very least, coins circulated in and around cities, and wherever military units were present. As far as the issues discussed in this study are concerned, these environments are of the highest relevance.

The publications

An impressive number of publications of coins from the later third century have been reached in the last decades. The only catalogue of general reference that covers the whole period is still volume V of the *Roman imperial coinage*, by Percy Webb. This volume has since then been commonly regarded as by far the least satisfactory of the *RIC*-volumes. It suffers from a number of errors, lacunae and misreadings, and was severely criticized already upon publication. So immediate was apparently the criticism that Webb already in volume V.2, published a few years after volume V.1, felt obliged to counter some of the criticism the first volume had been met by.²³⁸ However, Metcalf has recently pointed out that the attributions of coins to different mints in the *RIC* V “have worn surprisingly well”²³⁹ – it should be commented that such attributions are not always obvious. Frequently, mint-marks indicate where a coin has been struck. However, when such marks are lacking, attribution has to be done by other criteria,

²³³ Rostovtzeff 1926, 169–172, and Heichelheim 1938, 682–685 respectively.

²³⁴ Crawford 1970, 40.

²³⁵ Hopkins 1980; Hopkins since responded to criticism and restated his opinions in Hopkins 2002.

²³⁶ Duncan-Jones 1990, 45–47; cf. also Duncan-Jones 1994, 176–179.

²³⁷ Howgego 1992, 21f. and 30; cf. Howgego 1994, 10–16 and 20f.

²³⁸ *RIC* V.2, viif.

²³⁹ Metcalf 2005, 742.

such as the style of the imagery on the coins. For the aims of this study, it is important to note that some attributions of coins to certain mints remain hypothetical.

After the *RIC*, the single most important project as far as third century coinage is concerned is the ‘*Aufbau*-project’, initiated by the *Wiener Schule* in the 1930s under the supervision of Karl Pink. This project aimed at establishing the structures – the *Aufbau* – of the coinages of the third century with the coin-emission as the basic principle of organisation.²⁴⁰ This project was apparently fuelled by a desire to create *Ordnung* in a discipline too much hampered by antiquarian tastes.²⁴¹ The project has produced impressive, if uneven studies. Above all, sometimes the desire of the Viennese school to attain order and symmetry led to overly ambitious reconstructions of the patterns of coinage. Perhaps the most notorious attempt is the reconstruction by Georg Elmer, in an article in *Bonner Jahrbücher* 1941, of the coinages of the emperors of Gaul. One will note that, of the more than 800 coin-types listed by Elmer, there are actually quite a few of which no specimen has been preserved. However, these types are still assumed by Elmer to have existed, as they would have fit into his patterns of reconstructed coin-emissions. The project of the Viennese school culminated in the works on by Robert Göbl, one of Pink’s pupils.²⁴² The works of Göbl represent an exceedingly thorough and ambitious undertaking. However, the tables that constitute the core of Göbl’s work are characterized by an ambition to present all relevant information into one single sheet. This is admirable. Still, the result is a pattern that is somewhat bewildering and difficult to understand even for the professional numismatist.²⁴³

The work of the Viennese school was not brought to a conclusion. Guido Bruck, another of Pink’s associates and pupils, was to have reconstructed the *Aufbau* of the coinages of Tacitus and Florian. This work was cut short by Bruck’s untimely death, leaving his unpublished doctoral thesis as the only result.²⁴⁴ More recent efforts have amended this. The result is that the coinages struck for the later soldier-emperors are fairly well covered. There is, however, an imbalance in the material.

²⁴⁰ Cf. Pink 1933 and following *Aufbau*-articles.

²⁴¹ The introduction to the first *Aufbau*-article is quite significant for the aims of Pink (1933, 17): “Es ist bekannt, daß kein Werk der wissenschaftlichen Numismatik so viel geschadet hat als Cohens médailles impériales. Als Materialsammlung ist es unter Anwendung der von mir unten angegebenen Vorsichtsmaßregeln wertvoll, als Münzkunde hat es der Bequemlichkeit und Gedankenarmut Tür und Tor geöffnet, die Wirkung des Hauptwerkes der Numismatik, der *doctrina nummorum*, stark geschwächt und das Sammeln antiker Münzen wieder zur ‘Münzbelustigung,’ etwa in der Art des Briefmarkensammelns herabgedrückt.” Pink refers to the works of Henry Cohen originally published from 1859 to 1868, which is still much in use in antiquarian circles. The *Doctrina nummorum veterum* of Joseph Hilarius Eckhel from 1792–98 represents one of the first scientific approach to numismatics; cf. further Arnold 1992, 6f.

²⁴² Göbl 1993 and *idem* 2000.

²⁴³ Metcalf (2005, 742) characterized the work of Göbl as “...encumbered by an almost impossibly complicated system of numbering which has rendered it, if not useless, at least unused as a work of reference.”

²⁴⁴ Bruck 1948.

The coinages of Valerian and Gallienus (253–260) and from the sole reign of Gallienus (260–268) are well catered for. The coins from La Venèra have been published by Giard. A general synthesis of the coinages struck for Valerian, Gallienus and the members of their family, and also dealing with the coins of the usurpers Regalianus, Macrianus and Quietus was made by Göbl and published posthumously in 2000.²⁴⁵

The coinages of the emperors of Gaul have been the focus of much interest. This is not least because the coins struck for the emperors of Gaul are very varied. They are also often of a remarkably high artistic quality, frequently surpassing that of the coins struck in the city of Rome.²⁴⁶ The coins struck for Claudius Gothicus and Quintillus are less easily studied, as there is, to my knowledge, as of yet no general study over these coinages. Pink and his disciples did not undertake a reworking of the *Aufbau* of the coins struck for these two emperors. An early article by András Alföldi on the coins struck for Claudius Gothicus at the mint of Siscia remains valuable.²⁴⁷ The most substantial contribution is the above-mentioned publication by Giard, which includes the coins struck for Claudius Gothicus and Quintillus from La Venèra. However, as a whole, the most valuable works on these coinages to date is the series of articles by Huvelin and the recent article on the mint of Cyzicus by Gysen.²⁴⁸

The coins struck for Aurelian, however, has been very well published, as it has been the focus of interest of two most noted scholars. Göbl first published a monograph on Aurelian in 1993. This was followed by the catalogue by Estiot of the coins struck for Aurelian from La Venèra in 1995.²⁴⁹ The analyses of Göbl and Estiot differ on some important points. Nevertheless, the consequence is that the coins struck for Aurelian are very well published.

For Tacitus and Florian, the state of publication was not nearly as thorough, until only recently. This was regrettable, as these are perhaps the two most complex reigns under this age. For quite some time, the unpublished dissertation of Bruck remained the most substantial publication of the coins of these emperors. To this, two articles by Alföldi and Weder, and the studies of the coins from Lugdunum (Lyon) by Bastien, were added.²⁵⁰ An important step towards a much more complete picture was taken by Estiot with the publication of the coins of Tacitus and Florian from La Venèra. In 1999, an important synthesis by Estiot on the gold coinage under Aurelian, Tacitus and Florian was published. However, all these earlier works have been supplanted by

²⁴⁵ Göbl 2000.

²⁴⁶ The study by Elmer has already been mentioned; to this should be added the analysis of the bronze coins of Postumus by Bastien, and of the gold coins of the Gallic usurpers by Schulte; cf. Bastien 1967 and Schulte 1983. Gilljam also dedicated a short monography to the coins of the usurper Laelianus; cf. Gilljam 1982. The publications of the finds from Cunetio and Normanby have also contributed greatly to an understanding of the coinages of the emperors of Gaul.

²⁴⁷ Alföldi 1935–36.

²⁴⁸ The most important articles by Huvelin in this respect are Huvelin 1984, *eadem* 1986, *eadem* 1988 and *eadem* 1990; cf. also Gysen 1999 and Ganschow 2005. Again, the publications of the finds from Cunetio and Normanby have proven to be very important.

²⁴⁹ Göbl 1993 and Estiot 1995.

²⁵⁰ Bruck 1948, Alföldi 1976, Bastien 1976 and Weder 1981.

the publication by Estiot of the coins struck for Aurelian, Tacitus and Florian from the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* in 2004.

Sadly, the case for Probus is quite different. The coinage struck under Probus is the most complex of all coinages from this age. Above all, the imagery on the coins struck for Probus is by far the most varied. Obviously, this is also the reason why a thorough study is still lacking: the material is simply too large and intricate. The main point of reference is still the *Aufbau*-article by Pink from 1949. This is one of the less satisfactory of his works. Pink commented that in the case of Probus, he would have wanted to make a more thorough investigation, but that this would have made the investigation too extensive.²⁵¹ This is quite understandable, but is also exactly what makes the article less valuable than it might have been. The coins struck for Probus in Lugdunum have been investigated by Bastien; further, the coinage of Probus has been the subject of a vast number of articles.²⁵²

The coinage of Carus and his family are almost as complex as that of Probus. However, in the case of Carus, the situation is much better. The main points of reference, again, are the *Aufbau*-articles of Pink; fortunately, these are superior to the article on Probus. The work of Bastien on the coins from Lugdunum is, again, of great value. The most important study is the publication from 2000 by Gricourt of the coins of Carus, his family, Diocletian and Maximian from La Venèra.²⁵³

This is also a very valuable work as far as the coinage early in the reign of Diocletian and Maximian is concerned. As the last coin from La Venèra is from 287 and the find contains no coins that can be attributed to the easternmost mints of the empire, the coinages of the dyarchs remain a problem. Therefore, for the reigns of Diocletian and Maximian, the single most important volume is the work of Bastien on the coins from Lugdunum²⁵⁴; however, for the coinages from mints other than Lugdunum after 287 and for coins struck for the whole reign at eastern mints, one has to resort to the *RIC* V.2.

Regrettably, although a large number of articles – and a number of monographs that discuss numismatical evidence – have been published, a thorough study on the coins of the British usurpers is still lacking; undoubtedly, there is still much that is uncertain in this field.²⁵⁵

²⁵¹ Pink 1949, 13: “Gerne hätte ich für den Spezialfall des Probus manches hier beigelegt, das zum besseren Verständnis nötig wäre. Aber die leidige Raumfrage verbietet es.”

²⁵² Bastien 1976; more important articles include Gysen 2000, Estiot & Gysen 2004 and Estiot 2006. Further, the monography of Kaczanowicz (Kaczanowicz 2003; originally published in 1997) contains some discussion of numismatic material. The impressive internet site *Coins of Probus* (<http://probvs.net/probvs/>) also deserves mentioning. Publications on the coins of Probus from La Venèra and from the Bibliothèque Nationale are apparently in preparation; cf. Metcalf 2005, 741. At the moment of writing this, neither has to my knowledge been published.

²⁵³ Pink 1961, *idem* 1963 and Gricourt 2000.

²⁵⁴ Bastien 1972.

²⁵⁵ Important studies of the coinages of the British usurpers include Huvelin 1985a, Casey 1994 and Williams 2004.

'Greek imperials' and medallions

Some concluding remarks should be made on the question of empiric material. First, it is important to consider how Roman provincial coinage will be approached and used. These coins represent an enormous field of research in their own right due to the vast number of cities that struck provincial coins. Still, bringing Roman provincial coinage to bear on the policies of the later soldier-emperors presents some problems.

Firstly, the sheer mass of coins means that major publications are still not adequate. The impressive publication series *Roman provincial coinage* aims at providing an equivalent to the *Roman imperial coinage*-series.²⁵⁶ The student, however, still needs to use the various volumes of the *Sylloge nummorum Graecorum* that may lie around. Secondly, the coining of Roman provincial coinage rapidly dwindles in the 260s, finally ceasing in 275, under the reign of Tacitus.²⁵⁷ Studying themes of imperial propaganda that occur throughout the period of c. 260 to 295 is therefore not possible with this material. Thirdly, Roman provincial coins were minted for and by the cities, rather than by imperial authority; one may assume that they express the views and propaganda of the Greek cities rather than official imperial rhetorics.²⁵⁸

Some importance should, however, be attributed to the analysis of medallions. These must be regarded as a medium of visual propaganda *par excellence*, as they were most likely to have been intended as gifts. Consequently, the incentive for striking propaganda on medals must have been even greater than on coins.²⁵⁹ All topics that are found on coins are also found on medals. The motives, however, are reproduced on a – literally – larger scale; the medallions are more meticulously handicrafted, and generally feature more detailed and expressive motives. One problem connected with the studying of medals is that the works of reference are quite old. The most important catalogue is still that of Gneccchi; the synthesis by Toynbee also remains very valuable.²⁶⁰ Still, this does not present that much of a problem – it is likely that the number of known medals has not risen, as has the number of known coin-types.

It should be underlined that the bulk of material available to the numismatist is ever increasing. One of the reasons for this is that more ancient coins appear on the market all the time. The notion that the world of numismatics is characterized by such close ties with the commercial world of private collectors and auction houses may seem strange to an outsider. Actually, this relationship has old roots. Ancient coins were already early much appreciated as antiquities; it was largely around such private

²⁵⁶ *Roman provincial coinage*, by A. M. Burnett, M. Amandry & P. P. Ripollès (London & Paris 1992–); The most recent publication in this series is Spoerri-Butcher 2006. Cf. also *Roman provincial coinage online* (<http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/>). An important study of the coin-imagery of provincial coinages from Greek cities which also deserves mentioning is that of Harl; cf. Harl 1987.

²⁵⁷ Howgego 1995, 139; cf. Harl 1987, 11 and 107. It should be noted that the mint of Alexandria is an exception to this; cf. Jones 1990, 11f.

²⁵⁸ Harl 1987, 21f.

²⁵⁹ Toynbee 1944, 15.

²⁶⁰ Cf. Gneccchi I–III and Toynbee 1944.

collections that numismatics began to develop.²⁶¹ In modern numismatics, private collectors and collections play a role as vital as ever. Much of the most recent research on ancient coins can therefore frequently be found in the catalogues of various auction houses and on trading sites on the internet; in particular, I have found the catalogues produced by the *Compagnie Générale de Bourse* to be of great help.²⁶²

Very little remains to be said before the reader is thrown into the actual investigation. This consists of four main chapters, focusing on the ‘corners of the triangle’ in the model discussed in chapter 1.4. First, chapters 2 and 3 will focus on the emperor and military matters. Chapter 2 addresses the issue in a more general sense, while chapter 3 focuses on the relations between the emperor and various groups of the army. Chapter 4 will focus on the relation between the emperor and civilian society. A key issue in this chapter is the importance of the city of Rome, and the development of provincial centres of power. Chapter 5, then, will examine the emperor and his claims to power with reference to divinity and dynastic claims.

I have opted to begin with a chapter in which I examine the military aspects of the images of the soldier-emperors. This would seem as a logical starting point. A row of events connected to the military stand at the beginning of the period on which I have chosen to focus. In general, discussions of military matters always seem to lie closest at hand during this ‘age of the soldier-emperors.’

²⁶¹ For an introduction to this topic, cf. Clain-Stefanelli 1965.

²⁶² Cf. the resources on Roman coins on the internet site of the *Compagnie Générale de Bourse*, <http://www.cgb.fr/monnaies/rome/index.html>.

2. *VIRTUS AUGUSTI*: THE EMPEROR GOES TO WAR

2.1. *The year 260: year zero in the Roman empire*

It was the year 260, and Rome was at war. The army, under the leadership of the emperor Valerian, marched to the eastern provinces of the Roman empire. Their objective was a major campaign against the arch-enemy of Rome: the Sassanid king Shapur. Disaster struck. Apparently, while negotiating with the enemy, the emperor was taken prisoner.²⁶³ According to literary sources, Valerian spent the rest of his life as a personal foot-slave to the Sassanid king. Orosius tells us that Shapur used to step on the back of the Roman ex-emperor every time he mounted his horse.²⁶⁴ It is even told that after Valerian's death, his corpse was flayed, the skin dyed red and exposed as a royal trophy of war.²⁶⁵ Shapur further related his triumphs against the Romans in a description of his campaigns, entitled *Res gestae divi Saporis*.²⁶⁶

The defeat unleashed a number of conflicts around the empire. Several usurpations followed. In the Balkan provinces, Ingenuus and Regalianus had already rebelled, and in the east, the officer T. Fulvius Macrianus was proclaimed emperor. Assisted by a man referred to by the name of Ballista, Macrianus assumed the purple together with his sons, Macrianus iunior and Quietus. To further aggravate the situation, on the Rhine, Postumus the governor of Germania inferior usurped the purple.²⁶⁷ Gallienus, son and co-emperor of Valerian had at the time left his young son Saloninus in Colonia Agrippinensis: Saloninus was handed over to Postumus and executed.²⁶⁸ There were further usurpations. Little known figures such as Piso, Mussius Aemilianus, Memor and Trebellianus are recorded by the sources.²⁶⁹ All of this happened while Gallienus occupied his time with various pursuits such as building castles out of apples, serving

²⁶³ Drinkwater 2005, 42.

²⁶⁴ Oros. 7.22.3–4; cf. Sommer 2004, 49.

²⁶⁵ Lactant. *De mort. Pers.* 5.2–3, 6; cf. Badel & Béranger 1998, 40.

²⁶⁶ Cf. Badel & Béranger 1998, 38f.

²⁶⁷ Drinkwater 2005, 43–45.

²⁶⁸ Cf. König 1981, 43–51 for an account of these events.

²⁶⁹ Cf. Kienast 1996, 226–230.

green figs out of season and sprinkling his hair with gold-dust, if we are to believe the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*.²⁷⁰

The events of the year 260 represented the culmination of a situation that had gradually become worse for some decades. From the 240s onwards, barbarian tribes repeatedly crossed the *limes* and went plundering the empire. More and more, the attention of the emperors was occupied by these problems. A number of emperors perished in these increasingly desperate struggles. The resistance against various enemies of the Roman order were to be a constant feature of the Roman empire for the rest of the century.²⁷¹

In such dark times, it is not surprising that military themes were the most notable features of imperial visual language. After 260, coins and medallions were struck depicting Gallienus in a number of lavish military guises.²⁷² In the coinages of the emperors succeeding him, a veritable plethora of various military stage props are depicted.

Military imagery was always a distinct feature of Roman coin-imagery. Was the military imagery on the coins of the soldier-emperors *different* from imagery that had been used previously? Or was it essentially the same, only more expressive? In this chapter, I will attempt to provide an overview over the uses of imagery referring to war in the coinage of the soldier-emperors. A number of expressive portrait-types are characteristical of the coins struck for the soldier-emperors from 260 onwards. These portrait-types feature explicitly warlike imagery, which refers to the *virtus* of the emperor. This imagery will be introduced in the first part of the chapter. Further, I will examine the occasions on which these portrait-types are used on coins. In the second part of the chapter, I will investigate how the portrait-types could be used in combination with other coin-images. These other images also referred to war and warfare in various ways.

The patterns of coinage, as I will suggest, indicate that a limited number of highly expressive war-images were used. These images were frequently used simultaneously. Firstly, the war-images could be combined on one single coin. These coins are eloquent testimonies to the possibilities of creating the surprisingly dense images offered by the coin. Secondly, the war-images could also be used on different coins struck for the same occasion.

Therefore, I suggest that the coin-images of the later soldier-emperors should be understood as 'monuments in miniature' (cf. chap. 1.6). As a conclusion, I suggest that the reason for the treatments of war-images in the later half of the third century is that during this period, coins were adapted to function as such 'monuments.' Coin-imagery was modified to express a visual language of imperial authority normally expressed in monumental arts such as triumphal arches and imperial statuary. The constant stress to which the imperial authority was subjected in this age must be an important reason

²⁷⁰ SHA *Gallieni* duo 16.

²⁷¹ For a comprehensible narrative, cf. Sommer 2004, 29–70.

²⁷² de Blois 1976, 111f.

for this. The expression of imperial authority was more urgent than ever, but means and time was lacking. The coins presented an easy way to remedy this.

2.2. *The image of military power*

Various types of military portraits represent one of the major categories of imperial portraits occurring on Roman imperial coinage. The most common of these portraits is that normally described as depicting the emperor ‘cuirassed and draped.’ This portrait-type first makes its appearance on bronze coins struck for Nero.²⁷³

The ‘drapery’ depicted in this portrait-type is the so-called *paludamentum*. This was a military cloak that would cover one shoulder. It would be kept together by a fibula on the other shoulder. Portraits depicting the emperor wearing a *paludamentum* normally depict the *paludamentum* worn over a cuirass (fig. 1). However, the emperor can also be depicted wearing the *paludamentum* with nothing else underneath. This is a pose usually referred to as ‘heroic nudity.’ Most often the *paludamentum* is recognizable through the fibula.²⁷⁴

The *paludamentum* was a garment very much associated with military campaigns. A number of literary sources attest that it should not be worn in the city of Rome.²⁷⁵ Increasingly, the *paludamentum* replaced the *toga* as sign of imperial magistracy. In late antiquity, it was still an explicit and forceful military garment. In this period, the *paludamentum* also symbolised the ‘field’ as opposed to the ‘city’ as it was worn by members of the civil administration on duty outside the capital.²⁷⁶ When worn by the emperor, the *paludamentum* also carried a distinct symbolic significance. The imperial *paludamentum* was purple and very much to be regarded as a sign of imperial power. Accordingly, when a usurper donned the purple it was regarded as a claim to imperial power.²⁷⁷

The portrait-type which depicts the emperor wearing a cuirass and a *paludamentum* is extremely frequent in the second century and in the first half of the third century. From the 270s and onwards, however, its use is diminished in favour of various depictions of the emperor wearing only a cuirass.²⁷⁸ This type of depiction first appears in the coinage of Antoninus Pius. Towards the later third century, this bust became increasingly intricate, as the cuirass was combined with various other pieces of iconography.²⁷⁹

The most widely known type of cuirass, and the type mostly associated with the Roman military, is the so-called muscular cuirass. This was of Greek origin. However,

²⁷³ King 1999, 133

²⁷⁴ Cf. the french term *nudité héroïque*; cf. Bastien I, 238–245

²⁷⁵ Bastien I, 235f.

²⁷⁶ Smith 2002, 142f.

²⁷⁷ Bastien I, 237.

²⁷⁸ Bastien I, 266f.

²⁷⁹ King 1999, 133.

it was early adopted by Roman military commanders. It was usually worn by the emperor, although it could be worn by others as well. For instance, it was in use among soldiers of the Praetorian Guard and among officers.²⁸⁰ However, in the coinages of the soldier-emperors, depictions of various mail-shirts and segmented armours are more common (*fig. 3*).²⁸¹ A depiction of the emperor wearing such armour becomes the most common way of imperial portraiture from the early coinages of Aurelian (cf. further chap. 2.3).

Two characteristic iconographic elements that become more common in the age of the soldier emperors are the depictions of the *aegis* and the *gorgoneion*. These were objects deriving from Greek mythology. The *aegis* was a goat's fleece, bordered by serpents. It could be worn by Zeus, but also by Athena, who used it as a piece of armour. Depictions of the *aegis* on coins first occur in Hellenistic coinages, then in coins struck under the Roman republic. It first occurred on Roman imperial coinage at the time of Nero;²⁸² Bastien concludes that when depicted on portraits of the Roman emperors, the *aegis* should be understood as a reference to the powers given to the emperor by Jupiter.²⁸³

Usually, the *aegis* is depicted as a woolly fleece surrounded by snakes. In the middle of this, there is a *gorgoneion*. This *aegis* is carried over the left shoulder.²⁸⁴ In rare cases, coin-portraits depicting the emperor from the left feature an *aegis*. In such cases, the *aegis* resembles a shield of somewhat irregular outline, slung over the shoulder turned 'towards' the spectator. This image first occurs on coins struck for Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus and Commodus. In the age of the soldier-emperors, the image occurs on coins struck for Tacitus and Probus (*fig. 5*). However, the more common coin-portraits depicting the emperor from the right feature aegides much more often. In these cases, the *aegis* can be rendered as a piece of fleece with a *gorgoneion* worn over the breast and over the shoulder. The *aegis* can also be rendered only as a corner of a fleece, which the emperor is wearing on the shoulder turned 'away' from the viewer. From the early coinages of Aurelian and onwards, such depictions of the *aegis* are frequent (*fig. 6*).²⁸⁵

Small aegides and gorgoneia are frequently featured on cuirasses depicted on coins. *Gorgoneia* were likely to actually have been featured on imperial cuirasses;²⁸⁶ therefore, as Bastien points out, it is only logical that *gorgoneia* appear on coinage as well. They need not only have been metaphorical symbols.²⁸⁷ Depictions of *gorgoneia* are very common in the early empire, for instance on the bronze coinage of Nero. From the age of Hadrian to the early third century, such depictions only occur randomly. From the

²⁸⁰ Bastien I, 260; cf. Robinson 1975, 147–152.

²⁸¹ Bastien I, 262–265.

²⁸² Bastien II, 343–346.

²⁸³ Bastien II, 361–363.

²⁸⁴ Bastien I, 269f; cf. Gnechchi II, 118, no. 30 and Tav. 120, nos. 8–9.

²⁸⁵ Bastien II, 347–349.

²⁸⁶ Alföldi 1935, 121; cf. Robinson 1975, 152.

²⁸⁷ Bastien II, 363.

coinages of Valerian and Gallienus, renderings of *gorgoneia* become more common. From the coinage struck for Claudius Gothicus onwards, they are frequent, above all in the coinage of Probus. Depictions of aegides and *gorgoneia* become less common in the coinages of the dyarchs and in the subsequent Constantinian period.²⁸⁸

Portraits of the emperor wearing a cuirass frequently include one or more additional military attribute. Attributes with which the emperor can be depicted include a spear, an imperial sceptre, a shield and a helmet. These depictions can be varied in a number of ways.²⁸⁹ One version is that consisting of a portrait depicting the emperor with cuirass, spear and shield. Sometimes, to these pieces of equipment are added a helmet or other attributes that will be described below (*fig. 8*). Such portraits are some of the most characteristic images of imperial authority that are created for the soldier-emperors.

This portrait-type first occurs on coins struck for Caracalla. This imagery would seem to derive from eastern sources. The images created for Caracalla constituted a clear reference to depictions of Alexander;²⁹⁰ further, it appears as if the Greek cities in their coinages precede Roman mints in depicting the emperor in this manner.²⁹¹ This portrait-type reappears in the coinages of Severus Alexander and Gordian III. It then disappears but reappears in the coinage of Valerian; from then onwards, the portrait-type is regularly used from the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus onwards. Above all, it is extremely common in the coinage of Probus. After the reign of Probus, the portrait-type becomes less common.²⁹²

The spear can be depicted in two ways, pointing forward (*fig. 10*) or held over the shoulder (*fig. 8–9*). The second manner of depiction presents us with a problem. Since the point frequently cannot be seen, it may be difficult to tell whether it is a spear or a long sceptre that is depicted. In the *RIC* and other Anglo-Saxon numismatic studies, the first interpretation seems to be decidedly favoured. French studies, apparently, in some cases tend towards the second interpretation.²⁹³

This is not necessarily a problem, as the two objects symbolically seem to be closely related. The spear in Roman iconography acquired a significance that lay close to the Greek royal sceptre, as a potent symbol of authority. More specifically, it became a symbol of power *extra pomerium*, that is of war and conquest.²⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the assumption that it is a spear which is depicted adds a more explicit military character to the portrait. Considering the other pieces of equipment the spear – or long sceptre

²⁸⁸ For an overview, cf. Bastien II, 350–357.

²⁸⁹ King 1999, 133.

²⁹⁰ Salzmann 2001, 179f.

²⁹¹ Bastien I, 269f.

²⁹² Cf. Delbrück 1940, 25f.

²⁹³ For example, the descriptions of various portrait-types in Bland & Burnett 1988, 9, and Estiot 2004, 275 may be compared.

²⁹⁴ Alföldi 1959, 2–4.

– is usually combined with, I assume that it is a spear that is depicted; Grandvallet, in a recent study, comes to a similar conclusion.²⁹⁵

Can any specific symbolic content be suggested for these two distinct manners of depicting the spear? Bastien suggests that the image depicting a spear pointing forward has a more ‘aggressive character’ and that it corresponds to military campaigns.²⁹⁶ The spear which is held on the shoulder has been suggested to have more peaceful connotations. Delbrück argued that the image of the emperor holding a spear in this way was a depiction of the emperor returning from a campaign.²⁹⁷ Obviously, in both cases the association with military campaigns lies close at hand. For the sake of convenience, I will henceforth refer to portraits depicting the emperor with spear, shield and – sometimes – a helmet as ‘campaign-portraits.’

Bastien is inclined to assume that the depiction of a shield does not correspond to an actual defensive weapon that may have been used by the emperor. According to Bastien, it is likely that this is an object with a primarily cosmic or metaphysical value.²⁹⁸ I see no reason to exclude the idea that the depiction of a shield corresponds to weapons that may actually have been used by the emperor. The Roman cavalry was equipped with shields, mostly oval but sometimes round;²⁹⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus relates that during the campaigns against the Parthians in 363, the Roman troops were on one occasion ambushed. Julian then ‘caught up a shield in the confusion,’ and personally took part in the battle.³⁰⁰ In my view, the interpretations need not be mutually exclusive.

Shields can be depicted in manifold ways. They can be either bare or, as is more often the case, ornate. The ornamentation can consist of geometric patterns (*fig. 8*) or symbols. The symbol most frequently occurring is the *gorgoneion* (*fig. 31*). More rarely, other more elaborate motifs can be depicted (*fig. 9*).³⁰¹ Such motifs can be incredibly detailed, considering the small area available. They must be regarded as one of the most interesting innovations of coin-imagery in the later half of the third century.

Along with the depictions of shields and spears, the depictions of the emperor wearing a helmet is an important novelty in the coinages of the soldier-emperors. In Roman imperial coinage, the helmet is introduced on the portraits of coins struck for Postumus and Gallienus and dated to the early 260s. Helmets are depicted on the coin-images struck for these emperors simultaneously. This has sometimes been characterized as a kind of ‘propaganda-war’ fought between these two emperors.³⁰²

²⁹⁵ Grandvallet 2006b, 143f.

²⁹⁶ Bastien II, 442.

²⁹⁷ Delbrück 1940, 25; cf. Bastien II, 442.

²⁹⁸ Bastien II, 462f.; cf. L’Orange 1953, 97–101.

²⁹⁹ Junkelmann 1992, 176–179.

³⁰⁰ Amm. Marc. 25.3.3: “Qua concitus clade, oblitus loricae, scuto inter tumultum adrepto, properans ultimis ferre suppetias, revocatur alio metu...”

³⁰¹ Cf. Bastien II, 477–487 for an overview of motives used.

³⁰² Kraft 1978, 140; cf. Bastien I, 203.

As the spear and the shield, helmets only occur sparingly in the coin-imagery of most soldier-emperors. Probus and Postumus are two exceptions (*fig. 8–9 and fig. 28 respectively*).³⁰³ For Kraft, this piece of iconography was a clear reference to military might, and to the *virtus* of the emperor.³⁰⁴ Leander-Touati argues that the depictions of helmets mark a context, which is that of ‘field duty.’³⁰⁵ Bastien, however, argues that the helmet should be interpreted as a symbol of imperial authority in a wider sense.³⁰⁶ Again, I think that these interpretations are not mutually exclusive.

To sum up, the *aegis*, *gorgoneion*, helmet, spear and shield might all be interpreted in a metaphorical sense. On one level, they were symbols of the divine dimensions of imperial authority. Furthermore, I think that the *aegis*, due to its associations with Athena, in a more specific sense could symbolize the martial qualities of the emperor. On another level, cuirasses with *gorgoneia*, helmets, spears and shields were also most likely to have been real objects, which could have been carried by the emperor. Therefore, it seems likely that these military objects also refer to the importance of personal presence of the emperor on the battlefield. This suggests that imperial authority under the soldier-emperors had become more closely connected to military prowess, and hence to military arms.

Such an understanding of imperial authority would represent an important development. Flaig argues that earlier, under the principate, the Roman emperors were never required to fight themselves. The first emperor to fight as a soldier was Maximinus Thrax; indeed, he was the first ‘soldier-emperor.’³⁰⁷ This is not to say that emperors, even before Maximinus Thrax, could not be *depicted* as personally present in war. Leander Touati observed that the main iconographic theme of the great Trajanic frieze is the depiction of the personal presence, and participation, of Trajan in battle.³⁰⁸ However, by the second half of the third century, the visual reference of this aspect of imperial authority seems to have become a more important part of imperial legitimation. In the following sub-chapter, I will examine the patterns of such visual references in the coinages of the later soldier-emperors.

³⁰³ Cf. Bastien I, 204–208 for an overview.

³⁰⁴ Cf. Kraft 1978, 138f.

³⁰⁵ Leander Touati 1987, 52: “Like the landscape ... the helmets, or rather the absence of them, mark a context; that of the City. Soldiers are generally bareheaded when depicted inside the City, an artistic convention which might have been borrowed from reality.”

³⁰⁶ Bastien I, 203.

³⁰⁷ Flaig 1992, 162: “Der Kaiser mußte nicht seine siebringende Eigenschaften mit eigenem Arm manifestieren. Indem er Kaiser war und die Götter ihm beistanden, verbürgte er den Sieg, sogar abwesend.”

³⁰⁸ Cf. Leander Touati 1987, 29.

2.3. *The virtue of a soldier-emperor...*

Indeed, not even in battle and arms could the enemy find fault with him, but he showed them that he is able not only to conquer them by his intelligence and his other cultivation, but also by courage.³⁰⁹

In his panegyric to the emperor, the anonymous orator Pseudo-Aristides asserts that courage in battle is one of the characteristics that made the emperor worthy of rule. The key to the purpose of depicting the emperor as personally present in warfare lies in this. The *virtus* of the emperor was of fundamental importance for all doings of the emperor. What were the ‘virtues’? Their origins are somewhat obscure. Mattingly argued that they probably formed an old feature of Roman religion. Their status may have been comparable to that of the *numina*, i.e. personal qualities that could be attached to a person.³¹⁰

The imperial virtues most often referred to and most obviously associable with the emperor are those mentioned by Augustus in his *Res gestae*; here, Augustus states that the state awarded him a golden shield, a *clipeus virtutis*, because of the four virtues he had shown in actions for the state: *virtus*, *clementia*, *iustitia* and *pietas*.³¹¹ This is not to say that these formed a fixed cadre considered to be relevant to the emperor - if, indeed, at all such a cadre existed. An array of various virtues is known from Roman imperial imagery.³¹²

Nevertheless, of all these virtues, *virtus* – military valour and capacity – was one of the most enduring. It adorned emperors from Augustus to Constantine I; *virtus* was the key to that which made them worthy of rule.³¹³ However, *virtus* did not only signify powers in connection with war but also the courage displayed in any state action or exploits on behalf of the state.³¹⁴

The intimacy with which the personal valour of the emperor and military success were associated during this age is demonstrated by a fragment from the *Continuator Dionis*. This fragment records an incident from the conflicts between Postumus and Gallienus. According to the *Continuator Dionis*, Gallienus offered Postumus that they solve their different opinions through single combat, thus avoiding unnecessary bloodshed.³¹⁵

The importance of the personal courage of the emperors is also acclaimed in the *Panegyrici Latini*. One of these was addressed by Mamertinus to Maximian in 289, at a time when the emperor was preparing a naval expedition to deal with the

³⁰⁹ Aristid. *Or.* 35.35: “καὶ μὴν οὐδ’ ἐν ταῖς μάχαις καὶ τοῖς ὅπλοις αὐτὸν ἐμέμψαντο οἱ πολέμιοι, ἀλλ’ ἐπέδειξεν αὐτοῖς οὐ μόνον συνέσει καὶ τῇ ἄλλῃ παιδείᾳ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀνδρείᾳ κρατεῖν αὐτῶν δυνάμενος.”

³¹⁰ Mattingly 1937, 106f.

³¹¹ *Res gestae divi Augusti* 34; cf. Charlesworth 1937, 111 and Wallace-Hadrill 1981b, 300.

³¹² Wallace-Hadrill 1981b, 307.

³¹³ Charlesworth 1937, 112; cf. Fears 1981b, 748.

³¹⁴ Norena 2001, 159.

³¹⁵ de Blois 1976, 113; cf. FHG IV, 194f, frag. 6.

British usurper Carausius.³¹⁶ In the panegyric, Mamertinus comments on past campaigns against Gallic tribes. Mamertinus emphasises how Maximian for the crushing of these tribes on purpose used only a small force. This was so Maximian could display his personal courage:

For what need of a multitude when you yourself took part in the fray, when you yourself did battle in each spot and over the whole of the battlefield, and you yourself ran to counter the foe everywhere, both where he resisted, and where he gave way and fled...³¹⁷

The campaign of Maximian against the British usurpers, however, seems to have failed. Another panegyric, addressed to Constantius Chlorus, intimates that the naval expedition was a failure.³¹⁸ This panegyric was probably held in 297 and relates a naval expedition in 296, through which Britain was finally conquered.³¹⁹ Also in this speech, the crucial importance of the personal presence of the emperor in battle for the outcome is acclaimed:

But you, invincible Caesar, were the commander in chief of that whole expedition of yours, both of the actual sailing and the fighting itself, not only by right of your imperium but by your personal participation, and by the example of your firm resolve were its instigator and driving force.³²⁰

As these examples demonstrate, an increased importance was attached to the *virtus* of the emperor during the course of the third century. Considering the turbulent political situation, it is of course only to be expected.³²¹ This suggests an explanation for the increased focus on the *virtus* of the emperor in the language of images of the soldier emperors.

Adaptions: images of imperial virtus from Gallienus to Claudius Gothicus

An examination of the circumstances under which the portrait-types discussed above are used in the coinages of the soldier-emperors indicates that they are repeatedly struck in connection with military campaigns. This pattern is evident in the coinage of Gallienus. Campaign-portraits are introduced on coins attributed to several coin-series struck in the years following 260. After the severe setbacks for imperial authority in this year, it became more important than ever for Gallienus to stress his military capacity.

³¹⁶ Nixon & Rodgers (eds.) 1994, 42f.

³¹⁷ Pan. Lat. 10.5.3: "Quid enim opus erat multitudine cum ipse pugnares, ipse omnibus locis totaque acie dimicares, ipse hosti undique et qua resisteret et qua cederet et qua fugeret occurreres..."

³¹⁸ Pan. Lat. 8.12; cf. Nixon & Rodgers (eds.) 1994, 130, n. 45 and 46.

³¹⁹ Nixon & Rodgers (eds.) 1994, 105f.

³²⁰ Pan. Lat. 8.14.3: "At enim tu, Caesar inuicte, omnis istius et nauigationis et belli non modo pro imperii iure praeceptor sed rebus ipsis et exemplo constantiae tuae hortator atque impulsor fuisti."

³²¹ Cf. R.-Alföldi 1999, 105.

Campaign-portraits occur on numerous coins. In the city of Rome, several versions of the portrait-type were used in the same coin-series, which is considered by Göbl to have been struck in 260. Coins depict Gallienus holding a spear forward, or holding it over the shoulder.³²² Other coins depict the emperor with or without a helmet.³²³ One coin depicts Gallienus with a *gorgoneion* on his shield; the reverse of this particular coin, additionally, features the legend *VIRTVS AVG*.³²⁴ A few coins emphasises the associations between the campaign-portrait and *Virtus Augusti* by featuring reverses with the legend *VIRTVS AVG*, and a portrait of the emperor wearing a helmet.³²⁵ As Göbl remarked, the contrast between this coin-series and the last ones struck for Valerian and Gallienus is astounding.³²⁶ References to the *virtus* of Gallienus also occur later during his sole reign. A medallion which cannot be dated precisely, but which is also attributed to the city of Rome by Göbl, features a campaign-portrait on the obverse and a reverse with the legend *VIRTVS AVGVSTORVM*. The motif depicts the emperor seated, a personification of *virtus* standing in front of him. Behind him, a *Victoria* is standing.³²⁷

Campaign-portraits also occur on coins attributed to other mints of the empire. Coins attributed to the mint of Mediolanum feature campaign-portraits and reverses referring to *Virtus Augusti*.³²⁸ This mint had been established in the last years of the 250s (*for the establishment of this mint and other provincial mints, cf. further chap. 4.5–6; cf. also fig. 47*). Other coins refer more specifically to *Virtus Gallieni Augusti*: one such coin-type depicts the emperor on a horse, armed with a spear and riding down an enemy (*cf. fig. 11*); another type depicts the emperor, armed with a spear and a shield, stepping on a defeated enemy.³²⁹ However, coins referring to the military capacity were not only struck for Gallienus in the 260s. As already noted, on coins struck for Postumus, a distinct ‘helmet-portrait’ (*fig. 28*) is introduced; furthermore, bronze coins struck for Postumus and dated to 261 feature the obverse legend *VIRTVS POSTVMI AVG*.³³⁰

After a number of usurpations around 260 had been suppressed, a few years of comparative quiet followed. As Postumus held the western parts of the empire and the east was secured by Odaenathus of Palmyra, Gallienus could concentrate on holding the ‘central empire.’ This comprised Italy, North Africa, Egypt, the Danubian provinces and Greece. This situation did not last long. In 266, Goths from the Black Sea

³²² For instance Göbl 2000, nos. 340p and 366t respectively.

³²³ For instance Göbl 2000, nos. 344q and 348aa respectively.

³²⁴ Göbl 2000, no. 423b.

³²⁵ Göbl 2000, nos. 408k, 408n and 408p.

³²⁶ Göbl 2000, 88: “Insgesamt ist diese erste Alleinmission des Gallienus nach Konzept wie Ausführung der Organisation gerade nach der Katastrophe des Valerianus und im Kontrast zu den letzten Phasen der Samtherrschaft bemerkenswert. Hier ist mit sicherem Griff auch ein neuer Stil gefunden worden.”

³²⁷ Göbl 2000, no. 767d.

³²⁸ Göbl 2000, nos. 963f and 965s.

³²⁹ Göbl 2000, nos. 966u and 968z respectively.

³³⁰ Bastien 1967, 153, nos. 108, 111 and 112.

attacked Asia Minor and ravaged Greece. In 268, Aureolus, a military commander, rebelled in Mediolanum. Aureolus was defeated; however, in the autumn of 268, Gallienus was murdered by a conspiracy. This conspiracy gave the purple to general Claudius. The new emperor immediately had to counter Germanic raiders threatening northern Italy.³³¹

The coins struck for this emperor display an aggressive policy. Campaign-portraits are used for two coins attributed to the earliest series of coins struck in the city of Rome. They are also used on some coins attributed to the earliest series struck in Mediolanum; Huvelin estimates these coins to have been struck in acclamation of the liberation of Mediolanum from Aureolus and the acclamation of the new emperor.³³² A campaign-portrait also occurs on a coin-type attributed to the imperial mint of Cyzicus; this mint was established under the reign of Claudius.³³³ More impressive still is a series of heavy gold medallions featuring a portrait of the emperor wearing an *aegis* and a cuirass; on the cuirass is a relief depicting the emperor charging towards the head of a gorgon.³³⁴

Claudius immediately showed his military ability. The Germanic raiders were defeated by Lake Garda;³³⁵ a special series of aurei,³³⁶ in which a number of coins refer to *Virtus Augusti*, is considered by Huvelin to have been struck in celebration of this victory.³³⁷ A number of other coin-types in the coinage of Claudius refer to the imperial *virtus*. One aureus is attributed to Cyzicus: the reverse of this coin depicts the emperor charging on horseback, brandishing a spear. The coin also features the reverse legend VIRTVS CLAVDI AVG. A similar motif is used on antoniniani attributed to the mint in Siscia (*fig. 11*);³³⁸ this was another new imperial mint, which had been established in the first half of the 260s.

In 269, the Roman army defeated the Goths decisively at Naïssus in what is today Serbia; for this victory, Claudius was acclaimed as *Gothicus Maximus*. It is possible that Claudius Gothicus planned to deal with the problems in the east. However, in 270 he died of a plague that broke out in the army. His successor, Quintillus, was accepted as emperor by the senate and the central empire.³³⁹ However, he was challenged and defeated by Aurelian, who had been proclaimed emperor in the city of Sirmium in Illyricum.³⁴⁰

³³¹ Cf. Drinkwater 2005, 45–48.

³³² Huvelin 1980, 112 and 114f, nos. 4–6 (Mediolanum) and nos. 11–13 (Rome).

³³³ Gysen 1999, 31.

³³⁴ Huvelin 1986, 205f, cf. Gnechi I, 9, no. 1 (Claudius Gothicus) and Tav. 3, no. 8.

³³⁵ *Epit. de Caes.* 34.2; cf. Drinkwater 2005, 48.

³³⁶ The aureus was the standard Roman gold coin; cf. Jones 1990, 30f.

³³⁷ Huvelin 1982, 263–269.

³³⁸ *RIC* V.1, 230, no. 227 (Cyzicus); Alföldi 1935/36, 12, no. 12 (Siscia).

³³⁹ Drinkwater 2005, 49f.

³⁴⁰ Cf. Kienast 1996, 234.

Refinements: from Aurelian to Florian

Aurelian was very similar to Claudius in background and career. He had been Claudius Gothicus' colleague in the staff of Gallienus; Aurelian may have been involved in the plot that gave Claudius Gothicus the purple. Again, like Claudius Gothicus, Aurelian immediately had to deal with barbarians threatening Pannonia and northern Italy.³⁴¹ In the early coin-series considered to have been struck for Aurelian, a new portrait-style is introduced. On coins featuring this new style, the emperor is depicted in a scale-armour, often with an *aegis* covering the breast, or over the shoulder.³⁴² This portrait-type, as already mentioned (cf. above, chap. 2.2), is the most common depiction of the emperor in the coinages from Aurelian to Maximian (*fig. 26*).³⁴³ With the introduction of this portrait-type, an image which markedly enhanced the martial qualities of the emperor was presented.

A number of aurei attributed to Siscia and the city of Rome feature reverses referring to *Virtus Augusti*.³⁴⁴ A large gold medallion featuring a campaign-portrait of the emperor is also attributed to the earliest coinage of Aurelian. This medallion, considered to have been struck in Mediolanum, depicts the emperor holding a spear pointing forward. The portrait also features a *gorgoneion* on the shield held by the emperor.³⁴⁵

Aurelian spent the year 271 dealing with the situation in Northern Italy and in the Balkans. In early 272, he set out east, to deal with Palmyra. Its queen Zenobia had already in 270 proclaimed her son Vaballathus co-emperor of Aurelian. Under the leadership of Zenobia, Palmyra, further, had taken control of large parts of Asia Minor. Palmyra now posed a problem which the central empire could no longer ignore.³⁴⁶ Coins attributed to the 'mint of uncertain location' seem to refer most explicitly to the campaigns against Palmyra. This mint seems to have been a temporary field mint, established for these campaigns. One coin-type attributed to this mint depicts the emperor wearing a cuirass with a *gorgoneion*;³⁴⁷ furthermore, a number of coin-types feature campaign-portraits of the emperor. On one of these coin-types, the emperor is depicted with a shield featuring what looks like a battle scene in miniature.³⁴⁸

Coins attributed to the imperial mint at Serdica and dated to coin-series considered to have been struck in 272–273, also feature imagery which may refer to the campaigns against Palmyra.³⁴⁹ At the time, this mint had only recently been opened, as it had been established under Aurelian. A few coins attributed to Serdica feature

³⁴¹ Cf. Drinkwater 2005, 50f.

³⁴² Cf. Estiot 2004, pl. 13, nos. 418–433.

³⁴³ Cf. Delbrück 1940, 24.

³⁴⁴ Estiot 2004, 341 (Siscia) and 286 (Rome).

³⁴⁵ Estiot 2004, 318 and pl. 75, no. 37.

³⁴⁶ Drinkwater 2005, 51f.

³⁴⁷ Estiot 1995, nos. 9216 and 9624.

³⁴⁸ Estiot 2004, 386f and pl. 81, no. 165; cf. also nos. 156, 158–161 and 163–164.

³⁴⁹ Estiot 2004, 98f.

campaign-portraits.³⁵⁰ Furthermore, a novel portrait-type is introduced, depicting the emperor wearing a cuirass, with depictions of various war-motives.³⁵¹

Palmyra was finally defeated in 273. After this, it only remained to deal with Gaul. A campaign was launched in 274, leading to the defeat of Gaul. Early in 275, Aurelian set out again towards the east, possibly for a campaign against the Persians. However, on the way he fell victim to a conspiracy and was murdered. His successor, Tacitus, immediately set out towards the east to deal with the Goths who were raiding Asia Minor.³⁵²

A number of coins struck for the last successful campaigns of Aurelian, attributed to the city of Rome and dated to 273–274, feature campaign-portraits.³⁵³ Most of the earlier coin-imagery, however, is phased out after the victory over Palmyra. It is replaced at all mints, first by coin-types acclaiming Aurelian as *restitutor orbis*, and then by references to *Oriens Augusti* and *Soli Invicto* (cf. chap. 5.4).

The portraits on the coinage struck for Tacitus contrast with the uniform imagery of the later coin-series struck for Aurelian. Furthermore, they seem to refer explicitly to the campaign undertaken by the new emperor. A number of aurei and antoniniani attributed to the initial series of coins struck for Tacitus in the mint of Lugdunum feature campaign-portraits.³⁵⁴ This mint had been re-opened after the recapture of Gaul under Aurelian. Coins featuring campaign-portraits are also attributed to a mint at Ticinum;³⁵⁵ this was a new mint which had been opened in the last years of the reign of Aurelian. Further such coins are attributed to the mint of Siscia. The coin-type attributed to this mint further enhances the *virtus* of the emperor by depicting Tacitus wearing a muscular cuirass with a *gorgoneion*. The shield held by the emperor also features the depiction of a charging rider.³⁵⁶ Estiot argues that all these coin-types were introduced in the coinage struck for the emperor as he passed by the mints on his way to Asia Minor.³⁵⁷

Tacitus was successful in fighting the Goths in Asia Minor. Even so, the emperor appears to have been murdered in Tyana by his own men. This happened around June 276. The praetorian prefect Florian was proclaimed as the successor of Tacitus. He was immediately accepted in Asia Minor and in the west.³⁵⁸ The gold coinage of Florian acclaiming the *virtus* of the emperor in an astounding manner. A series of aurei attributed to Ticinum feature campaign-portrait of the emperor, carrying spear and shield. Additionally, these aurei feature the obverse legend VIRTUS FLORIANI

³⁵⁰ Cf. Estiot 2004, 392–395 and pl. 82, nos. 183 and 187.

³⁵¹ Cf. Estiot 2004, 392–395 and pl. 82, nos. 184 and 195.

³⁵² Drinkwater 2005, 52–54.

³⁵³ Cf. Estiot 2004, 294–299; cf. pl. 73, no. 18 and pl. 74, nos. 19, 20 and 23.

³⁵⁴ Estiot 1999b, 405, nos. 6–7; cf. Estiot 2004, 279.

³⁵⁵ Estiot 2004, 330f. and pl. 91, nos. 358–359 and 361.

³⁵⁶ Estiot 2004, 366f. and pl. 93, no. 408.

³⁵⁷ Cf. Estiot 2004, 81; cf. 94, 104 and 112.

³⁵⁸ Drinkwater 2005, 54.

AVG.³⁵⁹ One coin-type used for this series even features a reverse referring to *Virtus Augusti*.³⁶⁰

It seems likely that this coin-imagery should be interpreted with reference to the insecure position of Florian. It must have been urgent to assure those who had accepted the claims of Florian to the purple of his military capacity. If this was the strategy, it failed: in the east, Probus was also proclaimed emperor. Florian was killed by his own men before his troops and those of Probus had engaged each other.³⁶¹ Under Probus, who retained the purple, portraits referring to the imperial *virtus* are developed in a spectacular way.

Elaborations: the coinage of Probus

In the coinage of Probus, the imagery abounds with military imagery, exalting the military capacity of the emperor. The use of imagery referring to the *virtus* in the coinage of Probus is too prolific to be described in detail. Campaign-portraits are far more common in the coinage of Probus than under any other emperor, and occur in a great number of sub-types.³⁶²

The significance of some of these will be discussed later in this study. For instance, some campaign-portraits of Probus depict the emperor additionally carrying a globe surmounted by a *Victoria*, usually referred to as *victoriola*. Others depict Probus holding a horse by the bridle. Above all, the 'shield-motifs' are developed. The shields carried by the emperor in campaign-portraits usually depict a *gorgoneion* or pictorial reliefs. The latter are often rendered as a simplified pattern of dots.³⁶³ Pink notes that frequently, the shields depict motifs adapted from coin-reverses. One common such motif depicts the emperor charging against enemies on a horse.³⁶⁴ As mentioned above, such shield-motifs also occur under Aurelian and Tacitus.

Furthermore, legends and images referring to the *virtus* of the emperor are combined much more frequently than under previous emperors. The use of the obverse legend VIRTVS PROBI AVG is extremely frequent.³⁶⁵ This legend is repeatedly combined with campaign-portraits.³⁶⁶ Furthermore, as for Florian, some coins are struck for Probus with this legend on the obverse together with campaign-portraits, as well as reverses referring to *Virtus Augusti*.³⁶⁷

³⁵⁹ Estiot 2004, 336 and pl. 98, nos. 507–509.

³⁶⁰ Estiot 1999b, 424f, nos. 6–7.

³⁶¹ Drinkwater 2005, 54.

³⁶² For an introduction, cf. Pink 1949, 17–20; a very recommendable overview of portrait-types on coins struck for Probus can be found at the Internet site *Coins of Probus*: <http://probvs.net/probvs/>

³⁶³ Delbrück 1940, 168.

³⁶⁴ Pink 1949, 19.

³⁶⁵ For instance in Ticinum; cf. Estiot 2006, 218. For an overview of the use of this legend, cf. Pink 1949 (the legend is referred to as no. 4; cf. Pink 1949, 14).

³⁶⁶ For instance in Lugdunum: cf. Bastien 1976, 185–97, nos. 203–204, 209–212, 220–226, 232–237, 242–246 and 256.

³⁶⁷ For example in Lugdunum; cf. Bastien 1976, 197, nos. 259–261.

Similar to Claudius Gothicus and Aurelian, Probus was a soldier from the Balkans. After having prevailed over Florian, Probus moved west to deal with Germanic invasions on the Rhine and Danube frontiers. The years of 277–278 were spent in heavy fighting on the Rhine frontier.³⁶⁸ Pink attributes sizeable coin-series struck at Siscia, Ticinum, Rome and Lugdunum to these years, and to these campaigns.³⁶⁹ In these coin-series, references to the *virtus* of the emperor abound. In Siscia, the reverse legend VIRTVS PROBI AVG is introduced. Furthermore, a medallion featuring the legend VIRT AVGVT (*sic*) NOSTRI is attributed to this mint. This medallion depicts the emperor charging forward, preceded by a soldier and followed by a prisoner.³⁷⁰ In Ticinum, a reverse motif depicting the emperor mounted, armed with a spear and riding down an enemy, is used in a number of versions on coins referring to *Virtus Augusti*.³⁷¹

The years 279–280 were also spent in heavy fighting along the frontiers of the empire. Again, the pressure on the eastern front seems to have grown, and Probus moved to Antioch. In 281, however, he was forced to leave for the Rhine again. There, a military revolt had broken out. By the end of that year, this revolt had been dealt with, and Probus celebrated his victories with a triumph in the city of Rome.³⁷² To this occasion, Pink attributes a spectacular series of coins and medallions. A number of coins and medallions referring to *Virtus Augusti* are attributed to this series.³⁷³ Furthermore, two medallions from this period feature imagery exalting the *virtus* of Probus. The medallions feature campaign-portraits of the emperor; additionally, the emperor is depicted with an *aegis* and a *gorgoneion*. He is holding a shield; upon this, there is a depiction of the emperor charging into battle.³⁷⁴ On these medallions, the campaign-portrait is brought to the peak of its development.

Despite his successes, it is apparent that Probus had made many enemies. This may have been due to his employment of soldiers in agricultural projects; he is also related to have commented that ‘soon there would be no need for soldiers anymore.’³⁷⁵ In the autumn of 282, Probus was murdered by his own soldiers in Sirmium. In his place, the praetorian prefect Carus was proclaimed emperor. He soon proclaimed his two adult sons, Carinus and Numerian, *Caesares*. Before the end of the year, Carus and Numerian had left for the eastern front, while Carinus remained in charge of the northwestern frontiers.³⁷⁶

³⁶⁸ Drinkwater 2005, 54f.

³⁶⁹ Cf. Pink 1949, 47–52 (Siscia); 55f. (Rome); 61–64 (Ticinum). For a detailed analysis of the coin-series of Ticinum, cf. Estiot 2006, 207–247.

³⁷⁰ Pink 1949, 49–51; cf. Gnechchi II, 120, no. 43 and Tav. 121, no. 10.

³⁷¹ Estiot 2006, 215f.

³⁷² Drinkwater 2005, 55f.

³⁷³ Cf. Pink 1949, 58f. for an overview.

³⁷⁴ Pink 1949, 19; cf. Gnechchi II, 117, nos. 18–19 and Tav. 120, nos. 2–3.

³⁷⁵ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 37.3–4; Eutr. 9.17.3; SHA *Probus* 20.

³⁷⁶ Drinkwater 2005, 56f.

From Carus to Maximian

The mint of Lugdunum is the only mint where campaign-portraits are retained on a wider scale for the coinages of Carus, Carinus and Numerian.³⁷⁷ A number of coins featuring such portraits are attributed to a series of coins dated to the closing months of 282. This series is considered to have been struck for the acclamation of Carinus as *Caesar*. Campaign-portraits are used on coins struck for Carus, with the obverse legend VIRTUS CARI AVG; however, such portraits are most numerous on coins struck for Carinus. Bastien suggests that this was to show that Carus was bestowing power on Carinus over the western provinces.³⁷⁸

This may also have been the reason for a coin-type that is considered to have been struck in the autumn of 282 in Siscia. This type features a campaign-portrait of Carinus, with a spear pointing forward. A little later, the obverse legend VIRTUS CARINI AVG is also introduced.³⁷⁹ The coinages of the eastern mints in this period are less well known. Aurei attributed by Pink to Cyzicus and dated to November–December 282 features the reverse legend VIRTUS CARI.³⁸⁰

Campaign-portraits are used again in a coin-series attributed to Lugdunum and dated to the spring of 283. This series is considered to have been struck in celebration of the elevations of Carinus and Numerian to the ranks of *Augusti*.³⁸¹ That spring, Carus conducted successful campaigns against Persia. However, that summer, he died suddenly.³⁸² This left his sons with greater responsibilities. A number of campaign-portraits of Carinus and Numerian occur on coins attributed to Siscia and Lugdunum and dated to the beginning of 284.³⁸³ Gricourt considers the use of this portrait on a medallion, struck for Numerian, to be a reference to campaigns on the eastern frontiers.³⁸⁴

Towards the autumn of 284, clouds began to thicken. In November, Numerian died under mysterious circumstances in Bithynia. After his death, the Dalmatian officer Diocles was proclaimed emperor in Nicomedia. Upon assuming the purple, he took the name L. Domitius Diocletianus. In Pannonia, Iulianus also usurped the purple. The latter was defeated by Carinus in the spring of 285; later that same year, Carinus defeated Diocletian as well. In spite of this, as already noted (cf. chap. 1.8), Carinus was murdered by his own troops, and Diocletian emerged as victor.³⁸⁵

Coin-series attributed by Gricourt to Ticinum and the city of Rome, and dated to November 285 acclaim the *virtus* of the victor. Coins with reverses referring to *Virtus*

³⁷⁷ Bastien I, 206f.

³⁷⁸ Bastien 1976, 24 and 239–242, nos. 481, 484–490, 492–493 and 495–496.

³⁷⁹ Gricourt 2000, 45–47.

³⁸⁰ Pink 1963, 52–53.

³⁸¹ Gricourt 2000, 62; cf. Bastien 1976, 248, nos. 525 and 526.

³⁸² Cf. Kienast 1996, 258.

³⁸³ Gricourt 2000, 52f (Siscia); 64 (Lugdunum). For the latter mint, cf. Bastien 1976, 254–261, nos. 550–586.

³⁸⁴ Gricourt 2000, 53.

³⁸⁵ Cf. Drinkwater 2005, 57f.

Augusti are attributed to both mints, as are other coins featuring campaign-portraits.³⁸⁶ Such portraits are also used on coins attributed to the earliest coin-series struck for Diocletian in Lugdunum.³⁸⁷ On the whole, such depictions of Diocletian are rare; they seem to be more common on coins struck for Maximian. Like Diocletian, he had served in the army under Carus in the east. Maximian was appointed as *Caesar* in 285 and as *Augustus* with Diocletian in the spring of the following year.³⁸⁸ As for Probus, a number of obverse portrait-types, exalting the *virtus* of the emperor, are used on coins struck for Maximian. Some of these will be discussed more closely later in this study.

Coin-series dated to 286 celebrate the *virtus* of the dyarchs. In Rome, the *virtus* of Maximian is proclaimed with a medallion, featuring a campaign-image of the newly acclaimed *Augustus* and the legend VIRTUS MAXIMIANI AVG.³⁸⁹ Further, such portraits occur on coins attributed to Lugdunum and dated to 286–287; Gricourt suggests that this imagery is a reference to campaigns of Maximian in the west. A coin-type featuring the more rare depiction of Maximian holding the club of Hercules over the shoulder is also attributed to this series.³⁹⁰

Another medallion, struck for Maximian, is attributed to a coin-series struck in the city of Rome in January 287 in celebration of a joint consulate of Diocletian and Maximian. The imagery of this medallion once more demonstrates the military capacity of Maximian. The obverse of a medallion features a curious version of the campaign-portrait. Behind the portrait of the emperor, a horse's head is protruding: the emperor is holding the horse by its bridle or reins, in addition to the spear and shield. On the shield held by Maximian on this medallion, the *lupa Romana* and her twins are depicted.³⁹¹ The latter detail adds an interesting dimension to the imagery. A coin-type attributed to Siscia and dated to the winter of 287 also features a campaign-portrait of Maximian, in this case with the spear held forward – possibly this depiction was as reference to coming campaigns against Britain.³⁹² A number of coins struck for Diocletian and Maximian attributed to Lugdunum and dated to the first half of 287 refer to *Virtus Augustorum*;³⁹³ these coins, too, may have been intended as a reference to such campaigns.

The coinage struck in the west of the empire in the closing years of the 280s is characterized by the continuing campaigns against Britain. This is most likely the reason for why campaign-imagery is retained at the mint of Lugdunum, whereas it

³⁸⁶ Gricourt 2000, 69–71 (Ticinum); 81–82 (Rome).

³⁸⁷ Bastien 1972, 114, nos. 3–4.

³⁸⁸ Cf. Bowman 2005, 69.

³⁸⁹ Gricourt 2000, 84f; cf. Gneccchi II, 129, no. 16 and Tav. 127, no. 5.

³⁹⁰ Gricourt 2000, 99f; cf. Bastien 1972, 120–124, nos 29–31, 34–35 and 39.

³⁹¹ The obverse legend reads VIRTUS MAXIMIANI AVG; cf. Gricourt 2000, 88f and Gneccchi II, 129, no. 18 and Tav. 127, no. 6.

³⁹² Gricourt 2000, 96.

³⁹³ Bastien 1972, 137, nos. 108–112 and 141, nos. 132–134.

largely disappears from the rest of the empire.³⁹⁴ A large number of coins, struck for Maximian and attributed by Bastien to a coin-series struck through 287–289, refer to *Virtus Augustorum*. On a number of these coins, this reference is combined with obverse campaign-portraits.³⁹⁵ The campaigns against Britain were brought to a conclusion in the first half of the 290s; however, by then, campaigns-portraits occur very rarely. Bastien attributes only one coin-type featuring such a portrait to the coinage of Lugdunum, dated to 293 onwards.³⁹⁶

2.4. ...that leads to victory

In the words of Rufus Fears, “in victory was the empire founded and through victory was it perpetuated.”³⁹⁷ The symbol of this victory was the personification of *Victoria*. This figure has complex connotations. On the one hand, it could be seen as a divine force in its own right; on the other, *victoria* could be regarded as a gift awarded by the gods to someone because of his *virtus*.³⁹⁸ One way in which the Roman emperors demonstrated their victories was by the assumption of honorary titles, referring to the victory in question, for example *Germanicus* and *Parthicus*. In the imperial age, such titles were regularly added to the official titulature of the emperor.³⁹⁹

The triumph was the most spectacular visual expression of the ‘gift of victory’ in the Roman world;⁴⁰⁰ the most explicit motive depicting this in visual arts is the depiction of the emperor in his triumphal *quadriga*. A *Victoria* stands behind the emperor, holding a wreath over his head. This imagery abounds in Roman art depicting triumphs.⁴⁰¹ In the coinages of the third century, such motifs are subject to some interesting variations. Curiously, honorary titles referring to certain victories are rare in coin-legends. However, a style of depiction that refers to the victoriousness of the emperor is introduced on coins, where the emperor is portrayed holding a *victoriola*, a globe surmounted by a *Victoria*. In this manner, the emperor is depicted as the possessor of victory (*cf. fig. 12*).⁴⁰²

This portrait-type appears regularly on the reverses of coins from the age of the Severans and onwards.⁴⁰³ However, this motif is also developed as a distinct obverse portrait-type. This type first occurs on a medallion struck for Pupienus; it also occurs

³⁹⁴ Bastien 1972, 7.

³⁹⁵ Bastien 1972, 152–160, nos. 191–236; nos. 220 and 223 feature campaign-portraits.

³⁹⁶ Bastien 1972, 203, no. 486 (dated to early 293).

³⁹⁷ Fears 1981b, 737.

³⁹⁸ Hölscher 1967, 175f; *cf.* Fears 1981b, 740–749.

³⁹⁹ *Cf.* Kienast 1996, 40–44, for an overview.

⁴⁰⁰ Fears 1981b, 781f; for an analysis of the various aspects of the triumph, *cf.* Östenberg 2003.

⁴⁰¹ For an introduction to this motif, *cf.* Bieber 1945.

⁴⁰² Alföldy 1935, 37f; *cf.* Hölscher 1967, 31f.

⁴⁰³ *Cf.* Bastien II, 531.

on portraits struck for Gordian III. After the reign of this emperor, it is encountered only very infrequently until the reign of Gallienus.⁴⁰⁴

Victoriae from Gallienus to Florian

Gallienus was acclaimed as *Germanicus*, *Dacicus* and *Persicus*.⁴⁰⁵ The ‘*victoriola*-portrait’ is taken back into use for the consulate of Valerian and Gallienus in 257. Göbl also attributes a medallion with such a portrait to the sole reign of Gallienus.⁴⁰⁶ An interesting pattern is apparent already in the earliest coin-series struck for the sole reign of Gallienus. In the coin-series considered by Göbl to have been struck in the city of Rome in the wake of the events around 260, there are numerous references to *Victoria Augusti* and coins featuring the reverse legend VIC GALL AVG.⁴⁰⁷ Some coins referring to *Victoria Augusti* even feature obverses exalting the *virtus* of the emperor with campaign-portraits.⁴⁰⁸ At the same time as the *virtus* of the emperor is exalted, *victoria* is promised. A rare campaign-portrait of Gallienus features a shield, with the depiction of a trophy.⁴⁰⁹

The pattern evident from these coins, struck for Gallienus, is also apparent on coins struck for Postumus. The latter emperor is known to have been acclaimed as *Germanicus*.⁴¹⁰ References to *Victoria Augusti* on coins only seem to occur early in his reign.⁴¹¹ Two aurei, featuring ‘helmet-portraits’ of Postumus, are struck with a reverse referring to *Victoria Augusti*; Schulte dates these coins to 261 and argues that they were struck to celebrate a successful campaign against Britain.⁴¹² It could also be noted that on the most common ‘helmet-portrait’ used on aurei struck for Postumus, a *biga*, driven by a *Victoria* is depicted on the helmet (fig. 28). This type is later re-used under Probus.⁴¹³ The coinage of Postumus illustrates how urgent it was to demonstrate that a newly proclaimed emperor could deliver *victoria*. This is also evident from the coinages of Postumus’ short-lived successors, Laelianus and Marius: as for the coinage struck for Laelianus, all known antoniniani are struck with reverses referring to *Victoria Augusti*.⁴¹⁴

As already mentioned, Claudius, who succeeded Gallienus, was acclaimed as Gothicus. Acclamations of him as *Germanicus* and *Parthicus* are also known.⁴¹⁵

⁴⁰⁴ Bastien II, 518. Cf. the ‘*Gebetsbüste*’ of Delbrück; cf. Delbrück 1940, 26.

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. Kienast 1996, 219.

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. Göbl 2000, nos. 302g and 775Ai; cf. Delbrück 1940, 100 and 106.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. Göbl 2000, nos. 354–359 and 360–361 respectively.

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. Göbl 2000, nos. 355p, 358l, 358q and 358aa.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. Bastien II, 480 and *idem* III, pl. 104, no. 7.

⁴¹⁰ Cf. Kienast 1996, 243f.

⁴¹¹ Cf. Besly & Bland 1983, 44f.

⁴¹² Schulte 1983, 30 and 75, nos. 10 and 11.

⁴¹³ Cf. Bastien I, 220, and Schulte 1983, 81–98 (series 5 and 6).

⁴¹⁴ Besly & Bland 1983, 61.

⁴¹⁵ Cf. Kienast 1996, 231.

References to the victories of Claudius Gothicus are frequent on the coins struck for this emperor. Coins featuring the reverse legends VICTORIAE GOTHIC and VICTORIA GERMANIC are attributed to Cyzicus. Other coins attributed to the same series refer to *Virtus Augusti*.⁴¹⁶

The victories of Aurelian are reflected in a large number of victory titles; this emperor is known to have been acclaimed as *Germanicus*, *Gothicus*, *Dacicus*, *Parthicus*, *Arabicus*, *Palmyrenicus* and *Carpicus*.⁴¹⁷ Coin-types referring to *Victoria Augusti* are introduced, alongside references to *Virtus Augusti*, in the first coin-series struck for this emperor and attributed to the city of Rome. These coins are dated towards the end of 270. The following year, coin-types referring to *Victoria Augusti* are introduced in Mediolanum and Siscia.⁴¹⁸ Estiot comments that the imagery of these coin-series may have referred to the anticipated victory in the campaigns against the east.⁴¹⁹ Perhaps a coin-series attributed to Serdica was struck with a similar intention. This is the series to which a number of coin-types featuring portraits of the emperor wearing cuirasses with various depictions are attributed. As already noted (cf. chap. 2.3), some of these depict battle scenes. One cuirass, however, depicts Aurelian coronated by two *Victoriae*; another depicts Roma presenting a *victoriola* to Aurelian.⁴²⁰

The most explicit references to the victories of Aurelian occur in coin-series attributed to Siscia and dated to a period from the autumn of 272 to the beginning of 274. A number of rare portrait-types are used for the obverses of the coins attributed to this series. These include campaign-portraits and one type depicting the emperor holding a *victoriola* (fig. 12).⁴²¹ Coins attributed to this series refer to *Victoria Augusti* and *Victoria Partica*; the reverses of these coins depict the emperor, crowned by a *Victoria*.⁴²² The coinage of Aurelian, too, demonstrates how references to the *virtus* of the emperor and its close association with *victoria* can be varied. The most characteristic reference to Aurelian as a victor is the acclamation of this emperor as *restitutor orbis* (cf. chap. 2.8).

For Tacitus, the acclamation as *Gothicus* is known.⁴²³ The coins carrying the most explicit references to his victories are attributed to Ticinum. A medallion attributed to this mint features an obverse portrait depicting Tacitus holding a *victoriola*; this portrait-type is also used on two coin-types used for antoniniani attributed to Ticinum.⁴²⁴ Some of the coin-types featuring obverse campaign-portraits also feature reverses referring to *Victoria Augusti*.⁴²⁵ The reverse legend VICTORIA GOTTHI (*sic*) also

⁴¹⁶ Cf Gysen 1999, 36f.

⁴¹⁷ Cf. Kienast 1996, 235.

⁴¹⁸ Estiot 2004, 286f (Rome); 320–324 (Mediolanum); 348–352 (Siscia).

⁴¹⁹ Cf. Estiot 2004, 72–74.

⁴²⁰ Estiot 2004, 392–395 and pl. 82, nos. 196 and 194 respectively.

⁴²¹ Cf. Estiot 2004, 358f and pl. 79, nos. 122–123 and 125 respectively.

⁴²² Estiot 2004, 356f and pl. 79, no. 120–121.

⁴²³ Cf. Kienast 1996, 250.

⁴²⁴ Estiot 2004, 330 and 334 respectively; cf. also pl. 91, no. 357 and pl. 92, nos. 382 respectively.

⁴²⁵ Cf. Estiot 2004, 331 and 334; cf. pl. 91, nos. 358–359 and pl. 92, no. 383.

occurs on these coins.⁴²⁶ Again, *virtus* and *victoria* are combined. The reverse of a medallion attributed to Ticinum illustrates the associations between *virtus* and *victoria* in an ingenious way: the reverse depicts a *Victoria*, holding a *clipeus virtutis* (cf. chap. 2.3) and a personification of *virtus*, coronating the emperor with a wreath.⁴²⁷

The coin-imagery of Florian reveals another aspect of the imperial victory. Aurei attributed to Serdica and Cyzicus refer to *Victoria Gothica*.⁴²⁸ Otherwise, focus is rather on the ‘general victoriousness of the emperor:’ a number of coins attributed to Ticinum and Serdica refer to *Victoria Perpetua*.⁴²⁹

From Probus to Maximian

Probus, on the other hand, was acclaimed as *Gothicus*, *Germanicus*, *Particus Maximus* and *Persicus*.⁴³⁰ In the coinage struck for Probus, a wide range of expressions of the victoriousness of the emperor are developed. The ‘*victoriola*-portrait’ appears in a number of versions.⁴³¹ Moreover, a number of medallions struck for Probus feature ‘shield-motives’ depicting the emperor and a *Victoria*.⁴³²

Probus’ first years as emperor were spent in intense fighting along the northern frontiers of the empire. As noted, a number of large coin-series, exalting the *virtus* of the emperor, are considered to have been struck for these campaigns (cf. chap. 2.3). A number of coins attributed to the same series celebrate the *Victoria Augusti*. A medallion attributed to Ticinum celebrates the victories with the legend TRIVMFVM GOTTHICVM (*sic*): the reverse depicts Probus riding, crowned by a *Victoria*, a trophy and two prisoners. The obverses of some coins attributed to Ticinum depict Probus holding a *Victoria* or a *victoriola*; another very rare coin-type features a portrait of the emperor holding on to a *victoriola*, spear, shield and a helmet. A laurel-wreath is attached to the helmet. This coin-type also features the obverse legend VIRTVS PROBI AVG.⁴³³ In Siscia, a number of coin-types refer to *Victoria Augusti*, alongside other coin-types referring to *Virtus Probi Augusti*; for one coin-type, the novel reverse legend VICT PROBI AVG NOSTRI is used.⁴³⁴

A similar pattern is evident in the impressive coin-series attributed to the triumph in the *urbs aeterna* in 281/282. The coin-series struck for the celebration of this include a slightly bewildering variety of motifs all celebrating the *virtus* and victoriousness of the emperor. A number of coin-types refer to *Virtus Augusti*, *Virtus Probi Augusti*,

⁴²⁶ Cf. Estiot 2004, 334 and pl. 92, no. 383–384.

⁴²⁷ Estiot 2004, 334 and pl. 92, no. 386.

⁴²⁸ Cf. Estiot 2004 408f (Serdica) and 429 (Cyzicus).

⁴²⁹ Cf. Estiot 2004, 336 (Ticinum) and 408f (Serdica).

⁴³⁰ Kienast 1996, 254.

⁴³¹ Bastien II, 532.

⁴³² Cf. Bastien II, 484 and *idem* III, pl. 119, nos. 1–2.

⁴³³ Estiot 2006, 219–222; pl. 7, nos. 32–34, pl. 8, no. 36 and pl. 9, nos. 44–48, 50 and 51.

⁴³⁴ Pink 1949, 49f.

Victoria Augusti and *Victoria Germanica*.⁴³⁵ One coin-type features the reverse legend VICTORIOSO SEMPER and depicts the emperor surrounded by kneeling prisoners, begging for his *clementia*; another type features the legend VICT PROBI AVG and depicts Roma, presenting a *victoria* to Probus.⁴³⁶

The triumph of 281/282 was to be the last triumph of Probus. For his successor Carus, the titles *Germanicus* and *Persicus* are recorded; for Carinus and Numerian, acclamations as *Germanicus*, *Persicus* and *Britannicus* are recorded.⁴³⁷

For Carus and his sons, a number of novel coin-images, referring to the victories of the *Augusti*, are created. One characteristic is the reference to imperial victoriousness as an effect of the 'teamwork' of Carus and his sons. An early coin-type, attributed to Cyzicus, presents an example. This features the unusual reverse legend VICTORIA CAESARIS and depicts the emperors in a *biga*. This series is dated by Pink to November 282.⁴³⁸ A gold quinarius⁴³⁹ attributed to Ticinum and dated to December 282 features an obverse depicting Carus with a club over one shoulder and holding a *victoriola*. The reverse of this coin depicts the *Caesar* Carinus in military guise; he, too, is holding a *victoriola*.⁴⁴⁰

In Siscia, a number of aurei, also dated to December 282, feature different creative images, which refer to *Victoria Augustorum*. One of these aurei depicts Carus, draped in a toga, and Carinus, in military guise, holding a *victoriola* together. Another aureus depicts two prisoners supplicating before Carinus, who is coronated by a *Victoria*. A third depicts a *Victoria* and a *clipeus virtutis*. This type also features the reverse legend VICTORIAE AVGG FEL.⁴⁴¹ Further, a number of coins, attributed to Lugdunum and dated to the closing months of 282, refer to *Victoria Augustorum*. A number of these coins are struck with obverses featuring campaign-portraits of Carus and the legend VIRTVS CARI AVG. Other coins, attributed to the same series, are struck for Carinus with campaign-portraits. These coins feature reverses referring to *Mars Victor*.⁴⁴²

The victoriousness of the emperors is also proclaimed in coin-series attributed to several mints and dated to the period from around the end of 283 to the beginning of 284. The reason may have been to celebrate the victories of Carinus on the northern frontiers, and the successes of Carus and Numerian in the east.⁴⁴³ A medallion struck for Numerian and attributed to Siscia features a campaign-portrait of Numerian. The reverse features the legend TRIVNFV (*sic*) QVADOR and depicts Carinus and

⁴³⁵ Cf. Pink 1949, 58f.

⁴³⁶ Pink 1949, 59; cf. *RIC* V.2, 32f, nos. 143–144 and 140 respectively.

⁴³⁷ Cf. Kienast 1996, 258–261.

⁴³⁸ Pink 1963, 52f.

⁴³⁹ A silver coin worth half a denarius; the term 'gold quinarius' is used for half-aurei, that were struck occasionally. Cf. Jones 1990, 262f.

⁴⁴⁰ Gricourt 2000, 22.

⁴⁴¹ Gricourt 2000, 48.

⁴⁴² Bastien 1976, Em. 3, 235–242; cf. no. 475 and nos. 488–490 respectively.

⁴⁴³ Cf. Gricourt 2000, 36f.

Numerian in a triumphal *quadriga*, and two prisoners.⁴⁴⁴ Another gold medallion, struck for Numerian and attributed to the same series also presents an extremely dense imagery. The obverse features a campaign-portrait of Numerian, holding a horse by the bridle. The reverse features the legend VIRTUS AVGVSTORVM and depicts Carinus and Numerian, riding with spears into battle. Furthermore, both *Augusti* are crowned by *Victoriae*.⁴⁴⁵ Coins attributed to the city of Rome feature the novel reverse legend VNDIQUE VICTORES.⁴⁴⁶

Even if Carinus and Numerian had attained ‘victories everywhere,’ they could not attain ‘victories for all time.’ The usurpations in 284 proved to be the beginning of the end of their reign. As the coinages of the emperors of Gaul in the 260s demonstrate, it was urgent, not least for a usurper, to display his capacity to be victorious immediately. The coinage of Iulianus presents another example. He managed to seize the mint of Siscia; it seems likely that controlled it from mid-December 284 to the late winter of 285. Not unexpectedly, antoniniani struck for Iulianus at this mint refer to *Victoria Augusti*.⁴⁴⁷

At least as far as coin-imagery is concerned, the victory of Diocletian over Carinus does not ‘stand out’ in any particular way. The coin-types used for the early coins struck for Diocletian are similar to those used under Carus, Carinus and Numerian. The initial coinage of Diocletian, therefore, conveys an impression that ‘everything is as usual:’ another emperor has been proclaimed, and there are new references to *Victoria Augusti*. In early coin-series attributed to Ticinum and dated to the period towards the end of 285, there are references to *Virtus Augusti*, *Victoria Augusti* and *Mars Victor*. Gricourt suggests that these are references to campaigns of Diocletian on the northern frontiers.⁴⁴⁸ Victories in these campaigns may also be the reason for a series of coins attributed to the city of Rome. In this series, there are references to *Virtus Augusti*, *Victoria Augusti* and *Victoria Aeterna*.⁴⁴⁹

Similar to the references to the imperial *virtus*, references to *victoria* occur on coins attributed to Lugdunum, probably as references to the coming confrontations with Britain.⁴⁵⁰ A gold medallion is attributed to the series of coins and medallions struck in the city of Rome for the joint consulate of Diocletian and Maximian in January 287. The reverse of this impressive medallion depicts Diocletian and Maximian, riding in a *quadriga*, drawn by elephants, and both coronated by *Victoriae*.⁴⁵¹ This imagery refers to the victories of the dyarchs, but no doubt also to the further victories that were expected.

⁴⁴⁴ Gricourt 2000, 51; cf. Gneccchi II, 123, no. 11, and Tav. 123, no. 8.

⁴⁴⁵ Gricourt 2000, 51; cf. Gneccchi I, 11, no. 1 (Numerian), and Tav. 4, no. 7.

⁴⁴⁶ Gricourt 2000, 36f.

⁴⁴⁷ Gricourt 2000, 57f.

⁴⁴⁸ Gricourt 2000, 70f.

⁴⁴⁹ Gricourt 2000, 81.

⁴⁵⁰ Gricourt 2000, 101.

⁴⁵¹ Gricourt 2000, 87; cf. Gneccchi I, 12, nos. 1–2 (Diocletian and Maximian), and Tav. 5, no. 1–2.

References to *Victoria Augustorum* recur on a few coin-types attributed to Lugdunum and dated to the period from the closing years of the 280s to the early 290s.⁴⁵² The reverse legend VNDIQUE VICTORES, familiar from the coinage of Carinus and Numerian in the city of Rome (cf. above) occurs on coins struck for Maximian, Constantius Chlorus and Galerius. These coins are dated to 294. Bastien considers this coin-type to refer to successful campaigns in Gaul the previous year.⁴⁵³ Most importantly, Constantius Chlorus had recaptured Gesoriacum (today Boulogne) from Carausius. After this defeat, Carausius had been murdered – and succeeded – by Allectus.⁴⁵⁴

Admittedly, Britain was at that time not yet finally defeated. However, the reference to *Undique victores* could also have implied a claim that the British problem would soon be resolved. And so it was, a few years later. The anonymous orator, who attributes this *victoria* to the *virtus* of Constantius Chlorus, eulogizes the security the victory of the emperor has restored to Rome:

And so by this victory of yours not only has Britain been liberated, but security has been restored to all nations which could incur as many dangers from the employment of the sea in time of war as advantages from its employment in peacetime.⁴⁵⁵

2.5. The importance of being invictus

The links between *Virtus Augusti* and *Victoria Augusti* are demonstrated repeatedly. The emperor, by grace of his *virtus*, attains *victoria*; however, likewise, an emperor who fails to attain *victoria* shows that he does not possess *virtus*. Hence, he cannot be emperor. An effect of this is that imagery proclaiming military success can be used more intensely in times when imperial authority was *not* successful. One example of this tendency is the imagery featured on coins struck for Gallienus following the capture of Valerian. The defeat of the emperor, a disaster never preceded in the history of the Roman empire, forced Gallienus to distance himself from Valerian and forge a new message of imperial authority.⁴⁵⁶

The emperor, simply, must be victorious.⁴⁵⁷ Likewise, Roman victory must be Roman *imperial* victory. The successful campaign against Britain that finally ‘restored security’ was probably actually the work of the praetorian prefect Asclepiodotus.

⁴⁵² Bastien 1972, 169, nos. 290–292 (em. 6 of Bastien, dated to 289/290); 211, no. 522 (em. 10 of Bastien, dated to 293).

⁴⁵³ Bastien 1972, 66–69.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. Bowman 2005, 78f.

⁴⁵⁵ Pan. Lat. 8.18.4: “Itaque hac uictoria uestra non Britannia solum seruitute est liberata, sed omnibus nationibus securitas restituta quae maritimo usu tantum in bello adire periculi poterant quantum in pace commodi consequuntur.”

⁴⁵⁶ Cf. Alföldi 1967, 90f; de Blois 1976, 112–116.

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. Charlesworth 1937, 124.

Still, this person is not even mentioned in the panegyric.⁴⁵⁸ However, not only is Constantius Chlorus credited with the victory that probably belonged to Asclepiodotus; in the coinage struck in Lugdunum, not even Constantius Chlorus is initially credited with the success. Two coin-series, struck for the first tetrarchy, are considered to have been struck in Lugdunum in celebration of these successes. A number of coins attributed to this series refer to *Virtus Augustorum* – the victory belonged to the imperial collegium. Further, almost all coins referring to *Virtus Augustorum* and dated to 293 are struck for Maximian, the senior *Augustus* in the west. As Bastien observes, the senior *Augustus* is awarded most credit for the victory.⁴⁵⁹ In coin-series dated to 294, most coins referring to *Virtus Augustorum* are struck for Constantius Chlorus. However, it should be noted that they are struck for all four tetrarchs. Nevertheless, with this coin-series, it seems as if Constantius Chlorus was given more appropriate credit for the campaigns.⁴⁶⁰

This use of the concept of victory in Roman visual language may lead to the impression that proclamations of victories are only ‘empty boasts’.⁴⁶¹ This is not a very generous view. Moreover, it betrays a misunderstanding of the Roman idea of *victoria*. It has already become evident that *victoria* does not necessarily have to refer to success in single battles, but can refer in a broader sense to the ‘persistence of Roman order’.⁴⁶² Further, the evidence demonstrates that references to *victoria* could be concentrated to coin-series that *did* celebrate actual victories. Other references to *victoria* occur on coins struck for ongoing campaigns. These references could be interpreted as ‘boast’ – or perhaps assurance – that the imperial *virtus* will bring victory. As the Roman empire was constantly at war in the second half of the third century, sometimes it is hard to tell. Any coin-series referring to *Victoria Augusti* could be taken to refer to an actual victory somewhere, or as promises for a forthcoming victory somewhere else.

In some cases, subtle variations of *victoria*-imagery, for instance the addition of prisoners to the image, could be interpreted as indicators of actual victories.⁴⁶³ Perhaps not too much should be inferred from this. The issue could definitely merit further research. However, all these images of *Victoriae*, and their associations with *Virtus Augusti*, testify to the urgent need for depicting the imperial authority as victorious.

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. Nixon & Rodgers (eds.) 1994, 133, n. 52.

⁴⁵⁹ Bastien 1972, 63f. and 203–222, nos. 499, 521, 575–77 and 579–82 (Maximian); no. 519 (Diocletian); no. 578 (Constantius Chlorus).

⁴⁶⁰ Bastien, 1972, 69 and 222–39, nos. 654 and 654bis (Diocletian), nos. 655 and 657 (Maximian); nos. 656, 658 and 659 (Constantius Chlorus).

⁴⁶¹ Cf. Sutherland 1983, 78.

⁴⁶² Cf. Weinstock 1957, 219–21.

⁴⁶³ Estiot considers coins struck for Aurelian, referring to *Oriens Augusti* and depicting Sol with one prisoner to have been supplanted by coins depicting Sol and two prisoners in 274; cf. for instance Estiot 2004, 396 (Serdica).

The inextricable links between *virtus*, *victoria* and the emperor could be expressed with the acclamation of the emperor as *invictus*.⁴⁶⁴ This acclamation was tied to a number of associations. The most obvious connotation was that of various divinities, mainly Mithras, the cosmic victor. This deity was worshipped as a god of battle bringing victory. Jupiter, Mars and Hercules could also be acclaimed as *invicti*. In addition, the title can be traced to the honorary titulature awarded to military commanders during the Republic. In a more abstract and general sense, the title could refer to a politician who had saved the Republic from dangers.⁴⁶⁵ In this sense, the titulature was first accepted by Scipio Africanus.⁴⁶⁶ During the course of the Republic, the title assumed an increasingly broad meaning. In the titulature of Pompey, it came to refer not only to a general of the past, but also to a saviour of world order and of the very future.⁴⁶⁷

During the imperial age, Augustus, Domitian and Trajan were acclaimed as *invicti* in panegyrics. However, it was not until the rule of Commodus that the acclamation as *invictus* was adapted for 'official' titulature.⁴⁶⁸ In the third century, use of this title is intensified. The even stronger appellative *invictissimus* occurs in inscriptions for Maximinus Thrax, Gordian III, Trebonianus Gallus and his son Volusianus.⁴⁶⁹ Further, under the reign of Aurelian, the title is adapted for use on coinages.

Legends acclaiming the emperor as *invictus* are used for the first time in the coin-series which was struck for Aurelian, attributed to Serdica and dated to the period from the late autumn of 274 to the autumn of 275.⁴⁷⁰ On coins attributed to this series, a number of versions of the obverse legend IMP AVRELIANVS INVICTVS P F AVG are used.⁴⁷¹ A coin attributed to the coin-series struck for Tacitus in Ticinum also acclaims the emperor as *invictus*. This coin is one of the coins attributed to this mint featuring an obverse portrait of Tacitus holding a *victoriola*; the reverse refers to *Victoria Gothica*.⁴⁷² The acclamation of the emperor as *invictus* also occurs on coins attributed to Serdica.⁴⁷³

Acclamations of the emperor as *invictus* also occur on coins struck for Probus. A large number of these can be attributed to the coin-series considered to have been struck in Siscia for the campaigns of Probus on the northern frontiers in 277–278.⁴⁷⁴ Probus is also acclaimed as *invictus* on a medallion attributed to the triumphal series

⁴⁶⁴ Charlesworth 1937, 112.

⁴⁶⁵ Imhof 1957, 198f.

⁴⁶⁶ Weinstock 1957, 221f.

⁴⁶⁷ Imhof 1957, 203.

⁴⁶⁸ Weinstock 1957, 237–242.

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. Peachin 1990, 112 (no. 41 for Maximinus Thrax); 173 and 193 (nos. 89 and 210 for Gordian III respectively); 284 (no. 100 for Trebonianus Gallus and Volusianus).

⁴⁷⁰ Estiot 1995, 84.

⁴⁷¹ Estiot 2004, 400f.

⁴⁷² Estiot 2004, 334 and pl. 92, no. 384.

⁴⁷³ Estiot 2004, 404–407.

⁴⁷⁴ Pink 1949, 47–52.

struck in Rome for the triumphs of 281/82.⁴⁷⁵ The significance of the acclamation of the emperor as *invictus* is most explicitly demonstrated by a coin-type struck for Carus. These coins feature the legend DEO ET DOMINO CARO INVIC AVG.⁴⁷⁶ Being *invictus* is, at least in some sense, divine. It could be noted that, at least on coins, the tetrarchs are not known to have been acclaimed as *invicti*.

2.6. 'Waging peace'

From Aurelian Augustus to his most devoted Roman people, greeting. We have established peace everywhere throughout the whole world in its widest extent, ... There is nothing now, fellow-citizens, sons of Romulus, which you need fear.⁴⁷⁷

Naturally, the hoped-for consequence of any military victory was peace. If *victoria* followed warfare, *pax* was the effect of *victoria*. Accordingly, references to peace could be regarded as indirect references to military capacity. More specifically, depictions of *pax* could be regarded as indirect depictions of *victoria*.⁴⁷⁸

Just as proclamations of *victoria* could be regarded as 'empty boast', references to *pax* may be interpreted merely as 'wishful thinking'.⁴⁷⁹ Again, such a view betrays a misunderstanding of the idea of 'Roman peace.' The Roman understanding of peace was pragmatical, by comparison with today. *Pax Romana* did not signify an end to bellicose state policy, only an end to inner political crisis. Turmoil at the frontiers of the empire did not change this overall notion of *pax*.⁴⁸⁰ Furthermore, *pax* was a condition that needed to be upheld continually: as Woolf points out, the Romans were therefore repeatedly engaged in a 'waging of peace' on their provinces.⁴⁸¹

This intimate relationship between war and peace is illustrated to some effect on coins in the later half of the third century. One apt illustration is a coin-type which features versions of the legend MARTI PACIFERO and depicts Mars, holding the olive-branch of *pax* (fig. 14). This coin-type is introduced in the coinage of Septimius Severus⁴⁸² and is used regularly under the soldier-emperors. In the coinage of Gallienus, the type is very rare; it is only attributed to two coin-series, in the city of Rome

⁴⁷⁵ Pink 1949, 59. This medallion depicts Probus with a spear and a large *aegis*; cf. Gneccchi II, 118, no. 30 and Tav. 120, no. 8.

⁴⁷⁶ Gricourt 2000, 46f.

⁴⁷⁷ SHA *Firmus, Saturninus Proculus et Bonosus* 5.3–4: "Amantissimo sui populo Romano Aurelianus Augustus salutem dicit. Pacato undique gentium toto qua late patet orbe terrarium, ... nihil est, Romulei Quirites, quod timere possitis."

⁴⁷⁸ R.-Alföldi 1999, 109–112.

⁴⁷⁹ R.-Alföldi 1999, 210f.

⁴⁸⁰ Cornell 1993, 160–168.

⁴⁸¹ Woolf 1993, 189–191.

⁴⁸² Cf. *RIC* IV.1, 68. This is preceded by a reference to Mars Pacator in the coinage of Commodus dated to 188–189; cf. *RIC* III, 385f, nos. 174 and 188; 427f, nos. 527 and 543.

and Mediolanum respectively.⁴⁸³ It is interesting to note that two coins attributed to Mediolanum are struck with obverses featuring campaign-portraits.⁴⁸⁴

The coin-type is also used for billon⁴⁸⁵ coins struck for Claudius Gothicus. Bronze coins of this type are attributed to a coin-series struck in 269 in celebration of the victory of the emperor at Lake Garda.⁴⁸⁶ Further, the coin-type is much used for the coinage of Quintillus;⁴⁸⁷ perhaps the military successes of Claudius Gothicus, made the reference to Mars Pacifer suitable for the successor to Claudius. Mars Pacifer is also depicted on coins struck for Aurelian. Such coins are attributed to the earliest coin-series struck for Aurelian in Mediolanum. Especially, it could be noted that the gold medallion which has been attributed to this coin-series (cf. above, chap. 2.3) features a reverse referring to Mars Pacifer.⁴⁸⁸ There are a number of further references to Mars Pacifer in the coin-series struck for Tacitus.⁴⁸⁹

The recurring references to Mars Pacifer in early coin-series (as both Quintillus and Tacitus were short-lived, all their coin-series could be regarded as ‘early coin-series.’) suggest that the reference was regarded as fitting for a newly proclaimed emperor. It was important to demonstrate that warfare under the new emperor would ensure peace. However, it could also be important to demonstrate this capacity repeatedly. In the coinage of Probus, references to Mars Pacifer recur throughout his reign,⁴⁹⁰ under this emperor, as under the other later soldier-emperors, the Romans were engaged in a constant ‘waging of peace.’

Imperial peace

Warfare leads to peace. The decisive factor in this warfare, and which brings warfare to a fortunate conclusion, is the *virtus* of the emperor. Therefore, peace is also imperial peace – the *Pax Augusta*, which Augustus in the *Res gestae* claimed to have brought to Rome.⁴⁹¹ The fact that *pax* is indirectly a ‘military’ motive is demonstrated by the references to *pax* in the coinage of Gallienus. A number of coins attributed to the first series of coins considered to have been struck in the city of Rome after 260 feature the legend PAX AVG.⁴⁹² It has already been noted that a number of coins

⁴⁸³ Göbl 2000; nos. 569–572 and nos. 1031–1034 respectively.

⁴⁸⁴ Göbl 2000, nos. 1034o and 1034q.

⁴⁸⁵ An alloy consisting of less than 50% silver. As the denarius and antoninian were nominally ‘silver’ coins, the debased denarii and antoninians of the later third century are often referred to as billon coins; cf. Jones 1990, 36.

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. Huvelin 1982, 263; cf. also Bland & Burnett 1988, 183, nos. 976–983.

⁴⁸⁷ Cf. Huvelin 1988, 185–189, nos. 16, 18, 20–22 and 32; cf. Bland & Burnett 1988, 187, nos. 1190–1194.

⁴⁸⁸ Estiot 2004, 318.

⁴⁸⁹ Estiot 2004, 330–335 (Ticinum) and 372–77 (Siscia).

⁴⁹⁰ Cf. Pink 1949, 68 (Lugdunum, series dated to 276); 53 (Siscia, series dated to 280); 59 (Rome, series dated to 282); 66f (Ticinum, series dated to 280 and onwards).

⁴⁹¹ *Res Gestae divi Augusti* 12; cf. Hardwick 2000, 337f.

⁴⁹² Göbl 2000, nos. 366–367.

attributed to these coin-series also refer to *Virtus Augusti* and *Victoria Augusti*. Not surprisingly, a number of the coins featuring the legend PAX AVG are struck with obverse campaign-portraits.⁴⁹³ Similar coins appear in coin-series considered to have been struck in Mediolanum. Here, too, reverses referring to *pax* could be combined with obverse campaign-portraits.⁴⁹⁴ A novel coin-type, featuring the legend AVG IN PACE and used for coins struck for the empress Salonina, is also attributed to this mint.⁴⁹⁵

Similar patterns are apparent in the coinages of Claudius Gothicus and Quintillus. In the coinage of Claudius Gothicus, references to *Pax Augusti* occur alongside references to *Virtus Augusti* and *Victoria Augusti* on coins attributed to the city of Rome, Mediolanum and Siscia.⁴⁹⁶ In the coinage of Quintillus, the references to *pax* occur along with references to *Virtus Augusti*, *Victoria Augusti* and Mars Pacifer in the city of Rome.⁴⁹⁷ This suggests that it was urgent to demonstrate the ability of the newly proclaimed emperor to 'wage peace.' This may have been especially important for the *urbs aeterna*; in the coinage of Aurelian, where references to *Pax Augusta* are very rare, the only exception is a series of antoniniani attributed to the city of Rome and dated by Estiot to 273.⁴⁹⁸

In the coinage of Tacitus, references to *pax* are frequent from the outset, especially on coins attributed to Lugdunum.⁴⁹⁹ At this mint, a coin-type featuring the legend PAX PVBLICA is also introduced, both for aurei and antoniniani.⁵⁰⁰ This is interesting, considering that the mint of Lugdunum had recently been re-opened after Gaul had been retaken from Tetricus (cf. chap. 2.8).

In the coinage of Probus, the links between *virtus*, *victoria* and *pax* are demonstrated once more. References to *Pax Augusti* are absent from the first coin-series struck for this emperor. They first occur in the large coin-series attributed to Siscia and the campaigns of 277–278. To this coin-series, an aureus is also attributed, featuring yet another novel portrait of Probus. This depicts the emperor holding an olive branch in his right hand.⁵⁰¹ With this portrait, the idea of the emperor as the bringer of peace is given a uniquely explicit expression.

The coinage of Carus and his sons presents a pattern more reminiscent of that of the coinage of Tacitus, as references to *Pax Augusti* occur in several early coin-series. A number of coins referring to *Pax Augusti* are attributed to one of the earliest coin-series struck for this emperor; this series is attributed to Lugdunum and dated to

⁴⁹³ Göbl 2000, nos. 366p, 366t and 366u1–2.

⁴⁹⁴ Göbl 2000, nos. 1039–1041 and 1220–1030; cf. nos. 1040o

⁴⁹⁵ Göbl 2000, nos. 1303–1307.

⁴⁹⁶ Bland & Burnett 1988, 177–184 (Rome); 184 (Mediolanum); Alföldi 1935–36, 12 (Siscia).

⁴⁹⁷ Bland & Burnett 1988, 187f.

⁴⁹⁸ Estiot 2004, Em. 3 and 4 of Rome; 288–291.

⁴⁹⁹ Estiot 2004, 279–283 (Lugdunum); 332f (Ticinum) and 368–371 (Siscia).

⁵⁰⁰ Estiot 2004, 279; cf. Bastien 1976, 142f.

⁵⁰¹ Pink 1949, 51f; cf. Bastien II, 544 and *idem* III, pl. 124, no. 4.

September–October 282.⁵⁰² A number of coins struck for Carus referring to *Pax Augusti* and attributed to this mint feature obverse campaign-portraits.⁵⁰³ Further, just as *virtus* and *victoria*, *pax* is associated with the *Augusti*; references to *Pax Augustorum* also appear early.⁵⁰⁴

The initial coin-series struck for Diocletian and attributed to the city of Rome displays a familiar pattern; references to *pax* appear alongside references to *virtus* and *victoria*. This series is dated to November 285.⁵⁰⁵ Under the dyarchs, references to *pax Augustorum*, as references to *virtus* and *victoria*, appear repeatedly in connection with campaigns against Britain. One example is a coin-series attributed to Lugdunum and dated to a period towards the end of 286.⁵⁰⁶

References to *pax* next appear in coin-series dated by Bastien to a period from the autumn of 289 to early 290. This series was struck after the disastrous expedition to Britain, as a temporary stalemate had been reached.⁵⁰⁷ The coin-type referring to *Pax Augustorum* is interesting: it depicts *pax* with a *victoriola*.⁵⁰⁸ Once more, *pax* is made secure through *victoria*. In later coin-series, coin-types referring to *pax* are used repeatedly. In a coin-series, dated by Bastien to the first months of 293, a novel motif is introduced on coins referring to *Pax Augustorum*. This motif depicts Minerva, equipped with a helmet, lance and shield in addition to the mandatory olive-branch of *pax*. It seems likely that this imagery is a reference to coming campaigns against Carausius.⁵⁰⁹

A number of examples demonstrate that *virtus*, *victoria* and *pax* are linked. Just as references to *victoria*, references to *pax* could be interpreted as a reference to peace and order, that had been restored somewhere. Further, references to *pax* could also be interpreted as a promise that order *would be* restored. In any case, in my view, the point is that peace and peacekeeping is invariably associated with the military capacity of the emperor.

⁵⁰² Gricourt 2000, 59.

⁵⁰³ Cf. Bastien 1976, 239, no. 481.

⁵⁰⁴ Gricourt 2000, 60f.

⁵⁰⁵ Gricourt 2000, 81.

⁵⁰⁶ Cf. Gricourt 2000, 100.

⁵⁰⁷ Bastien 1972, 47.

⁵⁰⁸ Bastien 1972, 166–168, nos. 275–288.

⁵⁰⁹ Bastien 1972, 58 and 199–201, nos. 467–476.

2.7. *A promise of order*

“Soon”, he said, “we shall have no need of soldiers.” What else is this than saying: “Soon there will not be a Roman soldier? Everywhere the commonwealth will reign and will rule all in safety.”⁵¹⁰

In the *Historia Augusta*, it is told how the magnificent victories of the emperor Probus would have led to universal peace, at last – if the emperor had not been killed.⁵¹¹ The aim of establishing *pax* was to attain lasting peace. This condition implied something more than just the ceasing of military conflict – something like an *aurea aetas*. The full meaning of *Pax Augusta* was a ‘return to a happy state.’⁵¹² In visual arts, this could be demonstrated by allowing *virtus*, *victoria* and *pax* to give way to broader concepts of what lasting peace could mean: *securitas*, *fortuna*, *abundantia*, and so forth.

The ‘return of a golden age’ is a recurrent theme in the coinages of the soldier emperors. As references to *pax*, references to *fortuna* or *felicitas* can occur in coin-series struck as an anticipation of victory. In times of military danger, such references could function as an assurance that ‘everything will go on just as before.’ The references to *fortuna* present a case in point. In the coinages of the soldier-emperors, there are frequent references to *Fortuna Redux* – ‘Fortune the Bringer-back,’ who brings the emperor back safely from his journeys (*cf. fig. 32*).⁵¹³ A reference to *Fortuna Redux* in the coinages of the soldier-emperors, naturally, becomes an assurance that the emperor will return safely from his campaigns.

The coinage of Gallienus in the early 260s presents an illuminating pattern. In coin-series following the particularly ‘aggressive’ series struck in Rome following the disasters in 260, the tone is gradually changed to one of reassurance. References to *felicitas*, *laetitia* and *securitas* appear, a little later joined by a coin-type referring to *Fortuna Redux*.⁵¹⁴ Göbl interprets this as a reference to coming campaigns against Postumus.⁵¹⁵ Later still, references to *Pax aeterna* also appear, as does a coin-type featuring the legend *VBIQUE PAX* (*fig. 45*).⁵¹⁶

A similar pattern is evident in the coinage struck for Gallienus in Mediolanum. At this mint, two decidedly ‘military’ coin-series are struck in the first years of the 260s.⁵¹⁷ In a third coin-series, however, the reference to *Laetitia Augusti* is extremely

⁵¹⁰ SHA *Probus* 20.5: “Brevi,” inquit, “milites necessarios non habebimus.” quid est aliud dicere: Romanus iam miles erit nullus? ubique regnabit, omnia possidebit secura res publica.”

⁵¹¹ SHA *Probus* 20.

⁵¹² Hardwick 2000, 341–344.

⁵¹³ Jones 1990, 120.

⁵¹⁴ References to *felicitas*, *laetitia* and *securitas* all appear in coin-series dated to 262; *cf.* Göbl 2000, nos. 475–478, no. 497f and nos. 502–504 respectively. References to *Fortuna Redux* appear in coin-series dated to 263; *cf.* Göbl 2000, no. 545f.

⁵¹⁵ *Cf.* Göbl 2000, 89.

⁵¹⁶ The reference to *Pax aeterna* appears in em. 9 of Göbl; *cf.* Göbl 2000, nos. 605–610 and 675–679. The reverse legend *VBIQUE PAX* appears in em. 9 of Göbl; *cf.* Göbl 2000, nos. 689, 691, 694f and 699.

⁵¹⁷ I.e. Em.2–3 of Göbl; *cf.* Göbl 2000, 104–113.

frequent. In later series in Mediolanum, coins referring to *Laetitia* are joined by coin-types referring to *Felicitas Publica* and *Fortuna Redux*⁵¹⁸ and the more novel *BONAE FORTVNAE*, and *BONVS EVENTVS*.⁵¹⁹

This imagery, obviously, could also be used by usurpers. Coins depicting *Fortuna Redux* are struck for Macrianus and Quietus; possibly this was a reference to imminent campaigns against Gallienus.⁵²⁰ Similar coin-types are used in the coinage of Postumus. Coins referring to *Felicitas Augusti* are attributed to the earliest billon coinage struck for Postumus; a coin-type depicting *Fortuna Redux* appears in series of antoninians dated to 263–265.⁵²¹ The latter coin-type, possibly, could be interpreted as a reference to the confrontations between Postumus and Gallienus which commenced around 265 (cf. further chap. 5.5).

The coinage struck for Aurelian illustrates the associations that could be made between the *virtus* of the emperor and the ‘fruits of peace.’ In coin-series struck for Aurelian from 271 and onwards, coin-types depicting *Fortuna Redux* and referring to *felicitas saeculi* are introduced. These coin-series are attributed to Mediolanum and Siscia.⁵²² At the latter mint, coins depicting *Fortuna Redux* are very frequent, especially in a series of aurei, dated by Estiot to 271; this series is considered by Estiot to have been struck in the early summer of 271 for campaign against barbarians raiding northern Italy. At the same time, a series of antoniniani is struck with frequent references to *Fortuna Redux*, *Victoria Augusti* and *Pax Augusti*.⁵²³

Coins depicting *Fortuna Redux* are also attributed to further coin-series attributed to Siscia and Mediolanum. In the former mint, coins referring to *Fortuna Redux* are considered to have been struck only until 272; in Mediolanum, however, they are struck until 274.⁵²⁴ These coins could be interpreted as expressions of a hope – and an assurance – of the safe return of the emperor from the campaigns against Palmyra. It is illustrative that two such coins feature obverse campaign-portraits. One, attributed to Siscia and dated to 271, depicts the emperor with ‘spear forward’;⁵²⁵ the other coin is attributed to Mediolanum and the period between the end of 272 and the beginning of 274; it features a ‘shield-motif’, depicting the emperor riding into battle.⁵²⁶

⁵¹⁸ The reference to *laetitia* appears in em. 4 of Göbl; cf. Göbl 2000, nos. 1093–1125. References to *Felicitas publica* and *Fortuna Redux* appear in em. 6 of Göbl; cf. Göbl 2000, nos. 1301f. and 1281–1284 respectively.

⁵¹⁹ Coins featuring the legend *BONAE FORTVNAE* are attributed to em. 6 of Göbl; cf. Göbl 2000, nos. 1278–1280. Coins featuring the legend *BONVS EVENTVS* are attributed to em. 8 of Göbl; cf. Göbl 2000, nos. 1390f.

⁵²⁰ Göbl 2000, 144; nos. 1730–1731.

⁵²¹ Coins referring to *Felicitas Augusti* are attributed by Bastien to em. 2, dated to the second half of 260; cf. Bastien 1967, 49–51 and 118, nos. 12–14. Coins depicting *Fortuna Redux* appears in em. 3 of billon coinage, dated to 263–265; cf. Besly & Bland 1983, 49, and 144, no. 2408.

⁵²² Estiot 2004, 320f. (Mediolanum) and 346–352 (Siscia).

⁵²³ Estiot 2004, 84 and 346–49.

⁵²⁴ Estiot 2004, 322f. (Mediolanum) and 352f (Siscia).

⁵²⁵ Estiot 2004, 348 and pl. 78, no. 94.

⁵²⁶ Estiot 2004, 322 and pl. 76, no. 68.

By comparison with the coinages of Aurelian, especially the later coin-series, a markedly different tenor is evident in the coinage of Tacitus. In the initial coin-series attributed to Lugdunum, a coin-type referring to *Pax Publica* is introduced (cf. above); in following coin-series, further coin-types referring to *Temporum felicitas*, *Pax Aeterna* and *Felicitas saeculi* are also introduced.⁵²⁷ Coins referring to *Felicitas Temporum*, *Laetitia Augusta* and *Spes Publica* are attributed to the city of Rome. Another coin-type attributed to the city of Rome features the legend CLEMENTIA TEMP and a depiction of Mars as *pacifer*, holding an olive-branch.⁵²⁸ A medallion featuring the legend TEMPORVM FELICITAS is also attributed to the city of Rome. This depicts the emperor, coronated by *victoria*, and receiving a globe from Roma.⁵²⁹ In the coinage attributed to Ticinum, references to *Felicitas temporum*, *Salus Publica* and *Securitas perpetua* are frequent; one coin referring to *Salus Publica* features an obverse campaign-portrait.⁵³⁰

Similar imagery is much used in Siscia, Serdica and Cyzicus as well;⁵³¹ a range of intricate motifs depict the golden age which the emperor has brought (or will bring), by grace of his *virtus*. A coin-type attributed to Serdica depicts a *Victoria* presenting a wreath to the emperor and the legend VICTORIA PERPETVA AVG. The *Clementia temporum*-type used for coins attributed to the city of Rome, depicting Mars as *pacifer*, is also used for coins attributed to Serdica.⁵³² A coin-type featuring the reverse legend SPES PVBLICA is also used for coins attributed to this mint. The reverse motif of this type depicts a *Victoria*, holding a palm-branch and presenting a wreath to the emperor.⁵³³

The assurances of a new *aurea aetas* are even more insistent in the coinage of Florian. In the coinage attributed to Lugdunum, references to *Temporum felicitas* and *Aeternitas Augusti* are frequent; furthermore, these references appear alongside references to *Virtus Augusti*.⁵³⁴ The choice of legends for the first coin-series struck for Florian and attributed to Ticinum is especially telling. The aurei attributed to this mint all feature the obverse legend VIRTVS FLORIANI AVG and campaign-portraits; for the reverses, three types are used. These feature the legends PERPETVITATE AVG, VICTORIA PERPET and VIRTVS AVGVSTI respectively. For the reverses of the antoniniani struck for Florian and attributed to Ticinum, six types are used. These refer to *Pax Augusti*, Mars *Pacifer*, *Salus publica*, *Providentia Augusta*, *Felicitas temporum* and *Securitas perpetua*.⁵³⁵ The events following the murder of Aurelian in 275 are complex and merit a further discussion (cf. chap. 4.4). Whatever the situation was,

⁵²⁷ Estiot 2004, 279–283.

⁵²⁸ Estiot 2004, 308–313.

⁵²⁹ Estiot 2004, 312 and pl. 90, no. 339.

⁵³⁰ Estiot 2004, 330–335 and pl. 91, no. 361.

⁵³¹ Estiot 2004, 403–407 (Serdica); 436f (Antioch); 426f (Cyzicus).

⁵³² Estiot 2004, pl. 96, no. 471 and pl. 95, no. 450 respectively.

⁵³³ Estiot 2004, pl. 95, no. 453.

⁵³⁴ Estiot 2004, 284f.

⁵³⁵ Estiot 2004, 336f.

the choices of coin-types for the coinages of Tacitus and Florian suggest that it must have been more urgent than ever to assure the citizens of the empire that the emperor would preserve stability.

In the coinage of Probus, the associations between the military virtues of the emperor and the *securitas* of the empire are also repeatedly demonstrated. For the coin-series attributed to Siscia, dated to 277 and which acclaims Probus as *invictus* on the obverses, four types are used for the reverses. These types refer to *Concordia Militum*, *Securitas Augusti*, *Felicitas saeculi* and *Providentia Augusti*.⁵³⁶ Not unexpectedly, the most astounding examples can be attributed to the series of coins and medallions struck for the triumphs in Rome in 281/282. One medallion attributed to this occasion depicts the four seasons, depicted as four children, and features the legend FELICIA TEMPORA. Another medallion, dated to the same occasion, features a similar motif and the legend SAECVLI FELICITAS.⁵³⁷ A third medallion attributed to this triumph features an obverse depicting the emperor holding a *victoriola*, and the legend INVICTVS PROBVS PF AVG; the reverse depicts the emperor, drawn in a chariot by six (!) horses and coronated by a *Victoria*. This reverse also features the legend GLORIA ORBIS.⁵³⁸ As noted, regular coins dated to the triumph of Probus in the *urbs aeterna* feature the reverse legends VICTORIOSO SEMPER and VBIQVE PAX.⁵³⁹

These examples, then, testify to the notion that the final aim of Roman war was not *Victoria*. It was not even *pax*. *Pax* had to be restated repeatedly and constantly, with military means: the ultimate aim of such ‘waging of peace’ was a more durable *securitas*. The *virtus* of the emperor, explicitly, becomes a guarantee for this (*fig. 15*). As stated by the anonymous orator who acclaims Constantius Chlorus for his display of *virtus* in the victorious campaigns against Britain, the truly significant effect of this campaign was not only that Britain had been liberated, but that ‘security has been restored’:

Now, to say nothing of the Gallic coast, Spain is secure, although its shores are almost visible, now Italy too, and Africa, now all the peoples right up to Lake Maeotis are free from perpetual cares.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁶ Pink 1949, 47f.

⁵³⁷ Pink 1949, 59; cf. Gneccchi II, 119, no. 37, and Tav. 121, no. 6.

⁵³⁸ Pink 1949, 58; cf. Gneccchi II, 117, no. 13, and Tav. 119, no. 8.

⁵³⁹ Pink 1949, 59.

⁵⁴⁰ Pan. Lat. 8.18.5: “Nunc segura est, ut de latere Gallico taceam, quamvis paene conspicuis litoribus Hispania, nunc Italia nunc Africa nunc omnes usque ad Maeotias paludes perpetuis curis uacant gentes.”

2.8. Restoring the world

At the centre of this network of interrelated images of war and peace stands the emperor.⁵⁴¹ In the third century, this is brought to expression with the acclamation of the emperor as *restitutor orbis*. This acclamation is a telling example of how the role of the emperor as the guarantee of the Roman order through his *virtus* is exaggerated on the coins struck for the soldier-emperors. Moreover, the use of coins acclaiming the emperor as *restitutor orbis*, in my view, testifies explicitly to the Roman outlook towards war.

The acclamation of the emperor as *restitutor orbis* is known from two inscriptions mentioning Gordian III and Philippus Arabs.⁵⁴² On coins, the acclamation is introduced under Valerian.⁵⁴³ However, in the sole reign of Gallienus, the *restitutor*-types seem not to have been used at all. It may be noted that Postumus is acclaimed both as *restitutor orbis* and *restitutor Galliarum*. Both acclamations appear on coins considered to have been struck towards the end of his reign in 268.⁵⁴⁴ These acclamations may have been references to the successful reign of Postumus. Claudius Gothicus is also acclaimed as *restitutor orbis* on a few coins attributed to Siscia.⁵⁴⁵ Perhaps these coins were references to the decisive military victory of Claudius Gothicus at Naïssus in 269.

However, the most spectacular use of this acclamation occurs under Aurelian. Coins acclaiming Aurelian as *restitutor Orientis* appear in coin-series attributed to the mints of Siscia, Mediolanum and the mint of uncertain location, and dated to 271.⁵⁴⁶ After that, the acclamations of the emperor as *restitutor Orientis* spreads further east. They appear on coins considered to have been struck in Cyzicus in 272, and on coins considered to have been struck in Tripolis in 273. Finally, the acclamation of the emperor as *restitutor Orientis* appear on coins considered to have been struck in Antioch in 275.⁵⁴⁷ Estiot remarks that the acclamation of Aurelian as *restitutor Orientis* follows his troops as they marched eastwards for the campaigns against Palmyra. Thus, the acclamation is most likely to have referred to the presumed elimination of the 'Palmyrean problem'.⁵⁴⁸

However, acclamations of Aurelian as *restitutor orbis* are even more frequent. This acclamation first occurs on coins attributed to the mint of uncertain location and dated to 271.⁵⁴⁹ Coins acclaiming Aurelian as *restitutor orbis* then appear in coin-series at-

⁵⁴¹ Estiot 1999b, 352; cf. Leander Touati 1987, 29.

⁵⁴² For Gordian III, cf. Peachin 1990, 166, no. 39 and 170, no. 68a. For Philippus, cf. Peachin 1990, 233, no. 244.

⁵⁴³ Göbl 2000, 81 and nos. 111, 143, and 185 (Rome, Em. 3–5 of Göbl, dated to 256–257).

⁵⁴⁴ Besly & Bland 1983, 53 and 145, nos. 2452.

⁵⁴⁵ Cf. Alföldi 1935–36, 16.

⁵⁴⁶ Estiot 2004, 320 (Mediolanum), 384 (mint of uncertain location); 348 (Siscia).

⁵⁴⁷ Estiot 2004, 416f. (Cyzicus); 438 (Tripolis); 434 (Antioch).

⁵⁴⁸ Estiot 2004, 72.

⁵⁴⁹ Estiot 2004, 384–386.

tributed to Cyzicus, Antioch, Mediolanum and Siscia, and dated to 272.⁵⁵⁰ As Estiot suggests, the replacement of the acclamation of Aurelian as *restitutor Orientis* with the acclamation as *restitutor orbis* is evidently connected with the success in the campaigns against Palmyra.⁵⁵¹

The most spectacular coin-series that features coins acclaiming Aurelian as *restitutor orbis* is one which is considered to have been struck in Serdica from the late autumn of 274. A reverse acclaiming Aurelian as *restitutor orbis* is the only reverse used for this coin-series. A number of coins attributed to this series additionally feature obverse legends acclaiming Aurelian as *invictus*. A few famous coins from this series even acclaim Aurelian as *deus et dominus*.⁵⁵² Estiot considers this coin-series, exalting the invincibility of Aurelian, to have been struck for coming campaigns against Asia Minor.⁵⁵³

After Aurelian and his defeat of Palmyra, acclamations of the emperor as *restitutor orbis* are much less frequent. The acclamation occurs on coins struck for Tacitus and attributed to Siscia and Antioch.⁵⁵⁴ It also occurs on coins struck for Probus. Some of these, attributed to Siscia and dated to 282, are considered to have been struck for the campaigns against Carus.⁵⁵⁵ In the coinage struck for Carus, the acclamation of the emperor as *restitutor orbis* appears only once, on coins attributed to one of the earliest coin-series, dated to the autumn of 282. This coin-series is considered by Gricourt to have been struck prior to the departure of Carus for campaigns in the east.⁵⁵⁶

Coins acclaiming the emperor as *pacator orbis* represent a version of the acclamation of the emperor as *restitutor orbis*. The vast majority of coins acclaiming the emperor as *pacator orbis* are attributed to the western parts of the empire. This acclamation first occurs on coins struck for Postumus; these are attributed to coin-series considered to have been late in the reign of this emperor.⁵⁵⁷ The acclamation also occurs on coins struck for Aurelian, attributed to coin-series ascribed to Augusta Treverorum and Lugdunum. These series are considered to have been struck after the defeat of Tetricus in 274.⁵⁵⁸ In Lugdunum, the acclamations of the emperor as *pacator orbis* also occur on coins struck for Florian, and for some coins struck for Numerian in the fall of 284.⁵⁵⁹

These choices of coin-types, acclaiming the emperor as *restitutor orbis* and *pacator orbis* respectively, are intriguing. It suggests that there was a difference between these acclamations. It is evident that the acclamations of Aurelian as *restitutor orbis*

⁵⁵⁰ Estiot 2004, 417 (Cyzicus); 432 (Antioch); 322 (Mediolanum); 356 (Siscia).

⁵⁵¹ Estiot 2004, 74.

⁵⁵² Estiot 2004, 400f.

⁵⁵³ Estiot 2004, 102.

⁵⁵⁴ Estiot 2004, 368 (Siscia); 436 (Antioch).

⁵⁵⁵ Pink 1949, 54; cf. also Pink 1949, 40 (Antioch) and 51–54 (Siscia).

⁵⁵⁶ Gricourt 2000, 45f.

⁵⁵⁷ Besly & Bland 1983, 53 and 146, no. 2465.

⁵⁵⁸ Estiot 2004, 55.

⁵⁵⁹ Cf Estiot 2004, 284 (Florian) and Gricourt 2000, 65 (Numerian).

are introduced on a large scale in connection with the defeat of Palmyra. In the west, the defeat of Gaul is also 'celebrated' with the additional acclamation of the emperor as *pacator orbis*. The acclamations of the emperor as *restitutor Orientis* obviously refers to victories in the east. However, as Estiot points out, the campaigns of Aurelian in the east could be described as a war which was fought to restore Roman authority; the acclamation of the emperor as *restitutor orbis* seems to refer to a more final victory and overcoming of the enemies of the Roman state. The campaigns in Gaul, on the contrary, appear not to have been possible to describe as a proper war against a proper enemy. Rather, it had to be described as a 'settling of civil unrest'.⁵⁶⁰

This choice of coin-types tells us something about a Roman outlook towards war and peace. In Gaul, however, there could be no 'war:' Gauls were not 'enemies,' but 'fellow Romans'.⁵⁶¹ It could be noted that Aurelian is acclaimed as *restitutor orbis* on one coin-type attributed to Lugdunum. However, the imagery of this coin is copied from coins struck for Gallienus: these coins were struck for victories on the Rhine and acclaimed Gallienus as *restitutor Galliarum*.⁵⁶² While Palmyra was defeated, Gaul was 'liberated.'

A similar problem suggests an explanation for the choices of coin-imagery at western mints in the 280s. The usurpers of Britain were problematic in the same way the usurpers in Gaul had been. As the usurpers of Britain were also 'Roman', they could not be vanquished with the usual force. Hence, Bastien suggests, coin-imagery exalting the imperial *virtus* remains in use on coins attributed to Lugdunum. In the rest of the empire, however, such imagery to a much larger extent seems to be phased out.⁵⁶³ As far as Gaul and Britain were concerned, the modern concept of 'Civil war' did not exist. Therefore, victory in such a civil war could not be depicted, or at least not yet. The Panegyrist praising the tetrarchs for the victory over the Britannic usurpers attempts to evade embarrassment by describing the Britannic usurpers as barbarians; the same strategy is also evident in tetrarchic art.⁵⁶⁴ Roman war was waged with the 'other.'

2.9. War as ritual and monuments of war

From Aurelian Augustus to Cerronius Bassus. The swords of the soldiers should not proceed further. Already enough Palmyrenes have been killed and slaughtered. We have not spared the women, we have slain the children, we have butchered the old men, we have destroyed the peasants. To whom, at this rate, shall we leave the land or the city? Those

⁵⁶⁰ Estiot 2004, 56.

⁵⁶¹ Cf. Woolf 1998, 240f.

⁵⁶² Estiot 2004, 56; cf. *RIC* V.1, 70f, nos. 27–35.

⁵⁶³ Bastien 1972, 7.

⁵⁶⁴ Pan. Lat. 8.16.4; cf. Mayer 2002, 181f.

who still remain must be spared. For it is our belief that the few have been chastened by the punishment of the many.⁵⁶⁵

Roman war was not only waged with the ‘other.’ Furthermore, Roman war was total war. When the Roman army went to war, it could fight with an extreme brutality. Roman warfare had an important moral function:⁵⁶⁶ the ruthlessness of the Roman troops was a symbolic demonstration of the devastating power of Rome.⁵⁶⁷ Mattern suggests that the strategy of the Roman army was one of ‘shock and awe.’⁵⁶⁸

War, therefore, had a ritual character. In both Greek and Roman visual art, this is reflected in the way imagery of war is expressed in visual media. Rituals of war were translated into series of images expressing the acts of these rituals.⁵⁶⁹ In Roman art, these images could depict such a sequence of concepts as *virtus* – *victoria* – *pax* – *felicitas/aeternitas*. These concepts were all forged into one grand narrative of the cosmos that was Rome.⁵⁷⁰ The emperor is the very centre of this staging of the war as a ritual. The emperor by grace of his *virtus* ensures *victoria*, and through this the perennial existence of Rome.⁵⁷¹

The primary stage where this ‘Roman war and peace’ was staged was the triumph. In this, all components of the Roman order were expressed symbolically. As Östenberg has shown, the triumph became a means of ‘showing Rome to Rome.’⁵⁷² Further, the Roman triumph was monumentalized perennially in visual arts. The pictorial programmes of triumphal arches are the most explicit expressions for the monumentalization of the imperial triumph.⁵⁷³ It is apparent that the same effect could be reached with coins. The function of the triumph could be appropriated by a series of coins, featuring a coherent group of images.⁵⁷⁴

However, the Roman language of images could be even denser. In the triumph, the spoils displayed represent a whole story of war, conquest and victory;⁵⁷⁵ each part

⁵⁶⁵ SHA *Divus Aurelianus* 31.5–6: “Aurelianus Augustus Cerronio Basso. Non oportet ulterius progredi militum gladiis. iam satis Palmyrenorum caesum atque concisum est. mulieribus non pepercimus, infantes occidimus, senes iugulavimus, rusticos interemimus. cui terras, cui urbem deinceps relinquemus? parcendum est iis qui remanserunt. credimus enim tam paucos tam multorum suppliciis esse correctos.”

⁵⁶⁶ Goldsworthy 1996, 114f.

⁵⁶⁷ Campbell 2002, 169f.

⁵⁶⁸ Mattern 1999, 115f.

⁵⁶⁹ Cf. Leander Touati 1987, 31–35.

⁵⁷⁰ Hölscher 2003, 15. “war becomes in this perspective a ritual system which makes visible an ideological system – the system of virtues that sustain the Roman world empire.”

⁵⁷¹ Estiot 1999b, 352: “c’ est l’empereur lui-même, qui peut, par sa *Virtus* militaire, la protection de la Victoire et ce contrat passé avec la divinité que sont les *Vota* cycliques, assurer la pérennité de Rome.”

⁵⁷² Östenberg 2003, 8.

⁵⁷³ One example is the pictorial programme on the arch of Galerius in Thessalonica; cf. Pond-Rothman 1977, 449–453 and more recently Mayer 2002, 57–65.

⁵⁷⁴ Cf. Grunow-Sobocinski 2006, 599.

⁵⁷⁵ Östenberg 2003 290: “Similarly, we might say of the Roman triumphs that conquest was fully defined and confirmed by the visual display (and its viewing) and written nomination (and its reading) of each single part.”

‘represented the whole’. Similarly, one coin-image could function as *pars pro toto*. Moreover, coin images were made ‘multi-layered’ through the combination of various significative elements. Frequently, a familiar image representing one ‘part of the whole’ can be given further interpretations through the addition of another ideologically-laden element; this may be taken from an image representing ‘another part’ of the whole. The *hasta* was one such powerful symbol, as it not only represented martial powers, but also traditions and the jurisdiction of Rome. It was a sign of military command, of religion and of sovereignty.⁵⁷⁶ The elaborate shields, depicting whole battle-scenes and featured on some portraits of Probus, present another example. As pointed out by Pink, it is doubtful whether such shields were actually carried by the emperor in battle; rather, such shields represent adaptations of the imagery usually featured on coin-reverses.⁵⁷⁷ With such adaptations, symbolically dense images could be created.

In this way, more complex concepts could be expressed on one single coin. As an example, we may take an aureus struck for Probus in Siscia. The reverse of this coin features the legend VIRTVS AVGVSTI. The motif depicts Mars, carrying a *hasta* with the point forward, and a trophy over the shoulder. Beneath him, two prisoners are huddling (fig. 2). The ideas of *virtus*, *victoria* and *pax* are all brought together in the same image. One coin, alone, could convey the whole idea of Roman order. Moreover, even the mere portrait of the emperor could feature all the facets of war and peace, and express them in one image which was simple and coherent, yet complex and ambiguous.

Two conclusions can be drawn from the coin-images investigated in this chapter. Firstly, the ‘monumental capacity’ of the coins featuring these images is greatly enhanced. An expansion of what could be expressed on one single coin is reached through modification of the imagery. The references to *Virtus Augusti* illustrate this most explicitly. Reverses referring to *Virtus Augusti* are frequent in the coinages of the later soldier-emperors. Furthermore, the *virtus* of the emperor can also be expressed with obverse portraits. Sometimes these portraits are struck on coins featuring reverses referring to *Virtus Augusti*. However, more frequently, obverse portraits exalting the *virtus* of the emperor are combined with reverses referring to *victoria*, *pax* or the ‘fruits of peace.’ Each single coin, in a sense, becomes a ‘monument’ (cf. chap. 1.6).

Secondly, the coin-series struck for the soldier-emperors do not appear to have been conceived to form ‘narrative sequences.’ Rather, all war-images could simultaneously be part of the whole. In several coin-series struck for the later soldier-emperors, the whole series of war-images is brought to expression. One tendency can sometimes be discerned. This is that a coin-series focusing on references to *virtus*, *victoria* and *pax* gives way to coin-series focusing on the ‘fruits of peace,’ such as *fortuna*, *felicitas*, *abundantia* and the like. The coin-series nos. 6 and 7 of Göbl, struck in the city of Rome for Gallienus, is an example of this tendency. However, more frequently, all

⁵⁷⁶ Bastien II, 435; Alföldi 1959, 2f.

⁵⁷⁷ Pink 1949, 19.

these references appear simultaneously, in the same coin-series. I therefore suggest that such coin-series also had a monumental, commemorative character.

One example of such a 'monumental' coin-series is the Estiot's series no. 2, struck for Tacitus in Ticinum. In this coin-series, the departure of the emperor for the campaigns, as well as his (hoped-for) victorious return are expressed with references to *Victoria Augusti*, *Pax Augusti*, *Victoria Gothica*, Mars Pacifer and *Securitas perpetua*.⁵⁷⁸ Another example is the coin-series considered by Pink to have been struck for the triumphs of Probus in the city of Rome in 281–82. In this coin-series, references to *Virtus Probi Augusti* and *victoria* occur along with the coins featuring the legends VBIQVE PAX and VICTORIOSO SEMPER.⁵⁷⁹ A third example is the first coin-series of Gricourt, struck for Carus in Ticinum. Coins attributed to this series feature the reverse legends VICTORIA AVG, SPES PVBLICA, ABVNDANTIA AVG, VIRTVS AVG, PERPETVITATE AVG and PAX EXERCITI.⁵⁸⁰ In one single emission of coins, the whole Roman outlook towards the world is expressed: to paraphrase Östenberg, 'Rome strikes itself' on the coin-flans.

These observations of the coinages of the later soldier-emperors suggest that the staging of war and peace in visual media in this age was not made 'at random.' Moreover, the images on the coins struck during this period do not seem unconventional in any way. On the contrary, the staging of war was made with the same images, and on just as grand a scale, as previously in the imperial age. The difference, rather, lay in the *medium*. Or rather, an already-existing and well-tried medium was used, only on a more ambitious and ingenious scale than was usual. Under the later soldier-emperors, the potential of expressing a language of images on coins was pressed to its limits. This demonstrates the capacity of Roman imperial authority of adapting and switching between different strategies of visual communication.

The imagery on triumphal arches represents the closest parallel to the military imagery featured on the coins struck for the later soldier-emperors. Imperial statuary may be regarded as another parallel. Further, the cuirasses of statues of Roman emperors could also be laden with various symbolic motives. Arguably, the most famous example is the cuirass of the statue of Augustus from Prima Porta: as Imhof observed, this features a 'symbolic typology of military conquest.'⁵⁸¹

How are we to account for the adaption of such 'symbolic typologies of military conquests' on the coins struck for the later soldier-emperors? I suggest that these coins, with their novel motifs, were designed to assume the function of imperial statues and monuments. With dense and multi-layered iconography, these coins aimed at expressing all the ideas of imperial authority that would normally have been expressed through imperial statuary and larger-scale monuments. In short, the coins of the soldier-emperors functioned as 'monuments in miniature.'

⁵⁷⁸ Cf. Estiot 2004, 247–249.

⁵⁷⁹ Pink 1949, 58f.

⁵⁸⁰ Gricourt 2000, 19

⁵⁸¹ Imhof 1957, 207; cf. R.-Alföldi 1999, 98–102.

Why, then, were such ‘monuments in miniature’ created during this period? The incessant warfare, obviously, may have been one reason. The emperors constantly needed to assure the empire that the imperial authority could maintain *securitas*. Therefore, there was an increasing need for references to the *virtus* and victoriousness of the emperor. The emperors, simply, needed their triumphal arches. They also needed to send out ‘statues’ so that the *imago* of the emperor could be ‘present’ and invoke loyalty where it was needed.⁵⁸² The coins were to create *a monument over the virtus* and an impression of *presence of the emperor*.

This suggestion, however, is not sufficient. Rome had been to war before. The presence of the *imago* of the victorious emperor had been needed before. Why, then, do these ‘*Zusatz*-monuments’ appear on a wider scale only under the later soldier-emperors?

The explanation lies in the notion that the coin-images that appear c. 260–295 do not just refer to the victorious emperor. Other images are also incorporated. These images refer to complex issues of Roman society and developments of the Roman empire. These were related to the wars of the age. These issues present a reason why the ‘*Zusatz*-monuments’ were created in the age of the later soldier-emperors, and not before. In the following chapters, I will turn to such issues, that influenced the shaping and contents of the coin-imagery under the later soldier-emperors.

⁵⁸² For this aspect of the function of the imperial *imago*, cf. Pekáry 1985, 22f.

3. ...*ET FRATRES SUI*: EMPERORS, SOLDIERS AND OFFICERS

3.1. “*Be harmonious, enrich the soldiers...*”

On his deathbed, Septimius Severus is reported to have taken leave of his sons with the famous words: “be harmonious, enrich the soldiers, and scorn all other men.”⁵⁸³ The empire that developed under the Severan dynasty was famously characterized by Rostovtzeff as a ‘military monarchy’;⁵⁸⁴ the last words of Septimius Severus have obviously been a quite convenient reference for this view.

In the previous chapter, some patterns in the use of military imagery in imperial visual arts in the later third century have been explored. It has become apparent that the military prowess of the emperors during this period is expressed in more complex ways than under previous emperors. This prowess is expressed through an ingenious manner of adaption and combinations of imagery previously used for coinage, and inclusions of some imagery not used for coinage until the later third century. Tentatively, a reason for this – the creation of a kind of ‘monuments in miniature’ – has been suggested.

What do these ‘monuments in miniature’ tell us? Which factors influenced the choice of imagery? In the previous chapter, I explored the issue which throws its shadow over most coin-imagery of the soldier-emperors: the never-ceasing warfare and need for military victory. However, the emperor did not fight the wars of the Roman empire alone; he depended on his soldiers for success. In this chapter, the importance of the soldiers for imperial authority and for the shaping of coin-imagery will be explored.

Of course, it is only logical to assume that the novel military imagery created in the later half of the third century is a reference to the increasing importance of the soldiers. However, this is only one part of the problem. There is still the problem of why this imagery is developed in the later half of the third century, and not earlier. One explanation has already been hinted at – it is only then that the ‘monuments in miniature’ are needed. However, there may also be another explanation. In this chapter,

⁵⁸³ Dio Cass. 77.15.2: “ὁμονοεῖτε, τοὺς στρατιώτας πλουτίζετε, τῶν ἄλλων πάντων καταφρονεῖτε.”

⁵⁸⁴ Cf. Rostovtzeff 1926, chap. 9, ‘The Military Monarchy.’

I will argue that the military imagery is also connected to certain developments of the army which take place in the second half of the third century.

In the first part of the chapter, I will examine the ways in which the legions, the backbone of the Roman army, influence the creation of coin-imagery. Fundamental for good relations between the emperor and the soldiers was the idea that the emperor was the *commilito* of the soldiers. In a first sub-chapter I examine some subtle ways by which the soldier-emperors could be portrayed on their coins as 'one of the men.' Thereby, an impression of an emperor who was 'on terms with his soldiers' could be created.

Further, I will examine how an impression of the loyalty of the legions is created with various references to the fidelity and unity of the troops. In this part, I conclude that such references in some cases were more common at the proclamation of a new emperor, but occur continuously. The emperor was forced to demonstrate the loyalty of the troops repeatedly. This testifies to the notion that legitimation is an ongoing process.

In the second half of the chapter, I turn to certain developments of the 'Roman armed forces' in the 260s, and the ways in which these influence coin-imagery. The establishment of cavalry units is one of the most important processes of the second half of the third century. I suggest that the cavalry presented the emperor with more flexible means at his disposal to defend his position; however, the cavalry could also present a threat. A range of coin-images which are characteristic for the soldier-emperors refer explicitly to the cavalry. Accordingly, these images may have been intended to convey an impression that the emperor enjoyed the loyalty of these forces.

Another development of the army is that in the second half of the third century, the military is assumed to have been professionalized. In the fifth sub-chapter, I discuss whether this could have led to the emergence of an 'officer-corps' and which role this may have had for imperial authority. More specifically, the question addressed in chapter I, whether the officers surrounding the emperor could function as an *aula Caesaris*, will be addressed. It will be suggested that the officers' corps could indeed assume this function; however, this 'court' is an unstable one, since the army features other structures as well, conflicting with the court-like structures. A distinct portrait-type, which I refer to as the '*pugio*-type', has been suggested to be a reference to the importance of the loyalty of the officers. I conclude that this imagery, rather, is most likely to constitute references to certain elite units, the loyalty of which was also important for the emperor.

This importance of the officers may be connected with an interesting tendency in the age of the soldier-emperors. This is that usurpers present themselves as 'military colleagues' rather than as rivals of the supreme power. In the final part of the chapter, I argue that this understanding of imperial authority is pointing directly forward to the division of imperial power conceived for the first tetrarchy in 293.

3.2. *Being one of the men*

He incited others by the example of his own soldiery spirit; he would walk as much as twenty miles fully armed; he cleared the camps of banqueting-rooms, porticoes, grottos, and bowers, generally wore the commonest clothing, would have no gold ornaments on his sword-belt or jewels on the clasp, would scarcely consent to have his sword furnished with an ivory hilt, visited the sick soldiers in their quarters ... and, lastly, improved the soldiers' arms and equipment.⁵⁸⁵

The picture of Hadrian presented by the biographer 'Aelius Spartianus' in the *Historia Augusta* is, on the whole, a rather disdainful one. However, his simple habits while on campaign with the legions form one of few characteristics of the emperor that Spartianus appreciates. A recurring type of depiction of the soldier-emperors apparently is conceived to express exactly this: the simple and soldierly habits of the emperor. This suggests that the opinion of Spartianus regarding which habits an emperor should have while on campaign were not only personal opinions, but more widely spread.

In the previous chapter, I mentioned that the cuirass is the piece of equipment with which the emperor is most frequently depicted on coins. The so called 'muscular cuirass', the cuirass-type with which the emperor is usually depicted in earlier Roman imperial coinage, still occurs on the coin-images of the soldier-emperors. However, from the reign of Aurelian onwards, 'muscular cuirasses' are only depicted infrequently. Nevertheless, the Roman army also used other types of cuirasses, such as the *lorica squamata* (a cuirass made out of small metal plaques stitched together), and the *lorica hamata* (a mail-shirt). These were simpler, more comfortable cuirasses that were probably better suited to army campaigns than the muscular ones.⁵⁸⁶ Only a few such cuirasses have been preserved, although many fragments are known. On the other hand, they are very common in pictorial representations from the second and third centuries.⁵⁸⁷

As previously noted, portraits depicting the emperor wearing these cuirasses become the most common portrait-types from the first 'proper' coin-series which is struck for Aurelian and onwards (cf. chap. 2.3). Another characteristic of these new portrait-types may also be noted: the imagery introduced in the coin-series following the first 'proper' coin-series struck for Aurelian frequently features portraits which are somewhat 'elongated'. These portraits depict a larger part of the body, frequently from the shoulder and upwards, but in some cases, even from the waist and up.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁵ SHA *Hadrianus* 10.4–8. "exemplo etiam virtutis suae ceteros adhortatus, cum etiam vicena milia pedibus armatus ambularet, triclinia de castris et porticus et cryptas et topia dirueret, vestem humillimam frequenter acciperet, sine auro balteum sumeret, sine gemmis fibula stringeret, capulo vix eburneo spatham clauderet, aegros milites in hospitibus suis videret ... arma postremo eorum supellectilemque corrigeret."

⁵⁸⁶ Bastien I, 262–65.

⁵⁸⁷ For an overview, cf. Robinson 1975, 153–173.

⁵⁸⁸ Cf. Estiot 1995, Tav. 1, nos. 42–72 (coins attributed to em. 2 of Rome).

This modification of the portrait enables the die-cutter to indicate in more detail with which kind of armour the emperor is depicted. The introduction on a wide scale of these ‘elongated portraits’, which clearly depict the emperor wearing various kinds of *loricae*, calls for an explanation.

Whether these *loricae* were actually used more often by the soldier-emperors than by earlier emperors is not the point. What I am suggesting is rather that coin-imagery was adapted to enable a *demonstration* that the emperor was wearing the field armour; and, further, that this demonstration had become more important than previously.

I have also already mentioned that the depiction of the emperor wearing a paludamentum over his cuirass becomes more common. As noted, the *paludamentum* is also a garment associated with ‘field duty’ (cf. chap. 2.2). It was worn by members of the civil administration on duty in the provinces. The frequent depictions of the *loricae* and *paludamenta* on the coin-images of the soldier-emperors, I think, should be understood as a reference to such ‘field duties.’

Similar to the portraits depicting the emperor wearing a cuirass, ‘paludamentum-portraits’ of the later soldier-emperors are often more elaborate previously. Sometimes, the die-cutters have evidently made some effort to depict the *fibula* holding the *paludamentum* together on the shoulder. This *fibula* is also occasionally very prominent on sculpture busts of emperors from the second century where the emperor is depicted wearing a *paludamentum*.⁵⁸⁹ In the *Historia Augusta* we are told that Aurelian was the first emperor who allowed his soldiers to adorn their attire with gold *fibulae*, instead of – as had been the practise earlier – brooches of silver.⁵⁹⁰ It may be noted that certain portraits of Aurelian depict the emperor with such elaborate *fibulae*.⁵⁹¹ Drawing on the evidence from modern case studies, it has been suggested that in the communities of the soldiers, objects such as tunics and *fibulae* could be used as signs of belonging to a certain group.⁵⁹² I therefore suggest that these iconographic details could have served the purpose of depicting the emperor as ‘one of the soldiers.’

Another detail that should also be mentioned in connection with this is one which is rarely ever discussed. This is perhaps because it is so common: the beard, which most of the emperors from Claudius Gothicus to Diocletian and his tetrarchs are depicted wearing. This beard is a short-cut full beard, quite different from the longer, more ‘flamboyant’ beards introduced by Hadrian and that became very much in fashion under the Antonines and the Severans.⁵⁹³ R.R.R. Smith has suggested that the beard characteristic for the soldier-emperors was a ‘campaign beard’ of a kind that soldiers grew while out in the field. Depicting this beard and not ‘symbolically shaving

⁵⁸⁹ Bastien I, 244–248.

⁵⁹⁰ SHA *Divus Aurelianus* 46.5.

⁵⁹¹ Bastien II, 406.

⁵⁹² James 2001, 85.

⁵⁹³ Cf. Smith 1998, 87.

the emperor' enabled the military character of these emperors to shine through much more directly than in the depictions of previous emperors.⁵⁹⁴

This style of depiction is highly characteristic for the coin-portraits of Claudius Gothicus, Aurelian, Probus, Carus, Diocletian and Maximinian. Drawing on the evidence of these coin-portraits, a number of sculptures have been identified as portraits of these soldier-emperors. Four famous bronze portrait heads were found in the sea off Brescia; two of these heads have also been suggested to depict Claudius Gothicus. This identification, however, has since been refuted. However, a sculptural portrait now in Worchester, Mass., has been given a more certain identification as a depiction of Claudius Gothicus.⁵⁹⁵

Likewise, a few sculptural portraits, featuring the same grim features as the distinct coin-portraits of Aurelian and Probus, have been identified as portraits of these two emperors. The two 'other' bronze heads from Brescia (cf. above) were identified by Felletti-Maj as depictions of Probus and by Bergmann as depictions of Probus and Aurelian respectively.⁵⁹⁶ Further, one of the most well-known portraits usually regarded as a portrait of a soldier-emperor is the sculptural-portrait usually identified as a depiction of Probus. This portrait is in the Palazzo Nuovo of the Musei Capitolini.⁵⁹⁷

The portrait-style is also characteristic for the coin-portraits of Carus, although, notably, not for those of his sons. No sculptural portrait has, at least with any certainty, been identified as a depiction of this emperor. The style is also typical for portraits of Diocletian, Maximian and the subsequent tetrarchs. Several sculptures suggested to depict the tetrarchs and featuring these 'soldier-beards' are known. The most famous example of this type would be the portrait-group of the four tetrarchs that is now walled into the external walls of the treasury of the cathedral of San Marco in Venice (*fig. 16*).⁵⁹⁸

These various portraits, then, all adhere to a distinct style. This is underlined by the notion that portraits of other soldier-emperors adhere to *other* distinct styles. A number of soldier-emperors are depicted with a 'beard-style' more reminiscent of that common in the second century. The style is characteristic for the coin-portraits of Carinus and for a larger than life-size sculptural portrait usually identified as a depiction of him. This portrait was found in the Castro Pretorio in Rome, and is now in

⁵⁹⁴ Smith 1997, 179 and 197; cf. Smith 2002, 139.

⁵⁹⁵ Felletti Maj identified two of the heads from Brescia as depictions of Claudius Gothicus, cf. Felletti-Maj 1958, 262, nos 351–352 and Tav. 51, nos. 171–174. The identification has frequently been refuted, cf. Wegner 1979, 136 and Bergmann 1977, 110. The sculptural portrait in Worchester, Mass. is identified as a depiction of Claudius Gothicus by Bergmann, cf. Bergmann 1977, 105f. and Taf. 32, nos. 1–3.

⁵⁹⁶ Cf. Felletti-Maj 1958, 278f, nos 371–72 and Tav. 56, nos. 193–196. Cf. Bergmann 1977, 110–115 and Taf. 33, nos. 1–4. This identification was refuted by Wegner; cf. Wegner 1979, 153.

⁵⁹⁷ Felletti-Maj 1958, 277f, no. 370 and Tav. 55, no. 192. Cf. Bergmann 1977, 107f.; Cf. also Rößler 1993, 361–365. Wegner, however, is sceptic, cf. Wegner 1979, 153. The identification has also been refuted, cf. Meischner 1986, 225f.

⁵⁹⁸ Cf. L'Orange 1984, 6–10. It should be noted that the identification of the statue-group from San Marco as the first tetrarchy has been disputed, cf. Laubscher 1999, 242.

the Musei Capitolini.⁵⁹⁹ This style is much in vogue around c. 250. It is also a characteristic of the coin-portraits and numerous sculptural portraits identified as depictions of Gallienus. Another sculptural portrait of this type worthy of note is the one suggested to depict either Aurelian or Diocletian. This was found in Nicomedia and is now in the Archaeological museum in Istanbul (cf. further chap. 5.7).

In short, a number of sculptural portraits have been identified as depictions of some of the soldier-emperors. No identification seems completely certain. However, these portraits all seem to adhere to a distinct style – a sort of ‘soldier-type.’ In my view, this portrait-type was intended to depict an emperor, who, while on campaign, spent his time together with his *commilitones*, sharing their burdens and enduring their hardships. In a more abstract sense, the portrait-type was conceived to depict an emperor who was actively taking part in the defence of the empire, in order to bring victory for the Roman arms by the grace of his *virtus*. For the emperors who succeeded Gallienus – the emperor who appears to have earned the hatred of his chroniclers by choosing to *remain* in the city of Rome – such imagery must have appeared as especially suitable.

This imagery may have been intended as a message to potential usurpers that the emperor was in control of the army. It could also have been intended for inhabitants of the provinces – who were waiting for the arrival of the imperial army. Furthermore, it may have been intended for the soldiers of the legions, as a message that the emperor was one of them.

3.3. *The legions: an armed society?*

In chapter I, adapting a model presented by Winterling, I proposed that the power of the soldier-emperors rested on two ‘pillars’ – the soldiers on the one hand and civilian society on the other. The role of the soldiers in Roman society – or rather as a *counterpart* to Roman society is easily imagined: Rostovtzeff presented a compelling image of a third century Roman army, which mercilessly intended to shatter Roman society.⁶⁰⁰ Obviously, the emperor depended on the loyalty of these soldiers and therefore had to buy it. As mentioned, Estiot argues that the gold coinage of the soldier-emperors was struck as payment for the soldiers (cf. chap. 1.7). This picture is somewhat too categorical. For one thing, as James points out, it must be misleading to regard the army as consisting of “disciplined and murderously efficient automata;”

⁵⁹⁹ Cf. Felletti-Maj 1958, 282, no. 378f and Tav. 58, no. 203. Cf. Wegner 1979, 158f. and Taf. 61.

⁶⁰⁰ Rostovtzeff 1926, 406: “The policy of the military monarchy thus triumphed over the last attempt of the city *bourgeoisie* to restore the supremacy of the intellectual and propertied classes in the Roman empire. But the victory of the army was won at the expense of the safety and the prosperity of the empire. The victors indulged in a real orgy and reduced the empire to such a condition that its very existence was for a while imperiled.”

this is an idea that originated in the political constitution of early modern Britain, where people were ‘gun-fodder.’⁶⁰¹

When imperial authority dealt with the army, it dealt with an intricate society. In an important article, MacMullen pointed at various indications that the soldiers would have regarded themselves as members of a society of their own. For example, members from certain legions tended to form their own blocks in *coloniae*. Further, MacMullen pointed to the fact that the legions were characterized by special signs and appellatives (soldiers addressed each other as *commilitones* and *contubernales*; the latter can be translated as ‘tentmates’). MacMullen also observed the strict organisation of the legions, not least their camps. The Roman military camp was organised according to certain strict rules, and could, in a sense, become a universe of its own.⁶⁰² Additionally, Flaig has later pointed towards the long service (25 years) of the soldiers as an important factor.⁶⁰³

These notions, admittedly, do not contradict Rostotzeff’s idea of an army intent on shattering civilian society. However, they suggest that the relations between imperial authority and the military were ‘not just about money’ or about buying (temporary) non-aggressivity from the troops. This is because it is apparent that, in the military society, there were other values than strictly economic ones. Repeatedly, it has been pointed out that honour and esteem, both within the military society and between the military society and its commander, were of crucial importance for the conduct of the army.⁶⁰⁴ This esteem motivated the commander to appear as ‘one of the men;’⁶⁰⁵ it is also most likely that the importance of this esteem is one reason for the depiction of the emperor as ‘one of the men.’

Further, this military ‘society’ was not a homogenous one. James points out that Roman writers never talk of the ‘army’ but of ‘the soldiers’, or of the legions. Hence it can be questioned whether we can talk of a ‘Roman army’ at all. Rather, this army should be understood as a network of groups that it was necessary to win for the cause of the emperor. Further, these groups may have had quite different motives; James observes that what is striking in Roman accounts of the activities of their armies is the effort that often seems to have been required to persuade the armies to cooperate.⁶⁰⁶

The coinages of the Roman emperors can be regarded as tangible expressions of this ‘persuasion.’ Obviously, as the soldiers were paid with coins, these coins were a substantial part of the actual persuasion. In addition, the patterns of coinage and the imagery on the coins refer to the other values held in esteem by the military. In the following section, I will examine certain motifs that constitute such references.

⁶⁰¹ James 2001, 78: “Ultimately this conceptualisation finds its roots in the political constitution of early modern Britain, where people were subjects rather than citizens, in a world where social inferiors like Wellingtons ‘scum’-soldiers in the Peninsular war were simply expected to do as they were told.”

⁶⁰² MacMullen 1984, 441–447.

⁶⁰³ Flaig 1992, 133.

⁶⁰⁴ MacMullen 1984, 447–450; cf. Lendon 1997, 237–243.

⁶⁰⁵ Cf. MacMullen 1984, 451.

⁶⁰⁶ James 2001, 78.

Fides and Concordia

The first thing any emperor would have to do as far as the troops were concerned was to ensure their loyalty. Moreover, in order to gain acceptance from other groups, it was important to *assure them* that the emperor enjoyed the loyalty of the troops. Coin-types featuring variants of the legends CONCORDIA MILITVM and FIDES MILITVM represented the most obvious references to this in coinage (fig. 17).

Coins referring to *Fides militum* are attributed to coin-series struck for Gallienus in the city of Rome, Mediolanum and Siscia and dated to the first half of the 260s. However, on the whole, *Fides militum*-types seem only to have been used on a limited scale for this emperor.⁶⁰⁷ This is not to say that references to the legions of Gallienus were neglected in the coinage struck for him. As a contrast, the reference to *Fides militum* is frequent in a series of large bronze coins struck for Postumus in Gaul, dated to 261.⁶⁰⁸ It is easy to imagine that after Postumus had assumed the purple, it was of the utmost importance to assure his sympathisers that he could defend his position with military power.

The coinage of Claudius Gothicus demonstrates a more distinct pattern. A series of large gold multiple aurei struck for this emperor is attributed to the mint of Mediolanum. The reverse features the legend CONCORDIA EXERCITVS. The same reference to *Concordia exercitus* and the more novel legend PAX EXERC also occur on regular aurei, which are also attributed to Mediolanum.⁶⁰⁹ References to *Fides militum* occur on antoniniani attributed to Mediolanum, Siscia and the city of Rome;⁶¹⁰ at the latter mint, novel coin-types featuring the legends GENIVS EXERCI and FIDES EXERCI are also struck.⁶¹¹ Whatever the circumstances surrounding the proclamation of Claudius Gothicus, the assurance of the loyalty of the soldiers must have been more urgent than ever.

After the death of Claudius Gothicus, references to *Fides exerciti* and *Concordia exercitus* appear on both gold and billon coins struck for Quintillus in Mediolanum;⁶¹² it is apparent that it became important for Quintillus to appeal to the loyalty of the soldiers who had acclaimed his predecessor. Nevertheless, it must also have been important to assure the sympathisers of Quintillus that he enjoyed this loyalty. The same kind of loyalty must have been just as important for his adversary, Aurelian. In the first issues of coins struck for this emperor, attributed to the mints of Siscia and Mediolanum, references to *Fides militum* are very common. Further, new coin-types featuring the reverse legends CONCORDIA MILI, CONCO EXER and variants of

⁶⁰⁷ Göbl 2000, nos. 539 and 672–673 (Rome, Em. 7 and 9 of Göbl respectively); nos. 1072–1074 and 1370–1371 (Mediolanum, Em. 3 and 8 respectively), nos. 1433–1437 (Siscia, Em. 3).

⁶⁰⁸ Em. 3 of Bastien; cf. Bastien 1967, 134–140, nos. 68–79.

⁶⁰⁹ Huvelin 1986, 202–207; for billon coins, cf. Huvelin 1980, 114f, nos. 4 and 6; Bland & Burnett 1988, 184, nos. 1047 and 1019 respectively.

⁶¹⁰ Bland & Burnett 1988, 183f (Rome and Mediolanum); Alföldi 1935/36, 12, nos. 13–14 (Siscia).

⁶¹¹ Cf. Bland & Burnett 1988, 178–182.

⁶¹² Cf. Huvelin 1988, 176f. and 185–189.

the legend *CONCORD LEGI* are introduced. These references occur on both gold and billon coins; this also hints at the importance of these motifs for Aurelian.⁶¹³

The frequent use of these coin-types in the initial coinages of Claudius Gothicus, Quintillus and Aurelian suggest some instability in the empire in the years following the murder of Gallienus. However, the use of *Concordia militum*-types under Aurelian demonstrates that the importance of the loyalty of the troops did not end after the proclamation and the acceptance of a new emperor. After the *Concordia militum*-types have been introduced in the initial coin-series struck for Aurelian, they remain in use in Mediolanum; in the coinage attributed to Siscia, such a coin-type is re-introduced in coin-series dated to the autumn of 272. This type features a depiction of *Concordia* and the emperor clasping hands. Often this coin-type is combined with obverses featuring campaign-portraits or portraits of the emperor, holding a *victoriola*.⁶¹⁴ Further *Concordia militum*-types are attributed to the mint of unknown location and Cyzicus, and were probably struck for the campaigns of 272–273.⁶¹⁵

As noted in the introduction, a number of sources state that the assassination of Aurelian led to some confusion. Series of aurei struck for Severina were probably struck in 275, after the death of Aurelian. In these coin-series, a *Concordia militum*-type featuring the legend *CONCORDIAE MILITVM* and depicting *Concordia* holding two standards is the only coin-type used; it is also by far the most frequent coin-type in the billon coinage struck for Severina.⁶¹⁶

These coin-series, then, were probably struck during the ‘interregnum.’ Just as after the death of Gallienus, the loyalty of the troops was of the utmost importance. With this in mind, it is interesting to note that references to the *Concordia militum* and *Fides militum* are not as prominent in the coinages struck for Tacitus and Florian. Perhaps the worst problems with the loyalty of the troops had been solved by the proclamation of Tacitus. References to *Fides militum* occur on coins attributed to the earliest series of coins struck in Lugdunum for Tacitus;⁶¹⁷ perhaps these represented an appeal to the loyalty of the troops that, as Estiot argues, had proclaimed Tacitus emperor. The reference to *Fides militum* also occurs continuously in the city of Rome on coins struck for both Tacitus and Florian. However, in this case, a large number of different coin-types are used, and the referring to *Fides militum* may only have been used as ‘routine types.’ In a similar fashion, a *Concordia militum*-type is used in coin-series struck both for Tacitus and Florian and attributed to Siscia.⁶¹⁸

However, a few more novel versions of this coin-type are struck. A coin-type featuring the legend *CONSERVATOR MILITVM* is struck for Tacitus; coins of this type

⁶¹³ Estiot 2004, 318f. (Mediolanum) and 341–345 (Siscia).

⁶¹⁴ Estiot 2004, 320–323 (Mediolanum) and 358f (Siscia).

⁶¹⁵ Estiot 2004, 384–387 (mint of uncertain location) and 417 (Cyzicus).

⁶¹⁶ Estiot 2004, 308 (Rome; to this emission Estiot also attributes a denarius referring to Venus Felix); 328 (Ticinum); 364 (Siscia).

⁶¹⁷ Estiot 2004, 280.

⁶¹⁸ Estiot 2004, 308–313 and 314–317 (Rome); 369–377 and 378–381 (Siscia).

are attributed to the mints of Serdica and Cyzicus. The reverse motif of this type depicts Mars presenting a globe to the emperor.⁶¹⁹ This is an apt reference to the role of the emperor as the *patronus* of the soldiers. For Florian, a coin-type featuring the legend *CONCORDIA EXERCI* is struck in Ticinum; in Cyzicus, a new version of the *Concordia militum*-type is used. This type depicts a *Victoria* crowning the emperor with a wreath. Estiot suggests that these types could be interpreted as overt references to the campaigns against Probus, and the importance of the unity for victory in the struggle against this new threat.⁶²⁰

Under Probus, references to *Fides militum* and *Concordia militum* occur on coins attributed to Siscia and dated by Pink to the campaigns of 277–78. After this, these references no longer occur. Coins referring to *Fides militum* are also struck on coins attributed to the city of Rome. Further, coins referring to *Concordia militum* are estimated by Pink to have been struck in Ticinum throughout the reign of Probus. Coins referring to *Fides militum* are also attributed to this mint. However, these were probably not struck in the last years of the reign of Probus.⁶²¹

These references become less frequent from the second half of the 280s. Under Carus and his sons, they do not occur at all. In the early reign of Diocletian, references to *Fides militum* occur, although not on a wide scale. Coins referring to this are attributed to coin-series considered by Gricourt to have been struck in Ticinum from the end of 285 to the beginning of 286. Coins referring to *Fides militum* are also attributed to Siscia, and considered to have been struck from the end of 286 to the beginning of 287. The coin-type struck in Siscia depicts Diocletian presenting a globe to Maximian.⁶²² Obviously, the loyalty of the troops was important for the dyarchs, not least considering the usurpers of Britain. Not surprisingly, aurei referring to *Concordia militum* are also struck for their adversary, Carausius.⁶²³ Furthermore, coins referring to *Concordia militum* are later struck for the dyarchs. These coins are attributed to a mint at Heraclea, and dated by Webb to the beginning of the 290s. Coins referring to this, but struck for all four tetrarchs, are attributed by Webb to Cyzicus and Antioch.⁶²⁴

The evidence suggests that coins referring to *Concordia militum* and *Fides militum* are frequently struck early in the reigns of a new emperor. This is not surprising. However, these coin-types are also, in many cases, struck continuously throughout the reign of an emperor. This demonstrates that the emperor not only needed the loyalty of the troops when assuming the purple. He also needed to *retain* this loyalty: legitimacy is a continuous practise.

⁶¹⁹ Estiot 2004, 404f (Serdica) and 425 (Cyzicus); cf. Estiot 1987, 30.

⁶²⁰ Estiot 2004, 338f (Ticinum) and 429 (Cyzicus).

⁶²¹ Pink 1949, 46–48 and 50f (Siscia); 54–59 (Rome); 60–67 (Ticinum).

⁶²² Gricourt 2000, 70f (Ticinum); 92f (Siscia).

⁶²³ Huvelin 1985a, 116, nos. 1–3.

⁶²⁴ Heraclea: *RIC* V.2, 249, no. 284 (Diocletian) and 289, no. 595 (Maximian). Cyzicus: *RIC* V.2, 253, no. 306 (Diocletian); 291, nos. 602–604 and 606 (Maximian); 302, no. 672 (Constantius chlorus); 308–309, nos. 717–718 (Galerius). Antioch: *RIC* V.2, 256, no. 322 (Diocletian) and 294, no. 621 (Maximian).

However, the recognition that coins referring to *Fides militum* and *Concordia militum* are struck continuously may also enable a new interpretation of these concepts. Coins referring to *Fides militum* are in many cases attributed to coin-series considered to have been struck in celebration of certain military victories. In such cases, I suggest that the reference to *Fides militum* was not only a call for the loyalty of the troops. It was also a *declaration of triumph*: it proclaimed that the Roman arms were victorious *because* of the *fides* of the legions. An apt example of this is the reference to *Fides militum* in the coin-series attributed by Pink to the triumph of Probus that was celebrated in the city of Rome in 281/282.⁶²⁵ This is also illustrated by one reverse motif depicted on coins struck for Probus and referring to *Concordia militum*. The motif depicts the emperor crowned by a *Victoria* with a wreath:⁶²⁶ thanks to the *concordia* of the legions, the emperor is granted victory by the gods.

However, this image could also be given the opposite interpretation: since Jupiter grants the emperor victory, the legions will do wisely to keep united. The references to *fides* and *concordia* in the coinages of the soldier-emperor therefore suggest close and complex ties between the soldiers and the emperor. The emperor depended on the soldiers – but the soldiers also depended on the emperor, and the presence of the emperor, since the army is victorious through the *virtus* of the emperor.

Coins for certain units

A common way of making a more specific reference to the army was by way of striking coins with imagery referring to specific units, usually legions. One example of this practise is the vast issues of *denarii* for the legions of Mark Antony that were struck before the battle of Actium (cf. chap. 1.7).

Coins struck for specific legions are not as common under the soldier-emperors as one perhaps might expect. They seem to appear only in cases when the loyalty of certain legions became especially important. In the wake of the disastrous events in 260, Gallienus lost control over a number of military units, both in Gaul and in the east. The loyalty of the remaining ones would have been all the more important. A coin-series, which is attributed by Göbl to Mediolanum, consists completely of coins – including numerous heavy gold coins – struck for a number of legions. A number of these coins are struck with campaign-portraits. Moreover, in this coin-series, the portrait-type depicting the emperor wearing a helmet first occurs. Göbl considers this a reference to some demonstration of military valour of Gallienus. Special coins are struck for the praetorian cohorts.⁶²⁷

An interesting detail is that the names of the legions featured on these coins are usually followed by a formula reading for example V.P.V.F. It has been suggested by J. M. Jones that this should be interpreted as an acclamation of the loyalty of the

⁶²⁵ Cf. Pink 1949, 58f.

⁶²⁶ Cf. *RIC* V.2, 117, nos. 907–908.

⁶²⁷ Göbl 2000, 105; cf. Tab. 29.

legion addressed, and that it should be read as *quintum (annum) pia, quintum (annum) fidelis*.⁶²⁸

Other coins may refer to military units from certain parts of the empire. A coin-type struck for Quintillus and attributed to the last series of coins struck for this emperor in Mediolanum features the legend PANNONIAE. Huvelin suggests that this coin-type represented a call for loyalty in the face of the proclamation of Aurelian in Sirmium;⁶²⁹ it could also be suggested that the coin-type tried to assure that Pannonian troops remained loyal to Quintillus, despite the challenge.

Such references to Balkan troops are more common in the coinages of Aurelian. In one of the first coin-series in Siscia struck in November of 270, a reverse referring to *Genius Illyrici* is used for both gold and billon coins.⁶³⁰ Similar imagery occurs on a broader scale somewhat later, in December 270, in the first donativum struck for Aurelian in Mediolanum. Here, reference is again made to Danubian legions with the reverse legends GENIVS ILLVRICI, PANNONIAE and DACIA FELIX. These types were adapted from the coinage struck for Decius, the first Illyrian emperor. With these images, Aurelian could refer to the similarities between him and this predecessor. In addition, the imagery could also be interpreted as a promise to re-establish order in these provinces.⁶³¹

The virtues of the Illyrians are again remembered by Aurelian after the successful campaigns in the gold series struck in Tripolis following the sack of Palmyra in the spring of 273. The emperor once more pays tribute to the Danubian legions after returning from the east in the spring of 274, with coins struck in Siscia and Serdica featuring the legend VIRTUS ILLVRICI.⁶³² Thus, this imagery is much in use under Aurelian; it seems literally to follow him and his troops. Moreover, it might be noted that the imagery does not occur in the city of Rome.

The recurring references to the Balkans in the coinage struck for Aurelian is all the more striking as these references are totally absent in the coinages of Tacitus and Florian. A coin struck for Probus featuring the reverse legend RESTITVT ILLIVRICI (*sic*) is recorded from Siscia by Pink;⁶³³ otherwise, imagery referring to the Balkans falls into disuse. Therefore, it is obviously all the more telling when it appears one last time in the coinage of Iulianus of Pannonia from the captured mint at Siscia. One of the types struck in billon bears the legend PANNONIAE AVG.⁶³⁴ This clearly seems to indicate that the usurper was forced to rely on the loyalty of certain forces of the army.

⁶²⁸ Jones 1990, 166.

⁶²⁹ Huvelin 1988, 184.

⁶³⁰ Estiot 2004, 83f, 341 and 344–47. Cf. also Estiot 1999a, 131, no. 103, and *RIC* V.1, 289, no. 223.

⁶³¹ Estiot 2004, 71 and 318f.

⁶³² Estiot 2004, 438 (Tripolis); 360 (Siscia); 396 (Serdica).

⁶³³ Pink 1949, 50.

⁶³⁴ Gricourt 2000, 57.

A demonstration of presence: adlocutiones

One category of coins makes direct references to situations where the emperor met the soldiers in person. This category consists of coins that in various ways refer to *adlocutiones*.

A vital demand on the emperor was his *accessibility*; the result of this was a call for physical presence of the emperor. Hartmann characterizes this as a demand for *Kaisernähe*.⁶³⁵ An important event where this demand could be met was in the *adventus*-ceremony (cf. further chap. 4.3). The emperor, further, was largely expected to rule through the *spoken word*.⁶³⁶ In a military context, this demand could be met with the *adlocutio*, where the emperor harangued the soldier.⁶³⁷ Flaig suggests that in a symbolical sense, an *adlocutio* could function as the counterpart to the acclamation of an emperor⁶³⁸ – in a sense, the *adlocutio* becomes a “symbolical re-acclamation”. If this is correct, *adlocutiones* must have been ceremonies, which by necessity had to be repeated continuously by the emperor.

In the visual arts of the Roman empire, *adlocutiones* constitute a recurring motif from the beginning of the imperial age. Jones considers it likely that depictions of *adlocutiones* correspond to specific addresses.⁶³⁹ This motif is one of the few more elaborate motives retained in the language of images of the soldier-emperors: *adlocutiones* are frequently depicted on medallions. The fact that this motif is retained clearly indicates that the ceremony retained its importance. Moreover, *adlocutiones* are sometimes also depicted on shields and cuirasses of ‘campaign-portraits’.⁶⁴⁰

One distinct portrait-type, which is interesting in this respect, has frequently been overlooked: the type that depicts the emperor with the *pteryges*⁶⁴¹ of the cuirass raised; this suggests that the right arm is raised. This portrait-type, which is introduced on coins struck for Caracalla, has been suggested to correspond to *adventus*-ceremonies.⁶⁴² If so, it could just as well be intended to suggest an *adlocutio*. However, the type is not necessarily ‘tied’ to one specific meaning. As the raised right arm and hand of the emperor was a gesture which was highly symbolically laden,⁶⁴³ the portrait-type which depicts the emperor with raised *pteryges* became a compressed, ambiguous image which was symbolically potent.

⁶³⁵ Millar 1977, 3; cf. Hartmann 1982, 140–144.

⁶³⁶ Cf. Miles 2000, 52–56.

⁶³⁷ Campbell 1984, 70f.

⁶³⁸ Cf. Flaig 1992, 161.

⁶³⁹ Cf. Jones 1990, 4, for an overview of the *adlocutio* as motif in visual arts, cf. Brilliant 1963, 165–170.

⁶⁴⁰ Bastien II, 484f.

⁶⁴¹ The fringes of an armour covering the shoulders; cf. Robinson 1975, 148f.

⁶⁴² Bastien I, 276–78; cf. *idem* III, pl. 117, no. 3. It should be pointed out that the depictions of this portrait-type on coins struck for Caracalla and Gallienus depict the emperor from right with the *left* arm raised; Weder argues that this image-type should still be interpreted as a simplified *adventus*-image, as it is technically simpler to achieve. Cf. Weder 1981, 45f and Bastien I, 277.

⁶⁴³ Lehnen 1997, 156; for a discussion of the issue, cf. Lejdegård 2002, 137–141.

The portrait-type that depicts the emperor with raised *pteryges* is used on a medallion struck for Gallienus and dated to the joint reign with Valerian. The reverse depicts an *adventus*. A later medallion, which is dated to the sole reign, depicts an *adlocutio*; the obverse of this piece features a campaign-portrait.⁶⁴⁴ The ‘raised *pteryges*-portrait’ is used for coins struck for Aurelian and attributed to the earliest coin-series struck for this emperor in Mediolanum. Estiot considers these to refer to an *adventus*, to which some coins attributed to the same series explicitly refer.⁶⁴⁵ Aurelian is believed to have made an *adventus* in Mediolanum in December 270 (cf. chap. 4.5); an *adlocutio* before the troops stationed here must have been particularly desirable in this city, considering its central role in the events of the two previous years.

As has already been related (cf. chap. 2.3), Estiot reconstructs the movements of the emperor Tacitus through the empire with the help of coin-images. In the situation that followed the assassination of Aurelian, his successor would need to gain as firm support as possible. It is easy to imagine that Tacitus, accordingly, would have needed to address troops that were stationed in various cities. The campaign-portraits featured on aurei struck for Tacitus in Lugdunum have been referred to in the previous chapter. However, coins featuring depictions of the emperor with raised *pteryges* are attributed to the same coin-series. These coin-images have been interpreted as a reference to the fact that Tacitus was in the northern provinces of the empire at the time of his proclamation and made an *adventus* in Lugdunum.⁶⁴⁶

Estiot maintains that the first series of coins struck in the city of Rome were struck at the proclamation of Tacitus. These coins feature a portrait of the new emperor, which is a slightly modified portrait of Aurelian. Other coins attributed to the city of Rome featuring a different portrait, resembling that on the coins struck for Tacitus in Lugdunum. This portrait also features raised *pteryges*.⁶⁴⁷ Estiot attributes the coins featuring this portrait to a second series of coins struck in the city of Rome. Tacitus is believed to have proceeded from Lugdunum to the city of Rome, where he probably arrived in November 275. Once there, he is supposed to have made an *adlocutio*: a medallion featuring the legend ADLOCVTIO AVG depicts the emperor standing on a platform, accompanied by Sol, addressing his soldiers.⁶⁴⁸

Estiot argues that after visiting the *urbs aeterna*, Tacitus leaves for northern Italy and the march towards the east. Coins featuring the portrait first introduced in Lugdunum and then in the city of Rome are also attributed to Ticinum; these coins were probably struck at the arrival of Tacitus to this city. As has already been commented on (cf. chapt. 2.3), a number of coins are struck with campaign-portraits. Further, a medallion featuring the reverse legend ADLOCVTIO TACITI AVG is attributed to Ticinum. This medallion features a motif that is slightly different from that of

⁶⁴⁴ Cf. Göbl 2000, Taf. 27, no. 298b, and Taf. 60, no. 771g respectively.

⁶⁴⁵ Estiot 1995, Tav. 11, nos. 1563–1570 and 1573–1578; cf. Estiot 1999a, 71.

⁶⁴⁶ Weder 1981, 45; cf. Estiot 2004, 31.

⁶⁴⁷ Estiot 2004, 67 and pl. 53, for instance nos. 1559, 1560 and 1563.

⁶⁴⁸ Estiot 2004, 67 and pl. 90, no. 340.

the similar medallion attributed to the city of Rome. Both depict the usual motif of the emperor, standing on a podium and addressing the soldiers. However, in this case, the emperor is not accompanied by Sol, but instead crowned by a *Victoria*.⁶⁴⁹ Both variations of the motifs demonstrate how complex and ambiguous, symbolical images can be created with simple modifications of a simple motif. In this latter case, the ties between the presence of the emperor and the victoriousness of Rome are given a very eloquent expression.

Coins featuring images suggesting the presence of the emperor are further attributed to Siscia. Two aurei attributed to this mint feature portraits depicting the emperor with raised *pteryges*; two antoniniani also seem to feature this portrait-type. However, as these portraits are rather crudely executed, this cannot be said for certain. Nevertheless, it would be tempting to interpret these coins as references to an *adlocutio*, as they feature reverses referring to *Concordia militum*. Estiot maintains that this coin-series was struck for the presence of the emperor in Siscia at the time of his passing through Illyricum on his way east.⁶⁵⁰

In short, the coinage struck for Tacitus conveys an impression of an emperor anxious to visit the troops in order to gain their acceptance. Coins struck for Probus suggest that this emperor tried to adopt a policy similar to that of Tacitus. Similar to what Estiot does with the coin-series struck for Tacitus, Pink constructed a pattern, in which the movements of Probus can literally be followed through the coin-series struck for him (cf. further chap. 4.5). Coins referring to *adlocutiones* of Probus are attributed to coin-series struck in Ticinum and Siscia. The motif also occurs on aurei, attributed to the coin-series struck in Siscia for victory celebrations in 278; the obverse features a portrait of Probus holding a *victoriola*.⁶⁵¹ A gold coin-type and bronze medallions referring to *adlocutiones* of Probus are also attributed to the coin-series struck in the city of Rome in 281/282.⁶⁵² These references to *adlocutiones* in coin-series celebrating the victory of the emperor provide a triumphal character for the *adlocutio*.

In comparison with the 270s, the *adlocutio*-motif is used more infrequently in the 280s. A medallion, which is struck for Numerian, attributed to Siscia and dated to January 284, features a reverse motif depicting an *adlocutio*. The reverse features the legend ADLOCVTIO AVGG and depicts two augusti (Carinus and Numerian) addressing the soldiers together.⁶⁵³ In this case, the *adlocutio*-motif also refers to a dynastic theme; this theme is fundamental in the language of images conceived for Carus and his sons. In comparison with the medallions depicting *adlocutiones* struck for Tacitus, this motif demonstrates yet another subtle modification, through which the basic motif is made symbolically multi-layered.

⁶⁴⁹ Estiot 2004, 81 and pl. 91, no. 357.

⁶⁵⁰ Estiot 1999b, 356f and 416, nos 82–83. Cf. Estiot 2004, 94 and 367; cf. also Estiot 1987, 72, nos. 2076–2077.

⁶⁵¹ Pink 1949, 63f (Ticinum) and 49 (Siscia). Cf. also *RIC* V.2, 51, no. 321 and 78, no. 581 respectively.

⁶⁵² Pink 1949, 58; cf. Gneccchi II, 116, no. 5, and Tav. 119, no. 2.

⁶⁵³ Gricourt 2000, 52f; cf. Gneccchi II, 122, no. 1 (Numerian), and Tav. 123, no. 2.

It is quite likely that the coins and medallions depicting *adlocutiones* functioned as references to actual events. As far as the soldier-emperors are concerned, it is difficult to ascertain to which extent this is indeed the case. However, I would suggest that even in cases when depictions of *adlocutiones* may not refer to actual events, the reference was still relevant: the *adlocutiones* could be understood as ‘pseudo-events’, and as illustrations of the activities of the emperor.⁶⁵⁴ Further, in this sense, similar to the references to *fides* and *concordia*, I think that the *adlocutio*-motif could represent a symbolical reference to the ties that bound the emperor and the soldiers together. As such a reference, the *adlocutio*-motif could be subject to different modifications and adaptations, which made the basic motif more expressive.

3.4. ‘From the curule seat to the horseback’

As initially stated, using the military imagery of the soldier-emperors as a reference to the soldiers is only one of several reasons. ‘Soldier-emperors’ had been proclaimed before. Moreover, the ‘military anarchy’ continues for some 25 years before the characteristic imagery under investigation in this study is used on a wide scale. Accordingly, an explanation for the imagery should at least partly be connected to the relationship between emperor and soldiers during these specific decades. Can a *particular* relationship between the emperors and the army be postulated for the later half of the third century?

The composition of the army in the second half of the third century presents a key to this issue. As initially stated, Roman ‘military society’ should not be regarded as one single entity; as Simon James and others have pointed out, there never was a Roman army. Within the network of various military outfits, there were different groups of soldiers. Each of these could have their different status and rankings. Surely, there must have been considerable differences between their respective needs and interests.

From the 260s and onwards, this composition of the army is subject to certain important changes. The most important development of the Roman ‘armed forces’ in the second half of the third century is the development of the cavalry. Until the mid-third century, the cavalry had mainly been used in a supportive function operationally. Further, the cavalry had mostly consisted of *auxilia*.⁶⁵⁵ In the 260s, more independent cavalry units were established, that could be swiftly deployed where they were needed. The creation and organisation of these units has been somewhat debated. For long, it was held that they were organized under the reign of Gallienus as one single ‘Rapid task force’, with its headquarters in Mediolanum;⁶⁵⁶ more recent additions to the debate have challenged this view. Simon argues that there is no conclusive evidence that

⁶⁵⁴ A phrase first used by Daniel Boorstin, cf. Boorstin 1962, 9–12. Cf. also Burke 1992, 126.

⁶⁵⁵ Junkelmann 1991, 70–72.

⁶⁵⁶ Alföldi 1967, 10, n. 21; cf. also de Blois 1976, 26–28.

the ‘Rapid task force’ was set up under Gallienus, nor that it was organised as one single unit; more likely, there were several units, the development of which had been an ongoing process during a longer period.⁶⁵⁷ As far as this study is concerned, suffice it to state that it is apparent that mounted units became decisive in the warfare in the Roman empire from the 260s onwards. As far as the relationship between the armies and the emperor is concerned, what were the consequences of this development?

The notion that the emperor had access to such troops, added increased emphasis to his claims to the purple. With these units under his command, the emperor would be able to move faster and to strike harder. On the other hand, the awareness of the fact that the emperor *could* be present would also create a stronger *demand* for *Kaisernähe*. Moreover, the cavalry could pose as a threat to the authority of the emperor. Therefore, the retaining of its loyalty must have been of the utmost importance. This importance is suggested by the coinage that is attributed to the mint of Mediolanum. It has been pointed out that the very presence of the cavalry units must have been one important reason for the striking of coins in this city.⁶⁵⁸

The cavalry’s rise to power creates new demands on the role of the emperor. In the tenth oration of the Panegyrici Latini delivered by Mamertinus to Maximian in 289,⁶⁵⁹ the tasks of the emperor is illustrated in the following manner:

I should say, with apologies to the gods, that not even Jupiter himself changes the face of his own heavens, O emperor, as swiftly and easily as you doffed the *toga praetexta* and put on the cuirass, laying down staff and seizing a spear, transporting yourself from the tribunal to the field of battle, from the curule seat to horseback, and returning again from the fray in triumph ...⁶⁶⁰

In the biography of Tacitus in the *Historia Augusta*, the biographer ‘Flavius Vopiscus’ lets Tacitus commend the Roman senate in the following way:

Behold these members, which should be able to cast a dart, to hurl a spear, to clash a shield, and, as an example for instructing the soldiery, to ride without ceasing.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁷ Simon 1980, 448.

⁶⁵⁸ Estiot 1995, 43; cf. Göbl 2000, 100.

⁶⁵⁹ Nixon & Rodgers (eds.) 1994, 43.

⁶⁶⁰ Pan. Lat. 10.6.4: “Bona uenia deum dixerim, ne Iuppiter quidem ipse tanta celeritate faciem caeli sui uariat quam facile tu, imperator, togam praetextam sumpto thorace mutasti, hastam posito scipione rapuisti, a tribunali temet in campum, a curuli in equum transtulisti et rursus ex acie cum triumpho redisti ...”

⁶⁶¹ SHA *Tacitus* 4.6: “en membra, quae iaculari valeant, quae hastile torquere, quae clipeis intonare, quae ad exemplum docendi militis frequenter equitare.”

The introduction of 'cavalry-portraits'

Depictions from the third century of the emperor fighting on horseback are well-known, for instance from the Arch of Galerius in Thessalonica.⁶⁶² Another famous third century depiction of a Roman military commander fighting on horseback is that of the Ludovisi sarcophagus.⁶⁶³ On coins struck for the soldier-emperors, a whole range of motifs refers to the cavalry. A reverse motif which is frequently used is the one depicting a soldier – possibly the emperor himself – on horseback, charging at full pace, brandishing a *hasta* and often striking down one or more enemies. This motif is frequently used in combination with legends referring to *Virtus Augusti* (cf. chap. 2.3). Furthermore, this motif often occurs in miniature as a design on the shields featured on campaign-portraits.⁶⁶⁴

References to the cavalry could also be made with more subtle imagery. The *loricae squamatae* and *loricae hamatae*, which are normally featured on obverse portraits on coins struck for Aurelian and onwards, were especially favoured by the cavalry.⁶⁶⁵ It may further be noted that the rider depicted in 'charging rider-motifs' frequently carries a spear; he can also be equipped with a shield. With the passages from the 10th Latin panegyric and from the biography of Tacitus in the *Historia Augusta* in mind, there is much reason to assume that the campaign-portraits actually depict cavalry gear.

Bastien has observed that the ornate helmets depicted in many of these portraits bear marked resemblance to helmets that were used by cavalry forces. Such helmets – quite a number of which have survived – are usually assumed to have been intended for parades and inspections; Robinson refers to them as 'cavalry-sports helmets'.⁶⁶⁶ However, it may be noted that Junkelmann has demonstrated that it was technically possible to use these helmets also in battle.⁶⁶⁷ The decorations usually consist of geometrical patterns; occasionally, figures such as animals are engraved or gilded on the helmets. On sculptural reliefs, officers and praetorian guards are often depicted wearing attic helmets, which are very richly decorated in this fashion.⁶⁶⁸ Many coin-portraits of soldier-emperors, most notably those of Probus, but also of Postumus, Carus, Carinus and Maximian, depict helmets very similar to those that have been preserved.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶² Pond-Rothman 1977, 436.

⁶⁶³ Cf. Hamberg 1945, 181–185.

⁶⁶⁴ Bastien II, 483.

⁶⁶⁵ Robinson 1975, 171.

⁶⁶⁶ Cf. Robinson 1975, 107–135 for a presentation of the type.

⁶⁶⁷ Junkelmann 1991, 172.

⁶⁶⁸ Bastien I, 219.

⁶⁶⁹ Cf. Bastien 1976, Pl. B for a convenient depiction of various types.

The cavalry units rise to power

It seems reasonable to explain the introduction of these portrait-types with the rise to importance of the cavalry. These references to the cavalry are combined in different ways in the coin-imagery of the soldier-emperors. As already noted, reverses referring to the cavalry are especially frequent on coins attributed to Mediolanum. Göbl assumes that the 'legionary series' struck in Mediolanum (cf. above, chap. 3.3) were struck for the military units that made up the '*Reichsfeuerwehr*' of Gallienus.⁶⁷⁰ Some coins struck for Gallienus, dated by Göbl to coin-series struck after the disasters of 260, refer to the loyalty of the cavalry in a more explicit way. The reverse of one coin-type depicts a flying Pegasus and features the novel legend *ALACRITATI*; another depicts the legend *FIDEI EQVITVM* in a wreath.⁶⁷¹ The use of this imagery is drastically staggered after the *dux equitum* – probably meaning the commander of the cavalry – Aureolus rebelled against Gallienus in Mediolanum and sided with Postumus; this most likely happened in 268.⁶⁷² Coins probably struck by Aureolus for Postumus in Mediolanum, with the exception for the use of one *Salus Augusti*-type, wholly refer to the cavalry. Coins attributed to this series refer to *Fides equitum*, *Concordia equitum*, *Virtus equitum* and *Pax equitum*.⁶⁷³

Although Aureolus was overthrown, Gallienus did not live to enjoy the victory. The importance of the cavalry, however, did not diminish. The heavy gold multiples struck for Claudius Gothicus in Mediolanum (cf. above, chap. 3.3) feature a portrait of the emperor wearing a cuirass, upon which a 'charging rider-motif' is depicted.⁶⁷⁴ Perhaps this should be interpreted as a suggestion that Claudius Gothicus enjoyed the support of the cavalry.

No further reference seems to be made to the cavalry in the coinage struck in Mediolanum, or in the city of Rome. Presumably, these subsequent coin-series were struck after the emperor had moved eastward with the army. A *Virtus Augusti*-type, featuring the 'charging rider-motif,' is introduced in Siscia. This motif is also used with the legend *VIRTVS CLAVDI AVG* on an aureus struck for Claudius Gothicus in Cyzicus.⁶⁷⁵ Here, for the first time, a novel obverse portrait-type is introduced. This is the version of the usual campaign-portrait, which additionally depicts the emperor holding a horse by the bridle.⁶⁷⁶ The introduction of these types at mints in the Balkans and Asia Minor, respectively, may be a reference to the march eastwards of the emperor and his army.

In the coinage struck for Quintillus in Mediolanum, no references seem to be made to the cavalry. Aurelian, who was at the time commander of the cavalry, was

⁶⁷⁰ Göbl 2000, 106f.

⁶⁷¹ Cf. Em. 3 of Göbl, nos. 1051 and nos. 1068–1071 respectively.

⁶⁷² Kienast 1996, 228f.

⁶⁷³ Besly & Bland 1983, 146f, nos. 2471–2498; cf. Alföldi 1967, 6–15.

⁶⁷⁴ Cf. Bastien III, pl. 113, no. 1.

⁶⁷⁵ Alföldi 1935–36, 12, no. 12 and Taf. III, no. 17 (Siscia); Huvelin 1985b, 725 (Cyzicus).

⁶⁷⁶ Bastien II, 547.

proclaimed emperor in Sirmium in September 270.⁶⁷⁷ In Siscia, which is assumed to have been the first mint where coins were struck for Aurelian, the *Virtus Augusti*-type featuring the ‘charging rider-motif’ is used for both aurei and antoniniani. Estiot suggests that these coins were a reference to the Vandal wars;⁶⁷⁸ presumably, Aurelian and the cavalry had just taken part in these campaigns. In the coin-series presumably struck for Aurelian a little later in Mediolanum, references to *Virtus equitum* occur on both aurei and antoniniani. This reference does not occur under Claudius Gothicus and Quintillus.

Except for these very early occurrences, references to the cavalry are absent from the coinage struck for Aurelian; the charging rider-motif is only re-used twice. First, it is used for an antoninian struck in the city of Rome and dated to 273; second, in a coin-series struck in Cyzicus and dated to 273–274.⁶⁷⁹ A portrait-type similar to the one used for Claudius Gothicus, depicting the emperor with a cuirass adorned with a miniature ‘charging rider-motif’, also occurs on a coin attributed to Serdica.⁶⁸⁰ The references to the cavalry are supplanted by references to the Balkan units (cf. above, chap. 3.3). Did Aurelian only pay attention to the cavalry in the beginning of his reign? If so, this may possibly have presented a motif for the assassination of this emperor in 275.

Imagery referring to the cavalry is used on a similar, rather discreet scale, in the coinages struck for Tacitus and Florian. No coins featuring campaign-portraits depicting the emperor wearing a helmet are known to have been struck for either emperor. Coins struck for Tacitus and attributed to Siscia feature campaign-portraits, which depict the ‘charging rider-motif’ on the shields.⁶⁸¹ The ‘charging rider-motif’ further occurs on aurei, referring to *Virtus militum*, struck for Tacitus and attributed to Cyzicus. This motif also occurs on an antoninian struck for Florian attributed to the mint of Lugdunum.⁶⁸² However, in comparison with the coinages in 268–270, the coinages of 271–276 contain few references to the cavalry. This is somewhat curious. One wonders whether there were new re-organisations of the army, which reduced the importance of the cavalry in the 270s.

The cavalry from Probus to Maximian

If so, these re-organisations seem only to have been temporary, as references to the cavalry are far more frequent in the coinage struck for Probus. Campaign-portraits depicting Probus wearing various types of cavalry-helmets abound. Less common versions also occur. One such version, which only occurs on very rare coins struck for

⁶⁷⁷ Kienast 1996, 234.

⁶⁷⁸ Estiot 2004, 83f. and 341f.

⁶⁷⁹ Estiot 2004, 290 (Rome; cf. *R/C* V.1, 270, no. 42) and 418 (Cyzicus; cf. pl. 86, no. 269).

⁶⁸⁰ Estiot 2004, 392 and pl. 82, no. 184.

⁶⁸¹ Estiot 2004, 367.

⁶⁸² Estiot 2004, 425 (Cyzicus) and 285 (Lugdunum).

Probus and the dyarchs, is the one depicting the emperor holding what appear to be small spears or arrows. Pierre Bastien interpreted these as a divine attribute, namely the arrows of the deity Ved-Iovis.⁶⁸³ These ‘arrows’ are invariably depicted together with other gear that is quite easily recognisable as cavalry equipment. Therefore, I am rather inclined to interpret them as the short throwing spears, the *iacula*, that were used by the cavalry. Usually, each rider carried three or four such spears in a quiver.⁶⁸⁴ The portrait-type introduced in the coinage struck for Claudius Gothicus in Cyzicus, depicting the emperor holding a horse by the bridle, is also used.⁶⁸⁵ Further, the ‘charging rider-motif’ is much used at most mints. In the huge coin-series struck in Siscia and Ticinum for the campaigns of 277–278, the motif is depicted on reverses featuring the legends VIRTUS PROBI AVG and VIRTUS INVICTI AVG.⁶⁸⁶ As other coin-types referring to *Virtus Augusti*, those featuring the ‘charging rider-motif’ next occur in coin-series considered to have been struck towards the end of the reign of Probus.⁶⁸⁷

Judging from the coin-imagery, then, the cavalry seems to have reached its highest importance under Probus. The whole empire had once more been brought under the control of the *urbs aeterna*. However, this empire was still threatened by attacks on several fronts. In this situation, it is easy to imagine that the cavalry was kept extremely busy.

In the coinage struck for Carus, the references to the cavalry are, again, scarce. The policy of Carus was to share imperial power with his sons, Carinus and Numerian; in the coinages struck for them, there are a number of references to the cavalry. In visual imagery, Carinus and Numerian are presented as sharing more ‘active’ roles in the defence of the empire. Further, the imagery on coins struck for Carus and his sons indicates that the cavalry is regarded as the most important tool of the ‘active’ emperor. For Carinus, billon quinarii referring to *Virtus Augustorum* and featuring the ‘charging rider-motif’ are struck. Gricourt assumes this coin-type to have been struck to celebrate a victory early in the reign of Carus.⁶⁸⁸ The obverse of a coin struck for Carinus features a campaign-portrait of Carinus, holding a horse by the bridle; Gricourt considers this coin to have been struck to celebrate the return of Carinus from campaigns in 283.⁶⁸⁹

The same year, Carinus is joined in his tasks by Numerian; their roles as the ‘active’ emperors are demonstrated by the imagery of the gold medallion, exalting the *Virtus Augustorum*, which was struck for Numerian and dated to December 283 (cf. chap 2.4). It is telling that the medallion depicts the two junior emperors, mounted,

⁶⁸³ Cf. Bastien II, 443f.

⁶⁸⁴ Junkelmann 1992, 140.

⁶⁸⁵ Bastien II, 551f; cf. *RIC* V.2, 38, no. 189 and pl. 2, no. 7.

⁶⁸⁶ Pink 1949, 47–50 (Siscia); Estiot 2006, 215f. and pl. 6, nos. 17–21 (Ticinum).

⁶⁸⁷ Cf. Gysen 2000, 19 and 28f (Serdica); Pink 1949, 44 (Cyzicus) and 59 (Rome).

⁶⁸⁸ Gricourt 2000, 22; cf. *RIC* V.2, 159, no. 169.

⁶⁸⁹ Gricourt 2000, 25; cf. Bastien III, pl. 129, nos. 1–2.

in battle; as has also already been noted, the obverse features a portrait of Numerian, holding a horse by the bridle.⁶⁹⁰ Finally, after the death of Carus, Carinus becomes the new ‘*senior Augustus*’ and Numerian appears to take over the ‘active’ role completely. A *Virtus Augustorum*-type, featuring the ‘charging rider-motif’ is used on coins struck for Numerian, attributed to Lugdunum and dated to the autumn of 284.⁶⁹¹

The imperial ‘roles’ envisioned for Carus and his sons are also adapted by Diocletian and Maximian, with Maximian appearing as the ‘active’ emperor. Whereas the military capacity of Diocletian is stressed early in his reign, after the ascension of Maximian, this role is reserved for him.⁶⁹² Maximian is very often depicted with the cavalry gear described above. The rare obverse portrait-type that depicts the emperor with *iacula*, otherwise only known from the coinage of Probus, is used for coins struck for both dyarchs. However, the portrait-type which depicts the emperor holding a horse by the bridle is known only to have been used for Maximian (cf. chap. 2.3).⁶⁹³

‘Mythical warriors’?

In the decades following the 260s, the importance of the cavalry became a wide-ranging one, militarily and – as an effect – politically. Just as the praetorian guard had done in the first two centuries, the cavalry from time to time acted as ‘kingmaker.’ This is illustrated by the establishing of a mint in Ticinum. Estiot suggests that the mint of Mediolanum was moved to Ticinum in 274 because the *equites* stationed in Mediolanum had become too powerful. They could easily secure the mint for their own purposes. Otherwise, there would not seem to be any apparent reason for this move: Mediolanum was a larger city, more densely populated and, not least, more heavily fortified. Ticinum on the other hand, had really nothing to commend it except reasonable means of communication (cf. further chap. 4.5).⁶⁹⁴ Above, I have suggested that the comparative lack of references to the cavalry in 271–276 may have been connected to re-organisations of the cavalry units; perhaps the moving of the mint was a part of this.

Recently, Bartman has suggested that ‘cavalry sports-helmets’ were not intended primarily for battle but rather for parades, and above all to *hippikai*.⁶⁹⁵ The *hippikai* were horse exercises that had been an important part of the ceremonial events surrounding imperial power since the age of Augustus. Such horse exercises were multi-dimensional events, deeply associated with the myths of Rome (cf. further chap. 5.3). On a more practical level, *hippikai* were occasions where the officers and most likely

⁶⁹⁰ Gricourt 2000 51f; cf. Gnecci I, 11, no. 1 (Numerian), and Tav. 4, no. 7.

⁶⁹¹ Gricourt 2000, 65f; cf. Bastien 1976, 267, no. 614.

⁶⁹² Gricourt 2000, 89.

⁶⁹³ Cf. Bastien II, 443 (The ‘*iacula*-type’); 550 (the ‘horse-head’-type).

⁶⁹⁴ Estiot 1995, 51.

⁶⁹⁵ Bartman 2005, 102f.

the emperor would have been present as commander of the cavalry. Accordingly, like the *adlocutio*, the *hippika* would have been a ceremony where the *presence* of the emperor among, and together with, his soldiers was demonstrated. In this way, Bartman points out that such ceremonies became statements equivalent to monumental art.⁶⁹⁶

Following Bartman, I find it reasonable to assume that the imagery depicting elaborate cavalry equipment functioned as a visual reference to ceremonies such as *hippikai*, and accordingly as ‘monuments in miniature’. Moreover, just as at *adlocutiones*, the ties of loyalty between the commander and the soldiers could have been demonstrated and made explicit at the *hippika*. Images depicting these events could also be used at mints where neither the emperor nor the cavalry was present. Whether an actual ceremony could be held was not really the point; I think that, similar to the *adlocutiones*, the *hippika* could function as a ‘pseudo-event’. The message was probably just as clear if the cavalry was absent. It would serve as a reminder – to anyone nurturing mutinous thoughts – that the cavalry was on the side of the emperor. No usurpation would go ignored for long.

To sum up, the cavalry could function as the most important weapon of the emperor, but it could also become the most immediate threat to the imperial power. This is the reason for the creation of a number of image-types referring to the loyalty of the cavalry.

After the creation of the ‘Rapid task forces’, not only could the army be present in various crises, but also, at least in theory, so could the emperor. This would also create a new demand for the emperor to actually *be* present everywhere – a demand for *Kaisernähe*. Such a demand – or at least a hope – for the presence of the emperor is suggested by the account preserved from the works of Publius Herennius Dexippus of the invasion of the barbarian Heruli of Athens in 267/268. The barbarian attack went badly for the Athenians. The Heruli sacked and burned Athens; at this point, Dexippus rallied troops outside the city and planned a counter-attack. In a speech which Dexippus addressed to his men, he encourages them by claiming that the Emperor’s fleet is approaching to aid Athens.⁶⁹⁷

This demand, in turn, could trigger new usurpations. This meant that not only the loyalty of the cavalry, but also that of legionary commanders, was of crucial importance. The emperor, not least, had to be able to trust his officers.

3.5. *Conceiving a ‘military court’*

There must have been differences between various military units and ‘arms’. However, there were other differences in the Roman armed forces as well – on the one hand between ranks, on the other between soldiers who were close to the emperor and those who were not. The interests of the officers who were close to the emperor, and those

⁶⁹⁶ Bartman 2005, 117f.

⁶⁹⁷ Dexippus, frag. 28.4; cf. FGrH II, 472, 100.28. Cf. also Millar 1969, 27.

of the commanders of the legions in the provinces, need obviously not have been the same. Similarly, the concerns of the soldiers serving the emperor personally, and those of the soldiers of the legions, are rather likely not to have been the same.

I have previously posed the question whether certain groups of soldiers could have functioned as an *aula Caesaris* (cf. chap. 1.4). In this sub-chapter, I would like to turn to this issue, and make a few observations of the soldiers in the immediate surroundings of the emperor. This group is something of a paradox. On the one hand, it is a quite distinct group – obviously, it must have existed. However, hardly anything about this group is known. This is a point where evidence begins to falter seriously, at least as far as the third century is concerned; therefore, the arguments presented in the following should rather be regarded as speculations around an idea.

In 67, Vespasian assumed supreme command of all legions stationed between Capadocia and Egypt and the order to subdue the Jewish revolt. Vespasian, as is well known, did this effectively. In this situation, civilian magistrates and military officers agreed to proclaim Vespasian emperor.⁶⁹⁸ As Flaig points out, these events present a model for how an informal leadership develops in a ‘military epicentre’.⁶⁹⁹ In short, a group of actors, sharing one specific location – geographical, sometimes also temporal – creates an emperor. It is a group of ‘ad-hoc kingmakers’. This case may be regarded as a ‘model’ for third century usurpations. Certain military development is considered to have taken place during the 260s. One of these is the establishment of ‘rapid task forces.’ Another reform, which aimed at excluding members of the senatorial order from military service, is also attributed to the age of Gallienus. It has been argued that the result of this was a rise to importance of the equestrian order. It has also been suggested that this led to a ‘professionalization’ of the army and, ultimately, a ‘militarization’ of the Roman Empire.⁷⁰⁰

For my part, I would consider the word ‘militarization’ a rather problematical concept in a Roman context; anyhow, this matter is not the issue here. Instead, what will be under discussion for the next pages are the direct consequences as far as the proclamations of emperors are concerned. Could an effect of the reforms of the 260s be that a more permanent group of ‘military kingmakers’ emerges – an officers’ corps, perhaps even a kind of ‘general staff’? Once more, there is an apparent risk of lapsing into use of somewhat anachronistic concepts. Nevertheless, I think that a number of less specific effects seem reasonable. Firstly, the military profession becomes a direct way of ‘making a career’, rather than a more or less necessary step in a (civilian) ca-

⁶⁹⁸ Flaig 1992, 359–363.

⁶⁹⁹ Flaig 1992, 414: “Vespasians Usurpation ist ein modellhaftes Beispiel dafür, wie es einem militärischen Epizentrum gelang, die militärische und auch politische Initiative zu gewinnen und gegen das Zentrum der Revolte bis zur Durchsetzung zu bewahren. Die entscheidende Bedingung dafür war, daß innerhalb des Epizentrums die politische Kontrolle verloren ging; es bildete sich eine ‘informelle’ Führung.”

⁷⁰⁰ For an overview, cf. John 1993, 230–242. In a more recent contribution to the debate, de Blois studies how military men increasingly become involved in imperial administration in the third century; cf. de Blois 2001, 149–153.

reer as a magistrate. The result of this, secondly, is that a group of officers can emerge, with aims and agendas that do not necessarily concur with those of the state, but are instead directed towards their own group. Thirdly, the increasingly complex military situation means that these officers must become increasingly independent.

Courts and conspiracies

It is evident that most of those who claimed the imperial purple in the later decades of the third century came from a group of higher officers. It is certainly tempting to interpret the pattern of events as an effect of the emergence of a military court – or rather, of different military courts.

What is known of the careers of the soldier-emperors prior to their proclamations as emperors? Gallienus was murdered by a conspiracy. This, then, presented Claudius Gothicus with the purple. The career of this emperor, before this event, is shadowy. However, he is known to have been a *tribunus* in Ticinum in 268. The death of Claudius Gothicus seems to have been from perfectly natural causes.⁷⁰¹ His successor Quintillus is claimed to have been the brother of Claudius. Quintillus may also have served as *procurator* on Sardinia. He was killed by a coup – or died a natural death, or committed suicide, after a very short period of time.⁷⁰² Aurelian, who had been proclaimed emperor at roughly the same time as Quintillus, remained in power. Aurelian is known to have been *dux equitum* under Claudius. Aurelian, too, was murdered by a conspiracy among some of his officers.⁷⁰³

After the confused procedures following this murder, Tacitus was proclaimed emperor. Tacitus died an untimely death after only some six months in office; it is likely that he was murdered by his own soldiers.⁷⁰⁴ His successor, Florian, is asserted to have served as *praefectus praetorio* under Tacitus. Florian is also claimed to have been killed by his own soldiers, who deserted him in favour of Probus.⁷⁰⁵ The career of Probus, who was proclaimed emperor in the east and remained in power after the confrontation with Florian, is more shadowy. Probably, he had distinguished himself in the cavalry. After having reigned for some six years, Probus was murdered, by his own troops, in Sirmium.⁷⁰⁶

Carus, who was pronounced emperor after the murder of Probus is claimed to have served as *praefectus praetorio* under his predecessor. Carus died suddenly and under mysterious circumstances; it was reported that he had been struck by lightning.

⁷⁰¹ Aur.Vict., *Caes.* 33.28, Zonar. 12.26; cf. Kienast 1996, 231.

⁷⁰² *Epit.de Caes.* 34.5; Eutr. 9.12; SHA *Divus Aurelianus* 37.6; cf. Kienast 1996, 233.

⁷⁰³ Aur.Vict. *Caes.* 35.8; *Epit. de Caes.* 35.8; Eutr. 9.15; SHA *Divus Aurelianus* 40.2; Zos. 1.62.1–3. Cf. Kienast 1996, 234 and Drinkwater 2005, 53.

⁷⁰⁴ SHA *Tacitus* 13.5; Zos. 1.63.2.; cf. Kienast 1996, 250 and Drinkwater 2005, 54.

⁷⁰⁵ Aur.Vict. *Caes.* 37.1; SHA *Tacitus* 14.2; Zos. 1.64. Cf. Kienast 1996, 252 and Drinkwater 2005, 54.

⁷⁰⁶ Aur.Vict. *Caes.* 37.4; Eutr. 9.17; SHA *Probus* 20.1; Zos. 1.71.5. Cf. Kienast 1996, 253. For a thorough discussion of the early career and death of Probus, cf. Kreucher 2003, 93–97 and *ibid.*, 179–186 respectively.

However, this may have been intended to mask the fact that Carus had been murdered by a conspiracy.⁷⁰⁷ Numerian is claimed to have been killed by his father-in-law, a sinister figure known by the name of Aper. After the murder, Aper tried to conceal his deed by hiding the corpse in the imperial bier and denying anyone else access to this. The murder, however, was discovered when the corpse started smelling.⁷⁰⁸ Carinus, finally, was murdered by his own soldiers – ironically after having defeated Diocletian near the Margus (Morava), a tributary river to the Danube.⁷⁰⁹ Diocletian was then proclaimed emperor. Diocletian is known to have served under Numerian. Before this, both he and his future co-emperors Maximian, Constantius Chlorus and Galerius are all assumed to have served under Aurelian and Probus. Maximian is further assumed to have served under Carus in the east; Constantius Chlorus and Galerius are assumed to have served as praetorian prefects under the dyarchs.⁷¹⁰

Possible conflicts within the system

These events seem to suggest that the conspiracies do not constitute groups of ‘ad-hoc kingmakers’, but may have been a more durable network of actors in the negotiations of power. I suggest that these groups resembled the *aula Caesaris*. The ‘military court’ appears to have some advantages over the ‘conventional’ *aula Caesaris*. Most importantly, a military court can be expected to be well equipped to deal with problems that demand quick decisions. This, no doubt, is a capacity that was urgently called for in the later decades of the third century. These groups, therefore, may be assumed to have represented a practical way of government in a crisis.

However, this manner of rule may conflict with the deeply rooted notion that the military commander is a *commilito* of the soldiers, and ‘one of the men.’⁷¹¹ This may be one explanation of why some soldier-emperors who were acclaimed by soldiers are later killed by their own soldiers. Further, if there is one thing the military court can be expected to have problems with, it is acting as kingmakers. One problem is that every member of a military court becomes a direct potential threat to the emperor and other candidates to the throne. This is because everybody who is present at this court has direct access to arms and can resort to physical violence. *Deposing* of an emperor, therefore, does not present a problem.

Then, problems may emerge. The military court shares certain structural weaknesses with the *aula Caesaris*. A court should be socially and structurally representative;⁷¹² in a military camp, obviously the soldier-emperors run the risk of being too detached from other parts of society. Further, the *aula Caesaris* has difficulties in controlling

⁷⁰⁷ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 38.3; *Epit. de Caes.* 38.3; Eutr. 9.18; SHA *Carus Carinus et Numerianus* 8.3. Cf. Drinkwater 2005, 57.

⁷⁰⁸ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 38.7–8; *Epit. de Caes.* 38.4–5; Eutr. 9.18; SHA *Carus Carinus et Numerianus* 12.

⁷⁰⁹ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39.11; Eutr. 9.20.2. Cf. Drinkwater 2005, 57f.

⁷¹⁰ Cf. Kienast 1996, 266 (Diocletian), 272 (Maximian); 280 (Constantius Chlorus); 283 (Galerius).

⁷¹¹ For an introduction to this issue, cf. Campbell 1984, 32–39.

⁷¹² Winterling 1997a, 20–25.

power outside the court. The *aula Caesaris* cannot function as a carrier of traditional legitimacy. Therefore, it comes in conflict with traditional hierarchies; it can control the access to rank, but not the creation of rank itself.⁷¹³

In the military camp, the soldier can rely on his soldiers, but at the same time may have difficulties communicating with other military units. The power – formal or informal – that is wielded by a military commander in a certain military army camp, conflicts with the official hierarchies and ranks of the army. Accordingly, one group of officers in one military camp has difficulties controlling other officers and camps. Therefore, a military court cannot prevent that another ‘court’ is formed around another particularly powerful military commander. Obviously, this can lead to usurpations.

However, for the same structural reasons, the military court can be expected to have difficulties *creating* emperors. The fact that there are too many daggers around, and too many who know how to handle them, makes it all too easy for a military court to depose of a *princeps*. In addition, the military court can also be easily challenged, and may only with difficulty be able to gain acceptance for its candidate. This is because the military court cannot change the fact that the (military) authority of the emperor, ultimately, rests on the formal acceptance and acclamation of the soldiers. Pabst has suggested that such acclamations acquired an increasingly formal and ritualized nature. In the fourth century, acclamations were committed by electoral committees that would have functioned as ‘military *comitia*.’⁷¹⁴ Such *comitia* could act as ‘military senates.’⁷¹⁵ It is significant that the first attested event of this kind took place in the age of the tetrarchy;⁷¹⁶ it seems reasonable to assume that these examples also represent a manner in which the soldiers acclaimed the soldier-emperors in the last decades of the third century.

If a military court wishes to produce a candidate for the imperial purple, this demand for a formal ‘election’ by the *commilitones* becomes an obstacle. This is illustrated by the ‘deposing’ of Gallienus and Aurelian. Both seem to have been killed by some kind of conspiracies. However, both of these conspiracies had some difficulties presenting a new emperor. Huge donatives had to be paid out in Mediolanum in order to gain acceptance from the troops for Claudius Gothicus. Moreover, after the death of Aurelian, the confused interregnum followed before Tacitus could be accepted as successor.⁷¹⁷

To sum up the observations made so far in this chapter, it is evident that the military does not provide the emperor with informal power alone, but rather with a mixture of formal and informal power. Sometimes, this mixture is disharmonic. As a result,

⁷¹³ Cf. Winterling 1997b, 111f.

⁷¹⁴ Pabst 1997, 10–14; Pabst refers to these committees as *Heeresversammlungen*.

⁷¹⁵ Cf. Pabst 1997, 23.

⁷¹⁶ Pabst 1997, 12.

⁷¹⁷ Hartmann 1982, 75f.; for a recent, more thorough discussion of the events surrounding the death of Gallienus, cf. Hartmann 2006, 100–118.

the ‘two-pillar’ model of imperial power (cf. chap. 1.4) can be somewhat revised. The idea that the power of the soldier-emperors rested on two pillars still seems to hold. However, the ‘military pillar’ does not replace the informal power wielded by the emperor through the *aula Caesaris*, as it does not represent informal power. Rather, the military in itself presents tensions between formal and informal power. This makes the ‘military pillar’ unstable. In my view, this model presents a key to the problems of the soldier-emperors.

The pugio: a sign of authority?

The formal acceptance of imperial authority from fellow officers, then, would have been urgent. A rather rare image that gains some popularity in the age of the soldier-emperors might be a reference to this. This portrait-type depicts the emperor holding a *pugio*. The *pugio* was a characteristical sword, easily recognisable, since the end of the handle was shaped like the head of an eagle. The most well-known depiction of this sword-type occurs in the ‘tetrarchic groups’. These groups depict the four tetrarchs all holding a *pugio* firmly by the handle. The most famous of these groups is the one now inserted in the walls of the cathedral of San Marco in Venice (cf. chap. 3.2).

The portrait-type featuring the *pugio* depicts the emperor holding the sword under one arm, leaving only the characteristical handle visible. Frequently, the emperor – as in the case of the tetrarchs from San Marco – also holds a globe in the right hand. A less common portrait-type depicts the emperor holding only the *pugio*.

Similar to the other more novel portrait-types discussed in this study, the ‘*pugio*-type’ is first featured on medallions struck for the Severans, and in the coinage struck for Gordian III. After this, the *pugio*-type occurs only sporadically; from the 260s and onwards, it is used on a wider scale. Not surprisingly, the *pugio*-type occurs most frequently on coins and medallions struck for Probus, when the type is used for both medallions and regular coins. After the dyarchs, the type falls into disuse until the age of Constantine I.⁷¹⁸

The *pugio* is usually considered to have eastern origins. It has also been suggested to be a weapon characteristical for high military officers.⁷¹⁹ As mentioned, the eagle-headed sword mainly occurs on medallions. These are usually assumed to have been struck as gifts.⁷²⁰ Now, it could be suggested that these medallions were struck as gifts to the officers surrounding the emperor – or perhaps rather for those that needed to know that the officers were backing the emperor.

However, I would like to suggest a somewhat different interpretation. Firstly, it is apparent that the eagle-headed sword is often carried by soldiers, and not necessarily by officers. As an example, one may note the soldiers on the Ludovisi sarcophagus,

⁷¹⁸ Cf. Bastien II, 451; cf. Gnechchi I, 45, no. 1 (Septimius Severus) and 50, no. 3 (Trebonianus Gallus).

⁷¹⁹ Cf. Bastien II, 447–50.

⁷²⁰ Toynbee 1944, 15.

a number of which are armed with such swords. The sculptural reliefs of the Ludovisi sarcophagus, in turn, can be compared with the tombstone of a certain Marcus Aurelius Vitalianus, now in the Musei Capitolini (NCE 541). This tombstone depicts Vitalianus holding a sword, featuring an eagle-headed grip. The tombstone is dated to the second half of the third century; Vitalianus is assumed to have been a member of the *equites singulares*. This was a cavalry unit, which may have been established under Trajan and functioned as the personal guard of the emperor, both while on campaign and in the city of Rome.⁷²¹ Similar eagle's heads also appear on cavalry helmets, for instance on one helmet now in the *Archäologisches Museum* in Frankfurt.⁷²²

Estiot suggests that the *pugio* was a 'parade sword' and that the image where the emperor is depicted with *pugio* is struck for special occasions, such as *adlocutiones*.⁷²³ For my part, I cannot quite understand why Roman troops should have sets of weapons only intended for parades; the idea that all more spectacular pieces of equipment carried by Roman soldiers should be interpreted as 'parade gear' seems somewhat anachronistic.⁷²⁴ I would rather suggest that the *pugio* was a weapon not so much characteristic for officers or parades, but rather for members of certain elite units such as the *equites singulares*. These had much influence on the power of the emperor: it has often been observed that the cavalry units that rise to power in the 260s could be regarded as a pre-state to the *comitatenses* of later emperors.⁷²⁵ As mentioned, one of the first emperors for whom the portrait-type is used was Gordian III; it may be noted that he was proclaimed emperor by the praetorian guard.⁷²⁶

In my view, it seems most reasonable to assume that the depiction of the *pugio* was intended as a sign that the emperor demonstrating this sword had been formally accepted by units such as the *equites singulares*. This acceptance must have been important. It is evident that the *equites singulares* did not simply gain power from the fact that they were close to the emperor: the emperor also gained some of his power from *them*. The *equites singulares* could be a factor of power in their own right. Therefore, they could also become a threat to the emperor. This is demonstrated by the fact that the unit was formally disbanded by Constantine I after the battle at the *Pons Milvius* for having supported Maxentius. It is also likely that the *equites singulares*, or at least members of the unit, may have participated in proclaiming Maxentius emperor.⁷²⁷

⁷²¹ For an overview, cf. Speidel 1965, 87–94.

⁷²² Robinson 1975, 129 and pl. 376–377.

⁷²³ Estiot 2005, 175.

⁷²⁴ Cf. Junkelmann 1991, 165.

⁷²⁵ Cf. de Blois 1976, 29f.

⁷²⁶ Herodian 8.8.6–7; SHA *Maximus et Balbinus* 14.7. Cf. Drinkwater 2005, 33.

⁷²⁷ Cf. Speidel 1986, 254–257.

3.6. *Colleagues in arms?*

I have argued that one possible effect of the increased importance of military officers is that conflicts evolve. These are due to tensions between formal and informal hierarchies within the military. Another interesting tendency in the later third century is that certain usurpers try to present themselves as colleagues and fellow soldiers to the emperor, rather than as rivals to the purple.⁷²⁸ This tendency may also have been an effect of the increased authority of the officers, and may have represented an attempt to evade such conflicts as could evolve.

The *Historia Augusta* relates that Gallienus took the following measures towards Odaenathus:

...when he learned that Odaenathus had ravaged the Persians ... he gave him a share in the imperial power, conferred on him the name Augustus, and ordered coins to be struck in his honour, which showed him haling the Persians into captivity.⁷²⁹

The idea that a coin is struck in the name of more than one emperor is usually denoted by changing the legend *Virtus Augusti* (as an example) to *Virtus Augustorum*. These titles are common in the second century; for instance, on aurei struck for Lucius Verus with the significative reference to *Concordiae Augustorum*.⁷³⁰ In the third century, this is normally achieved by changing the legend AVG to AVGG. This practise becomes common in the later Roman empire.⁷³¹

The most ambitious use of these legends, as may be expected, occurs under Carus and his sons. Both of them, in turn, became elevated to the rank of *Augustus*. As noted previously (cf. above, chap. 3.4), the imagery occurring on coins struck for Carus and his sons seems to denote both rank and hierarchy within the imperial collegium. Legends denoting that the coins are struck in the name of more than one emperor are used to some effect. In the first coin-series struck for Carus, legends indicate that the coins are struck in the name of one emperor only, as Carinus was still only *Caesar*.⁷³² Towards the end of the year, Carinus was elevated to the rank of *Augustus*, while Numerian was promoted to *Caesar*. Coins referring to *Virtus Augustorum* first occur in coin-series dated to December 282. The reverse of one coin-type depicts Carus, holding a sceptre, presenting a globe to a person that may be Carinus or Numerian. A coin featuring the legend VICTORIA AVGVSTORVM is attributed to coin-series dated to the end of the year. The reverse motif depicts Carus and Carinus, together holding a *Victoria*.⁷³³

⁷²⁸ Howgego 1995, 82 and 137.

⁷²⁹ SHA *Gallieni duo* 12.1: "ubi comperit ab Odaenatho Persas vastatos ... Odaenathum participato imperio Augustum vocavit eiusque monetam, qua Persas captos traheret, cudi iussit."

⁷³⁰ *RIC* III, 250f., nos. 449–456; cf. R.-Alföldy 1999, 71–73.

⁷³¹ For examples, cf. *RIC* IX, 321f.

⁷³² Overview: Gricourt 2000, 19–21 (Ticinum) and 45–48 (Siscia).

⁷³³ Gricourt 2000, 48–50.

In 283, Numerian was also elevated to the rank of *Augustus*; since Carus died that same summer, it is possible that Numerian became promoted to *Augustus* after the death of his father.⁷³⁴ In any case, coins featuring the reverse legends CONSERVAT AVGGG and VIRTVS AVGGG are known. After Carus had been proclaimed emperor, he and Numerian went on their way to the eastern provinces of the empire. Pink attributes the coins struck in the name of three *Augusti* to Antioch. He argues that Carus and Numerian arrived to this city in February 283, and made it their headquarters for the campaigns against the east. The coins featuring the legend AVGGG were struck to commemorate this, although Numerian was at that time still only *Caesar*.⁷³⁵

In the coinage of Carinus and Numerian struck after the death of Carus, the hierarchy of power envisioned for Carus and Carinus is maintained. Carinus takes over the role of Carus. A coin featuring the reverse legend VIRTVS AVGVSTOR is dated by Gricourt to January 284. This coin has a rather interesting reverse motif: Gricourt interprets it as Numerian, coronated by Sol, presenting a globe to Carinus. He, in turn, is coronated by Hercules.⁷³⁶

Unwanted colleagues

Coins are also struck in the name of more than one emperor for usurpers. One example of this is the coinage of Macrianus and Quietus, who assumed the purple in the wake of the events of 260.⁷³⁷ In this case, the striking of coins in the names of both emperors would have been intended to lend credibility to their claims to power. However, such coins are also struck for usurpers, who are known to have claimed the purple alone. In such cases, it could be suggested that the striking of coins in the names of two emperors was intended to present the usurper as ‘fellow *Augustus*.’

Regalianus may present one such example. For this usurper, coins are struck which frequently refer to *Concordia Augustorum*, for instance. Göbl considered these legends to refer to Valerian and Gallienus.⁷³⁸ In any case, it seems likely that these coins represent an acknowledgement of the emperors in the city of Rome, quite likely in the hope of gaining recognition for Regalianus. Likewise, coins are struck for Vaballathus of Palmyra depicting Aurelian on the reverse and Vaballathus, the ‘co-regent’, on the obverse (*fig. 18–19*). However, in following coin-series, considered to have been struck from the spring of 272, all references to Aurelian disappear and Vaballathus is presented, alone, as *Augustus*. The interpretation lies close at hand that with this, Palmyra finally challenged Rome openly.⁷³⁹

⁷³⁴ Cf. Kienast 1996, 258–260.

⁷³⁵ Pink 1963, 54f.

⁷³⁶ Gricourt 2000 52–53.

⁷³⁷ Cf. Göbl 2000, Anhang II, 143f. and Tab. 52.

⁷³⁸ Göbl 2000, Anhang I, 139 and Tab. 51.

⁷³⁹ Estiot 2004, 118f. and 430f.

Yet another example can be observed: this is the case of Saturninus, who usurped the purple in Asia Minor in the last years of the reign of Probus, and was deposed in 281. For Saturninus, coins featuring the legend AVGG are struck. This has been interpreted as an attempt to gain recognition for the usurper as fellow-emperor.⁷⁴⁰

The idea that imperial power could be shared between colleagues in arms reaches its most drastic expression on some well-known coins struck for Carausius and his 'colleagues' – or 'comrades in arms', if you will – Maximian and Diocletian. These coins feature the legend CARAVSIVS ET FRATRES SVI and obverse portraits of Carausius and his 'brothers'.⁷⁴¹ Other coins are struck in the names of the three *Augusti*; this is denoted by the use of the legend AVGGG in the reverse legends.⁷⁴² Carson also published another coin with the unique obverse legend AVGVSTIS CVM DIOCLETIANO and the reverse legend CONCORDI AVGGG. Carson suggested that, if this coin was a later one than those depicting Carausius as the *frater* of the dyarchs, the later coin may be an indication that the claims for Carausius were 'lowered': the seniority of Diocletian is recognised, but Carausius is depicted as the equal of Maximian.⁷⁴³ Carausius, in a sense, is depicted as sharing the role of the 'active' emperor with Maximian.

Why were these coins struck? They were probably not struck to appease the dyarchs. It is more likely that these coins were intended to convince the local population that Carausius was indeed member of the imperial collegium (cf. further chap. 4.8). This, I think, can be said for similar coins also struck for other usurpers.⁷⁴⁴

The idea that a group of military officers could function as a collegium of fellow-emperors, in my view, leads directly to the concept of the tetrarchy, and reaches its most eloquent expression in the image of the tetrarchs from San Marco. This is an image that dramatically expressed the unity and 'fellowship' of the four emperors.⁷⁴⁵

The creative images struck for Carausius were to no avail. Carausius was himself stabbed in the back by one of his ministers, Allectus; as for Allectus, he was defeated by troops under the 'legitimate' co-emperor Constantius Chlorus in 296–297.⁷⁴⁶ By this time, the first tetrarchy had already been in power since about two years. Diocletian and Maximian had made themselves *Augusti* and accepted Constantius Chlorus and Galerius as *Caesares*. In the tetrarchy, the limits to the imperial collegium had finally become defined, and there was no room for more 'colleagues.'

To sum up the points of this chapter, I conclude that military imagery c. 260–295 suggests one marked tendency. This is the appearance of increasingly autonomous military actors, inclined to act independently, and a central power finding it has in-

⁷⁴⁰ Pomeroy 1969, 55; cf. for a more recent overview, cf. Estiot 2002, 230–236.

⁷⁴¹ *RIC* V.2, 550f, nos. 1–2.

⁷⁴² *RIC* V.2, 551–56, nos. 3–49.

⁷⁴³ Cf. Carson 1987, 146f. Carson suggests that AVGVSTIS should be read as a dedicatory dative, and refers to Carausius and Maximian.

⁷⁴⁴ Cf. Estiot 2002, 232.

⁷⁴⁵ Rees 1993, 193.

⁷⁴⁶ Cf. Kienast 1996, 278f. and Bowman 2005, 78f.

creasing difficulties to adapt to this. The central power conceives various innovative images of an imperial power in firm control despite the increasing complexity of rule and increasing geographical distances.

The motif-types on coins all represent various strategies to cope with an imperial power facing an increasing demand to be everywhere at the same time. These motif-types include the stressing of the ties with the 'Rapid task forces', the 'division of power' in 'active' and 'formal' imperial roles under Carus and the imperial collegium presented in the imagery on the coins struck for Carausius. This development was enabled by the changing understanding of the empire, and especially of the importance of the imperial centre, the city of Rome. In the next chapter, I will turn to this development.

4. ROMAE AETERNAE: THE EMPEROR AND THE URBS AETERNA

4.1. All roads lead...

The presence of the emperor Tacitus in the city of Rome in 275 proved to be brief. The emperor departed, probably in early 276, to counter barbarians threatening Asia Minor.⁷⁴⁷ If any ‘senatorial renaissance’ did take place, it was not in the presence of the emperor.

Tacitus was not unique in this respect; rather, most of those proclaimed emperors in the second half of the third century found only little time to reside in the city of Rome. Gallienus remains an exception. He resided in the *urbs aeterna* from 260 and possibly to the early 265, before leaving for Greece.⁷⁴⁸ It is likely that his successor Claudius Gothicus spent the winter 268–69 in the city of Rome before departing for the Balkans, where the marauding Gothic tribes were defeated at Naïssus sometime in 269. It is uncertain whether his successor Quintillus ever visited the city of Rome; Aurelian, however, most likely spent both the winter of 270–271 as well as the winter of 271–272 there, after having been proclaimed emperor in Sirmium in September 270. After his second stay in the city of Rome, the emperor left for the campaigns in the east. He did not return until 273, when he celebrated the defeat of Palmyra with a triumph.⁷⁴⁹ In the following year, after the defeat of Tetricus in Gaul, another triumph was celebrated. At this time, the emperor dedicated the *Templum Solis* to the city.⁷⁵⁰

Events of the following years are even more difficult to reconstruct. Similar to Quintillus and most emperors, Florian did not live long enough to visit the city of Rome. As for Probus, it can only be stated with certainty that he was in the city in 281–282, when a spectacular triumph was celebrated. Carus, who was proclaimed emperor following the murder of Probus in the autumn of 282, seems to have been in the city of Rome for the assumption of a second consulate in 283. After this, however, he departed for campaigns against Parthia. It cannot be ascertained whether either of

⁷⁴⁷ Kienast 1996, 250.

⁷⁴⁸ Kienast 1996, 218.

⁷⁴⁹ Zos. 1.61.1.

⁷⁵⁰ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 35.5–7; for the chronology for the rules of Claudius Gothicus and Aurelian, cf. Kienast 1996, 231 and 234 respectively.

his sons Carinus or Numerian paid visits to the city after this, while Diocletian is not known to have visited the city until the celebrations of his *vicennalia* with Maximian in 303.⁷⁵¹ In other words, for a period of maybe 20 years, the emperors were absent from the city of Rome.

To put it simply, the city of Rome did not see much of its emperors. This chapter attempts to analyse some strands of development in the Roman Empire that can be connected with this nonappearance – a ‘mechanism of absence’, if you will. In a first sub-chapter, some notes are made of the actual and symbolical importance of the *urbs aeterna* for the emperor. Following this, an overview over public building-projects in the city of Rome connected to the soldier-emperors is made, indicating that although very few projects can be directly tied to the soldier-emperors, displays of imperial *providentia* towards the *urbs aeterna* seem to have been regarded as no less urgent than before. I subsequently turn from actual projects in the city to coins referring to the city of Rome. Coin imagery referring to tangible actions towards the city, such as the all-important *annona*, is very scarce; however, imagery expressing respect for the city on a more symbolical level is far more common. Above all, the adherence of the emperor to the republican traditions of the city is often proudly displayed on coins.

Another way of making symbolical reference to the *urbs aeterna* was through the striking of coins featuring the image of the deity *Roma Aeterna*. This deity was introduced in the Greek East as a way of establishing relations with Rome. By paying tribute to *Roma Aeterna*, loyalty to Rome could be expressed. Coins paying such tribute to *Roma Aeterna* are struck frequently in the Greek city states throughout the imperial period. During the period under investigation, this coinage testifies to what is perhaps the most important development of the empire in the second half of the third century. By far the largest number of coins referring to *Roma Aeterna* are struck for the emperor Tacitus. However, these coins are not struck in the city of Rome, but at Balkan mints. These are some of the provincial mints established by the Romans in the 260s and 270s.

The development of this network of provincial mints and the connections between this and the development of the empire is examined in the final parts of this chapter. It is argued that the provincial mints testify to the same reality that was the main reason for the long periods of absence of the emperor from the city of Rome: his presence was needed at the frontiers. Moreover, the empire was also developing new centres of political gravity. The *urbs aeterna*, simply, was no longer where the action was.

⁷⁵¹ For chronologies of the rules of Probus, Carus and Diocletian, cf. Kienast 1996, 253 (Probus), 258 (Carus) and 266f (Diocletian).

4.2. *The gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples:
searching for the soldier-emperors in the city of Rome*

One impression, which is easy to gain from the coinages of the soldier-emperors, is that of almost never-ceasing military glory. The truth – as is well known – was frequently rather the opposite. However, not only did the empire cope with repeated crushing military defeats. It also survived what was in practise a split in three autonomous regions in the 260s. Moreover, after the defeat of Gaul in 274, the empire was re-united again, as it would seem more or less without complications.

It seems obvious, then, that the empire was not kept together with weapons alone. Instead, something else must have been regarded so important to maintain united to ensure the continuation of the empire. The primary role of the emperor was as defender of Rome. The factor that decided whether he would be able to hold on to the purple was his capacity to avert the dangers threatening Rome. What was then this ‘Rome’ that the emperor was supposed to defend?

Since the 1990s, much scholarship has been focusing on an idea that the empire was not only held together by political or economical force, but also by an evolving sentiment of ‘Roman identity’ (cf. chap. 1.4). This sentiment is regarded as common to citizens of Rome in all its various provinces, providing them with some sense of belonging to the same society. Ando, referring to a phrase used by Cicero, characterized this ‘experienced common society’ as a *Communis patria*.⁷⁵²

In this symbolical network, the city of Rome enjoyed a central position. The role of the city was repeatedly acknowledged by contemporaries throughout antiquity.⁷⁵³ One of the most famous expositions on the subject is that of Aelius Aristides in the panegyric *Εἰς Ρώμην*. He praises the city of Rome as the ruler of all the world:

If one considers the whole empire, he is amazed at the city when he thinks that a fraction of the world rules over the whole of it. Yet if he regards the city itself and the boundaries of the city, he is no longer amazed that the whole world is ruled by so great a city.⁷⁵⁴

Furthermore, the city of Rome is not only the master of the world. It has also become the common *home* to all the world:

What a city is to its boundaries and its territories, so this city is to the whole inhabited world, as if it had been designated its common town. ... It has never refused anyone. But just as the earth’s ground supports all men, so it too receives men from every land, just as the sea receives the rivers.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵² Ando 2000, 10f.; cf. Cic. *Leg.* 2.5.

⁷⁵³ For an introduction to this topic, cf. Edwards & Woolf 2003.

⁷⁵⁴ Aristid. *Or.* 26.9: “ἅλλ’ ἔστιν εἰς μὲν τὴν ὅλην ἀρχὴν βλέψαντα [μηκέτι] τὴν πόλιν θαυμάζειν, πολλοστὸν μέρος τῆς ἀπάσης ἄρχειν νομίσαντα γῆς, εἰς δ’ αὐτὴν τὴν πόλιν καὶ τοὺς τῆς πόλεως ὄρους ἰδόντα μηκέτι θαυμάζειν, εἰ ὑπὸ τοσαύτης ἄρχεται πᾶσα ἡ οἰκουμένη.”

⁷⁵⁵ Aristid. *Or.* 26.61–62. “ὅπερ δὲ πόλις τοῖς αὐτῆς ὁρίοις καὶ χώραις ἐστίν, τοῦθ’ ἦδε ἡ πόλις τῇ πάσῃ οἰκουμένῃ, ὥσπερ αὐτῆς [χώρας] ἄστὺ κοινὸν ἀποδοδεγμένη· ... ἡ δὲ οὐδεπώποτε

Naturally, this speech – and similar praise of the *urbs aeterna* – may only have been conceived to appeal to the opinion of the inhabitants of the *urbs aeterna*. Still, it does tell us something of the prominence of the city of Rome in the Roman world. With which means did the soldier-emperors, then, attempt at appealing to this set of concepts? To answer this, one must first pose the question of which the connections were between political power and the cities as a feature in the Roman world.

The city of Rome obviously was the grandest and most prestigious of all ‘stages’ for the Roman politician; in one sense it was the only truly important one. This was where the politicians of the late Republic expressed their claims to power against each other, acting before the fractions in the city for whose confidence they were competing. The city of Rome was also the stage where wealthy families marked their status, for instance with elaborate funerary monuments.⁷⁵⁶ Therefore, it was also where the political arena was developed, upon which the imperial power was to perform: the city of Rome also became the stage of the emperors. Rome, its structures and the emperor emerged together as the centre of state in Roman ideology.⁷⁵⁷ In the city of Rome, the rituals and symbols, with which the emperors would communicate, were shaped, put to the test and refined.⁷⁵⁸

However, this communication was not always a straightforward one. The ‘audience’ was not uniform, as the city contained at least two groups with different and sometimes conflicting interests, namely the senatorial aristocracy and the *plebs urbana* (cf. chap. 1.4). When analysing the building activity of the emperors in the *urbs aeterna* these two centres of political gravity, and the need for the emperor to strike a balance between them, should be kept in mind.

Naturally, Augustus stands out as the creator of the repertoire of expressions with which the emperor emerges on this stage. Furthermore, he was the emperor who more than anyone else used the full potential of the stage. The *Ara Pacis*, the Mausoleum of Augustus and the Temple of Mars Ultor on the Forum of Augustus are only a few examples of the monuments over his accomplishments that Augustus left behind in the city of Rome.⁷⁵⁹ In the same fashion, the successors of Augustus used the same stage for demonstrations of their own *auctoritas*. As an effect, Rome is much characterized by the results of the efforts to find visual expressions for imperial power: the imperial fora, the triumphal arches, and the huge baths. This practise went on well into late

ἀπείπεν, ἀλλ’ ὥσπερ τὸ τῆς γῆς ἔδαφος φέρει πάντας, οὕτω καὶ ἡδε δέχεται μὲν τοὺς ἐξ ἀπάσης γῆς, ὥσπερ τοὺς ποταμοὺς θάλαττα.”

⁷⁵⁶ Claridge 1998, 10f; One example of such a tomb is the famous one of Caecilia Metella, cf. Claridge 1998, 341f.

⁷⁵⁷ Ando 2000, 23.

⁷⁵⁸ This development under the Late Republic and the Augustan age has been studied in connection with research concerning the emergence and formation of courts and court-like structures in antiquity; cf. Rilinger 1997 and Winterling 1997b.

⁷⁵⁹ Cf. Claridge 1998, 11–14 for an overview.

antiquity, to which the ambitious building projects of Maxentius in the early fourth century testify.⁷⁶⁰

The 'age of Gallienus'

Asserting the extent of the building activity in the city of Rome during the soldier-emperors is connected to a range of problems. A number of literary sources connect soldier-emperors with various more or less fanciful building projects in Rome. The problem is that most statements derive from the *Historia Augusta*, and are most likely to be fictional. Secondly, there is obviously a range of archaeological material which with certain accuracy can be attributed to the second half of the third century, but cannot be given a more certain attribution. Thirdly, the question is also to what the archaeological material really testifies. Whose intention does it illustrate – that of the emperor, or of...someone else?

The *Historia Augusta* credits Gallienus with having initiated the construction of a portico extending along the Via Flaminia to the Pons Milvius. This portico was supposedly adorned with statues. Brilliant has suggested that two famous sculptured pedestals now in the Boboli garden in Florence are remains from this project.⁷⁶¹

Further, the *Historia Augusta* also records that Gallienus ordered a colossal statue of himself in the guise of Sol, double the size of the Colossus of Nero, to be erected on the Esquiline; the statue was never finished, and is most likely fictional.⁷⁶² However, the notice that the statue was to be put on the Esquiline is interesting, as there is an amassment of archaeological remains connected to Gallienus on this hill. The only known monument that is securely attributable to the age of Gallienus is the so-called Arch of Gallienus, which today spans the Via di S.Vito (*fig. 20*). This is a gate in the Servian walls; the gate was constructed under Augustus, but provided with a new inscription dedicated to Gallienus and Salonina by the *vir egregius* Aurelius Victor.⁷⁶³ The 'Arch of Gallienus' is an interesting example of an appropriation of an older monument; it may not have been a coincidence that it was chosen to appropriate a gate constructed by Augustus, the *restitutor* of Roman peace and creator of the *aurea aetas*. After 260, this was what Gallienus wanted to be seen as, more than ever.

The *Historia Augusta* also states that Gallienus in the summer used to take his court to the gardens of his family estate.⁷⁶⁴ These are usually identified as the *Horti Liciniani*, thought to have been located on the northeastern slopes of the Esquiline. Later martyr acts also state that a certain Saint Bibiana was buried in a grave near to a *Palatium Licinianum*; this, then, should be located near the present church

⁷⁶⁰ For an overview, cf. Cullhed 1994, 49–60.

⁷⁶¹ SHA *Gallieni duo* 18.5; Brilliant 1982, 12–14.

⁷⁶² SHA *Gallieni duo* 18.2; *LTUR* I, 295.

⁷⁶³ *LTUR* I, 93f; cf. Rodríguez-Almeida 1991, 4f. and Claridge 1998, 299f. A *vir egregius* was a member of the *ordo equestris*; cf. Rodríguez-Almeida 1991, 4.

⁷⁶⁴ SHA *Gallieni duo* 17.8.

S. Bibiana. The Arch of Gallienus leads out to this very area.⁷⁶⁵ Further, this area is also the location of the remains of a large nymphaeum or dining hall, usually referred to as the ‘Temple of Minerva Medica’.⁷⁶⁶

The presence of this structure exactly where the *Palatium Licinianum* is supposed to have stood suggests that a palace, or rather perhaps a sumptuous hortus, belonging to Gallienus was to be found in the area. An analogy with the nearby *Horti ad spem veterem* and the *Palatium Sessorianum* would seem likely. Cima does not exclude that the ‘Temple of Minerva Medica’ belonged to the *Horti Liciniani*; however, the ‘temple’ itself can be securely dated to a period post-dating the age of Gallienus (most likely around 300).⁷⁶⁷ Guidobaldi, however, instead suggests that the temple should be understood as a part of the nearby *Palatium Sessorianum*, which was expanded in the age of Constantine I.⁷⁶⁸

The *Epitome de Caesaribus* records that Gallienus was buried in a mausoleum at the ninth mile of the Via Appia; this statement is usually associated with the remains of a large, round mausoleum that are preserved on this spot (fig. 21). This mausoleum is adjacent to the remains of a villa, which remains largely unexcavated. Although there is no evidence to support it, a connection with Gallienus has not been excluded.⁷⁶⁹

In any case, this combination of a villa and a mausoleum is interesting. The ‘Mausoleum of Gallienus’ is of the rotunda variety typical of several imperial mausolea dated to around 300; further, the site is a precedent to many similar archaeological sites that are dated later and have similar locations in the suburbia of the city of Rome, along the major roads. Examples include the Villa of Maxentius, which features the so-called Mausoleum of Romulus. They also include the so-called Villa of the Gordiani, which includes a mausoleum often referred to as *Tor de’ Schiavi*, and the *Villa ad duas lauros*, today often referred to as Tor Pignattara. On this location, a mausoleum for Helena, the mother of Constantine I, was built.⁷⁷⁰

The city of Rome from Aurelian to Probus

A number of references in ancient sources connect Claudius Gothicus, the successor of Gallienus, to the city of Rome. Neither of these references can be verified.⁷⁷¹

⁷⁶⁵ Cima 1998, 425–428.

⁷⁶⁶ Claridge 1998, 355–357; *LTUR* III, 64f.

⁷⁶⁷ Cima 1998, 433 and 450f.

⁷⁶⁸ Guidobaldi 1998, 506f. An analysis of the fourth century *Palatium Sessorianum* is provided by Colli, cf. Colli 1996.

⁷⁶⁹ *Epit. de Caes.* 40.3; cf. *LTUR Suburbium* 3, 15f. De Rossi and Quilici do not exclude an identification of the villa as belonging to Gallienus; cf. De Rossi 1979, 258, and Quilici 1977, 105f.

⁷⁷⁰ Cozza et al. 1980, 60, n. 35; cf. Mansuelli 1958, 103. For an introduction to late-antique villas such as the Villa of the Gordiani and the *Villa ad duas lauros*, cf. Volpe 2000, 161–167.

⁷⁷¹ Certain martyr acts tell of Christians – including the famous presbyter Valentine – which were condemned in the *Palatium* of Claudius Gothicus. The location of this palace is unknown; cf. *LTUR* IV, 41f. The *Historia Augusta* (SHA *Divus Claudius* 3.5) states that a silver statue of Claudius Gothicus was erected on a column on the *rostra* of the Forum; cf. *LTUR* IV, 219. The *Historia Augusta* (SHA *Divus*

Aurelian, on the contrary, is connected to a number of more well-known building projects. A number of references, as in the case of Claudius Gothicus, cannot be verified.⁷⁷² However, it is especially interesting to note that Aurelian is claimed to have repaired the Baths of Caracalla.⁷⁷³ The *Historia Augusta* also claims that Aurelian planned to construct new baths in what is today the Trastevere area.⁷⁷⁴

Some others projects attributed to Aurelian are much more well known. First rank among these should be attributed to the walls of Aurelian (*fig. 22*). The construction of these walls started in 271, after Roman troops had suffered a disastrous defeat by the *Iuthungi* near Piacenza, which left the whole Po valley open to plunder.⁷⁷⁵ The most immediate purpose of the walls was to protect the *urbs aeterna* from the sudden invasion threat.⁷⁷⁶ In this respect, the walls are indeed a symbol of the changes that the empire had undergone: the *limes*, as Aelius Aristides had put it, used to function as the walls of the *urbs aeterna*. Now, this was no longer the case.⁷⁷⁷ However, the construction of the walls constitutes a rather more complex issue than may be gathered from a first impression. Several sources state that the project was not finally brought to a conclusion until 279, under Probus.⁷⁷⁸ Could they, then, have represented a sensible reply to a direct military threat? Surely, the reason for the construction must have been more complicated than merely a reply to urgent military needs.

Considering this, the lack of information regarding the planning of the project is somewhat frustrating. Ioannes Malalas states that the walls were constructed by work forces of the trade *collegia* of the city.⁷⁷⁹ The *Historia Augusta* claims that Aurelian extended the *pomerium* – the sacral border – of the city of Rome; this extension is assumed to have taken place after the construction of the walls.⁷⁸⁰ This may tell us something of the character of the project. Further, it is evident that the walls were laid out as far as possible on imperial estates, to evade the costs of expropriating land.⁷⁸¹

Claudius 3.6) also claims that Claudius Gothicus restored the *Templum gens Flavia*; cf. *LTUR* II, 368.

⁷⁷² Possibly, the *Castra urbana* may have been restored under Aurelian; cf. *LTUR* I, 255. Furthermore, Aurelian is claimed to have put a statue of the *Genius populi Romani* on the *rostra*. This may have taken place in connection with his triumph in the city of Rome in 274; cf. *LTUR* II, 366f. The *Historia Augusta* claims that Aurelian dedicated spoils in the palace on the Palatine (*SHA Divus Aurelianus* 10.2); cf. *LTUR* IV, 34.

⁷⁷³ Cf. *LTUR* V, 42f.

⁷⁷⁴ *SHA Divus Aurelianus* 45.2; cf. *LTUR* V, 48.

⁷⁷⁵ Mancini 2001, 21.

⁷⁷⁶ The classic publication on the walls is that of Richmond. Richmond categorized the purpose of the wall in the following observant way, rather influenced by the situation of 1930 (1930, 242): “Thus, the requirements was not a barrier which would attract notice and overawe by its enormous scale, ... but one which was efficient and self-effective, like the anti-aircraft defences of a modern capital.” The most recent study of the walls is Mancini 2001.

⁷⁷⁷ Aristid. *Or.* 26.29 and 26.82–84; cf. Lo Cascio 2005, 165.

⁷⁷⁸ Cf. *LTUR* III, 290.

⁷⁷⁹ *Chron.* 12.30.

⁷⁸⁰ *SHA Divus Aurelianus* 21.9; cf. *LTUR* IV, 105. For the religious significance of the *pomerium*, cf. Beard, North & Price 1998, 177–181.

⁷⁸¹ Cf. *LTUR* III, 294.

Potter suggests that the walls to some extent should be understood as a way of the emperor of showing on the one hand his presence, ability and authority, on the other that he was providing for his city in times of trouble.⁷⁸²

The *Historia Augusta* also states that Aurelian built a porticus that was extended for a mile in the *Horti Sallustiani*; in this portico, the emperor preferred to exercise with his horses. The porticus may be completely fictitious: such a long porticus sounds only too typical of the ramblings that abound in the *Historia Augusta*. However, it is known that an obelisk now standing in front of the church of Sta Trinità dei Monti was recovered from the *Horti Sallustiani*. It is also apparent that the hieroglyphs of this obelisk copy those of the obelisk that was erected under Augustus on the *spina* of the Circus Maximus. Drawing on this evidence, Grenier suggests that the portico of Aurelian was actually a hippodrome, where the obelisk was put. This would have been connected with the cult of Sol introduced under Aurelian, as this cult was often connected with circus games.⁷⁸³

The theory is a rather attractive one. A hippodrome constructed under Aurelian would be a striking testimony to the efforts of the soldier-emperors to adhere to traditional strategies of imperial legitimation of the emperor: circus games were always of fundamental importance for the imperial authority, as these games were the prime events where the ruler met his subjects.⁷⁸⁴ Further, hippodromes that were connected to villas seem to be characteristic for imperial residences in the later empire.⁷⁸⁵ Not least, the topography of the area where the *horti* were situated would have provided fitting room for a hippodrome.⁷⁸⁶ However, the theory remains speculative, not least as the extent and significance of the ‘solar cult introduced under Aurelian’ should be toned down somewhat (cf. further chap. 5.5).

The *Templum Solis*, which according to the sources was inaugurated after the defeat of Palmyra in 273, is the most problematic of the building projects associated with Aurelian. The temple was located on the *Campus Martius*, just below the north-western slopes of the Quirinal hill and beside the Via Flaminia. Nothing of the temple is preserved; however, well-known plans drawn by Piranesi depict a complex, which is usually assumed to be the remains of the *Templum Solis*. The plans depict a curious structure that seems to consist of two separate edifices. One of these is a basilica with two rounded apses: on one side, this was connected through a passageway with a structure which more than anything else resembles a large palaestra. In the middle

⁷⁸² Potter 2004, 270.

⁷⁸³ SHA *Divus Aurelianus* 49.2; Grenier 1989, 19f.

⁷⁸⁴ A classic study of this phenomenon is that of Veyne, cf. Veyne 1990, 398–403; cf. also Flaig 1992, 75–80.

⁷⁸⁵ The most well-known examples are the *Palatium Sessorianum* and the Villa of Maxentius. It may be noted that the obelisks erected on the *spinae* of the hippodromes adjacent to these villas now stand in the Pincio garden and in the *Fontana delle quattro fiume* in Piazza Navona respectively; cf. Paterna 1996, 820–823 and Claridge 1998, 338 respectively.

⁷⁸⁶ The area was dominated by a valley which separated the Quirinal hill from the Pincio; for the topography of the area, cf. *LTUR* III, 79–81. Cf. also *LTUR* III, Fig. 50.

of this palaestra, Piranesi has drawn something that looks like a small round temple. The functions of these two structures, whether only one of them represents the actual temple, and if so which one that would be, has been debated.⁷⁸⁷

To these difficulties may be added that other drawings by Pirro Ligorio, which seem to depict the same palaestra, instead feature something that looks like a small Pantheon in the middle.⁷⁸⁸ Suffice it here to say that it seems reasonable to assume that the ‘temple’ can be assumed to be the round structure in the middle of the palaestra,⁷⁸⁹ and that the palaestra was built for the distribution of foodstuff, which, according to the *Historia Augusta* was stored in the *Templum Solis*.⁷⁹⁰ Provisions for the distribution of other foodstuffs, for instance pork, are also claimed to have been made;⁷⁹¹ it has been suggested that a part of the Tiber banks referred to as the *ciconiae* were reconstructed under Aurelian for the unloading and further transport of wine into the city.⁷⁹² Similar to the notion of a hippodrome in the *Horti Sallustiani*, this is an attractive idea, although it remains rather speculative.

In connection with this issue, the so-called Arco di Portogallo also merits consideration. This was an arch or gate spanning the Via Flaminia where this road crossed the *Pomerium*. The name used for this arch derives from the Portuguese embassy next to which it stood. The arch was torn down when the Via del Corso was widened in the mid-17th century; the appearance of the arch, however, is well known from several depictions. Its most important features were two large relief panels, positioned to the left and right of the vault, on the outside of the gate. These panels, which were *spolia* most likely from the age of Hadrian, are today preserved on the landings of the staircase in the Palazzo dei Conservatori.⁷⁹³

The reliefs on these panels are usually identified as depictions of the apotheosis of Sabina and the reading of the funeral speech by Hadrian respectively.⁷⁹⁴ La Rocca suggests an attribution to the rule of Gallienus, while Torelli argues that the arch is to be attributed to Aurelian, and a part of a major renovation programme on the *Campus Martius* that included the construction of the *Templum Solis*.⁷⁹⁵ Both suggestions seem tempting, but are problematic. In the interpretation of La Rocca, the Arco di Portogallo becomes an interesting parallel to the Arch of Gallienus; however, the interpretation of the panels of La Rocca seems somewhat speculative, considering that they have been heavily restored. On the other hand, the argument of Torelli seems

⁷⁸⁷ Cf. *LTUR* IV, 332f.

⁷⁸⁸ Cf. Castagnoli 1978–80, 373.

⁷⁸⁹ Cf. Castagnoli 1978–80, 385.

⁷⁹⁰ *SHA Divus Aurelianus* 48.4; cf. *LTUR* IV, 331.

⁷⁹¹ *SHA Divus Aurelianus* 35.1–2, 48.1; *Aur. Vict. Caes.* 35.7; *Epit. de Caes.* 35.6.

⁷⁹² Palmer 1990, 54–57; cf. *LTUR* I, 268.

⁷⁹³ Cf. *LTUR* I, 77f.

⁷⁹⁴ Cf. Von Hesberg 1978, no. 38 & 48; La Rocca 1986, 24f. Torelli interpretes the panel, which is usually identified as a depiction of Hadrian reading the funeral speech, as an *adlocutio*; cf. Torelli 1992, 123. This interpretation, in my view, is not satisfactory.

⁷⁹⁵ La Rocca 1986, 30 and Torelli 1992, 118–25 and 131.

much influenced by the idea of a ‘sun-cult’ introduced under Aurelian. As already mentioned, I will elsewhere argue that this ‘religious new order’ of Aurelian has been rather overstated. In a recent addition to the debate, Liverani attempts an attribution of the arch to the reign of Honorius.⁷⁹⁶ For my part, I conclude that the problem of the Arco di Portogallo remains unsolved.

The *Historia Augusta* relates that the emperor Tacitus donated a silver statue to the *Templum Solis* constructed under his predecessor;⁷⁹⁷ another statement claims that a portrait of Tacitus was placed ‘*in Quintiliorum*.’⁷⁹⁸ The latter statement is of some interest, although it is not clear what ‘*in Quintiliorum*’ refers to. It could refer to a *domus*, found in the vicinity of the Ospedale S. Giovanni;⁷⁹⁹ however, the portrait of Tacitus has also been associated with the villa of the Quintilii.⁸⁰⁰ This giant villa, situated on the Via Appia outside the *urbs aeterna* and constructed under the brothers Sextus Quintilius Condianus and Sextus Quintilius Valerius Maximus, consuls in the year 151, is well known. Several finds datable to the third century, including sculptures depicting Maximinus Thrax (emperor 235–238) and Philippus Arabs (emperor 244–249) indicate a use of this villa in the third century.⁸⁰¹

The statement that there was a portrait of Tacitus in the Villa of the Quintili of course does not prove that this emperor resided there; however, it is interesting to note that once more, a soldier-emperor is connected to one of the large villas in the *suburbium* of Rome. For these emperors, who made only short sojourns in the *urbs aeterna*, it seems reasonable that these villae would have presented convenient residences, as they were much easier to arrive at (and, for that matter, leave) than the palace on the Palatine. No doubt, they were also much more easily guarded by the troops that the emperor would bring with him than the more central locations.

From the reign of Probus, there is a somewhat disappointing lack of information on the actions of the emperor as far as the city of Rome is concerned; not least considering the spectacular triumphs of that emperor in the city in 281/282. Several sources state that under Probus, a bridge over the Tiber was constructed; this, the *Pons Probi*, has been identified as the bridge later reconstructed under the emperor Theodosius and since known as the *Pons Theodosii*.⁸⁰² In the *Historia Augusta*, Probus is also claimed to have donated a house and an equestrian statue to Carus in recognition of the status of the latter as emperor-elect.⁸⁰³ As Carus is known to have been praetorian prefect under Probus and to have held a suffect consulate⁸⁰⁴, this seems like a reasonable idea.

⁷⁹⁶ Liverani 2004, 366f.

⁷⁹⁷ SHA *Tacitus* 9.2; cf. *LTUR* IV, 331.

⁷⁹⁸ SHA *Tacitus* 16.2.

⁷⁹⁹ Cf. *LTUR* V, 253.

⁸⁰⁰ Paris (ed.) 2002, 23; cf. *LTUR Suburbium* 4, 280.

⁸⁰¹ Paris (ed.) 2002, 22f.

⁸⁰² Cf. *LTUR* IV, 111f.

⁸⁰³ SHA *Carus et Carinus et Numerianus* 6.3; cf. *LTUR* II, 225.

⁸⁰⁴ Kienast 1996, 258.

However, considering the extremely favourable view of Probus that is evident in the *Historia Augusta*, this statement may well be fictitious.

Carus and his family, Diocletian and Maximian

The so-called *stabulum* on the Palatine is claimed in the *Historia Augusta* to have been redecorated with paintings, depicting public games that Carus, Carinus and Numerian gave to the city of Rome.⁸⁰⁵ Carinus is also claimed to have filled the palace with singers, actors and other depraved people.⁸⁰⁶ As these statements link Carinus to the Palatine, they are of some interest. If the previous soldier-emperors can be associated with the city of Rome at all, they are associated with various locations in the *suburbium*. It is likely that Carinus at least visited Rome on some occasion.⁸⁰⁷ It may further be noted that Carinus is one of the very few soldier-emperors of whom a portrait is known from Rome: as noted, the larger than life-size portrait usually identified as a sculpture of Carinus is known to have been retrieved from the *Castro Pretorio* (cf. chap. 3.2).

The most important event as far as the topography of the city of Rome in the age of Carus and his sons is concerned is not a building project at all. Rather, it is the great fire, which severely damaged certain parts of the city, most notably the Forum, in 283. It is usually assumed that the rebuilding after these fires commenced under the dyarchs.⁸⁰⁸ In my view, there is every reason to assume that the rebuilding commenced immediately, that is, under the reign of Carinus and Numerian. However, considering the brief time that remained of their rules, it is rather pointless to attempt at attributing any reconstructions to them.

The various architectural undertakings in Rome in the long reign of Diocletian and Maximian partly fall outside the scope of this thesis. However, a number of the better known projects merit some attention. For instance, it may be noted that the aqueduct supplying the Baths of Caracalla with water was repaired.⁸⁰⁹ The baths today known as the Baths of Diocletian can be regarded as the most spectacular project initiated by Diocletian and Maximian. The construction of these baths commenced in 298, and the complex was finally dedicated in 305/306.⁸¹⁰

Some notes may be made of the *Arcus novus*. This monument, which does not survive today, could, together with the so-called *Fünfsäulendenkmal*⁸¹¹ be regarded as the monument in the city of Rome that most obviously is connected to the events of

⁸⁰⁵ SHA *Carus et Carinus et Numerianus* 19.1; cf. *LTUR* IV, 34.

⁸⁰⁶ SHA *Carus et Carinus et Numerianus* 16.7: “mimis, meretricibus, pantomimis, cantoribus atque leonibus Palatium replevit.” Cf. *LTUR* IV, 34.

⁸⁰⁷ Gricourt argues that Carinus resided in the city of Rome in November 284; cf. Gricourt 2000, 38.

⁸⁰⁸ Cf. *LTUR* II, 342f.

⁸⁰⁹ Cf. *LTUR* V, 43.

⁸¹⁰ Cf. *LTUR* V, 53.

⁸¹¹ The most thorough investigation of this important monument, which however falls outside the chronological scope of this study, is that of Kähler; cf. Kähler 1964.

the period that is investigated in this thesis. The *Arcus novus* was a triumphal arch set up by Diocletian and Maximian over the Via Flaminia in the vicinity of where now the church Santa Maria in via Lata stands; the imagery of the arch was apparently, like the later arch of Constantine I, constructed with *spolia*. The arch was referred to as the *Arcus novus* due to its close proximity to an arch that was also spanning the Via Flaminia only some 150 metres away. This other arch was erected in honour of the emperor Claudius. The *spolia* used on the *Arcus novus* were also taken from monuments from the age of Claudius. The location of the new arch was most likely chosen with the older arch in mind: the *Arcus novus* was a celebration of the regaining of Britain from the usurpation of Carausius and Allectus, and Britain had originally been incorporated in the empire under the emperor Claudius. Sufficient sculpture and decoration has been attributed to the arch as to give an impression of its decoration and visual programme; the sculptured pedestals, which Brilliant suggests should be attributed to the portico of Gallienus along the Via Flaminia, are usually assumed to have been used for the *Arcus novus*.⁸¹²

The date of the construction of the arch has been debated; from what has been retrieved from the sculptural programme, it is clear that the inscription VOTIS X ET XX was prominent. Coins of Diocletian were struck with such a vota-inscription in the tenth year of the rule of Diocletian, i.e. in 293/294. Buttrey therefore suggested that the arch should be dated to these years.⁸¹³ However, as Mayer points out, the regaining of Britain was not celebrated until 297. Further, vota-coins with the legend VOT X ET XX were struck in that year as well; this implies that the most plausible date of the arch would be 297. The arch is interesting, as it celebrates the reclaiming of a territory from fellow Romans. In the contemporary panegyric, written in celebration of the victory, a solution to this rather sensitive matter problem was to 'barbarize' Britain. In this way, the regaining of a Roman province could be described as a military victory over barbarians. Thus, with the construction of this arch, the tetrarchs demonstrate their pietas and affiliation to the eternal city.⁸¹⁴ The construction of the *Arcus novus* thus presented a solution to the same problem which Rome faced after the 're-conquest' of Gaul (cf. chap. 2.8).

To sum up, only a very limited number of traces can be securely ascertained of actual presence of the soldier-emperors in the city of Rome, or of projects undertaken in the city on their behalf. It could, firstly, be noted that the only project mentioned in literary sources that almost certainly must be fictional is the 'Colossus of Gallienus.' This project fits a bit too well with the apparent intention of the *Historia Augusta* to render a picture of Gallienus as a 'second Nero.'⁸¹⁵ Secondly, the only two projects that can be securely attested are the Arch of Gallienus and the walls of Aurelian. Thirdly, literary sources tell of a number of projects which seem perfectly plausible,

⁸¹² *LTUR* I, 101f; cf. Mayer 2002, 180–183.

⁸¹³ Cf. Buttrey 1983, 382f.

⁸¹⁴ Pan. Lat. 8.16.4; Mayer 2002, 181f.

⁸¹⁵ Cf. for instance SHA *Gallieni duo* 3.6.

but for which there is – as of yet – no conclusive evidence. I would suggest that the most interesting of such projects were the ‘portico’ in the *Horti Sallustiani*, and the various undertakings on the *Campus Martius*, including the Arco di Portogallo and the *Templum Solis*.

I would suggest that the traces that can be retrieved indicate that the city of Rome retained its relevance in the age of the soldier-emperors. I would also suggest that further traces of imperial presence in the city of Rome in the second half of the third century should be searched for in the large villa-complexes that are formed from the third century and onwards on the outskirts of Rome. However, for the present, we have to be content with the notion that the presence of the soldier-emperors in the city of Rome is not fully understood. Even so, it does seem as if their presence was limited. It should then be asked, whether under these circumstances, the coins presented a means for the emperor to cling to the fundamental legitimizing image of Rome when other means of communication were no longer possible.

4.3. Providentia Augusti: coins for the city of Rome

After this survey of archaeological traces, the next question is in which way the soldier-emperors attempted to communicate with the *urbs aeterna* through their coins. Apparently, the soldier-emperors cannot be asserted to have constructed many ‘actual’ monuments. Did they amend this with ‘monuments in miniature’? Again, it should be pointed out that there lies a danger in drawing conclusions from a general examination of ‘coinage for the city of Rome’ struck under the soldier-emperors, as the city is not one entity. It consisted of various groups – the senatorial aristocracy, the *plebs urbana*, the praetorian guards – that may have had different interests.

Further, the question of whose intention the coins represent is also brought to the fore. A donative distributed in the *urbs aeterna* for an absent emperor might signify nothing else than the wishes of the magistrates of the *urbs* to maintain order in the city. To this it might be replied that a *donativum* for a new emperor cannot be made before the city has received news that a new emperor has been proclaimed. Moreover, a donative in gold cannot be made without bullion. As suggested before, suffice it to state that in any case the coinage must be regarded as an official statement.

The output of billon antoniniani in the 260s is high. However, repeatedly, confused coin-series are struck.⁸¹⁶ This problem appears in the coinage that is struck for Galienus and dated to 263 and onwards; it seems to culminate with coin-series struck in 266–268. As Estiot argues, the problem is most likely an effect of imperial absence

⁸¹⁶ Estiot 2004, 61. Confused coin-series occur when obverses and reverses are shared between coin-series in an unorganized way; coins struck with dies normally used for coins of different emperors is an effect of this. The problem is a very common one in third century coinage; the authors of Besly & Bland 1983 and Bland & Burnett 1988 make a distinction between ‘normal’ and ‘poor’ coinage. Cf. Besly & Bland 1983, 25f, and Bland & Burnett 1988, 119–21.

from the city of Rome.⁸¹⁷ The situation seems to become somewhat more stable under the rule of Claudius Gothicus. However, Estiot argues that during his rule, personnel are transferred from the mint of the city of Rome to that of Mediolanum.⁸¹⁸

Göbl argues that the problems with control of the coinage remain as Aurelian is proclaimed. Göbl and Estiot agree that the mint of the city of Rome is actually closed, in connection with an extraordinary incident, the ‘war of the moneyers’ (cf. further chap. 4.6).⁸¹⁹ The mint is reopened in 273. Estiot argues that this is connected with the expected return of the emperor from the campaigns in the east.⁸²⁰ Output of billon coins then remains notably high under Tacitus and Florian. Output of gold coinage, however, is low. An abundant gold coinage is not struck in the city of Rome until the triumphs of Probus.⁸²¹

Coins for the SPQR

If the emperor could not reside in the city of Rome, he could at least visit the *urbs aeterna*. Such a visit could be staged with an *adventus*. This ceremony could take place when the emperor visited a city and made his entry therein: as Lehen argues, the *adventus* was an event where the charisma of the emperor was expressed in a symbolically dense context.⁸²²

The usual depiction of an *adventus* features the emperor, mounted, with his right arm raised (fig. 7). *Adventus*-motifs, along with motifs of *adlocutiones* (cf. chap. 3.4) are some of the few more elaborate motifs that are retained for medallions struck for the soldier-emperors.⁸²³ This clearly indicates the importance of the ceremony. Nevertheless, *adventus*-ceremonies, also similar to *adlocutiones*, are sometimes also depicted on shields and cuirasses on the spear and shield-images.⁸²⁴

Göbl attributes a number of *adventus*-types, struck for Gallienus, to the city of Rome.⁸²⁵ Considering the circumstances surrounding the proclamation of Claudius Gothicus it is perhaps not surprising if it was necessary for him to visit the *urbs aeterna*: the *adventus*-type is used for antoniniani struck in the city of Rome and

⁸¹⁷ Estiot 2004, 61: “La situation d’urgence militaire, leur absence de la capitale empêchent Gallien, puis Claude et Quintille d’y remédier: l’atelier fonctionne en quasi autonomie, inondant le public d’une masse énorme de monnaies dévaluées et contribuant largement à la chute abrupte de l’antoninien.”

⁸¹⁸ Cf. Estiot 2004, 61.

⁸¹⁹ Göbl 1993, 42f; cf. Estiot 2004, 61.

⁸²⁰ Cf. Estiot 2004, 63.

⁸²¹ Cf. Estiot 1999b, 338.

⁸²² Lehen 1997, 14: “Der charismatische Charakter des römischen Kaisers fand im *Adventus* gewissermaßen seine symbolische Verdichtung.” Cf. also MacCormack 1981, 22–33.

⁸²³ Cf. for instance Gnechi II, 106f, nos. 5–6, and 118, no. 24; cf. also Tav. 113, nos. 7–8, and Tav. 120, no. 5 respectively.

⁸²⁴ Bastien II, 484f.

⁸²⁵ Göbl 2000, Nos. 337–338, nos. 377–379, 435 and 656.

attributed to this occasion. A wide range of coin-types, struck in gold and billon, are also attributed to this occasion.⁸²⁶

A novel *adventus*-type is used for gold coins struck for Aurelian and attributed to the mint of Rome. These are considered to have been struck after the re-opening of the mint and are dated to 273. In this case, it is difficult to make the coin fit with an actual visit of the emperor to the city, as Aurelian became held up in the east by prolonged fighting. This may account for the choice of imagery: instead of the usual *adventus*-motif, the image depicts a 'charging rider'-motif. In this case, the *adventus*-motif may express a 'hope for the return of the emperor.'⁸²⁷

A medallion, struck for Tacitus, depicts an *adventus* of the emperor to the *urbs aeterna*. Estiot argues that Tacitus, after his proclamation, proceeded from Lugdunum to the city of Rome; he is estimated to have arrived there in November 275. The reverse of the medallion depicts the emperor making his triumphant entry into the *urbs*, led by a *Victoria* and followed by his soldiers.⁸²⁸ For Probus, too, the usual *adventus*-type is used on coins attributed to the city of Rome. Pink considered these coins to record the arrival of the emperor to the city of Rome 277, after his proclamation in the east the previous year.⁸²⁹ In the great coin-series struck for the triumph of Probus in 281/282, a number of aurei and medallions are struck with *adventus*- and *adlocutio*-types on the reverses. A number of shield-motifs depicting the *adventus* are also utilized.⁸³⁰ With these images, the city triumphal character of the return of Probus is expressed. The *adventus*-ceremony starts to resemble a triumph.

A number of *adventus*-ceremonies, as is evident, are recorded on coins struck in the city of Rome. Some of these ceremonies may very well have taken place: in some cases, this seems less likely. However, in all these cases, I think that the use of the coin-type must have expressed the hope, and to some extent a promise, for the imminent return of the emperor to his city.

There is a notable lack of references to specific groups or interests of the city of Rome. In the coinage struck for Gallienus, a number of coins are struck with reverses referring to *Liberalitas Augusti* and *Annona Augusti*. Interestingly enough, these are attributed by Göbl to the early 260s. To the period immediately following the events of 260, Göbl attributes a series of coins focusing thematically on the military capacity of the emperor; this is followed by another broad series of coins where the emphasis rather lies on safety and security.⁸³¹

⁸²⁶ Cf. Bland & Burnett 1988, 177, nos. 591–592; cf. Huvelin 1980, 115, no. 11, and *eadem* 1984, 205.

⁸²⁷ Estiot 2004, 63; cf. *RIC* V.1, 270, no. 42.

⁸²⁸ Estiot 1999b, 345f; cf. Estiot 2004, 67 and 312. Cf. also Gnecci II, 114, no. 3, and Tav. 118, no. 2.

⁸²⁹ Cf. Pink 1949, 55.

⁸³⁰ Pink 1949, 20 and 58f.

⁸³¹ Em.7 of Göbl (dated to the year 262, cf. Göbl 2000, 88); nos. 457–59, 470–71, 481–82 and 489 (reverse legend LIBERALITAS AVG); nos. 486–88 and 493–95 (reverse legend ANNONA AVG).

To these series, Göbl also attributes a coin featuring the novel legend SPQR OPTIMO PRINCIPI.⁸³² On other coins attributed to subsequent series, the reverse legends OB LIBERTATEM RECEPTAM and OB REDDIT LIBERT occur. An astounding gold multiple featuring the reverse legend CONCORD•P•R•ET•MILIT is attributed to the coin-series following these.⁸³³ It is easy to imagine that references to the generosity of the emperor and, above all, vouchsafing for the continued supply of the all-important grain imports was urgent, considering the stress under which the empire had been put. These messages must have been especially important for the *plebs urbana*.

However, these references subsequently seem to disappear, as no reverse-types such as the ones mentioned above are attributed by Göbl to the coin-series struck for Gallienus in the later 260s. This may be understandable, if an increasingly autonomous mint produced ‘confused’ issues during this period: it may have been seen as desirable to avoid coins making too specific references to the generousness of the emperor; a generousness neither the mint, the city nor, indeed, the emperor could guarantee. It is further interesting to note that reverses referring to *Annona Augusti* are re-introduced for the coinage struck for Claudius Gothicus in Rome, along with reverses referring to *Providentia Augusti*, which made a less specific reference to the concerns of the emperor for the city. The latter reverses remain in use for the coinage struck under Quintillus.⁸³⁴

Under Aurelian, however, such coin-types are not much used.⁸³⁵ References to *Providentia Augusti*, however, are used on a larger scale in the coinage struck for Tacitus. It can be noted that they are introduced in coin-series estimated to have been struck in connection with the presence of the emperor in the city of Rome.⁸³⁶ Estiot dates a medallion struck for Tacitus with a reverse featuring the legend RESTITVT•REI•PVBLICAE to the spring of 276. The motif depicts the emperor raising a kneeling personification, who is carrying a mural crown.⁸³⁷ This explicit reference to the actions of an emperor towards the *urbs aeterna* remains unique.

The references to *Providentia Augusti* continue in the coinage struck for Florian and in initial coin-series struck for Probus, but subsequently disappear. The reference only re-appears in coin-issues dated by Göbl to the period following the great triumph of 281/282.⁸³⁸ The reference also occurs in the early coinage struck for Carus and his sons in the city of Rome; by this time, the reference to *Annona Augusti* also re-occurs. This coin-type is also used for the early coin-series struck for Diocletian and Maximian.

⁸³² Em. 7 of Göbl; cf. Göbl 2000, nos. 536–537.

⁸³³ Em. 8 of Göbl (dated to the year 263, cf. Göbl 2000, 89); Göbl 2000, nos. 561–562, 565, 567–568 and 700.

⁸³⁴ Cf. Bland & Burnett 1988, 178–181 (Claudius Gothicus) and 187 (Quintillus).

⁸³⁵ Estiot attributes one *providentia augusti*-type to the earliest billon coinage struck for Aurelian dated to October–December 270, in the city of Rome; cf. Estiot 2004, 287. Cf. also *RIC* V.1, 269, no. 36.

⁸³⁶ Estiot 2004, 67. The references to the *providentia augusti* occur on billon coins; cf. Estiot 310–11; cf. also *RIC* V.1, 335f, nos. 92, 98 and 102 respectively.

⁸³⁷ Estiot 2004, 68 and 312; cf. Gneccchi II, 114, no. 7, and Tav. 118, no. 6.

⁸³⁸ Cf. Estiot 2004, 314f (Florian; cf. *RIC* V.1, 353, 38); Pink 1949, 54–56 and 59 (Probus).

However, after these coin-issues, coin-types referring to *Providentia Augusti* and *Annona Augusti*, as many others, seem to be phased out.⁸³⁹

To sum up, references in coinage to the *providentia* of the emperor as far as the *urbs aeterna* is concerned are scarce. However, they occur more frequently in initial coin-series struck for a new emperor. In many cases, the implication of this may simply be that a coin-type used for the previous emperor is re-utilized. Still, in my view, such a practise did not make the content of the coin-type less relevant. In order to gain acceptance for a new emperor from the city of Rome, it would be desirable to assure the inhabitants – perhaps most of all the *plebs urbana* – that the routines of the city would be maintained.

The introduction of the 'consular portrait'

It is apparent that a more general way of referring to an interest in the *urbs aeterna* was by demonstrative adherence to its institutions. Prime importance among these must be attributed to the Republican offices that the emperor would have to adhere to, at least formally.⁸⁴⁰ This strategy, claiming legitimacy through acknowledging the legalistic traditions of Rome, is what I will investigate next. The strategy implied the formal assumption of Republican offices. All emperors who were acknowledged by the city of Rome during the period under investigation in this study were furnished with the titles of *pontifex maximus*, *pater patriae*, and with proconsular duties.⁸⁴¹ In the following, I will attempt at demonstrating that such measures, foremostly the assumption of consulates, are given pronounced expression in the coinages struck for the soldier-emperors.

It was common throughout the imperial period that the assumptions of such titles were proclaimed in reverse legends on coins; such legends frequently occur on coins struck for the soldier-emperors.⁸⁴² However, 'civic portraits' presented the most simple and common ways of referring to the civilian duties of the emperor. Such portraits depict the emperor bareheaded or laurel-wreathed. Sometimes, the emperor is also depicted draped in a toga, which also stresses the civic role of the emperor. In the first two centuries, this portrait-type is by far the most common one on Roman Imperial coinage. In the third century, it is increasingly replaced by the increasingly large variety of 'military portraits' which has been under discussion in the previous chapters. However, a portrait-type that is also characteristic of the third century is that depicting the emperor as a consul. This portrait-type depicts the emperor wearing the

⁸³⁹ Cf. Gricourt 2000, 29–32 (Carus, Carinus and Numerian); 82 (Diocletian and Maximian).

⁸⁴⁰ Cf. Winterling 2001, 98f.

⁸⁴¹ Cf. Kienast 1996, 218–279, for a thorough account.

⁸⁴² Cf. for instance Göbl 2000, no. 340 (Gallienus); Estiot 1999a, 125f, nos. 66–74 (Aurelian) and *RIC* V.2, 31, no. 132 (Probus). It should be noted that in some cases the assumptions of titles are only known through such coin-legends.

tunica palmata and *toga picta*; frequently the emperor is also depicted holding additional attributes such as an eagle-tipped sceptre or a globe (cf. fig. 23).⁸⁴³

This portrait-type, similar to the military portrait-types examined in previous chapters, are first used in the coinages struck for the late Severans and for Gordian III. After this, the 'consular portrait' disappears, occurring once on medallion struck for Trebonianus Gallus, and reappears in the coinage struck for Gallienus. The consular portrait subsequently occurs regularly in the coinages of most soldier-emperors. It is frequent in the coinage struck for Probus; after the rule of that emperor, the consular portrait is only used sporadically.⁸⁴⁴

The consular portrait was not merely a reference to the consulate. The consular attire derived from the triumphal garments worn by the generals of the republic and was worn by Augustus and his successors for different ceremonial events.⁸⁴⁵ The eagle-tipped sceptre, or *scipio*, was also a powerful symbol of imperial power.⁸⁴⁶ With these and the other iconographical objects with which the portrait could be modified, the image became a multi-layered and ambiguous reference to imperial power.

Gallienus became sole ruler of the empire in 260. He had been acclaimed *Caesar* by the senate in the fall of 253, only a few months after Valerian had been proclaimed emperor; shortly after having been acclaimed as *Caesar*, Gallienus became promoted to joint *Augustus* with Valerian.⁸⁴⁷ The picture of Valerian given in the *Historia Augusta* is a very positive one;⁸⁴⁸ if these acclamations were made in accordance with the demands of the senate, that may have contributed to this picture.

Gallienus assumed seven consulates, all but the first three during his sole reign. During his joint reign with Valerian, Gallienus was given tribunicial powers three times; a sixteenth time (!) is claimed for 267–268. He is also said to have been acclaimed as emperor 15 times.⁸⁴⁹ In the coinage, consular portraits are utilized on a few occasions. The coins attributed to the city of Rome and featuring the reverse legend OB LIBERTATEM RECEPIT on the obverse feature consular portraits. A number of large bronze medallions attributed by Göbl to the sole reign of Gallienus also feature such portraits. Unfortunately, Göbl does not give them any specific dating.⁸⁵⁰ The portrait-type is also used on regular antoniniani. It may be noted, however, that these are attributed by Göbl to the mint of Mediolanum.⁸⁵¹ This represents an important development (cf. further below, chap 4.5).

⁸⁴³ King 2002, 131f; Delbrück 1940, 13. For a thorough treatment of consular imagery, cf. Olovsson 2003, 70–91.

⁸⁴⁴ Bastien I, 281–85; cf. Delbrück 1940, 27.

⁸⁴⁵ Bastien I, 281.

⁸⁴⁶ Bastien II, 420.

⁸⁴⁷ Kienast 1996, 218; cf. de Blois 1976, 23f.

⁸⁴⁸ Cf. for instance SHA *Valeriani duo* 5.

⁸⁴⁹ Kienast 1996, 219.

⁸⁵⁰ Göbl 2000, nos. 567l, 568l, 776m and 777m.

⁸⁵¹ Göbl 2000, nos. 1184, 1189, 1192, 1268–69, 1274, 1275q, 1277.

Claudius Gothicus was given tribunicial powers three times and is credited with the assumption of two consulates.⁸⁵² This may have been a way of evading possible distrust following the somewhat obscure circumstances surrounding his assumption of the purple. A coin-series is attributed by Huvelin to the acceptance of this consulate. This would have taken place on January the 1st 269. In this series a number of coins are struck with portraits depicting Claudius Gothicus as consul, holding a globe.⁸⁵³ These portraits may have represented a way of enhancing the credibility of the emperor.

The fact that Quintillus is not credited with the assumption of consulates need not surprise, as his first opportunity to accept one – at least as emperor – would have been in January 271. Moreover, at this point he was dead. However, neither is Quintillus known to have been given tribunicial powers; this is perhaps somewhat more curious, if his claims to imperial power were accepted by the senate.⁸⁵⁴ No consular portraits are known from his short rule.

Aurelian, however, is credited with having been awarded tribunicial powers seven times. He also credited with the assumption of three consulates, in 271, 274 and 275.⁸⁵⁵ It is interesting that Aurelian assumes his first consulate at the beginning of the rule – as soon as it was possible, one might say – and two subsequent ones after his return from the campaigns in the east. The assumption of the two consulates in 274 and 275 fits rather well with other aspects of his policy, especially after the conquest of Gaul (cf. further chap. 5.3).

A number of coins struck at various mints are assumed by Estiot to have been struck in recognition of the consulates assumed by Aurelian. The coins recording the first consulate include aurei attributed to Siscia,⁸⁵⁶ they also include antoniniani and aurei attributed to Cyzicus.⁸⁵⁷ An aureus dated to the summer of 272 and which features a consular portrait is attributed to the mint of Antioch. This is the only aureus known to have been struck for Aurelian with this portrait-type. The reverse depicts the emperor in a triumphal *quadriga*, with his right arm raised in an *adventus*-pose. Estiot argues that this coin was struck for a triumphal *adventus* at Antioch, rather than for a *processus consularis*, as the consular attire was also the formal regalia awarded to a triumphator.⁸⁵⁸ This coin, similar to the coins struck with consular portraits for Gallienus in Mediolanum, demonstrates how imagery referring to ceremonies hitherto taking place in the city of Rome is introduced outside the city of Rome.

⁸⁵² Cf. Kienast 1996, 231; Kienast discards the inscriptions crediting Claudius Gothicus with a second consulate as “irrtümlich.”

⁸⁵³ Huvelin 1980, 115, nos. 7, 9 and 10.

⁸⁵⁴ Cf. Cubelli 1992, 48.

⁸⁵⁵ Kienast 1996, 235.

⁸⁵⁶ Estiot 2004, 87, 352 and 354; cf. pl. 78, no. 103 and pl. 79, nos. 112–113. A coin-type featuring a consular portrait is attributed to a series of antoniniani considered by Estiot to have been struck from the autumn of 272 to the beginning of 274; cf. Estiot 2004, 358 and pl. 79, no. 124.

⁸⁵⁷ Estiot 2004, 412 and 416; cf. pl. 84, no. 242 and pl. 85, no. 259.

⁸⁵⁸ Estiot 2004, 432 and pl. 87, no. 293.

Aurei recording the second consulate are attributed to two mints, the newly established one at Ticinum⁸⁵⁹ and the one at Tripolis.⁸⁶⁰ Aurelian's third consulate, assumed in 275, only seems to have motivated a special coin-series in the city of Rome.⁸⁶¹ The last years of the rule of Aurelian were characterized by a number of measures taken towards the city of Rome. Perhaps this consulate, or at least the spectacular *processus consularis* which would have been connected to it, was seen as an opportunity to boost popularity among the inhabitants of the city.

The consulates of the later soldier-emperors

The complex circumstances surrounding the assumption of the purple by Tacitus will be discussed later in this chapter. Tacitus is claimed with the assumption of three consulates. Of these, only one seems possible to attribute with certainty to 275. Further, he is credited with the award of tribunical powers twice.⁸⁶² The role of Tacitus as consul is awarded an unusually prominent position in the coinage of this emperor: a medallion and a number of coin-types both in gold and billon, attributed to Ticinum and dated to 276, feature consular portraits.⁸⁶³

Florian is claimed to have assumed one consulate. However, like Quintillus, he is not known to have been given tribunical powers. In the coinage struck for Florian, there are no references to his consulate. His successor Probus, however, assumed consulates for every year of his rule except for the year 280. He was also awarded with tribunical powers four times.⁸⁶⁴

In the coinage struck for Probus, consular portraits, which up to that point have been used rather sparingly, are utilized on a large scale. Probus assumed them to have been struck in celebration of each consulate. He further assumed that the portrait-type is first utilized in Cyzicus in 277, and then 'accompanies the emperor' on his way to the mints of the west.⁸⁶⁵ A new variation of the portrait-type is introduced. This depicts Probus holding a branch in the right hand, with the *scipio* in the left.⁸⁶⁶ With this variation of the basic portrait-type, an even more expressive image of imperial power is created.

As has already been noted, the possibilities of Carus, the successor of Probus, for establishing a stable rule were completely different from those of his predecessors. This was due to the fact that Carus had two grown up sons. Carus himself is claimed to have assumed one suffect consulate and one ordinary consulate; Kienast estimates that the suffect consulate was assumed immediately after the proclamation, if not

⁸⁵⁹ Estiot 1999a, 125f., nos. 66–74; cf. Estiot 2004, 77f. and 328.

⁸⁶⁰ Estiot 2004, 126 and 439; cf. pl. 87, no. 304.

⁸⁶¹ Estiot 2004, 65f. and 302–05.

⁸⁶² Kienast 1996, 250.

⁸⁶³ Estiot 2004, 330f; cf. pl. 91, nos 356, 360 and 363–368.

⁸⁶⁴ Kienast 1996, 252–254.

⁸⁶⁵ Pink 1949, 17.

⁸⁶⁶ Bastien I, 295 and *idem* III, pl. 124, no. 4; cf. *RIC* V.2, 79, no. 586.

earlier, while the ordinary consulate was assumed in January 283. Carus is also claimed to have been furnished with tribunicial powers twice. Carinus, the elder son, is credited with the assumption of three consulates; the first one in 283 together with his father, a second in 284 together with the younger brother Numerian, and a third one in 285. Carinus was awarded tribunicial powers three times. Numerian, finally, held no consulate except for the one mentioned above in 284 with his elder brother. He was awarded tribunicial powers twice.⁸⁶⁷

A number of coin-series are struck in celebration of the consulates of Carus and his sons. Gricourt dates a number of bronze medallions attributed to the mint of Siscia to January 284, when Carinus and Numerian assumed their second and first consulates respectively. Gricourt also attributes aurei struck for Carinus to the same event.⁸⁶⁸ Likewise, coins struck for both Carinus and Numerian and attributed to the mint of Lugdunum are connected with this occasion.⁸⁶⁹ In the city of Rome, a few coins featuring consular portraits of Numerian are attributed to his only consulate; a later series of coins is attributed to the third consulate of Carinus in January 285.⁸⁷⁰

A more novel and recurring motif in the visual imagery conceived for Carus and his sons is that presenting Carus and his sons – most often Carinus – as the new hope of the *res publica*. One coin features a double portrait of the two *Augusti*, and the reverse legend FELICITAS REIPUBLICAE. Furthermore, as already mentioned (cf. chap. 3.6), a coin-type referring to *Victoria Augustorum* features a reverse depicting Carus, draped in a toga, and Carinus, in military attire, holding a *Victoria* together.⁸⁷¹

It should be noted that Carus with some certainty assumed a suffect consulate already under the rule of Probus. Thus, when he was proclaimed emperor, he did not rise to sudden power from nowhere. Evidence that the same can be said for Diocletian is much stronger, as he assumed a first consulate as *consul suffectus* already in 283 or 284. After this he assumed a further nine consulates until 308; the first five of these were held in 285, 287, 290, 293 and 296. He is also credited with the award of tribunicial powers a mindboggling twenty-two times.⁸⁷² For his co-emperor Maximian Herculus, the assumption of nine consulates are claimed, the first one for 287 – that is, rather late by comparison with his predecessors – and the four following ones in 288, 290, 293 and 297; he was awarded tribunicial powers a total of twenty-one times until 305.⁸⁷³

⁸⁶⁷ Kienast 1996, 258–261.

⁸⁶⁸ Gricourt 2000, 52.

⁸⁶⁹ Gricourt 2000, 63; cf. Bastien 1976, 254–257, nos. 550, 553, 556, 559, 562 and 568.

⁸⁷⁰ Gricourt 2000, 36 (first and only consulate of Numerian; cf. nos. 3251–52); 43 (third consulate of Carinus).

⁸⁷¹ Gricourt 2000, 46 and 48 respectively.

⁸⁷² Kienast 1996, 266–268.

⁸⁷³ Kienast 1996, 274. Constantius Chlorus and Galerius assumed their first consulates in 284 (cf. Kienast 1996, 280 and 284 respectively); I consider the assumption of consulates and tribunicial powers directly connected to the first tetrarchy beyond the scope of this study.

The recurring theme in the visual imagery conceived for the dyarchs, similar to that conceived for Carus and his sons, is that of the unity and ‘fraternity’ of the emperors. Their assumption of consulates is only one aspect of this; they shared this office three times, in 287, 290 and 293. Consular portraits are utilized on a number of coins struck for both dyarchs. Coins attributed to Rome and Lugdunum and featuring consular portraits are dated to Diocletian’s assumption of his second consulate.⁸⁷⁴ The following year, Diocletian’s and Maximian’s joint assumptions of their third and first consulates respectively are celebrated on a wider scale. Coins featuring consular portraits and attributed to the mints of Rome, Lugdunum and Siscia are dated to the celebrations of this event.⁸⁷⁵ The most spectacular reference to this occasion must be the famous gold multiple, which features an obverse depicting the dyarchs as consuls, while the reverse features a depiction of the *processus consularis*, with the emperors in a *quadriga* drawn by elephants (cf. chap 2.4).⁸⁷⁶

It is evident, then, that specific references to the *res publica* could be made on coins. More common, however, was the general reference to Rome that could be made by the depiction of the deity that actually was created for that very purpose, *Roma Aeterna*.

4.4. Paying tribute to Roma Aeterna

The deity *Roma Aeterna*, and the strategy of expressing loyalty towards Rome by paying loyalty to that deity, is inextricably linked, not so much to the emergence of the Roman Republic, but to the establishment of relations between that republic and other states. As Mellor put it, ‘the origins of Roma cannot be found in Rome.’⁸⁷⁷ Roma, Mellor argues, was invented by Greek states to function as a personification of the collective of Rome. This personification was given a divine status, similar to that status which could also be bestowed upon individual rulers, such as those of the Hellenistic kingdoms. Paying tribute to these as ‘gods’ was a way of expressing loyalty towards them in a formal way. Similarly, paying tribute to *Roma Aeterna* became a way of formally and symbolically expressing loyalty towards the city of Rome.⁸⁷⁸ As the empire evolved, the cult of *Roma Aeterna* was developed into a cult of Roma and the emperor.⁸⁷⁹ The Empire created the demand for loyalty, not only towards Rome but also towards the emperor: the development of the cult of Roma and Augustus provided a solution to this.

⁸⁷⁴ Gricourt 2000, 81f (Rome) and 97 (Lugdunum).

⁸⁷⁵ Gricourt 2000, 86f (Rome); 101f (Lugdunum); 92–96 (Siscia). For Lugdunum, cf. Bastien 1972, 136f, nos. 102–03, 105 and 111.

⁸⁷⁶ Gricourt 2000, 87; cf. Gnechi I, 12, nos. 1–2 (Diocletian and Maximian), and Tav. 5, nos. 1–2.

⁸⁷⁷ Mellor 1981, 954.

⁸⁷⁸ Mellor 1981, 956–958; cf. Beard, North & Price 1998, 158–160.

⁸⁷⁹ Cf. Mellor 1981, 971f.

This act of loyalty could be manifested in many ways. One was the striking of coins, referring to *Roma Aeterna*. Coins featuring such motifs were repeatedly struck by the Greek cities.⁸⁸⁰ In Roman imperial coinage, the type appears for the first time on aurei struck for Hadrian.⁸⁸¹ In the third century, the most frequently used coin-type depicts Roma with helmet, spear and shield, seated on a heap of spoils and features the legend ROMAE AETERNAE (*fig. 25*). However, the duality of '*Roma et Augustus*' also could receive its explicit expression on coins depicting Roma and the emperor (cf. below).

References to *Roma Aeterna* are scarce under the sole reign of Gallienus. In the 260s, the common coin-type is only attributed to the mints of Antioch.⁸⁸² In the coinage of Claudius Gothicus, Gysen attributes pieces of the coin-type to a mint at Smyrna.⁸⁸³ The coin-type is also used in Siscia for antoniniani. From this mint, one aureus struck with this coin-type is also preserved.⁸⁸⁴

Under Aurelian, a version of the coin-type, depicting Roma presenting a *victoria* to the emperor, is utilized for billon coins attributed to the mint of Mediolanum (*fig. 27*). This motif is known to have been used in the Asian mints for coinage struck for Valerian and Gallienus and their wars against Persia; Estiot argues that this type, along with other types with the same origin were now re-introduced for the campaigns of Aurelian against the east.⁸⁸⁵

In the coinage of Probus, references to *Roma Aeterna* occur on coins struck at Siscia and Ticinum in the early reign, and in the city of Rome throughout the reign.⁸⁸⁶ The most novel depiction of Roma and the emperor from the coinage struck for Probus is that on a medallion attributed to the triumph celebrated in the *urbs aeterna* in 281/282. The obverse features a campaign-portrait; the reverse of the medallion features the legend TEMPORVM FELICITAS and depicts Roma presenting a globe to the emperor.⁸⁸⁷

In the coinage struck for Carus and his sons, references to *Roma Aeterna* occur on aurei struck for Carus and Carinus. These aurei are attributed to a coin-series struck in Siscia, and dated to November 282. This is the coin-series, to which Gricourt also attributes coins featuring the reverse legend FELICITAS REIPUBLICAE. At the same mint, the reference to *Roma Aeterna* later re-appears on aurei struck for Numerian. The reference to *Roma Aeterna* also occurs on antoniniani attributed to Ticinum.⁸⁸⁸

⁸⁸⁰ Mellor 1981, 961–964; cf. Harl 1987, 71–74 and pl. 30. nos. 1–5.

⁸⁸¹ Cf. *RIC* II, 370, nos. 263 and 265.

⁸⁸² Göbl 2000, Tab. 48, no. 1613.

⁸⁸³ Cf. Gysen 1999, 38, tab. II.

⁸⁸⁴ Cf. Alföldi 1935/36, 11f; cf. Taf. I. no. 36 and Taf. II. no. 12 respectively. Cf. also Huvelin 1985b, 723.

⁸⁸⁵ Estiot 2004, 72 and 320.

⁸⁸⁶ Cf. Pink 1949, 50 (Siscia; coin-series dated to 277); 55–59 (Rome; coin-series dated to 277–82); 61–63 (Ticinum; coin-series dated to 276–78).

⁸⁸⁷ Cf. Pink 1949, 59; cf. Gricourt II, 120, no. 42, and Tav. 121, no. 9.

⁸⁸⁸ Cf. Gricourt 2000, 46 and 54 (Siscia); 26f (Ticinum).

The common *Romae aeternae*-type is utilized again on coins attributed to the same mint, but struck for Diocletian and dated to the period 285–287.⁸⁸⁹ After this, it seems as though the *Romae aeternae*-types, as many others, are phased out. It should be noted, however, that the common type is used on coins, dated to as late as 294, struck for Constantius Chlorus in Lugdunum.⁸⁹⁰

To sum up, it is evident that references to *Roma Aeterna* appear in the coinages of all soldier-emperors. In my opinion, the variation to which the motif of Roma is subjected demonstrates that Roma was still as important a symbol as ever. One case is exceptional. This is the drastic peak in the use of coins referring to *Roma Aeterna* in the gold-coinage struck for the emperor Tacitus, and thus we are compelled to return to the events of the autumn of 275.

The 'interregnum' of 275

A historical tradition found in the works of Aurelius Victor, the *Historia Augusta* and the *Epitome de Caesaribus* claim that Aurelian was murdered in the summer of 275. This was then followed by an interval, which lasted six months. Subsequently, the senator Tacitus was elected emperor.⁸⁹¹ The tradition referring to this incident interpreted the event as a final moment of glory for the senate, a 'senatorial renaissance' when the civilian authorities of Rome one last time showed their authority before the empire once more relapsed into civil wars.

In volume V of *Roman Imperial Coinage*, Percy Webb, with some hesitation, attributed a curious series of bronze coins featuring the obverse legend GENIVS PR and the reverse legend INT S•C VRB, or just SC, to this interregnum. The reverse inscription should then be read as an abbreviation of *interregnum urbis*. Webb made the general observation that if an interregnum indeed had taken place and been as long as the sources state, the mints could hardly have been closed during the period. An interregnum simply would have had to generate coins.⁸⁹²

Webb, however, also cautiously mentioned that others had attributed the coins to Gallienus. An important reason for this attribution was that the Genius that is depicted on the obverse of the coins apparently has borrowed its facial features from the portraits of Gallienus. After a thorough analysis by David Yonge, this attribution seems certain.⁸⁹³ The assumption of Webb that coins must have been struck during the interregnum, however, is still valid; more recent works have argued conclusively that coins were struck for Severina, the consort of Aurelian, during the period. The implications

⁸⁸⁹ Gricourt 2000, 70.

⁸⁹⁰ Bastien 1972, 237, nos. 667–669.

⁸⁹¹ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 36; cf. SHA, *Tacitus* 1–2 and *Epit. de Caes.* 35.10.

⁸⁹² *RIC* V.1, 253.

⁸⁹³ *RIC* V.1, 361; cf. Yonge 1979, 47–60. Cf. also Göbl 2000, 93, and Tab. 19, nos. 702–03. The conclusion that these coins are from the interregnum can still be found – mainly in literature written by non-numismatists, as it would seem; cf. Gradel 2002, 195.

of this are highly interesting and merit a discussion of their own (cf. further chap. 5.3).

The idea of a 'senatorial renaissance' was first questioned by Sir Ronald Syme in his important studies on the *Historia Augusta*. Syme forcefully argued for his opinion that Tacitus was most likely to have been just another one of the Illyrian soldier-emperors. One of Syme's main argument is that the incident is only related in the Latin tradition, most exhaustive in the dreaded *Historia Augusta*, and that the Greek tradition does not mention any interregnum at all.⁸⁹⁴ Another argument is that the *Historia Augusta* claims that the whole period spanning the comparatively brief rules of Tacitus and Florian was a kind of interregnum between the illustrious rules of Aurelian and Probus.⁸⁹⁵ This idea, for Syme, provided an explanation for the fictitious idea of the senatorial renaissance in 275. Out of the idea of an interregnum between the rules of Aurelian and Probus, an idea of an actual interregnum was created. The position of Syme has been supported by a number of scholars.⁸⁹⁶

After Syme, André Chastagnol has revised the chronology for these years. Chastagnol concludes that Aurelian must have been murdered towards the end of September or in the beginning of October, and that Tacitus assumed power in November; an interregnum would consequently have occurred and lasted for a little less than two months.⁸⁹⁷ Other scholars have thereafter generally leaned towards this opinion. The general opinion nowadays seems to be that the interregnum lasted for between six weeks and two months.⁸⁹⁸

It therefore seems fair to assume that an interregnum, although shorter than related in the Latin sources, occurred. However, what happened in this period is another matter. Some scholars prefer the position of Syme and discard of the Latin tradition completely.⁸⁹⁹ Most notably, Estiot in a number of additions to the debate has argued that Tacitus was an officer with a military command in Gaul, and who was acclaimed by the soldiers.⁹⁰⁰ Others, again, have leaned in favour of the Latin tradition.⁹⁰¹

In my view, the idea of a 'senatorial renaissance' cannot be simply discarded. There are two methodological reasons for this. Firstly, the dismissal of the incident as 'fiction' is based on the premise that it is related only by the Latin tradition, and – worst of all – by the *Historia Augusta*, whose pro-senatorial bias, as mentioned in chapter I,

⁸⁹⁴ Syme 1971, 237.

⁸⁹⁵ SHA *Tacitus* 14.5.

⁸⁹⁶ Syme 1971, 237f; cf. Polverini 1975, 1021; Estiot 1987, 13f.

⁸⁹⁷ Chastagnol 1980, 76.

⁸⁹⁸ Thus, for example Cizek 1991, 116 (two months); Johne 1991, 145, (6–7 weeks). However, it may be noted that Callu (cf. Callu 1996, 140f), has argued in favour of the 'long' interregnum described by the Latin tradition.

⁸⁹⁹ So, for instance, Drinkwater (1996, 1471): "Tacitus made no attempt to restore senatorial authority in the face of the military: he may have been a veteran himself."

⁹⁰⁰ Cf. for instance Estiot 2005, 179f.

⁹⁰¹ Cf. Cizek 1991, 116f; Johne 1991, 146f.

is well known.⁹⁰² I must admit to having problems seeing why Greek sources written in the early 6th and 13th centuries respectively, almost per definition, should be deemed more reliable than the Latin tradition. Secondly, and more generally, I argue that the idea of an interregnum has been discarded simply because it does not fit with the idea of an ‘age of military anarchy’ in the third century favoured by Syme and his followers. It is rather easy to dismiss ideas in the *Historia Augusta* not fitting your own ideas as ‘fictitious’. This is unreasonable. As long as there is no more conclusive evidence *against* the senatorial renaissance, it must be retained as a possibility.

Moreover, recent scholarship has argued exactly this: that negotiations of power such as those occurring in the autumn of the year 275, as described by the Latin tradition, could have been possible. As mentioned above, Hartmann observed that the fact that Aurelian seems to have been killed by a conspiracy made it difficult to gain immediate acceptance for a successor, even if there was one (cf. chap. 3.5). In the reading of Flaig, the officers of the army were surprised by the sudden assassination, and so no successor was ready to be proclaimed. Therefore, the senate and the praetorian prefect were asked to find a suitable successor, whom the soldiers could then proclaim.⁹⁰³ Pabst, in a reconstruction of events based on evidence from better-known proclamations of emperors in the fourth century argues that Tacitus was formally elected emperor by *comitia*, consisting of both civilians and soldiers.⁹⁰⁴

Following Flaig and Pabst, I argue that the events following the death of Aurelian, and that ultimately lead to the assumption of power of Tacitus, should be understood as part of the dynamics in the negotiations of power between the city of Rome and the armies of the empire. Furthermore, this is of vital importance also for the understanding of the policy of Tacitus. His actions are best understood as part of an effort to please the city of Rome, the senate and its institutions. The coinage struck for Tacitus testifies to this: the idea of a ‘renaissance for civilian society’ – if not a senatorial renaissance – is apparent in the visual imagery created for Tacitus.

First, some notes can be made on the portraits of Tacitus. The only certain portraits are those featured on coins struck for Tacitus. In addition, all these depict the emperor with a highly characteristic beard, quite different from the common ‘field-beard’ with which most other soldier-emperors are depicted (cf. chap. 3.2). The beard of Tacitus appears to be rather longer and most importantly leaves the tip of the chin clean-shaven. A rather controversial portrait-sculpture, now in the Musée de Louvre, is identified by Felletti-Maj as a portrait of Tacitus, much due to the fact that the portrait features this beard.⁹⁰⁵ Another portrait-sculpture of a younger Roman magistrate, who is also depicted with this peculiar beard, has been suggested by Alföldi to be a depiction of

⁹⁰² Johne 1998, 638.

⁹⁰³ Flaig 1992, 128f.

⁹⁰⁴ Pabst 1997, 28–30.

⁹⁰⁵ Felletti-Maj 1958, 274f, no. 368 and Tav. 54, 187–88. This identification has not been accepted by later studies, cf. Bergmann 1977, 120 and Wegner 1979, 147.

a younger Tacitus.⁹⁰⁶ Tacitus is unique among the Roman emperors in wearing this kind of beard. Is it possible that it is just an effect of the veristic tradition? In that case, it would still signify that Tacitus in his appearance was *different* from the other emperors proclaimed in the later half of the third century.

Another observation can also be made. Most coin-portraits of Tacitus, especially those on medallions depict an older, somewhat heavy-set man (*fig. 24*).⁹⁰⁷ Not only does this portrait differ to some extent from the more energetic and military portraits of Claudius Gothicus, Quintillus, Aurelian, Probus, Carus and the dyarchs adhere. Delbrück further argues that the portrait of Tacitus features a notable resemblance to portraits of the emperors Balbinus and Valerian, who are also claimed by the *Historia Augusta* to have been chosen by the senate.⁹⁰⁸

Naturally, we need not assume that there was a causal connection between the portraits and careers of these emperors, that is that they were actually chosen by the senate. Likewise, whether the ‘heavy-set portrait’ of Tacitus actually is the most realistic portrait of Tacitus is, in my view, beside point.⁹⁰⁹ The point is, rather, that Tacitus is depicted as something *else* than the soldier-emperors. The ‘soldier-portraits’ and the ‘senator-portraits’ constitute two categories of portraits, representing two distinctive, contemporary styles (cf. chap. 1.5).

What, then, does this style signify? Smith interprets a portrait of Licinius found in Ephesus as a portrait of a ‘benevolent ruler’, who wants to emphasize his mildness, as opposed to the *virtus* of previous emperors.⁹¹⁰ The portrait of Tacitus, as I suggest, had the same intent: it represented an effort to present Tacitus as an older, more benevolent ruler than the previous soldiers that had assumed the purple.

This assumption is further supported by the choices of types for the coin-series struck for Tacitus. By comparison with the rather narrow range of uniform types utilized in the late coin-series struck for Aurelian, the coinage struck for Tacitus features a wide range of more traditional coin-types. Most notable is the use of types referring to the *pax*, *pietas* and *providentia* bestowed on the empire by the emperor, and to the *Temporum felicitas*.⁹¹¹ One might argue admitted that the reverse types used under Tacitus were older, left-over dies. If so, it was still decided to discard of the reverses used in the late issues of Aurelian and Severina and re-introduce other ones.

⁹⁰⁶ Alföldi 1976, 230f. and Tav. 8–9.

⁹⁰⁷ Cf. for example Gnechi II, Tav. 118, nos. 1–8.

⁹⁰⁸ Delbrück referred to them as ‘die drei greisen Senatskaiser’; cf. Delbrück 1940, 33.

⁹⁰⁹ Estiot (2005, 168–171) argues that the first coins struck for Tacitus in Lugdunum feature the most realistic portrait of the emperor. As this portrait depicts a younger man, in Estiot’s view this supports the idea that Tacitus was actually a younger officer serving under Aurelian. It is my opinion that these initial portraits of Tacitus are influenced by the late portraits of Aurelian.

⁹¹⁰ Cf. Smith 1997, 191–194.

⁹¹¹ Cf. Estiot 2004, for instance 279 (Lugdunum); 308–09 (Rome); 330 (Ticinum); and 368 (Siscia). The contrast between these early coin issues and the last coin-issues struck for Aurelian and Severina is marked: cf. Estiot 2004, 278 (Lugdunum); 302–308 (Rome); 328 (Ticinum) and 362–65 (Siscia).

The medallion struck for Tacitus with a reverse featuring the unique legend RESTITVT•REI•PVBLICAE has already been mentioned (cf. above, chap. 4.3); the other medallions struck for Tacitus, depicting *adlocutiones* (cf. chap. 3.3) also, in my view, testify to some kind of negotiations in the autumn of 275. Whatever happened, it became necessary for the new emperor to visit the legions *in persona* in order to gain acceptance.

However, the most vivid testimony to the idea that something did happen in the autumn of 275 is the extremely frequent references to *Roma Aeterna* on coins struck for Tacitus. These references, most notable in the gold coinage, are far more frequent in the coinage of Tacitus than under any other soldier-emperor. A most important aspect of the use of the reverse-type *Romae aeternae* under Tacitus, however, remains to be mentioned. One might have assumed that these coins would have been struck in the *urbs aeterna*. Estiot, however, has conclusively attributed the largest numbers of these coins to the Balkan mints of Siscia and Serdica (fig. 25).⁹¹²

On the one hand, this represents a continuation of the provincial tradition of demonstrating loyalty with Rome by paying tribute to *Roma Aeterna*. On the other hand, it represents a novelty as this tribute is paid – an involuntary pun – with Roman imperial coins. Greek coinages paying tribute to *Roma Aeterna* become augmented – and subsequent replaced – by Roman imperial coins making the same tribute.

This is one of the most explicit testimonies to an important process – perhaps the most important process –, which characterizes the second half of the third century. This is how *Roma Aeterna* is mirrored by the provinces; as Mellor put it, ‘all might soon equally worship Roma as a symbol of their common empire’.⁹¹³ The question of how this process is reflected by the establishment of provincial mints under the soldier-emperors – but also how these establishments help shaping and re-shaping the very process of relating to *Roma Aeterna* in the provinces – will be the focus of the next part.

4.5. “...the place, to which each emperor had come...”

The world which the Romans ruled was a world where the city was the only proper expression of the true glories of civilization. This idea is well expressed by Aelius Aristides in his panegyric to Rome. Aristides recurs to the idea that the empire is, above all, an empire of cities, representing the splendour of the world.⁹¹⁴

The Romans had always aimed at maintaining relations that as far as possible respected the rights of other cities. In the east, the Romans frequently encountered urban traditions older than their own. The ties between the *urbs aeterna* and such cities were

⁹¹² Cf. Estiot 1999b, 365 (Siscia) and 366 (Serdica). This can be compared with the gold coinage struck for Aurelian; cf. Estiot 1999b, 102f (Siscia) and 104 (Serdica).

⁹¹³ Mellor 1981, 1028.

⁹¹⁴ Aristid. *Or.* 26.93–99.

shaped through an intricate pattern of exchanges between centre and periphery in the empire. The peripheries attested their loyalties; but likewise, the centre had to show its readiness to attend to the periphery in order to retain acceptance. Delegations sent to the emperor by cities of the east became a frequently used medium for this communication.⁹¹⁵ A common way of expressing the links between Rome and the cities of the Greek East was that these cities became *Neokoroi*. This indicated that the city had an official permit to erect a temple to the imperial cult.⁹¹⁶ In the rhetoric of Aelius Aristides, the landscape of Greek cities had become a league of city-states where Rome was the hegemon, as Athens, Sparta or Thebes had been before.⁹¹⁷

In the western parts of the empire, however, a different pattern was encountered. Here the Romans to a greater extent could shape 'Roman' cities.⁹¹⁸ A 'Roman way of living' was gradually shaped around the premise that the subjects had been 'Romanized' thus accepting certain patterns of behaviour deemed to be Roman. However, the effect of both of these strategies was that a new 'class' evolved. This consisted of the social groups that were the immediate receivers of these statements of fidelity in the provinces. Accordingly, a sort of 'global' provincial Roman elite evolved – and this learned how to be 'Roman' in its own ways.⁹¹⁹ For this Roman culture, the city was the cornerstone; the fact that distinct elements – such as certain public buildings – recurred in cities throughout the empire could be seen as a sign of the unity of the Roman empire.⁹²⁰

From around 260, a further step was taken, as the minting of Roman coinage was gradually moved from the city of Rome to the provinces. Local coinages in these provinces were phased out to give way to the coinage of Rome itself. Well into the third century, the cities of the eastern parts of the empire had struck their own coins, often referred to as Greek imperials. This practise can be regarded as characteristic of the Roman relationship with the East. For one thing, it is a testimony to the way in which Roman economic relations with their provinces was shaped by a sense of *laissez-faire*; the Romans were reluctant to change a functioning system.⁹²¹ The coinages, moreover, presented a way for provincial cities to demonstrate their autonomy, towards Rome. However, the emperor could also strip the cities of their rights to strike coins.⁹²² Therefore, the coinage can be regarded as a way of establishing a 'mutual understanding' between the *urbs aeterna* and the provincial cities. Much of the imagery introduced on Roman imperial coinage from the end of the second century and

⁹¹⁵ Millar 1977, 8, and 410–434; cf. Laeben-Rosén 2005, 183–188.

⁹¹⁶ Cf. Burrell 2004, 1–3.

⁹¹⁷ Aristid. *Or.* 26.42–72; cf. Harl 1987, 72f.

⁹¹⁸ On the creation of the 'Roman city': cf. Fentress (ed.) 2000.

⁹¹⁹ Cf. Huskinson 2000, 109–111.

⁹²⁰ Nevett & Perkins 2000, 213–218.

⁹²¹ Cf. Lintott 1993, 95f.

⁹²² Cf. Harl 1987, 22–25.

onwards, such as the more elaborate military portraits, first appears in the coinages of such cities.⁹²³ This, as I will argue, is of some significance.

Considering this, it is logical that what was to become the first more permanent establishment in a network of provincial mints appears in Antioch. This was one of the true metropoleis of the ancient world, due to its strategic location as a hub on an ancient communication route.⁹²⁴ The city was noteworthy for its production of local silver coinage; coins had also been struck for Rome in the reign of Vespasian.⁹²⁵

The more regular striking of Roman imperial coinage seems to have begun as Pescennius Niger was proclaimed emperor in 193: Mattingly argues that the coins for this emperor can only have been struck in Antioch, as the city was the capital of Syria. Pescennius Niger was the governor of Syria and it was in Antioch that the proclamation took place. This is yet another testimony to the way in which imperial power, capitals and coinage were interrelated.⁹²⁶

Due to its exposed position in the east of the empire, the city was repeatedly lost and reclaimed. Probably, many of the other eastern mints that were established were established to recompensate for this. Around the year 270, the mint of Antioch was seized by Palmyra. Coins were struck, first in the names of Aurelian and Vaballathus, and then in the name of Vaballathus only.⁹²⁷ Statements in literary sources of a palace built by Gallienus, the *Licinianum*, are unverified.⁹²⁸ Pink assumes Antioch to have been the headquarters of Carus and Numerian at the time of their campaigns against the east.⁹²⁹ The city remained one of the most important cities of the ancient world for the Roman imperial power well into late antiquity. This is attested by the fact that it became chosen as the imperial residence by Valentinian and his family.⁹³⁰

The mints of northern Italy

Towards the mid-third century, a number of provincial mints are established. First, a mint is founded in Samosata in 255, with personnel from Antioch. This mint is probably only in use for a few years. A second mint is established in Viminacium in Moesia, probably under the rule of Decius.⁹³¹ In 258–259, the mint of Mediolanum is established. The immediate purpose was most likely to provide coins for the troops

⁹²³ Harl 1987, 40; cf. Bastien I, 269 and Salzmann 2001, 179–184.

⁹²⁴ Leisten 1996, 762.

⁹²⁵ Harl 1987, 17; for the coins struck for Vespasian in Antioch, cf. *RIC* II, 56–58.

⁹²⁶ Cf. *RIC* 4.1, 19: “Pescennius Niger’s coins are all of one general style, probably all of one mint: that mint can be none other than Antioch, the capital of Syria and, in fact, of the whole East, which for a moment, in making Niger Emperor, rivaled Rome herself.” Cf. Kienast 1996, 159f.

⁹²⁷ Estiot 2004, 115: “les deux dernières émissions au nom de Claude II montrent que l’atelier d’Antioche est passé sous la supervision de Palmyre.” For the coins struck in the names of Vaballathus and Aurelian, cf. Estiot 2004, 430f. and *RIC* V.1, 308, no. 381.

⁹²⁸ Frova 1990, 201.

⁹²⁹ Cf. Pink 1963, 59.

⁹³⁰ Cf. Mayer 2002, 104f.

⁹³¹ Cf. Göbl 2000, 132–135 and 96 respectively.

guarding northern Italy.⁹³² As noted in previous chapters, the importance of this mint is likely to be connected to the ‘rapid task forces,’ thought to have been based at Mediolanum. However, it is likely that there were other reasons too. This is because the cities in northern Italy – except Mediolanum such cities as Aquileia and Ravenna – would rise to great importance in late antiquity;⁹³³ I would suggest that establishment of an imperial mint in Mediolanum – and the subsequent re-location of this mint to Ticinum – can be interpreted as an early sign of this trend.

The presence of the military characterizes much of the coinage in Mediolanum. The numerous gold multiples struck for Gallienus and for Claudius Gothicus testify to the importance of the military forces that were stationed there (cf. chap. 3.3). *Adventus*-types attributed to the city may also be a reference to this. Göbl attributes a few such coin-types, struck for Gallienus, to Mediolanum.⁹³⁴ As Lehen shows, the army, like a city, could become the recipient of an imperial *adventus*. Such an *adventus* would become a ceremony where the social ties between the emperor and the soldiers were demonstrated symbolically.⁹³⁵ However, I suggest that these *adventus*-types should be interpreted not only as a reference to the soldiers that were stationed in Mediolanum. They also, in my view, testify to the importance of this community in a wider sense.

The mint seems to gain its greatest importance in connection with the events around 270. This is attested by the special coin-series struck for Claudius Gothicus with its many campaign-portraits and consular portraits. The series of gold multiples alluding to the unity of the troops is also a testimony to this.⁹³⁶ The prime importance of Mediolanum is further attested by the series of aurei struck for Quintillus, assumed to be a donative and suggesting that he had his headquarters in Mediolanum.⁹³⁷ The importance of the mint is also indicated by the large output of coins for Aurelian. Coins referring to an *adventus* are struck; Estiot reckons that Aurelian made this *adventus* in December of 270.⁹³⁸ An *adventus* in Mediolanum must have been regarded as particularly desirable, considering its role in the events of the two previous years. Estiot also argues that coins were struck in 272 for an expected *adventus* of the emperor to the city of Rome, after his return from the east, in Mediolanum and Siscia. This was because the mint of Rome was actually closed at the time (cf. below, chap. 4.6).⁹³⁹

The establishment of the mint at Mediolanum represents a significant step in the metamorphosis of the Roman empire in the third century. The mints hitherto established strike coins augmenting the main cash flow from the imperial centre. But now, a mint is founded which soon matched that of the *urbs aeterna* itself in importance.

⁹³² Giard 1995, 6; cf. Göbl 2000, 100f.

⁹³³ For a discussion of this development, cf. Marazzi 2006, 37–59.

⁹³⁴ Göbl 2000, Nos. 1026–1028 (Em. 3 of Göbl).

⁹³⁵ Lehen 1997, 291–294.

⁹³⁶ Cf. Huvelin 1980; *eadem* 1986.

⁹³⁷ Estiot 1995, 15.

⁹³⁸ Estiot 2004, 69–71 and 318.

⁹³⁹ Estiot 2004, 74.

However, the importance of Mediolanum and the forces that were stationed there also meant that the city became a threat to the emperor. Estiot argues that this is the reason why the mint was moved to Ticinum in 274.⁹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the importance of Mediolanum grew. This is demonstrated by the fact that the city was chosen as the residence of the tetrarch Maximian. Imperial baths are known to have been built, as well as an amphitheatre, a circus and a forum. Most of these should be dated to the age of the tetrarchs.⁹⁴¹ Mediolanum in this way became the earliest formation of a provincial capital. In one of the Latin panegyrics, addressed by an anonymous orator to Maximian and dated to 291⁹⁴², it is said of Mediolanum that the city of Rome has sent the city “a semblance of her own majesty, that the seat of imperial power could then appear to be the place to which each emperor had come.”⁹⁴³

The coinage of the mint of Ticinum from the outset assumes great importance. Estiot argues that the mint furnished the city of Rome with coinage intended to be handed out as donatives in the *urbs aeterna*.⁹⁴⁴ The subsequent coinage struck in Ticinum for Tacitus and Florian is some of the most varied of all coinages struck for these emperors. Notes have already been made of the coin-series struck in order to celebrate the victories of Tacitus and the aurei struck for Florian (cf. chap. 2.3–4). A medallion records an *adventus* of Tacitus to Ticinum. It features a motif similar to that of the medallion referring to an *adventus* of Tacitus in the city of Rome (cf. chap. 4.3).⁹⁴⁵

The mint also retains its position under Probus. Under this emperor, vast coin-series for the campaigns along the northern limes in 277–278 are struck (cf. chap. 2.3–4). In connection with the victory-celebrations of 278, Probus seems to have visited Ticinum. This is commemorated with a novel coin-type depicting an *adventus* and featuring the legend VIRTUS AVG. The motif this time depicts the emperor preceded by a *Victoria* who leads his horse by the bridle.⁹⁴⁶ The combination of motif and legend suggests an assurance that by grace of his virtue, the emperor will soon be able to return.

The mint of Ticinum retained its importance in the reign of Carus and his sons. Together with the mint of Lugdunum, it became the first mint where coins were struck for Carus.⁹⁴⁷ A short coin-series, referring to an *adventus* of Carinus, is also struck. Gricourt argues that this *adventus* took place in connection with his marriage to

⁹⁴⁰ Estiot 2004, 76f.

⁹⁴¹ Mayer 2002, 31–34.

⁹⁴² Nixon & Rodgers (eds.) 1994, 76–79.

⁹⁴³ Pan. Lat. 11.12.2: “Lumina siquidem senatus sui misit beatissimae illi per eos dies Mediolanensium ciuitati similitudinem maiestatis suae libenter impartiens, ut ibi tunc esse sedes imperii uideretur quo uterque uenerat imperator.”

⁹⁴⁴ Estiot 2004, 79.

⁹⁴⁵ Estiot 2004, 330; cf. Gnechi II, 114, no. 4, and Tav. 118, no. 3.

⁹⁴⁶ Pink 1949, 62f; cf. Estiot 2006, 216 and pl. 7, no. 23.

⁹⁴⁷ Gricourt 2000, 19.

Magnia Urbica and the elevation of her to the rank of *Augusta* in Ticinum.⁹⁴⁸ If so, it is telling that this ceremony did not take place in the city of Rome.

This event, however, represents the culmination of the importance of this mint. It seems to become less used after 285, and it is finally moved to Constantinople in 326–327. The importance of the mint is brought into even sharper light by the fact that there is no archaeological evidence to suggest that the city was in itself important. Actually, Ticinum never seems to have been densely inhabited.⁹⁴⁹ Its advantage seems to have been that it was a traffic junction between important roads and water-transportations. It may be noted the junction was frequently used by troops, for instance those of Otho and Vitellius in 69.⁹⁵⁰ Ticinum seems to have been an ideal place for the location of a mint, that was to provide coins for the various units serving on the northern frontiers. Further, Ticinum seems to have become an important point for meetings between the emperor and his soldiers. The *adventus*- and *adlocutio*-medallions struck for Tacitus may be interpreted as evidence for this.

The mints of the Balkans and Asia Minor

Perhaps even more than northern Italy, the Balkan provinces gain in importance during the period under investigation. As mentioned, an early mint had been founded in Viminacium in Moesia; in the first years of the 260s, another mint is founded in Siscia.⁹⁵¹ This would become one of the most important mints of the empire. The output of coins is high under the 260s and 270s. Especially worthy of note in this period is the high output of aurei under Tacitus, and the frequent references to *Roma Aeterna* (cf. chap. 4.4). Furthermore, coins referring to an *adventus* of Probus are attributed to the city and featuring the legend ADVENTVS PROBI AVG. According to Pink's *Aufbau*, Siscia was one of the cities that the emperor passed on his way from the east to the city of Rome in 277.⁹⁵²

As in Ticinum, the output of coins for the campaigns in 277–278 is vast. To this period, Pink attributes coins featuring the novel legend SISCIA PROBI AVG. Further, again like in Ticinum, Probus seems to have visited the city in connection with victory-celebrations in 278. Two medallions dated to this year by Pink depict the triumphal entry of the emperor, followed by his soldiers and with a *Victoria* leading the way. The usual *adventus*-type is also utilized for regular coins.⁹⁵³

The mint reaches its most outstanding position with the coin-series struck for Carus, Carinus and Numerian in the closing months of 282 and the first months of 283. During this period Siscia was in the middle of events, as Probus was killed and Carus

⁹⁴⁸ Gricourt 2000, 25–27.

⁹⁴⁹ Hudson 1990, 174.

⁹⁵⁰ Tozzi 1984, 176–178.

⁹⁵¹ *RIC* V.1, 22; cf. Giard 1995, 6 and Göbl 2000, 118f.

⁹⁵² Pink 1949 47; a rescript in the *Codex Iustiniani* attests the presence of the emperor in Sirmium on the 5th of May 277 (*Cod. Iust.* 8.55.2; cf. Kienast 1996, 253).

⁹⁵³ Cf. Pink 1949, 51f.

proclaimed emperor in Sirmium. In Siscia, an aureus is struck for an *adventus*-type on the reverse, featuring the legend ADVENTUS CARI AVG. In this case, it lies close at hand to assume that these coins were struck for an *adventus* of the newly-proclaimed emperor to Siscia.⁹⁵⁴ For Carus and his sons, it is evident that the *adventus*-ceremonies become a means to display the ‘new dynasty’ that has succeeded to the purple. A bronze medallion attributed by Gricourt to Siscia and struck for Carus and his sons depicts Carus, Carinus and Numerian, accompanied by a *Victoria*, defiling before soldiers.⁹⁵⁵ To the same series of coins, Gricourt also attributes the coin-type featuring the legend FELICITAS REIPUBLICAE.⁹⁵⁶

To Siscia the series of aurei struck for Iulianus of Pannonia in 285 and featuring the legend LIBERTAS PVBLICA can also be attributed.⁹⁵⁷ Coins featuring the legend PRAESIDIA REI PVBLIC, which are struck for the *Caesares* of the first tetrarchy, are also attributed to this mint.⁹⁵⁸ In the case of Iulianus, not only do the aurei struck for him carry an explicit message. They also represent a claim which, even more than the *Felicitas rei publicae*-type struck for Carus and Carinus, refers to values intimately attached to the *urbs aeterna*. It is not a claim to ‘Pannonian’ freedom but to ‘Roman’. Therefore, in my view, the aurei struck for Iulianus are an important testimony to the development of Roman provincial communities in the second half of the third century.

This development is also demonstrated in other cities in the Balkan area. One of the most important of these cities is Sirmium. This city had been the residence of Marcus Aurelius during his campaigns on the northern limes.⁹⁵⁹ Aurelian was proclaimed emperor there; it was the birthplace of Probus and also – ironically – where he was murdered and Carus was proclaimed emperor.⁹⁶⁰ Giard, following Alföldi, with some caution reckons with a mint in Sirmium.⁹⁶¹ This appears not to have been accepted by Göbl, as he does not mention it. This forms a curious contrast to the archaeological record of Sirmium, which features prominent baths, a palace and even a hippodrome – especially the latter is interesting, considering the importance of the hippodrome for imperial authority (cf. chap. 4.2).⁹⁶²

The development of imperial residences featuring the combination of palaces and hippodromes is one of the most significant developments of the later third century; the combination appears in a number of cities.⁹⁶³ Furthermore, the creation of such

⁹⁵⁴ Gricourt 2000, 45f.

⁹⁵⁵ Gricourt 2000, 50; cf. Gnecci II, 123, no. 1, and Tav. 123, no. 10.

⁹⁵⁶ Gricourt 2000, 46.

⁹⁵⁷ Gricourt 2000, 57.

⁹⁵⁸ Cf. *RIC* V.2, 301, no. 671 (Constantius Chlorus) and 308, no. 716 (Galerius).

⁹⁵⁹ Millar 1977, 4; cf. Kienast 1996, 138.

⁹⁶⁰ Cf. Kienast 1996, 253 and 258.

⁹⁶¹ Giard 1995, 6f.

⁹⁶² Frova 1990, 204.

⁹⁶³ For example in Mediolanum, Thessalonica and Constantinople; cf. Mayer 2002, 31, 40 and 108f. respectively.

residences outside the *urbs aeterna* testifies to the way Roman imperial authority is decentralized from the third century onwards. In the second half of the third century this particular region was to become one of the most important regions of the Empire. Spalato (today Split), was chosen as residence for Diocletian after his retirement from the Imperial purple. A second was created in Romuliana, which was the residence of Galerius. This was also the place where Romula, the mother of Galerius, and probably Galerius himself, were buried.⁹⁶⁴

In Asia Minor, a mint is founded in Cyzicus towards the end of the 260s. The mint would rise to importance under Claudius Gothicus,⁹⁶⁵ and had been established in a city that had become granted the status of *Neokoros*. The city was famous for a great temple dedicated to Hadrian.⁹⁶⁶ It seems reasonable to assume that the mint was founded to provide coins for the campaigns against the east. As the troops would have to be shipped over the Bosphorus, it would have been desirable to provide the disembarking troops with fresh salary. Many references to the ‘emperor on campaign’ can be found in the coinage from Cyzicus. One example is the first known portrait depicting the emperor holding a horse by the bridle.⁹⁶⁷

The output of coin is steady under the following emperors. Pink attributes coins referring to an Imperial *adventus* to the mint of Cyzicus and dates them to 276 – 277. The conclusion of Pink is, as in the cases of Ticinum and Siscia that these coins were struck for an *adventus* that took place as the emperor passed the city of Cyzicus in his way to the west and the city of Rome.⁹⁶⁸ An aureus which is struck for Carinus and Numerian, also attributed by Pink to Cyzicus and featuring the legend ADVENTVS AVGG NN is dated to July 284. Pink considers this to have been struck for a planned meeting in Siscia of Carinus and Numerian. As Bastien points out, only Numerian could have been present at that time as Carinus was in the west.⁹⁶⁹

A similar *adventus*-type, struck for the dyarchs, is attributed to Lugdunum and dated to 289–90 by Bastien. These coins are struck for both *Augusti*, with the reverse legend ADVENTVS AVGG. These were struck for an occasion when actually only Maximian could have been present.⁹⁷⁰ Both these uses of the *adventus*-motif, in my view, testify to how the motif should be interpreted: as depictions of ‘pseudo-events’, expressing a hope for the return of the emperor. The point is not that images such as these should be discarded as ‘wishful thinking.’ What is important, at least as this study is concerned, is rather that the use of these coin-types demonstrate a belief in imperial authority and an increasing demand for *Kaisernähe*.

⁹⁶⁴ For an introduction, cf. Mayer 2002, 69–88.

⁹⁶⁵ Gysen 1999, 29.

⁹⁶⁶ Cf. Burrell 2004, 86f; cf. Aristid. *Or.* 27.18–22.

⁹⁶⁷ Cf. Bastien I, 547; *idem* III, pl. 112, no. 7.

⁹⁶⁸ Cf. Pink 1949, 43.

⁹⁶⁹ Pink 1963, 53; cf. Bastien 1972, 49.

⁹⁷⁰ Bastien 1972, 48f; cf. 161, nos. 241–242 and 165, no. 266 respectively.

Military imagery tends to dominate in the coinage of Cyzicus. However, as for instance in Siscia, imagery referring to the city of Rome also occurs. For instance, Göbl attributes coins struck for Gallienus and featuring the legend SPQR on the reverses to the mint of Cyzicus.⁹⁷¹ Here, too, in my view, the outlines of a mint serving not only immediate military needs, but also regional needs, can be discerned.

The 'unknown Balkan mint'

The mint of unknown location to which coins struck for Aurelian are attributed was a temporary establishment, which only was in service for a few years. Still, the mint seems to have fulfilled an important function during the decisive campaigns of Aurelian against the east.

Göbl, following earlier scholars, argued that the location of this mint was the city of Byzantium. Göbl supported this claim on a passage in the *Historia Augusta* mentioning that Aurelian passed Byzantium, and a rescript in the Justinian codes indicating that the emperor was residing in Byzantium at the time of writing. A further argument is that some of the coins struck at this mint depict a dolphin, which was the symbol that the city of Byzantium of old had used on its coins.⁹⁷² Estiot, on the other hand, points out that in coin-finds from the Balkans, coins from the mint of unknown location are mostly found together with coins struck at the mint at Siscia. Drawing on this evidence, Estiot argues that the mint should be located to somewhere near Siscia, for instance the Adriatic coast.⁹⁷³

This is an important point. However, the argument of Estiot is based on the assumption that the circulation patterns of Roman coins are well understood, which, to my mind, they are not. This must be especially relevant for coins struck in the later third century. In addition, these coins represent a comparatively limited series of coins, struck at a very short-lived field mint for a campaign; perhaps one should not expect them to adhere to normal circulation patterns (if, indeed, there *were* any 'normal' circulation patterns in the Balkan area around 270). The attribution of Göbl is rather more attractive.

Above, I have suggested that the mint of Cyzicus was established in order to pay soldiers marching eastwards, and who just had been shipped over the straits between Europe and Asia. Further, I think one may suggest that this was done with pending campaigns in Asia Minor in mind. Perhaps Claudius Gothicus also intended to deal with Palmyra. Instead, this would take place under Aurelian in two campaigns in 272 and 273. Moreover, it seems reasonable to assume that Byzantium became an important communication point for these campaigns. The harbour would have been

⁹⁷¹ Göbl 2000, 122 and Tab. 45. It should be noted that Giard and Gysen attributes these coins to a mint in Smyrna, estimated to have been founded in 266 and subsequently transferred to Cyzicus; cf. Giard 1995, 6 and Gysen 1999, 37f.

⁹⁷² SHA *Divus Aurelianus* 22.3; *Cod. Iust.* 5.72.2; cf. Göbl 1993, 60f.

⁹⁷³ Estiot 2004, 95f.

valuable for the loading and ferrying of troops and supplies over the Bosphorus to the Asian side. Further, the so-called *strategion*, which was connected to the port, would have been a convenient point for the organisation of troops waiting to be shipped.⁹⁷⁴ It must also have been urgent to provide the soldiers waiting to be shipped over to the Asian side with pay.

It seems clear that the mint of unknown location was a provisionary and temporary one; as mentioned, a rescript in the Justinian code suggests that Aurelian spent the winter of 272–273, which would have been the period between the two campaigns against Palmyra, in the city.⁹⁷⁵ Therefore, it is rather tempting to assume that the mint of unknown location was established in Byzantium at this point, in order to provide the troops following the emperor with pay.

The problem is only that we know next to nothing of Byzantium in the second half of the third century. The city almost certainly must have been afflicted by the barbarian invasions in the mid-third century. It has been suggested that the walls of Byzantium were rebuilt in the 250s or 260s as a consequence of these calamities.⁹⁷⁶ The so-called Goth's column has been attributed to this age. This column is located in what is now Istanbul's Gülhane park, on the tip of the Golden Horn. On the base of the column is a half eradicated (but still barely legible) inscription, which reads FORTUNAE REDUCI OB DEVICTOS GOTHOS.⁹⁷⁷ It has been suggested that this monument should be dated to the age of Claudius Gothicus, because of his victory over the Goths at Naïssus in 269. However, later research has assumed that the column is of a much later date than the age of the soldier-emperors. An attribution to the age of Constantine I has been suggested;⁹⁷⁸ in the most recent addition to the debate, Rudolf Stichel suggests a dating to the end of the fifth century.⁹⁷⁹

It is worth mentioning that a fortification, which is claimed to have been situated near the so-called Capitolium is known to have had a gate constructed by Carus. The emperor Carus may well have visited Byzantium, as he and Numerian marched towards the east in 282–283.⁹⁸⁰ If a gate was raised in Byzantium and named after him, it may have been built for the arrival of the emperor (maybe an *adventus*?) to the city. Further, later sources record that a statue of the emperor Carus stood near the Hagia Sophia; possibly, it was originally placed on the *tetrastoon*, a central open square in the city.⁹⁸¹ In any case, it would be one of very few statues of emperors before Constantine I known from Constantinople.

⁹⁷⁴ The *strategion* is assumed to have been an open exercise ground; it is possible that it was directly connected both with the city centre and with the harbour through a processional street; cf. Bauer 1996, 225.

⁹⁷⁵ Kienast 1996, 234.

⁹⁷⁶ Müller-Wiener 1977, 18; cf. Mango 1990, 15.

⁹⁷⁷ Stichel 1999, 480f.

⁹⁷⁸ Müller-Wiener 1977, 53; cf. Stichel 1999, 482.

⁹⁷⁹ Stichel 1999, 484–492.

⁹⁸⁰ Müller-Wiener 1977, s. 267; cf. Kienast 1996, 258 and Mayer 2002, 167.

⁹⁸¹ Bassett 2004, 146.

However, none of this is conclusive. The question of the site of the ‘mint of unknown location’ remains unsolved in my view. Overall, the evidence regarding different cities presents an unbalanced picture. If one looks at the coinages, the cities of the west and the Balkans tend to assume an exaggerated prominence. This may only be due to the fact that these are the regions where large coin finds have been made. The important mints of Cyzicus and Antioch on the other hand are not even represented in the significant find from La Venèra: from these cities, probably only the most common coins, that were spread elsewhere, have been found. A sizeable eastern find would quite probably change our view on the workings of these mints and give a fairer image of their importance.

However, in my view, it is quite clear that regional mints are not only established to provide coins for marching armies, but also to support the new, developing centres of a changing empire. This is underlined by the fact that the establishment of Roman Imperial mints in Asia Minor coincide in time and place with the striking of some of the last issues of Greek imperials. For Claudius Gothicus, coins are struck in five cities in Pisidia; for Aurelian, in three cities in Pisidia and another three in Pamphylia. For Tacitus, finally, the last provincial coins in Asia Minor are struck in Perge.⁹⁸² Inscriptions from Perge indicate that this emperor granted the city the status of Metropolis of Pamphylia. This was celebrated with festival games.⁹⁸³ The evidence from Perge indicates how the cities of the Greek East gradually assumed ‘Romanitas.’ As the strength of the city of Rome was weakened, these cities struggled for pre-eminence and to become the ‘new Rome.’⁹⁸⁴

4.6. *The revolt of the moneyers: a counter-reaction?*

Nothing suggests more clearly that the establishment of provincial mint is connected to a loss of status for the *urbs aeterna*, than the circumstances surrounding the next establishment of a provincial mint. In Serdica, a new mint is opened in the summer of 271.⁹⁸⁵ This mint is intensively active in the first half of the 270s. After the first years of the reign of Probus, the mint is closed temporarily.⁹⁸⁶ Towards the last years of the reign of this emperor, it is re-opened again for a short while. In 281, the mint closed again. Gysen suggests that this was also intended to be temporary. However, as Probus was murdered the following year, it would take 22 years before the mint would be re-opened.⁹⁸⁷

⁹⁸² Naster 1987, 132.

⁹⁸³ Kaygusuz 1984, 1–4; cf. Burrell 2004, 178f.

⁹⁸⁴ Roueche 1989, 220: “This Perge inscription illustrates how the struggle for pre-eminence among the cities of the eastern empire in the Roman imperial period became increasingly a struggle to invest themselves with the authority of the central government.”

⁹⁸⁵ Estiot 2004, 97.

⁹⁸⁶ Gysen 2000, 20.

⁹⁸⁷ Gysen 2000, 29.

The most innovative coin-series struck at Serdica are those struck in 274–275 for Aurelian. To these series, the often referred-to coins featuring the legends SOL DOMINVS IMPERI ROMANI and DEO ET DOMINO NATO AVRELIANO AVG can be attributed. A number of coin-types featuring other similar, innovative legends can also be attributed to this coin-series.⁹⁸⁸

The massive gold-coinage struck for Tacitus with its prominent use of *Roma Aeterna*-types has also been commented; of these, it may additionally be noted that the coins struck in Serdica are distinguished by the addition of the legend SC. This may have been intended for local magistrates.⁹⁸⁹ After the reign of Tacitus, more conventional imagery is used at the mint; curiously, however, the practise of utilizing a large number of unique obverse legends introduced on the coinage struck for Aurelian is retained for the coinage struck for Probus. A novel coin-type refers to an *adventus* of Probus to Serdica: the type features the usual *adventus*-motif, but with the legend VIRTVS PROBI AVG. These coins are considered by Gysen to have been struck for an *adventus* in 280. At the time, Probus was passing the city on his way east for campaigns in Asia Minor.⁹⁹⁰

Although no more conspicuous archaeological traces remain,⁹⁹¹ it is evident that Serdica remained an important centre for imperial power. Constantine I is credited with the famous statement that ‘Serdica is my Rome,’ and allegedly considered Serdica as a possible candidate when considering where to establish an imperial residence of his own. The final choice, as is well known, became the similarly rather inconspicuous city of Byzantium, soon to become rather more famous under its new name Constantinople.⁹⁹²

The most interesting aspect of the establishment of the mint at Serdica is that it is suggested to become established with personnel from the mint of the city of Rome. This latter mint, in turn, was closed.⁹⁹³ This is a rather astounding development – until only some ten years earlier, the mint of Rome had been by far the most important mint of the empire. The direct reason for this was one of the most curious incidents of the third century: the revolt of the moneyers at the mint of Rome. It is frustrating that it is so poorly known: what is known is that the personnel of the mint revolted, led by a certain Felicissimus. The rebellion was suppressed after bitter fighting on the Mons Caelius: according to the *Historia Augusta* and Aurelius Victor, the revolt claimed the lives of some 7000 soldiers.⁹⁹⁴

What had happened? Cubelli is right in stating that if the incident claimed such a high number of casualties – and became referred to as a *bellum* in the *Historia Augusta*

⁹⁸⁸ Cf. Estiot 2004, 399–401 for an overview.

⁹⁸⁹ Estiot 1999b, 360.

⁹⁹⁰ Gysen 2000, 15–20.

⁹⁹¹ Cf. Danov 1979, 275–78.

⁹⁹² Cf. Dagron 1974, 29–31.

⁹⁹³ Estiot 2004, 97.

⁹⁹⁴ SHA *Divus Aurelianus* 38.2–4; Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 35.6; Eutr. 9.14, *Epit. de Caes.* 35.4. Cf. Cubelli 1992, 8f.

– it cannot have been confined to an uprising at the imperial mint. Rather, the uprising must have had more widespread support.⁹⁹⁵ At the time of the uprising – which is most likely to have taken place in the spring of 271⁹⁹⁶ – as noted, it seems as if the mint was at least in periods not under imperial control (cf. chap. 4.3). Göbl actually describes issues struck in the city of Rome in 270, mainly rather confused series of coins struck for the consecrated Claudius Gothicus, as ‘irregular.’⁹⁹⁷

The absence of the emperor, I think, is rather important for an understanding of the context for the revolt. For the emperor could not ignore the *urbs aeterna*. Imperial absence from the city of Rome was only acceptable if the emperor then returned in a way that lent glory to the city.⁹⁹⁸ Moreover, Claudius Gothicus, Quintillus and Aurelian had all been proclaimed emperors outside the city of Rome.

Cubelli argues that the rebellion was supported by the senate, in part because the senate had recognized Quintillus as emperor⁹⁹⁹ – this is a very attractive, if not entirely verifiable, hypothesis. However, it seems likely that the *plebs urbana* would also have been dissatisfied with the emperor, due to his absence. They would have expected the emperor to respect them and their importance through being present at games at the circus and in the theatres.¹⁰⁰⁰ In any case, on a general level, I think one can assume that the rebellion was due to widespread dissatisfaction with the emperor. Earlier, I have mentioned the suggestion that the building of the walls around the city of Rome presented a way for Aurelian to demonstrate his *clementia*. I would now like to suggest that the purpose of the walls at least was understood by the inhabitants of the city in a more grim sense. Instead of the emperor, they got a wall. In the future, the emperor would not be in the city of Rome much, if at all. The *urbs aeterna* would have to make it on its own.

However, the repercussions the ‘war of the moneyers’ caused can also be deduced from the events that followed. Aurelian celebrated his victories over Palmyra and Gaul with a spectacular triumph in the *urbs aeterna* in 274. He also adorned the city with a temple, the *Templum Solis*. The reverence for *Roma Aeterna* in the coinage struck for Tacitus has been commented on repeatedly. Probus celebrated a triumph equal to that of Aurelian in 281/282. In short, the emperors following Aurelian recognized that the status of the *urbs aeterna* had to be recognized at least formally in some way.

Nevertheless, the mint of Rome did not regain its prime importance. It is rather telling that parts of the personnel were transferred to the mint in *Serdica*. The cities of the provinces were gradually assuming the role originally reserved for the city of Rome. In connection with this, I suggest that the incident had a further effect: not only could

⁹⁹⁵ Cubelli 1992, 46f.

⁹⁹⁶ Cubelli 1992, 39.

⁹⁹⁷ Göbl 1993, 75–79 and Tab. 6–10.

⁹⁹⁸ Hope 2000, 75: “What the emperor did while he was away was still interpreted by reference to the capital city and how it benefited.”

⁹⁹⁹ Cubelli 1992, 49.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Flaig investigates the ways in which events such as circus games enabled the *plebs urbana* to act politically; cf. Flaig 1992, 57–59 and 80–82.

the provinces themselves support the emperor, without necessarily having the additional support of the *urbs aeterna*. Moreover, the *urbs* had turned against the emperor. This set a development in motion, by the end of which the city of Rome itself could actually be associated with ‘unromanness.’¹⁰⁰¹ Such a notion would, surely, have been impossible only a few decades before.

4.7. *Salus provinciarum – imperial coinage in Gaul*

Another important mint, which is opened under the period discussed in this thesis, is that of Lugdunum. This mint is opened in the fall of 274. The immediate circumstances surrounding the establishment of the mint of Lugdunum in 274 have been discussed in previous chapters, as the reasons for the intricate imagery utilized at the mint. The ‘re-conquest’ of Gaul was a complex matter; it is telling that coins acclaiming Aurelian as *pacator orbis* are attributed to a mint at Augusta Treverorum (cf. chap. 2.8).

This mint had been used by Tetricus; Estiot considers it likely that it was the only mint striking coins for Tetricus towards the end of his rule. After the defeat of Tetricus, the short coins-series, in which the *pacator orbis*-type is utilized, is struck for Aurelian. Then, the mint is closed and that of Lugdunum is re-opened;¹⁰⁰² the coin-series struck for Aurelian suggests that it was desirable to make the ‘transition to the new order’ – or rather the ‘return to the old order’ as smooth as possible. The coinages of the Gallic usurpers up to that point even more vividly demonstrate why such a ‘diplomatic re-conquest’ was necessary.

The creation of the Gallic empire presents a key occurrence in the third century. Postumus is proclaimed emperor in his home provinces, but then he *stays there*. The effect is that a ‘Gallic empire’ is created. The nature of this ‘empire’ has been interpreted in different ways.¹⁰⁰³ Suffice it here to state that the creation of this ‘Gallic empire’ would not have been possible without the wide-ranging ‘Romanisation’ of Gaul, proposed by Woolf.¹⁰⁰⁴ Postumus, for one thing, was not a local military commander – as many other usurpers – but the governor of the province *Germania Inferior*. His usurpation is also deemed to have been supported by local elites. His followers Victorinus and Tetricus both seem to have been from the same circles as Postumus; both are assumed to have come from noble Gallic families, and to have held civilian magistracies before attaining the purple. Laelianus and Marius, however, seem to have held only lesser military commands.¹⁰⁰⁵ The Gallic empire actually seems to have

¹⁰⁰¹ As for instance in the writings of Ammianus Marcellinus; cf. Lejdegård 2002, 16–20.

¹⁰⁰² Cf. Estiot 2004, 55.

¹⁰⁰³ König is inclined to regard the emperors of Gaul as nothing more than military usurpers or ‘deputies’, that were tolerated by the central Empire because of the critical military situation; cf. König 1981, 186–188. Drinkwater, however, argues that the ‘Gallic Empire’ must be regarded as a more complex phenomenon, firmly rooted in the context of a Roman civilian society; cf. Drinkwater 1987, 240–242.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Cf. Woolf 1997, 240f.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Cf. John 1993, 224–230.

created its own demands for *Kaisernähe*, and, accordingly produced its own military usurpations.

The coinages struck for these emperors testify to an environment in Gaul where a language of Roman imperial power could be re-produced. In addition, the Latin panegyrics became a vital part of this environment.¹⁰⁰⁶ The capacities of the Gallic usurpers are demonstrated with coins exalting the *virtus* and *victoriae* of the emperor. These coins feature the same imagery as similar coins struck for the 'legitimate' emperors that were acclaimed in the city of Rome. The helmet-portraits struck for Postumus have already been noted (*fig. 28–29*); obverses of early bronze coins (*cf. chap. 2.3*) and reverses on early aurei struck for him feature the legend VIRTUS POSTVMI AVG.¹⁰⁰⁷ A number of aurei struck for Victorinus feature campaign-portraits. Some of them are struck with reverses referring to *Victoria Augusti*;¹⁰⁰⁸ on one coin-type, the reverse acclaims Victorinus as DEFENSOR ORBIS.¹⁰⁰⁹ Such depictions of Victorinus also occur on antoniniani (*fig. 31*). Further aurei, struck for Tetricus, also feature campaign-portraits, with shields depicting battle-scenes¹⁰¹⁰ or *gorgoneia*.¹⁰¹¹ Further, the Gallic emperors, like their 'colleagues' of the 'central Empire,' are acclaimed as *invicti* on coins struck for them. Two aurei struck for Postumus depict the emperor with the legend INVICTO AVG; another aureus, struck for Victorinus, features the reverse legend INVICTVS AVG and depicts the 'charging rider'-motif.¹⁰¹²

However, on the whole, the *virtus* and victoriousness of the emperors do not represent the main tenor of the gold coinages struck for the Gallic usurpers. Rather, these coinages emphasize the peace, security and prosperity that will be the outcome of the military valour of the emperors. Coins struck for Postumus and referring to *Pax Augusti* are attributed to the later years of the 260s,¹⁰¹³ perhaps a fitting reference to the achievements of this emperor. An interesting *Virtus Augusti*-type is utilized for reverses of aurei struck for Tetricus. This coin-type depicts the personification of *virtus* seated and holding a peace-branch.¹⁰¹⁴ Other aurei struck for Tetricus, featuring obverse campaign-portraits on the reverses feature the legend PAX AETERNA.¹⁰¹⁵

However, even more telling is a novel coin-type utilized for reverses both for aurei and billon coins in the earliest coinage struck for Postumus, and dated to 260–261. This coin-type depicts the reclining river Rhine and features the legend SALVS PRO-

¹⁰⁰⁶ Mayer 2002, 7f; *cf.* Rees 2002, 191. *Cf.* also MacCormack 1981, 9–11.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Schulte 1983, 74–78, nos. 9, 19 and 20.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Schulte 1983, 132–137, nos. 11–14, 16 and 25–28.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Schulte 1983, 144, no. 54.

¹⁰¹⁰ Schulte 1983, 148f, nos. 6 and 9.

¹⁰¹¹ Schulte 1983, 150–156, nos. 12, 34 and 36.

¹⁰¹² Schulte 1983, 80f, nos. 28–29 and 137, no. 28 respectively.

¹⁰¹³ Schulte 1983, 117, no. 156 (gold); Besly & Bland 1983, 145, nos. 2438, 2446, 2450, 2453 and 2456 (billon).

¹⁰¹⁴ Schulte 1983, 152f, nos. 20–24.

¹⁰¹⁵ Schulte 1983, 149–157, nos. 9 and 37–38.

VINCIARVM (fig. 30).¹⁰¹⁶ Coin-types referring to this *Salus* and the prosperous times that follow it are struck under all Gallic emperors. These types refer to themes such as *Securitas perpetua*, *Felicitas temporum* and *Saeculi felicitas*.¹⁰¹⁷ A more novel coin-type, which features the reverse legend GAVDIA PVBLICA and depicts the personifications of the four seasons, is struck for Victorinus; another type featuring the reverse legend FELICITAS PVBLICA is struck for Tetricus.¹⁰¹⁸

On occasion, the fidelity of the troops is also referred to. For Postumus, novel coin-types featuring the reverse legends FIDES EXERCITVS and SALUS EXERCITI are used both for gold and billon coins.¹⁰¹⁹ A *Fides militum*-type is utilized for the first coins struck both in gold and billon for Victorinus.¹⁰²⁰ Furthermore, a singular series of aurei struck for Victorinus, refer to a number of legions.¹⁰²¹ A novel aureus struck for Tetricus may refer to the loyalty of the cavalry, as the reverse depicts a *decursio*.¹⁰²² Antoniniani referring to *Fides militum* are also struck for this emperor.¹⁰²³

In this respect, there is a marked contrast between the coinages of Postumus, Victorinus and Tetricus on the one hand and those of Laelianus and Marius on the other hand. The coinages struck for the latter demonstrate to some effect that they were military usurpers, relying on their troops for support. The aurei struck for Laelianus refer to *Virtus militum* and *Temporum felicitas*; antoniniani refer exclusively to *Victoria Augusti*.¹⁰²⁴ Similarly, the coinage of Marius refers to *Saeculi felicitas*, *Concordia militum*, *Fides militum*, *Victoria Augusti* and *Virtus Augusti*.¹⁰²⁵

The earliest coinages of Postumus, Victorinus and Tetricus, however, to a greater extent refer more generally to the *virtus* and victoriousness of the emperor. This suggests that these emperors had different power-bases. It may be worth noting that the imagery celebrating the *virtus* and victoriousness of the Gallic emperors seems to be used preferably in connection with victories against barbarians, and rather seldom as references to conflicts with Rome. The early *Victoria Augusti*- and *Virtus Augusti*-types used for billon coins struck for Postumus are dated to 261–262;¹⁰²⁶ further the series of aurei featuring helmet-portraits are dated by Schulte to 261–265. These coins are assumed to refer to campaigns against Britain and on the Rhine frontier.¹⁰²⁷ These campaigns are commemorated explicitly by some aurei and billon coins referring to

¹⁰¹⁶ Schulte 1983, 72, no. 2; Besly & Bland 1983, 143, 2367–2368 and 2371–2373.

¹⁰¹⁷ Schulte 1983, 135, nos. 19–21 and 160f, nos. 49 and 51–52.

¹⁰¹⁸ Schulte 1983, 143, no. 49 and 161f, nos 53–54 respectively.

¹⁰¹⁹ Schulte 1983, 100, nos. 101–102; Besly & Bland 1983, 145, nos. 2432–34.

¹⁰²⁰ Schulte 1983, 130, no. 1; Besly & Bland 1983, 148, nos. 2515 and 2522.

¹⁰²¹ Schulte 1983, 137–142, nos. 29–46.

¹⁰²² Schulte 1983, 155, no. 32.

¹⁰²³ Estiot et al. 1993, 108f, nos. 6101–6222.

¹⁰²⁴ Schulte 1983, 126f, nos. 1–5 and Besly & Bland 1983, 147, 2499–2501 respectively.

¹⁰²⁵ Schulte 1983, 128f, nos. 1–6; Besly & Bland 1983, 147f, nos. 2502–2512.

¹⁰²⁶ Besly & Bland 1983, 56 and 143.

¹⁰²⁷ Schulte 1983, 29–36 (groups 3–6b).

a *Victoria Germanica*.¹⁰²⁸ Likewise, the coins featuring campaign-portraits of Tetricus are assumed by Schulte to have been struck in celebration of campaigns undertaken against barbarians in the German provinces. These campaigns are celebrated by the first aurei struck for Tetricus; these aurei feature the reverse legend VICTORIA GERM.¹⁰²⁹ It is evident, then, that military imagery on coins struck for the emperors of Gaul is shaped and used *as in Rome* – the imagery depicts the struggle against and conquest of the ‘others.’

Coinage for a Roman society in Gaul

The emperors of Gaul approached the civilian magistracies of Rome in the same manner. Postumus assumed five consulates; Victorinus assumed two (the first one had been in 268, together with Postumus). For Tetricus, three are recorded.¹⁰³⁰ The consular portraits that become a recurring way of depicting the ‘legitimate’ emperors in Rome are used in Gaul as well, although the portrait-type appears rather late: it is only known to have been used on coins struck for Tetricus and his son Tetricus iunior (cf. below).

Reverse images clearly depicting the emperor as consul, however, are much used for aurei struck for Postumus. A number of such aurei, assumed to have been struck for the third consulate of the emperor, depict Postumus dressed in a toga, seated on a *sella curulis*, and holding a globe and a sceptre. A further coin-type features a reverse depicting Postumus seated in a similar fashion but with a kneeling supplicant before him. The legend reads INDVLG PIA POSTVMI AVG.¹⁰³¹ Two other coin-types recording the fourth and fifth consulates of Postumus respectively feature depictions of the emperor in a triumphal *quadriga*.¹⁰³²

Similar depictions of the emperor in his role as consul recur on coins struck for Tetricus and Tetricus iunior. A number of aurei struck for Tetricus depict the emperor dressed as a civilian magistrate in a toga and carrying a sceptre and a branch; one gold coin struck for his first consulate depicts Tetricus with the same symbols in a triumphal *quadriga*.¹⁰³³ During the rule of Tetricus, consular portraits are also introduced. The obverses of two aurei feature consular portraits of both the emperor and his son and the legend IMP P TETRICI AVGG. These are attributed to a joint consulate of Tetricus and his sons; this is assumed to have been the third consulate of Tetricus and the first consulate of Tetricus iunior. Other aurei, struck for Tetricus iunior only, also feature obverses with consular portraits.¹⁰³⁴

¹⁰²⁸ Schulte 1983, 91–93, nos. 72 and 74–76; cf. Besly & Bland 1983, 144, no. 2410.

¹⁰²⁹ Schulte 1983, 60 and 147, nos. 1–2.

¹⁰³⁰ Kienast 1996, 243–248.

¹⁰³¹ Schulte 1983, 89–91, nos. 62–71 and 97f, nos. 91–96 respectively.

¹⁰³² Schulte 1983, 102, no. 107 and 119, no. 161 respectively.

¹⁰³³ Schulte 1983, 154, nos. 26–27 and 156, no. 36 respectively.

¹⁰³⁴ Schulte 1983, 163f, nos 59–60 and 168, nos. 1–2 respectively.

The strategy of referring to *Roma Aeterna* is also resorted to. The conventional *Romae aeternae*-type, which is familiar from the 'central empire,' is utilized on a number of aurei struck for Postumus, and one aureus struck for Tetricus.¹⁰³⁵ However, for the coinage of Postumus a new *Romae aeternae*-type is also introduced. This features a portrait of the goddess Roma. This motif is later re-used for a coin struck for Victorinus. This particular piece features a campaign-portrait on the obverse.¹⁰³⁶ This latter type is highly interesting, as it features a depiction of Roma that is very uncommon in the coinage struck for the emperors of the 'central empire.'¹⁰³⁷ Therefore, it can hardly be regarded as a mere copy. Rather, it indicates the skill of the die-cutters working at the Gallic mints. Moreover, the image testifies to their ability to conceive novel imagery within the conventions set for Roman Imperial coinage.

The theme of Roma and the emperor is subject to further interesting variations. One aureus, struck for a third consulate of Postumus, features a reverse depicting Roma clasping hands with Postumus. The latter is dressed as consul. Another aureus, struck for a second consulate of Victorinus, depicts the emperor, in military attire, receiving a globe from Roma.¹⁰³⁸

A number of other coins are struck with imagery referring to the duties of the emperor towards the citizens that were their subjects. One aureus struck for Postumus features a reverse depicting a *liberalitas*; this was an event synonymous to a *congiarium*, i.e. an event where gifts of money were handed out to the people (cf. chap. 1.7). Another aureus, struck for Tetricus, depicts an *adventus*.¹⁰³⁹

It may, as a conclusion, be noted that many of the coin-images utilized on coins struck for the emperors of Gaul seem to derive from motives used on the coins struck for emperors of the first and second century. The *liberalitas*-type utilized on the aureus struck for Postumus is a motif which is common in the second century; however, in the third, it is rather uncommon.¹⁰⁴⁰ The motif of the *Concordia militum*-type utilized on billon coins struck for Marius depicts two clasped hands (fig. 17); this motif, too, occurs on a number of coins from the first century, but is very uncommon in the third.¹⁰⁴¹ Likewise, the *decursio*-motif appearing on the aureus struck for Tetricus is reminiscent of coins struck under Caligula and Nero.¹⁰⁴² Admittedly, these are isolated examples. Nevertheless, to my mind, they suggest that old coin-types on occasion may have been chosen deliberately, in order to connect the emperors of Gaul with the Roman past. Naturally, this is not to say that they older coin-types that were copied

¹⁰³⁵ Schulte 1983, 86f, nos. 47–53 and 151, no. 18 respectively.

¹⁰³⁶ Schulte 1983, 79, no. 24 and 134, nos. 16–17 respectively.

¹⁰³⁷ From coinages struck before Postumus, the motif is only known from a silver medallion struck for Valerian; cf. *RIC* V.1, 44, no. 65.

¹⁰³⁸ Schulte 1983, 99, no. 97 and 142, no. 47 respectively.

¹⁰³⁹ Schulte 1983, 81, no. 31 and 158, no. 41 respectively.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Jones 1990, 168; cf. *RIC* II, pl. 10, no. 177 (a bronze coin recording a *congiarium* of Trajan).

¹⁰⁴¹ Cf. *RIC* I², 213, no. 121 and 269f, nos. 27–30. It should be noted that the motif occurs on a coin-type struck for Gallienus, cf. Göbl 2000, no. 13; the coins struck for Marius may be copies of this type.

¹⁰⁴² Cf. *RIC* I², 111, no. 49 and 159, nos. 103–108.

would have been known to the potential receiver of these coins. However, the motifs which were re-used may have been known.

In earlier research, it was assumed that the main mint used by the Gallic usurpers was located to Colonia Agrippiniensium. The mint earlier established at Viminacium had been relocated there; Göbl dates this re-location to 257.¹⁰⁴³ The city was captured then by Postumus in 260.¹⁰⁴⁴ Besly and Bland, however, drawing on the evidence of the coin-find from Cunetio, argued that the main mint should instead be located to Augusta Treverorum (today Trier).¹⁰⁴⁵ This is a very attractive suggestion. It would imply that the coins were struck in a city that rose to become one of the most important centres of imperial power of the whole empire in the third century.

Moreover, the language of imperial authority presented on the coins would then be matched by a corresponding language of imperial authority, which was expressed physically in a cityscape. Augusta Treverorum had been an important residence since the second century. The city had become the residence of the *propraetor* of the province Gallia Belgica in the second half of the second century. This event was connected to an intense building activity, including a hippodrome, an amphitheatre and the so-called *Barbarathermen*. It also included a palace for the *propraetor*. The continued importance of the city is attested by the fact that Maximian resided in the city from 286. From 293–94, the city was an ‘official’ imperial residence. In the following decades, the city was furnished with the famous *aula magna* and the *Kaiserthermen*. It is interesting to note that the latter were never finished as a bath complex; instead, they were rebuilt to serve as headquarters for the *scholares*, the mounted guards of the emperor.¹⁰⁴⁶

To sum up, if the assumption that Augusta Treverorum was one of the major mints of the emperors of Gaul is correct, yet another case presents itself, where the themes of imperial coinage, imperial authority and imperial presence are intertwined. In any case, the coin-imagery of the emperors of Gaul, and the development of Augusta Treverorum, testify vividly to the process of ‘Roman decentralisation’ in the second half of the third century.

4.8. Maintaining Roman order in Britain

The coinages struck for the British usurpers present a case similar to that of the emperors of Gaul. With reasonable certainty, Carausius can be assumed to have served as a military officer under Maximian, possibly as a naval praefect. His successes in this position had the effect that he became proclaimed emperor.¹⁰⁴⁷ The imagery used for

¹⁰⁴³ Göbl 2000, 99.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Kienast 1996, 243; cf. Drinkwater 1987, 26f.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Cf. Besly & Bland 1983 57f.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Cf. Goethert 2007, 18–20.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Kienast 1996, 278.

the coinage struck for Carausius, as the imagery used on coins struck for the emperors of Gaul, closely adhere to the coinages of the emperors of the 'central empire.' The obverse of an aureus dated to around 290 features a campaign-portrait of Carausius (a *chimaera* is depicted on the shield) and the legend VIRTUS CARAVSI. Another aureus featuring a similar obverse legend depicts the emperor with cuirass and helmet.¹⁰⁴⁸ Similar imagery is used for antoniniani considered probably to have been struck at Rouen around 290.¹⁰⁴⁹ Recently, Bourne has identified an anonymous bronze coin featuring the obverse legend VIRTUS AVG as a coin struck for Carausius, most likely in 287–289. This coin, too, features a campaign-portrait of an emperor, with a *gorgoneion* on the shield.¹⁰⁵⁰ This portrait-type and legend-type is also used on coins struck for Allectus, the successor of Carausius.¹⁰⁵¹

However, just as in Gaul, the focus of the imagery on the coins struck for the British usurpers is rather on the (hoped for) outcomes of war: peace and prosperity. Several aurei struck for Carausius feature reverses referring to the *Pax Augusti*. On one coin-type, the ties between the emperor and the peace that has been accomplished are reinforced with the legend PAX CARAVSI AVG.¹⁰⁵² In the bronze coinage struck for Carausius, the reference to *Pax Augusti* is by far the most common. *Pax Augusti*-types accounts for between 60 and 70% of all coins struck for Carausius in coin-hoards. The *Pax Augusti*-types further appear to have been used continuously, in all issues and at all mints striking coins for this usurper. The type remains in prolific use under Allectus, the successor of Carausius, although *providentia*-types become more common.¹⁰⁵³ Similarly, references to *Felicitas Augusti* are common, as are references to *Hilaritas Augusti*. The latter reference is the second most common one in the coinage of Carausius, only less common than the reference to *Pax Augusti*.¹⁰⁵⁴

One may assume that such coin-types were used as a reply to the rather aggressive imagery featured on the coins struck for the dyarchs. However, following Carson, I would consider it more likely that the coins of the British usurpers were primarily intended for the 'home front'.¹⁰⁵⁵ This is also suggested by the legionary coinage of Allectus. It has long been noted that a number of the legions, for which aurei are struck under Victorinus (cf. above, chap. 4.7), cannot possibly have been under the control of Victorinus. As a solution, it has been suggested that certain *vexillationes* of these legions were under the command of Victorinus.¹⁰⁵⁶

¹⁰⁴⁸ Huvelin 1985a, 117, nos. 10–11.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Huvelin 1983, 381f. The reverse of this type was suggested by Huvelin to be read as TEMPORA FELICIT.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Bourne 2004, 377f; cf. *idem* 2001, 92.

¹⁰⁵¹ *RIC* V.2, 561, no. 31; cf. Bastien I, 207f.

¹⁰⁵² Huvelin 1985a, 117, nos. 12 and 13 (reverse legend PAX CARAVSI AVG); 14 and 15 (reverse legend PAX AVG).

¹⁰⁵³ Williams 2004, 71–73; cf. Bland & Burnett 1988, 199f.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Williams 2004, 71.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Carson 1987, 148.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Schulte 1983, 57.

However, similar coins are struck for Allectus. These coins refer to legions – including cohorts of the praetorian guard – which the British usurpers cannot possibly have controlled. To my mind, it seems rather unlikely that Allectus could have controlled even a *vexillatio* from the praetorian guard. Instead, a more attractive explanation is that both Victorinus and the British usurpers rather were *claimed* to command these legions. In this way they were presented as emperors who were in firm command of the Roman empire.¹⁰⁵⁷ Such coins most likely represented further reassurances, aimed at the ‘home front.’

In my view, it is interesting that it was seen as desirable to convince the ‘home fronts’ of Roman Gaul and Britain of the fact that the whole Roman world was under the control of their emperor. In this respect, the reference to the praetorian guard in the city of Rome is especially telling.

References were also made to Roman civilian society. Coins struck for Carausius acclaim him as *Pontifex maximus* and *pater patriae*. The coinage struck for him also claims the assumption of four consulates.¹⁰⁵⁸ Further, the obverses of some aurei and a medallion struck for Carausius feature consular portraits.¹⁰⁵⁹ Likewise, a coin struck for Allectus seems to claim a consulate for him, too, by featuring a consular portrait.¹⁰⁶⁰ On the coins, Carausius is generally depicted as a rather heavy-set man. This portrait is somewhat reminiscent of the portraits of Balbinus, Valerian and Tacitus (cf. chap. 4.4). Perhaps the portrait of Carausius had a similar symbolic content – that is, it was a depiction of an older emperor who wanted to express his *clementia*. Further, a number of coins struck for Carausius refer to *adventus*-ceremonies.¹⁰⁶¹

However, a number of coins struck for the British usurpers seem to make more subtle references to Roman culture. A coin-type struck for Carausius feature the reverse legend EXPECTATE VENI, normally assumed to be an allusion to a line from the Aeneid (2.282-3): *Quibus Hector ab oris / exspectate venis?* (‘From what shores do you come, Hector, long-awaited one?’). The reverse motif depicts the deity Britannia, clasping the hand of the emperor; one coin featuring this reverse is struck with a campaign-portrait on the obverse.¹⁰⁶² Other coins feature the enigmatic legend RSR, usually read as a mint-mark denoting the *Rationalis summae rei*, who is supposed to have been a ‘minister of finance.’¹⁰⁶³

However, it has also been suggested that this should be read as another reference to Virgil, this time to the Eclogues (4.6): *Redeunt Saturnia regna, iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto* (‘The Saturnian kingdoms return, now a new generation is sent down from heaven above’). The latter half of the phrase further, as de la Bédoyère

¹⁰⁵⁷ Schulte 1983, 137–142, nos. 29–46 (Victorinus); *RIC* V.2, 468–470, nos. 55–86 and 487–488, nos. 268–275 (Carausius). Cf. Jones 1990, 166.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Kienast 1996, 278.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Huvelin 1985a, 110, n. 16; cf. Kent 1978, 322, no. 569 and pl. 149.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Kienast 1996, 279; cf. *RIC* V.2, 561, no. 35.

¹⁰⁶¹ Cf. *RIC* V.2., for instance 464, nos. 7 and 10–11.

¹⁰⁶² de la Bédoyère 1998, 79f; cf. *RIC* V.2, 483, no. 218.

¹⁰⁶³ de la Bédoyère 1998, 80; cf. *RIC* V.2, 508–516, nos. 533–620.

has noted, corresponds to the initials of the enigmatic legend I.N.P.C.D.A. This is featured on the medallion, struck for Carausius, which on the obverse features a consular portrait of Carausius.¹⁰⁶⁴ In short, all of these allusions testify to the main tenor of the coinage struck for the British usurpers: that they had ‘restored Roman order.’ This received its most distinctive expression with the reverse-type used on coins struck for Carausius depicting the she-wolf and the twins. Pieces of the coin-type feature different versions of the curious legend *RENOVAT ROMANO*.¹⁰⁶⁵

These choices of sometimes surprisingly elaborate imagery suggest that the power of the British usurpers was based on a group of citizens well versed in Roman culture. It lies close at hand to describe this group as a ‘Romanized local elite.’ However, there are indications that another social group may have become an important factor of power in provinces such as Roman Britain. In the previous chapter, I discussed arguments suggesting the idea that the legions could assume the shape of societies, which were closed off from civilian society. A number of more recent additions to the debate question the latter assumption. Coulston has made the apt remark that the very notion that a military society must, more or less by necessity, be something ‘different’ from ‘civilian society’ – its ‘other’, one might say – was invented when armies introduced *uniforms*. These transformed soldiers to something ‘else.’¹⁰⁶⁶

However, archaeological evidence from Roman Britain provides certain cases where it is evident that military society and civilian society interacted.¹⁰⁶⁷ In this way, it is possible that a ‘mixed provincial society’ could be formed: Alföldy has characterized this as a *Militärgesellschaft*.¹⁰⁶⁸ Of course, this is not to say that coins featuring subtle allusions to Virgil were aimed at a group of well-educated ‘provincialized’ soldiers (although neither I am saying that they *did not*). However, on a more general level, such a group would have been interested in a message claiming that ‘Rome’, that is society itself, was secure.

Following the above evidence, then, I conclude that the formation of important Romano-British communities was intricately connected to the usurpations of Carausius and Allectus, and moreover is of vital importance for the shaping of the coinages struck for them. These communities later retained their importance. This is attested

¹⁰⁶⁴ Cf. de la Bédoyère 1998, 81f. and Kent 1978, above n. 1059.

¹⁰⁶⁵ For types, cf. *RIC* V.2, 512, nos. 571–576 and Huvelin 1985a, 117, no. 10. What is this legend supposed to mean? Several versions occur, including *RENOVAT ROMA*, *RENOVAT ROMAN* and *ROMANO RENOV* (cf. *RIC* V.2, 682f). The reading *Renovator romanorum* (cf. Casey 1994, 59) seems reasonable.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Coulston 2004, 145f.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Alston 1999, 175–178; James 2001, 77f and 80f.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Alföldy 2000, 53: “Zusammenfassend läßt sich sagen, daß das römische Heer ... im Laufe der Kaiserzeit innerhalb dieser Struktur allmählich zu einem privilegierten und mächtigen Sonderkörper geworden ist, der in den Militärdistrikten mit der dortigen Bevölkerung eng zusammenwuchs und mit diesem zusammen als ‘Militärgesellschaft’ eine eigenständige, verhältnismäßig homogene soziale Gruppierung hervorbrachte.”

by the fact that the mint established for the British usurpers in Londinium continued producing bronze coins, but now for the tetrarchs, until 313.¹⁰⁶⁹

Nevertheless, the British usurpers were vanquished, and Britain once more brought under the command of the *urbs aeterna*. In 287, this victory was celebrated in the proper way, with the construction of the *Arcus novus*. Diocletian, however was not himself present in the city for this occasion; he only visited the city in 303 (cf. above chapter 4.2). Rome was no longer in the city of Rome. However, neither was it necessarily ‘where the emperor was’. Rather, Rome would for the future be where Roman values were held on high – in Antioch, Mediolanum, Siscia, Augusta Treverorum and Londinium. This became the official policy of the Empire as four new residences – Augusta Treverorum, Mediolanum, Thessalonica and Nicomedia – were established for the tetrarchs.

¹⁰⁶⁹ *RIC* VI, 5.

5. *DEO ET DOMINO AVG*: DYNASTIC POLICIES, DEITIES, AND DIVINITY

5.1. *A death in the family...*

In 284, or possibly 285, a certain Nigrinianus died. The fact that the date of his death is uncertain is in itself quite telling. In fact, we do not even know his full name for certain – it may have been M. Aurelius Nigrinianus. Nothing of his life is known, except that he was the son of the emperor Carinus. In fact, we only know that Nigrinianus must have lived, because it seems certain that he did die. We do know that he was consecrated, as this was commemorated by coinage struck for such an event.¹⁰⁷⁰

Coins struck for dead emperors and the members of their families had been a part of imperial coinage since the beginning of the imperial age. The coinage struck for the *consecratio* of Nigrinianus is only one of a number of coin-series struck for emperors who were consecrated in the period from the 260s to the 290s. Nevertheless, this is not the most striking development of this age. On some coins, the *living* emperor is depicted as a god more explicitly than before. This has often been interpreted as a step in the development towards the changed role of the emperor of the ‘dominate,’ when he was regarded as ‘*deus et dominus*’ rather than as ‘*primus inter pares*.’¹⁰⁷¹

In this chapter, I will investigate this aspect of the coinages of the soldier-emperors. First, the function of *consecratio* will be commented on. I will follow scholars claiming that this act could be understood as a symbolical practise. This practise was embedded in the framework of observances taking place between the emperor and his surroundings. Mainly, this practise could be an important part of the negotiations between the emperor and the senate. Further, I will adhere to scholars arguing that the function of *consecratio* lies close to the function of a dynastic policy. In a second part of the chapter, references to such dynastic policies in visual imagery of the soldier-emperors will be discussed.

A strategy which sometimes resembles a dynastic policy is one which implies tying the gods to you as a *comes* or *conservator*. In a third part of this chapter, the strategies employed by the soldier-emperors implying the ‘summoning’ of various gods to

¹⁰⁷⁰ Kienast 1996, 262; cf. *RIC* V.2, 202f, nos. 471–474.

¹⁰⁷¹ Cf. Sommer 2004, 120–22 and Fowden 2005, 558.

the imperial cause is treated. The god who is most noticeable of the gods ‘summoned’ in this way is Sol. Repeatedly, a ‘cult of Sol’ has been regarded as characteristic of the third century.¹⁰⁷² I will argue that this emphasis on Sol under the soldier-emperors has been somewhat overexaggerated. Throughout the period, references to the more ‘traditional’ deities Jupiter and Hercules remain important.

The emperor himself could also be depicted as a god. However, what exactly was meant by this? Is the emperor actually *a* god, or simply *like* the gods? In a fourth part of this chapter, I examine the various cases where the emperor is depicted in the guises of various gods. Sol is the god with whom the emperor is most frequently paralleled. However, this parallel is, firstly, not new. Secondly, Sol is not alone in this respect: in a number of cases, soldier-emperors are depicted in the guises of several other gods, mainly that of Hercules.

In a fifth and concluding part of the chapter, I will examine the imagery most often deemed as characteristic of the age of the soldier-emperors. This is the imagery presenting the emperor as *deus et dominus*. Here I suggest that the importance of this imagery often has been, and still is, overstated. In all, the relations between the soldier-emperors and the gods of Rome were of a more traditional nature than is often assumed. Rather, the manners in which these relations were expressed were subject to change.

5.2. *A god in death: consecratio and pietas*

One of the most important virtues of the emperor was that of *pietas*. This was one of the oldest Roman virtues. *Pietas Augusti* was a guarantee for *Pax deorum*, and thus, for the stability of the Roman order.¹⁰⁷³ Noreña concludes that references to *pietas* on coinage could function as demonstrations of the virtue of the emperor in his capacity as head of Roman state religion. However, the reference to the *pietas* of the emperor could also demonstrate that the emperor respected his obligations towards his subjects.¹⁰⁷⁴ Reverse legends referring to *pietas Augusti* occur on coins struck for several soldier-emperors. These legends represented a simple way of demonstrating *pietas* on coins.¹⁰⁷⁵ A sculptural relief belonging to the collections of the Museo Nazionale delle Terme in Rome depicts a veiled emperor performing a sacrifice. The emperor has been suggested to be Claudius Gothicus. However, this proposition has not won

¹⁰⁷² Cf. the studies of L’Orange where the prominent role of *Sol Invictus* in the third century is a recurring theme; cf. L’Orange 1973, 335. Cf. also Halsberghe 1972 and *idem* 1984.

¹⁰⁷³ Turcan 1978, 1000.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Noreña 2001, 158.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Cf. Göbl 2000, nos. 466–469 (Gallienus); *RIC* V.2, 28, no. 93–94 (Probus); 171, no. 264 (Carinus); 193, nos. 396–97 (Numerian).

acceptance;¹⁰⁷⁶ moreover, the sculptural relief is dated by Wegner to the fourth century.¹⁰⁷⁷

The *pietas* of the emperor, however, could also be referred to by depicting the emperor sacrificing before an altar. Through the combination of this motif with a certain legend, a multi-faceted image could be created. One example of this is an aureus struck for a joint consulate of Tetricus and Tetricus iunior. This coin features a reverse depicting both emperors sacrificing before an altar (cf. above, chap. 4.7).¹⁰⁷⁸ Another example is that of the coins struck for Aurelian with an obverse featuring a portrait of Sol and the legend SOL DOMINVS IMPERI ROMANI. The reverses of these coins depict Aurelian sacrificing before an altar and the legend AVRELIANVS AVG CONS (cf. further chap. 5.4).

One expression of this imperial *pietas* was the consecration of a deceased predecessor. However, a *consecratio* could be an act of more than *pietas*. *Consecratio* was a many-faceted performance, which became a powerful part of the framework of negotiations between various centres of power in Roman society. One important aspect of this performance is that it was a part of the negotiations between the emperor and the senate.¹⁰⁷⁹ Gradel points out that the senate could demand of a newly proclaimed emperor that he would adhere to the traditions of Rome, for which the senate acted as custodian. If the emperor did not do this, the senate could threaten not to accept the emperor.¹⁰⁸⁰

Accordingly, *consecratio* could become an instrument of negotiation and of raising demands. For instance, a *consecratio* could be refused. One of the more famous occasions when this happened is the *consecratio* of Hadrian. Initially, the senate refused to sanction this *consecratio*. In this situation, the *consecratio* was forced through by T. Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus, Hadrian's adopted son, who had been proclaimed emperor after the death of Hadrian. Antoninus later took the additional title *pius*, probably as a demonstration of his *pietas* towards Hadrian.¹⁰⁸¹ Under the reign of Maximinus Thrax, the senate consecrated Severus Alexander, without consulting the emperor. As Gradel suggests, this *consecratio* may have been an act of protest against the emperor Maximinus.¹⁰⁸²

The cases of Valerian, Gallienus and Claudius Gothicus

In the second half of the third century, it is apparent that *consecratio* remained a powerful ideological tool. Throughout this work, it has been noted that after the death

¹⁰⁷⁶ Felletti-Maj lists the relief as 'disputed,' cf. Felletti-Maj 1958, 261, no. 350; Wegner does not accept an identification as Claudius Gothicus, cf. Wegner 1979, 137.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Wegner 1979, 137.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Cf. Schulte 1983, 163f, nos. 59–61.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Cf. Gesche 1978, 377–79.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Gradel 2002, 347f

¹⁰⁸¹ Birley 2000, 151.

¹⁰⁸² Gradel 2002, 358f.

of Valerian, it became desperately important for Gallienus to strengthen his own position. In the *Historia Augusta*, it is claimed that Valerian was consecrated;¹⁰⁸³ this is interesting, as the consecration would have taken place in the absence of the unfortunate ex-emperor. The claims may however be entirely fictitious, not least since no coins struck in commemoration of a *consecratio* of Valerian are known.¹⁰⁸⁴ However, the consecration of both sons of Gallienus is well attested. This also demonstrates the importance that this practise still retained.

Further, it is interesting that Aurelius Victor claims that also Gallienus was consecrated. This occurred after a short and passing *damnatio memoriae* under Claudius Gothicus.¹⁰⁸⁵ As no inscriptions or coins referring to this *consecratio* are known, this claim must remain dubious. However, considering the unclear circumstances surrounding the proclamation of Claudius Gothicus, a *consecratio* of Gallienus would have been a rather urgent measure in order to gain acceptance for the new emperor.

Claudius Gothicus, the successor of Gallienus, is also known to have been consecrated.¹⁰⁸⁶ This *consecratio* presents a rather special case, due to the extreme frequency of coins referring to the *consecratio* (fig. 33–34). This coin-series is surrounded with certain problems, and will have to be regarded with special care.

After the death of Claudius Gothicus in Sirmium, Quintillus claimed the purple. At the same time, Aurelian had been proclaimed emperor by the troops in Sirmium; the senate, however, accepted the proclamation of Quintillus.¹⁰⁸⁷ It seems reasonable that the coins commemorating the *consecratio* of Claudius Gothicus were struck under the latter emperor. The reference to a *consecratio* would have been a clear statement with reference to Aurelian.

However, references to the *consecratio* could also have presented a way for Aurelian to strengthen his position after his defeat of Quintillus. However, it is uncertain under which of these emperors the production of the coins referring to the *consecratio* of Claudius Gothicus began. Estiot argues that this coinage began under Quintillus, at least on a reduced scale. However, the great majority of the coins are considered to have been struck simultaneously with the first coin-series struck for Aurelian.¹⁰⁸⁸ This suggests that both these emperors tried to take advantage of the *consecratio* of their predecessor.

One problem is that we cannot be sure of the extent to which the striking of these coin-series was actually controlled by the emperor. Rather, most evidence seems to suggest that it was not. It could be repeated that the vast amounts of the coins referring to a consecration of Claudius Gothicus were deemed by Göbl to have been coined

¹⁰⁸³ SHA *Gallieni* duo 10.5; SHA *Divus Aurelianus* 8.1.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Cf. Kienast 1996, 214; Kienast mentions a few such coins, considered to be the results of ‘poor coinage’ (cf. above, n. 816).

¹⁰⁸⁵ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 33.27; cf. Kienast 1996, 218.

¹⁰⁸⁶ *Epit. de Caes.* 34.4; Eutr. 9.11.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Eutr. 9.12.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Cf. Estiot 1995, 23.

‘irregularly’ in the city of Rome, in the absence of the emperor.¹⁰⁸⁹ Moreover, these coins were copied on a vast scale. The result is that there are enormous amounts of more or less poorly executed copies of the type that is usually referred to as ‘barbarous radiates.’¹⁰⁹⁰

Nevertheless, if the mint of Rome was actually out of imperial control in 270, why did coins referring to a *consecratio* of Claudius Gothicus remain in production? One can only speculate. The situation in the city around the year 270 was strained. There is much reason to assume that the ‘war of the moneyers’ in the following year was connected to popular dissent (cf. chap. 4.6). The coins referring to a *consecratio* of Claudius Gothicus suggested adherence to *pietas* and to a ‘proper way of behaviour.’ In a critical situation, the *consecratio* could have been deemed by the officials of the mint to be a suitable ‘message’ for the inhabitants of the *urbs aeterna*.

Perhaps one should not infer too much from the fact that the coin-types referring to a *consecratio* of Claudius Gothicus remained in use in the city of Rome. The disorderly manner in which the coinage of the city of Rome seems to be struck at the time has been noted. Perhaps it is just as likely that the coin-type remained in use, simply because the dies used for the type happened to ‘be lying around.’ Nevertheless, I suggest that a *consecratio* would have been an action of marked significance in the situation the empire faced in 270. This is at least one reason why coins referring to a *consecratio* of Claudius Gothicus were struck in huge numbers.

The cases of Victorinus, Aurelian and Carus

Another example could be considered. Coins commemorating a *consecratio* of Victorinus were struck under his successor Tetricus; these coins are dated to the spring of 271.¹⁰⁹¹ At the same time, Aurelian was undertaking campaigns against various barbarian tribes threatening the northern *limes* such as the *juthungi*.¹⁰⁹² A *consecratio* of Victorinus would have been a rather interesting event; his predecessor Postumus – not counting the two short-lived usurpers Laelianus and Marius – had not been consecrated.

The references to a *consecratio* of Victorinus, for one thing, testifies to the way in which the same ‘language of imperial power’ is used both in Gaul and in the central Empire. Further, similar to the coinage struck for the divine Claudius Gothicus, the coins referring to a *consecratio* of Victorinus represent an interesting comment to the situation in the empire around the year 270. The conflict between Quintillus and Aurelian may have prompted the coins referring to a *consecratio* of Victorinus, in order to strengthen the position of Tetricus. The usurpation of a certain Domitian, which

¹⁰⁸⁹ Cf. Göbl 1993, 42 and Tab. 6–10.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Bland & Burnett 1988, 139.

¹⁰⁹¹ Besly & Bland 1983, 153, no. 2633; cf. Estiot 1995, 17f, and Estiot et al. 1993, 108, nos. 6091–6100.

¹⁰⁹² Estiot 2004, 10f.

Tetricus had to face, may have presented a further motive.¹⁰⁹³ Moreover, Victorinus seems to have been murdered for private causes.¹⁰⁹⁴ A *consecratio* may have been a desirable option for Tetricus, as he would have been forced to distance himself from the murderers of his predecessor.

Aurelian, like Gallienus seems to have been subjected to an initial *damnatio memoriae*, which was followed by a *consecratio*; the latter is recorded by a few inscriptions from Africa and one from Sardinia.¹⁰⁹⁵ However, no coins referring to such a *consecratio* of Aurelian are known. The *consecratio* may have taken place under Tacitus; such an action would certainly have suited the image of pietas and adherence to the traditions of Rome, which is conveyed by the visual imagery under this emperor (cf. chap. 4.4). For Tacitus or Florian, neither *damnatio memoriae* nor *consecratio* is known; this is perhaps symptomatic of the chaotic situation in 275–276.

It is also possible that a *consecratio* of Aurelian followed under Probus. At the time, it may have been found suitable to establish a link with the last emperor before the *interregnum species* recorded by the *Historia Augusta* (cf. chap. 4.4). Probus himself was, like Gallienus and Aurelian before him, first subject to a passing *damnatio memoriae*, followed by a *consecratio*. This is attested by one inscription from Italy;¹⁰⁹⁶ however, no coins struck for a *divus Probus* are known. Kienast suggests that this *consecratio* may have taken place under Diocletian.¹⁰⁹⁷ After the rather unruly years under Carus and his sons, Diocletian may have found it suitable to refer to their predecessor.

A drastic change can be noted under the reign of Carus and his sons. Under Carinus, not only do coins refer to a *consecratio* of his father and predecessor Carus; there are also references to consecrations of Numerian and Nigrinianus, the son of Carinus. The *consecratio* of Carus is documented by inscriptions from Numidia and Africa.¹⁰⁹⁸ Interestingly enough, coins referring to this consecration also explicitly refer to the military situation under Carinus and Numerian. The first coins for the consecration of Carus are considered to have been struck in Siscia in January 284, a little more than half a year after the death of Carus. They feature the novel obverse legend *DIVO CARO PARTHICO*. Gricourt suggests that this legend should be understood as a reference to recent military successes of Numerian in the east, since these successes were the effects of the campaigns undertaken by Carus.¹⁰⁹⁹ Coins referring to the consecrations of Carus, Numerian and Nigrinianus are attributed to the mint of the *urbs aeterna*. They are dated by Gricourt to the period towards the end of 284. Gricourt observes that the coins struck in this period must have been motivated by

¹⁰⁹³ Estiot 1995, 17f; cf. König 1981, 161. The existence of the usurper Domitian seems to have been ascertained as a coin struck for him was found in 2005; cf. Abdy & Harling 2005, 176f.

¹⁰⁹⁴ SHA *Tyranni Triginta* 6.3.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Kienast 1996, 235; cf. Peachin 1990, 384, nos. 4 and 7 and 392, no. 68.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Peachin 1990, 424, no. 1.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Kienast 1996, 253.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Peachin 1990, 466–468, nos. 166, 174 and 178 for Carus.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Gricourt 2000, 53f.

the fact that in November that same year, Diocletian had been proclaimed emperor in Nicomedia. Additionally, in Pannonia, Iulianus had revolted and seized the mint at Siscia.¹¹⁰⁰ In my view, it seems likely that the references to consecrations in the coinage of Carinus may have reflected an attempt to strengthen the position of Carinus in the *urbs aeterna*.

Indications that these coin-series were intended for the upcoming conflicts is further suggested by the references to the *consecratio* of Carus in later coin-series, estimated by Gricourt to have been struck in January 285. Coins attributed to this series commemorate the military achievements of Carus with the novel obverse legend DIVO CARO PERS.¹¹⁰¹ The very last coin-series of Carinus attributed to Lugdunum completely consist of coins struck in the name of the divine Carus. This coin-series is dated to 285. In this case, it is apparent that Carinus tried to strengthen his position by resorting to coinage demonstrating that he was *divi filius*.¹¹⁰² As these examples indicate, the demonstration of *pietas* through *consecratio* remained important throughout the age of the soldier-emperors.

5.3. (Attempts at) founding new dynasties

As is evident, some consecrations are claimed to have taken place after successful rebellions and usurpations, even – in some cases – after short phases of *damnatio memoriae*. Examples of this are the consecrations of Gallienus, Aurelian and Probus. How should one account for these instances? It is evident from these events that the *consecratio* of a predecessor, as a way of demonstrating respect for and adherence to the traditions of the *urbs aeterna*, could be part of the negotiations surrounding the acceptance of a new emperor. Furthermore, *consecratio* could be a way of strengthening one's own position, not only through demonstrating *pietas*, but also by establishing a more direct access to legitimacy.

The reason for this is the embeddedness of the act of *consecratio* in a father-son relationship. The *consecratio* of the deceased predecessor developed as a way for the adoptive emperors to express their piety towards their *fathers*, and thus their respect for the traditions and 'sound family values' of Rome. However, and this is even more interesting, the *consecratio* also had effects for the emperor who fulfilled the action. Being the adopted son of one who had just become a god, the emperor, logically, became the son of a god. This gave considerable strength to the position of the emperor.¹¹⁰³ By this, the true potential of consecration as a strategy of legitimation is revealed: two well-known cases when this potential was exploited are those of Augustus

¹¹⁰⁰ Gricourt 2000, 42f.

¹¹⁰¹ Gricourt 2000 43f.

¹¹⁰² Gricourt 2000, 66.

¹¹⁰³ Gesche 1978, 388f.

and Tiberius, who both were frequently acclaimed as *Divi filius* on the coins that were struck for them.¹¹⁰⁴

This model, presented by Helga Gesche, has one weakness. Alternatively, it seems too limited to be adaptable for the specific context of the third century, since in this period, there are quite a few cases where emperors are claimed to have been consecrated under their successors. Not only were these successors unrelated to the consecrated emperor; they may even have been adversaries or usurpers.

It should be noted that we do not know the circumstances of these consecrations. It is possible that some were made by the senate as measures against the new emperors. However, it is also possible that the references to consecrations are made on behalf of the new emperor. At least, I think this is the case with the consecrations documented by coinage. Through the reference to such acts, a dynastic link between the new and the divine emperor could be claimed; through *claiming* that the predecessor had attained divine status, an emperor could make the claim that he himself was the son of a god.¹¹⁰⁵ Therefore, precisely those emperors who usurped the purple would have been interested in promoting their deceased predecessors to the higher status of *divi*. Thus, the *consecratio*, in a sense, becomes a dynastic policy.

Dynastic policies from Gallienus to Tetricus

A dynastic policy was one of the most effective ways of preparing for a safe succession. Gibbon famously commented that one of the few weaknesses of the emperor Marcus Aurelius was his blind paternal love for his son, Commodus. This love led Marcus Aurelius to entrusting the imperial succession to his cruel son.¹¹⁰⁶ Actually, as Hekster has pointed out, it was nearly impossible for Marcus Aurelius to *avoid* making Commodus his successor; the idea of dynastic succession was too firmly rooted in the empire.¹¹⁰⁷ The dynastic policy retained its potential in the age of the soldier-emperors; many of the coinages of the soldier-emperors refer to such strategies. In many cases, references to dynastic policies and pietas, through *consecratio*, are combined.

Gallienus was a member of a dynasty that had been firmly established under his father Valerian. Gallienus was married to Salonina; she assumed the title of *mater castrorum*, in a fashion that was common under the Severan dynasty.¹¹⁰⁸ The two oldest sons of Gallienus and Salonina, Valerianus iunior and Saloninus, were both acclaimed *Caesares*, in 255 and 258 respectively.¹¹⁰⁹ Their status as members of the dynasty was frequently referred to, with both inscriptions and coins struck for them.¹¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰⁴ Gesche 1978, 382f; cf. *RIC* I², 71, nos. 390–93, and 93–95, nos. 1–32 respectively.

¹¹⁰⁵ R.-Alföldi 1999, 75f.; cf. Gesche 1978, 388.

¹¹⁰⁶ Gibbon I.IV, ed. Bury 1946, vol. I, 65f.

¹¹⁰⁷ Hekster 2001, 46–49.

¹¹⁰⁸ Kienast 1996, 222f; cf. 167 (Iulia Domna); 174f (Iulia Severa and Iulia Soaemias); 180 (Iulia Mamaea). Cf. Laeben-Rosén 2005, 27f.

¹¹⁰⁹ Kienast 1996, 220–2.

¹¹¹⁰ For inscriptions, cf. Peachin 1990, 339–345, nos. 292a–340; 353–63, nos. 401–459. For coins, cf. Göbl 2000, nos. 247–276 and nos. 318–323.

The coin-type that most explicitly refers to imperial dynasties is that which features the portraits of two or more members of the imperial family.¹¹¹¹ As Marietta Horster points out in a recent study, the theme for these ‘dynastic coins’ is the *fecunditas* and *concordia* of the imperial family, the settled succession this family vouchsafes, and the *felicitas* and *securitas* it will provide for the empire.¹¹¹² The unity of the dynasty of Valerian and Gallienus is displayed on a number of medallions that feature the portraits of Valerian and different members of his family. The legend *CONCORDIA AVGVSTORVM* is repeatedly used.¹¹¹³ Coins struck both for Valerianus iunior and Saloninus demonstrate the links between a dynastic policy and *pietas*; these coins frequently are struck with reverses featuring the legend *PIETAS AVGG*.¹¹¹⁴

Saloninus played a prominent role in the conflicts in Gaul around 260. As the Rhine frontiers were exposed to invading barbarians, Saloninus was in Colonia Agrippinensis as representative of imperial authority.¹¹¹⁵ The troops, however, proclaimed Postumus emperor, who besieged Saloninus. The latter was subsequently proclaimed emperor. This should be interpreted as another appeal to the loyalty of the troops. In spite of this, Saloninus was surrendered to Postumus and subsequently executed.¹¹¹⁶ He may have been consecrated; however, no coins struck for a divine Saloninus are known.¹¹¹⁷

As the 260s began, the luck of the dynasty of Valerian had decreased, as Valerian and both his grandsons were dead. Only Gallienus and Salonina remained. However, it is evident that their union had not lost its authority, as a number of medallions were struck depicting portraits of both Gallienus and Salonina.¹¹¹⁸ Further, coins struck for Salonina feature the legend *CONCORDIA AET*.¹¹¹⁹ An attempt to re-establish the dynasty of Valerian seems to have been made by reference to a certain Marinianus. A bronze medallion attributed to the mint of Siscia features a reverse depicting Gallienus and a smaller boy, crowned by a *Victoria*, in a triumphal *quadriga*. The medallion features the legend *XV COS (...) MARINIANO*.¹¹²⁰ This Marinianus has been suggested to be a third son of Gallienus and Salonina, probably born in 265 and executed along with Gallienus and Salonina in 268.¹¹²¹ In a recent study, Grandvallet argues that Marinianus must have been a younger relative, who was proclaimed the successor of

¹¹¹¹ King 1999, 132; cf. Bastien II, 650–53 for an overview.

¹¹¹² Horster 2005, 863.

¹¹¹³ Göbl 2000, nos. 290 and 311.

¹¹¹⁴ Göbl 2000, nos. 248, 255 and 267.

¹¹¹⁵ König 1981, 38.

¹¹¹⁶ König 1981, 48–51.

¹¹¹⁷ Kienast suggests that a coin-type featuring the legend *DIVVS CAESAR Q GALLIENVS* might have been struck for Saloninus (Q, then, should read *quondam*) Webb considered both known coins to be of doubtful authenticity; Göbl, however, considered the one coin preserved in Vienna as genuine, but attributes it to Valerian II. Cf. Kienast 1996, 221; Göbl 2000, no. 257.

¹¹¹⁸ Göbl 2000, nos. 773g and 781a.

¹¹¹⁹ Göbl 2000, nos. 542–543.

¹¹²⁰ Göbl 2000, no. 1453.

¹¹²¹ Kienast 1996, 222.

Gallienus. As the reverse legend dates the coin to 266–267, this must have been connected to the increasingly critical situation Gallienus was facing towards the end of his reign.¹¹²²

Quintillus, who was proclaimed emperor after the death of Claudius II, is claimed to have been the brother of Claudius Gothicus.¹¹²³ Except for the coins commemorating a *consecratio* of Claudius Gothicus, there are no references to any lineage between this emperor and Quintillus in the coinage struck for the latter. However, in both parts of the empire that had functioned as more or less autonomous areas since the early 260s, the rulers resort to dynastic policies in these critical years of the early 270s.

In the east, Zenobia proclaimed her son Vaballathus *Augustus* in early 272; coins attributed to the mint of Antioch are struck both for Vaballathus and Zenobia, acclaiming them as *Augustus* and *Augusta* respectively. This, in effect, meant that they usurped the imperial authority.¹¹²⁴ In the conflict that ensued, Zenobia and Vaballathus suffered a total defeat, as Aurelian crushed Palmyra and put an abrupt end to its autonomous status after the second campaign against the city in 273.¹¹²⁵

That same year, in Gaul, Tetricus, who earlier may have attempted to strengthen his position with a *consecratio* of his predecessor Victorinus, promoted his son Tetricus iunior to the rank of *Caesar*.¹¹²⁶ Tetricus iunior is given a very prominent position in the visual language of imperial power conceived for his father.

The coinage struck for Tetricus and Tetricus iunior further suggests that Tetricus iunior was promoted to the rank of *Augustus*. A number of aurei are struck in the names of both emperors.¹¹²⁷ The imagery on the coins struck for Tetricus and Tetricus iunior suggest a programme focusing on the *pietas* of the two emperors and the *felicitas* that was expected to be the result of the dynasty of Tetricus. Two aurei featuring obverse portraits of both Tetricus and Tetricus iunior feature reverses referring to *Hilaritas Augustorum* and *Aeternitas Augustorum* respectively.¹¹²⁸ Further, billon coins are struck for Tetricus iunior with a reverse featuring the legend PIETAS AVGVSTOR.¹¹²⁹ On aurei struck for Tetricus iunior, the reverses almost exclusively refer to *spes*. This imagery is also used on a wide scale for antoniniani struck for Tetricus iunior.¹¹³⁰ On some aurei, the image of Tetricus iunior as hope for the future is given further emphasis with the use of the reverse legend SPEI PERPETVAE.¹¹³¹

¹¹²² Grandvallet 2006a, 134–141.

¹¹²³ Eutr. 9.12; SHA *Divus Claudius* 12.3, Zos. 1.47.

¹¹²⁴ Estiot 2004, 17 and 430. In a recent addition to the debate, Udo Hartmann (2001, 10) argues that Palmyra never sought to provoke or challenge the central empire, but rather attempted to gain acceptance as a 'Teilreich'. In my view, this argument is, in the end, not conclusive.

¹¹²⁵ Estiot 2004, 19–21.

¹¹²⁶ Cf. Kienast 1996, 248.

¹¹²⁷ Schulte 1983, 162–164, nos. 56, 58 and 60.

¹¹²⁸ Schulte 1983, 162f, no. 56 and 57 respectively.

¹¹²⁹ Cf. Estiot et al. 1993, 109f, nos. 6630–6723.

¹¹³⁰ For aurei, cf. Schulte 1983, 168–71; nos. 1–2, 7–8 and 11–13. For antoniniani, cf. Estiot et al. 1993, 110f, nos. 7155–7555 and 7682–7747.

¹¹³¹ Cf. Schulte 1983, 170, nos. 9–10 for Tetricus iunior.

Another group of even more impressive aurei claim that Tetricus and Tetricus iunior assumed a joint consulate. The obverse of this coin-type features consular portraits of Tetricus and Tetricus iunior. The reverse depicts father and son dressed in toga, sacrificing before an altar (cf. above, chap. 5.2).¹¹³² As Tetricus and Tetricus iunior must have assumed their joint consulate in 274¹¹³³, this step may have been taken to make an imperial manifestation in the face of an impending confrontation with Aurelian. After the conflicts between Gallienus and Postumus, the emperors in Gaul may very well have expected that such a confrontation was imminent.

Aurelian, Tacitus and Florian

Dynastic policies seem to have been favoured by both usurpers and 'legitimate' emperors, especially in the face of military threats. This is yet another case, where there seems to be no difference between the emperors of the 'central empire' and those of the provinces.

After crushing Tetricus and Tetricus iunior, and thus restoring the whole world to the *urbs aeterna*, Aurelian returned in triumph to the city of Rome in 274. On this occasion, Severina, with whom Aurelian had been betrothed at some earlier, unknown occasion, was acclaimed as *Augusta* as well as *mater castrorum et senatus et patriae*.¹¹³⁴ One of the coin-types used for coins dated to this year and struck for Severina, features a reverse depicting the emperor and the empress clasping hands with the legend *CONCORDIA AVGG* (fig. 35).¹¹³⁵ Estiot also dates a new coin-type that features an obverse portrait of Aurelian and a reverse portrait of Severina to 275.¹¹³⁶

This event, with its apparent reference to the *matres castrorum* of the Severan dynasty, presents a completely new theme in the language of imperial power conceived for Aurelian. He had returned to the *urbs aeterna* as *restitutor orbis* and as the most victorious emperor since Trajan. The fact that Aurelian still took this action says much of the force believed to be held by dynastic policy.

The important function of Severina is further demonstrated by the coinage. A series of aurei, antoniniani and denarii struck for Severina is dated to the period after the death of Aurelian in 275 – that is, during the 'interregnum' (fig. 36–37). These coin-series were not only struck in the city of Rome, but in all the mints of the empire.¹¹³⁷ The suggestion that during the 'interregnum', Severina was 'queen of Rome' – or acted as some kind of figurehead, supported by at least some of the troops – has be-

¹¹³² Schulte 1983, 163f, nos. 59–60.

¹¹³³ Schulte dates this consulate to 275; cf. Schulte 1983, 67. The dating to 274 (cf. Drinkwater 1987, 42 and Kienast 1996, 247f.) must be regarded as more likely.

¹¹³⁴ Kienast 1996, 236.

¹¹³⁵ Estiot 2004, 300.

¹¹³⁶ Estiot 2004, 302 and 306; cf. pl. 74, no. 25.

¹¹³⁷ Cf. Estiot 2004, 308 (Rome); 328 (Ticinum); 364 (Siscia); 422 (Cyzicus); 434 (Antioch). In Lugdunum, another coin-type is struck depicting Concordia seated, with a *patera* and *cornucopiae*; cf. Estiot 2004, 278 and pl. 73, no. 6.

come generally accepted among scholars.¹¹³⁸ The fact that the image of the Augusta was relied upon to evoke loyalty is, in my view, an even more telling testimony to the power held by the dynastic policy.

It may be noted that a coin-type struck for Severina and dated to 275 features the obverse legend SEVERINA P F AVG. This inclusion of the acclamation *Pia Felix* in the titulature of an empress is extremely rare: it is only known from coins struck for Julia Domna, Salonina and Severina.¹¹³⁹ The coins featuring this legend are only attributed to the mint of Antioch. Callu suggests that the underlining of the imperial dignity of Severina by referring to her as *Pia Felix* was prompted by the examples of two earlier 'strong women' that had enjoyed close connections with Antioch, i.e. Iulia Domna and Zenobia.¹¹⁴⁰ This is a fascinating prospect – was this an attempt to present a 'counter-image' to that of Zenobia? The topic certainly is one that merits further studies.

Florian, the less than fortunate successor of Tacitus, presents us with a problem. Aurelius Victor and the *Historia Augusta* both claim that Florian was the brother of Tacitus.¹¹⁴¹ This seems less likely, as they do not have the same *gentilicium*. One solution could be that Tacitus and Florian possibly – which is also claimed in another passage in the *Historia Augusta* – were half-brothers.¹¹⁴²

If there was a dynastic connection between Tacitus and Florian, this has different implications. For a start, accepting the evidence that Tacitus aimed at a 'senatorial renaissance,' Cizek points out that Tacitus committed a mistake in elevating Florian to the rank of praetorian prefect. The attempts to please the senate would have collided with leaving the military responsibilities to his half-brother. This would have been understood as an attempt of the emperor to conduct a traditional dynastic policy.¹¹⁴³ Further, as Sauer points out, if Florian really was the half-brother of Tacitus, this undoubtedly would have supported his own later claims to the purple.¹¹⁴⁴

The case, as that of Quintillus, seems perfectly normal. An emperor with a weak power base and facing a strong military uprising relies on a strategy of legitimation usually effective with the military. However, there are no references to dynastic links between Tacitus and Florian in the coinage struck for either emperor – with the possible exception for a coin referring to Florian as *princeps iuventutis* (cf. below).

¹¹³⁸ Strobel 1993, 269f. Webb discussed this possibility; cf. *RIC* V.1, 253. Cf. also Cizek 1991, 116f; Callu 1995; *idem* 1996; Estiot 2004, 25–29.

¹¹³⁹ Estiot 2004, 29.

¹¹⁴⁰ Callu 1996, 143; cf. Callu 1995, 30.

¹¹⁴¹ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 36.2; SHA *Tacitus* 9.6 and 13.6.

¹¹⁴² SHA *Tacitus* 17.4; cf. Sauer 1998, 175.

¹¹⁴³ Cizek 1991, 120.

¹¹⁴⁴ Sauer 1998, 179.

Carus – a new Vespasian

As has been pointed out repeatedly, the most potent claim to the purple of Carus consisted in his two grown-up sons. This was a fundament for a strong dynastic policy. Further, it established a link between Carus and Vespasian. The dynasty of Carus became the most important theme in the visual imagery conceived for this emperor. As previously stated, both his sons in turn became first *Caesares* and then *Augusti* (cf. chap. 3.6). Further strength was added to the dynasty as Magnia Urbica, the wife of Carinus, was elevated to the rank of *Augusta*; this probably took place in July–August 283. Similar to Severina, in addition to the title of *Augusta*, Magnia Urbica was also acclaimed *mater castrorum senatus ac patriae*.¹¹⁴⁵ The last addition to the dynasty of Carus was Nigrinianus, the son of Carinus and Magnia Urbica.

Carus and the members of his family are depicted on a number of coins and medallions. Many of these depictions can be attributed to the mint of Siscia. The obverse of a medallion dated to November 282 features the portraits of Carus and Carinus; the reverse features the motif of the four seasons, depicted as four playing children, and the legend SAECVLI FELICITAS.¹¹⁴⁶ Similarly, a gold multiple, also considered to have been struck late in 282, features an obverse depicting Carus and Carinus; the reverse features the legend VICTORIAE AVGVSTT (*sic*).¹¹⁴⁷ The obverse of a unique bronze medallion dated to about the same time features the portraits of Carus and both his sons. The reverse depicts an *adventus* of Carus, Carinus and Numerian (cf. chap. 4.5). Gricourt assumes this medallion to have been struck in celebration of the elevation of Numerian to the rank of *Caesar*.¹¹⁴⁸

Further, a number of series of aurei and antoniniani attributed to the mint of Lugdunum feature coins struck with obverse portraits of Carus and Carinus. These coin-series are assumed by Bastien to have been struck in celebration of the promotions of Carinus and Numerian. The reverses refer to *Pax Augustorum*, *Victoria Augustorum*, *Felicitas saeculi* and *Spes publica*.¹¹⁴⁹

A number of coins struck in both gold and billon are assumed by Gricourt to have been struck in Ticinum in the summer of 283, in celebration of the elevation of Magnia Urbica to the rank of *Augusta*. These feature the portraits of Carinus and Magnia Urbica on the obverses and reverses respectively. To the same occasion, billon quinarii featuring portraits of Carinus and Numerian in a similar fashion are also attributed.¹¹⁵⁰ Carinus and Numerian are depicted one last time together on the obverses of aurei

¹¹⁴⁵ Kienast 1996, 262.

¹¹⁴⁶ Gricourt 2000, 46f; cf. Gneccchi II, 121, no. 1, (Carus and Carinus), and Tav. 122, no. 3.

¹¹⁴⁷ Gricourt 200, 48; cf. Gneccchi I, 11, no. 1 (Carus and Carinus), and Tav. 4, no. 8.

¹¹⁴⁸ Gricourt 2000, 50; cf. Gneccchi II, 123, no. 1, and Tav. 123, no. 10.

¹¹⁴⁹ Bastien 1976, 235–242, nos. 467–8, 472–3, 477, 491 and 494 (cf. Gricourt 2000, 59f); Bastien 1976, 248, no. 524 (cf. Gricourt 2000, 62).

¹¹⁵⁰ Gricourt 2000, 25. Webb also records one gold medallion struck with one side each for Carinus and Magnia Urbica; cf. *RIC* V.2, 181, No. 334. Cf. also Gneccchi I, 10, no. 1 (Carinus and Magnia Urbica), and Tav. 4, no. 6.

attributed to Lugdunum and dated to the summer of 284. For these aurei, a reverse featuring the legend VICTORIA AVGG is used.¹¹⁵¹

After the coinage struck for Carus and his family, coins featuring multiple portraits are much scarcer. One exception is the medallion attributed to the mint of Rome, dated to 287 and featuring an obverse depicting Diocletian and Maximian. It may seem strange that this manner of depiction was not used more under the dyarchs, considering the emphasis on unity in the visual imagery conceived for the dyarchs. Perhaps the reason was that this manner of depiction was too intimately associated with dynastic policies. It is rather telling that the portrait-style is only re-introduced for the coins that refer to Carausius as the ‘frater’ of Diocletian and Maximian.

The principes iuventutis

We could expect the recurring references to the dynasty of Carus in the visual imagery conceived for Carus and his family to have been intended for a military audience; this would have appreciated and acclaimed the filial legitimacy that sons of the emperor such as Carinus and Numerian could claim. A strong link between the emperor and the military could be established through the acclamation of the son of an emperor as *principes iuventutis*. This tradition is still a very strong one in the later half of the third century. However, the role of the *principes iuventutis* seems to be subject to certain developments in the third century. These are significant for the changing understanding of imperial power in the 270s and 280s.

Traditionally, successors to the imperial purple had been elected *principes iuventutis* – ‘leaders of youth.’ The *iuventus* appears to have been a body consisting of the noblest young men in Rome; for the sons of the noble families of the city of Rome, membership was mandatory.¹¹⁵² One of the duties of the *iuventus* was to ride in the *transvectio equitum*, a parade held on the Ides of July to commemorate the victory in the battle at Lake Regillus in 499 BC. The designation of the imperial princes as *principes* in this parade was a reference to the *dioscuri* who had appeared and saved the Romans at that legendary battle.¹¹⁵³ Another important duty of the *iuventus* was to perform cavalry games such as the *lusus Troiae*.¹¹⁵⁴ This choreographed parade usually was performed at the Circus Maximus. Augustus had attributed great importance to the *lusus Troiae*, because it gave him the opportunity to present Gaius and Lucius as *principes iuventutis*, as his intended successors, and to associate them with the myths of Troy and Aeneas.¹¹⁵⁵

¹¹⁵¹ Bastien 1976, 265, nos. 605–6. Cf. Pink 1963, 23 and Gricourt 2000, 64f.

¹¹⁵² Junkelmann 1991, 151.

¹¹⁵³ Junkelmann 1991, 49f.

¹¹⁵⁴ The reasons for the reference to Troy remain obscure. It has also been attempted to consider the name to come from the verb *truare*; cf. Junkelmann 1991, 142.

¹¹⁵⁵ Junkelmann 1991, 145–51.

The *iuventus* was thus a body intimately connected with the mythic origins and traditions of Rome, as it referred to the founding of Rome by Aeneas. The *iuventus* was further associated with the *exemplum* of Augustus. It was also connected to war-like qualities, since the *iuveneres* were mounted. It was tied to the people and the city of Rome, as well as the relations of the city to Augustus, since the *iuventus* could be associated with games that took place on the Circus Maximus. The *iuventus*, then, was a body in which many aspects of imperial authority seem to have been combined: strains related to religion and traditions of Rome, to warfare, dynastic lineage and, not least, to the example of Augustus. It is therefore not surprising that the *iuventus* remained of prime importance for imperial power in the third century.

In visual arts, the *principes iuventutis* were much associated with military command. This is very apparent from the choice of imagery for coins struck for *Caesares* acclaimed as *principes iuventutis* from the end of the second century onwards, for instance Commodus, Caracalla and Geta as well as Diadumenianus. The military capacity of these *principes* is expressed with the depiction of the *princeps* in military attire and various objects associated with *virtus* and *victoria*, such as military standards and trophies (cf. fig. 38). This 'triumphant' dimension of the imagery is further enhanced by a type introduced in the coinage struck for Philippus iunior. Here, the motif added prisoners to the other military symbols.¹¹⁵⁶ A dimension of imperial sovereignty was also added to the role of the *principes iuventutis*, as the *princeps* is frequently depicted holding a globe (cf. fig. 39).¹¹⁵⁷ This dimension is made more explicit with the introduction of a new motif for a coin-type struck for Maximus, the son of Maximinus thrax. This depicts the *principes iuventutis* with a *hasta* and holding a globe.¹¹⁵⁸

Valerianus iunior and Saloninus, the sons of Gallienus, were both given quite heavy advertisement as military commanders. Coins acclaiming them as *principes iuventutis* feature the usual military stage props such as trophies and standards. Göbl attributes such coins to the mints of Rome, Colonia Agrippinensis and Mediolanum.¹¹⁵⁹ However, in the coinages struck for the emperors following Gallienus, a somewhat curious development is evident. For a number of these emperors, coins are struck acclaiming the emperors *themselves* as *principes iuventutis*.

A coin-type depicting Florian as *princeps iuventutis* is used for antoniniani attributed to the mint of Ticinum.¹¹⁶⁰ Perhaps this depiction represented an attempt to establish a dynastic link between Florian and his predecessor Tacitus. This coin-type is also struck for Probus; the pieces are considered by Pink to have been struck in 276 in Ticinum. Apparently, the image is simply taken over from the coins struck for Florian.

¹¹⁵⁶ Cf. *RIC* IV.3, 96, no. 219 (Philippus iunior).

¹¹⁵⁷ Cf. *RIC* IV.2, 14, no. 111 (Diadumenianus).

¹¹⁵⁸ Cf. *RIC* IV.2, 155, no. 5.

¹¹⁵⁹ Cf. Göbl 2000, nos. 250–54, 256, 266 and 268–276 (Rome); 905–06 and 913 (Colonia Agrippinensis); 936 and 938–42 (Mediolanum).

¹¹⁶⁰ Estiot 2004, 338f; cf. *RIC* V.1, 357, no. 81.

The reverse is again used for aurei attributed by Pink to the large coin-series struck in Siscia in 277.¹¹⁶¹

More novel motifs are also created. A coin-type struck for Claudius Gothicus and attributed to Antioch depicts Hercules and features the reverse legend IVENTVS AVG. This coin-type is later re-used for Vaballathus with the reverse legend IVENVS (*sic*) AVG; this type is assumed by Estiot to be a reference to the *Iuventus*.¹¹⁶² Coins are also struck for Aurelian, acclaiming him as *princeps iuventutis*. These coins are only attributed to the mint of Cyzicus. The reverse motif depicts two soldiers in armour, with spears, sceptres and trophies.¹¹⁶³

Other, more curious references to the *princeps iuventutis* develop in the coinage struck for Tetricus and Tetricus iunior in Gaul. For Tetricus iunior, several coin-types depict the customary 'military' motifs. However, Webb also mentions a type depicting Tetricus iunior holding a *patera*. For Tetricus, a type is also struck, depicting the more curious motif of the emperor holding a sceptre and a *patera* over an altar.¹¹⁶⁴

How is this adaption of the imagery associated with the *princeps iuventutis* for the emperor himself to be interpreted? Possibly, the title had been separated from its original connotations, and had become more intimately attached to the person of the emperor himself. Further, the coin-type struck for Tetricus depicting the emperor sacrificing before an altar suggests that the association with the military is weakened. Nevertheless, these types struck for Tetricus and Tetricus iunior are the only variations of the coin-type featuring this kind of imagery. As the coinage of these last emperors in Gaul remain difficult and insufficiently well known, it seems prudent not to read too much into this.

Estiot suggests that the *iuvenes* referred to in coin-legends were the *collegia* of *iuvenes* that were organized in the provinces for the imperial cult and the cult of certain deities, most notably Hercules. Estiot further argues that these *iuvenes* acquired the character of armed *militiae*, which could provide the emperor with auxiliary troops.¹¹⁶⁵ Following this suggestion, the coins depicting the emperor as leader of these *iuvenes* could be understood as a reference to the loyalty of the provincial *militiae*. An increasing importance of such troops, organized and maintained by the provinces, certainly would fit well into the overall pattern of 'regionalisation' in the second half of the third century. Even so, one wonders why references to the *princeps iuventutis* in the provinces are not more common. On the whole, in my view, Estiot's suggestion is attractive, if not completely verifiable.

¹¹⁶¹ Pink 1949, 60 (Ticinum) and 49 (Siscia). Webb suggests that the use of the title for Probus may be an allusion to the connections of Probus with the *ordo equestris*; cf. *RIC* V.2, 3. The more simple conclusion of Pink that reverses used for coins struck for Florian were re-used seems more likely. Admittedly, this only leaves us with another problem, namely why the type was used for Florian.

¹¹⁶² Cf. Huvelin 1990, 261, no. 9 (Claudius Gothicus); cf. Estiot 2004, 109f. Cf. also Estiot 2004, 430 (Vaballathus).

¹¹⁶³ Estiot 2004, 417 and pl. 85, no. 267.

¹¹⁶⁴ *RIC* V.2, 410, no. 114 (Tetricus) and 423, no. 260 (Tetricus iunior).

¹¹⁶⁵ Estiot 2004, 110, n. 434.

Under Carus, Carinus and Numerian were depicted as *principes iuventutis* in the conventional manner. Coins depicting them as *principes iuventutis* are very common, and struck at all mints of the empire. A return to coin-types used very widely in the early third century, featuring the prince in military attire with hasta, globe, sceptre and standards, can also be discerned. One novel reverse motif, used for the coinages struck for Numerian, may be mentioned. This depicts the *princeps iuventutis* holding a sceptre and an olive branch. Before Numerian, this version of the motif is not known to have been used since Commodus.¹¹⁶⁶ The motif is also reported in two instances by Webb to have been used on coins struck for Carausius.¹¹⁶⁷ This version of the motif underlines the role of the military commander as a bringer of peace.

It is evident that under the reign of Carus, there is a heavy reliance on the image of the sons of the emperors as military commanders. They would bring back peace to the empire. Coins referring to the *principes iuventutis* are also common for the *Caesares* of the first tetrarchy;¹¹⁶⁸ apparently, the same hope was tied to them.

To sum up, the coin-images referring to the dynastic policies of the soldier-emperors demonstrate that this policy was as important as ever in the second half of the third century. Further, the coin-imagery also suggests that dynastic policies represent complex strategies of legitimation. It could correspond to the wishes of the troops. However, it could also be intertwined with the religious concerns of Roman tradition and its emphasis on the importance of demonstrating *pietas* towards parents. This strategy could have been hoped to invoke the loyalty of urban audiences, the support of which the emperor also needed.

5.4. The 'cult of Sol Invictus'

Dynastic coin-portraits from the late third century are frequently very similar to portraits depicting the emperor and a deity. This is one of the most overt expressions of a tendency discernible throughout the late second and third centuries. Rulers began to emphasize their relationship to chosen gods in terms that were more visually explicit than before. The category of portraits to which King refers as 'paired busts' is only one of these innovations. In the third century, such association with Hercules and Sol were especially common.¹¹⁶⁹

For long, a tradition was prevalent in classics which regarded the 'cult of Sol' as the most characteristic development of the third century, at least as far as 'Roman religion' was concerned; further, Sol was regarded as by far the most important deity associated with the soldier-emperors. The introduction of this cult was often

¹¹⁶⁶ Gricourt 2000, 50; for use of the type under Commodus, cf. *RIC* III, 262f, nos. 600–603 and 615–617.

¹¹⁶⁷ *RIC* V.2, 525, no. 721 and 539, no. 948.

¹¹⁶⁸ *RIC* V.2, 300f, nos. 658–668 (Constantius Chlorus); 307, nos. 704–712 (Galerius).

¹¹⁶⁹ King 1999, 133f.

taken as one of many features with eastern origins imported into Roman society in the third century.¹¹⁷⁰ More recent additions to the debate have emphasized the fact that sol-symbolism had been integrated in imperial imagery since Augustus: one of the most important recognitions as far as this investigation is concerned, is that Sol was integrated in the Augustan imagery as a reference to the *saeculum aurum* and the *aeternitas* of the empire.¹¹⁷¹

References to Sol are common under the Severans.¹¹⁷² After the Severans, such references are scarce; however, they recur on a somewhat wider scale on coins struck for Gallienus. Under the sole reign of this emperor, coins depicting Sol and referring to *Oriens Augusti* are struck in Rome and, to a larger extent, in Mediolanum.¹¹⁷³ Further, a coin-type depicting Sol holding a globe and featuring the legend SOLI INVICTO is introduced on coins attributed to Antioch.¹¹⁷⁴ The reason for the references to Sol makes sense considering the political situation: it was urgent to assure Rome that the empire would prevail.

In the coinage struck for Postumus, Sol is depicted already on aurei dated to 261 as the bringer of a new era and guarantee of the stability of empire.¹¹⁷⁵ In the later series of aurei referring to a number of deities, which may have been regarded as the ‘protection-deities’ of Postumus (cf. below, chap. 5.6), the reverse of one coin-type depicts the portraits of Sol and Luna. In this situation, Sol is summoned to the cause of the emperor as a ‘bringer of hope’ and as a guarantee for the eternity of empire.¹¹⁷⁶

‘Sol dominus imperii Romani’ under Aurelian

Often, it has been assumed that an oriental cult of Sol was introduced under Aurelian as a cult of state.¹¹⁷⁷ According to the biographer ‘Flavius Vopiscus’ in the *Historia Augusta*, this happened after Sol came to the assistance of the troops of Aurelian in the victorious battle against the forces of Palmyra.¹¹⁷⁸ As a token of gratitude, Aurelian constructed a lavish temple to Sol in Rome, and further established a collegium of priests for the cult of the deity.¹¹⁷⁹ References to Sol are extremely frequent on coins struck for Aurelian; this evidence, taken at face value, no doubt supports the assumption that a ‘cult of Sol’ was introduced in this period.

¹¹⁷⁰ Bergmann 1998, 269.

¹¹⁷¹ Bergmann 1998, 124f; cf. Berrens 2004, 33.

¹¹⁷² Berrens 2004, 45–51.

¹¹⁷³ Göbl 2000, nos. 614–617a and 682–83 (Rome); nos. 1126–43 and 1209–19 (Mediolanum).

¹¹⁷⁴ Göbl 2000, nos. 1655, 1659 and 1663.

¹¹⁷⁵ Berrens 2004, 82f; cf. Schulte 1983, 76f, nos. 16–18A.

¹¹⁷⁶ Schulte 1983, 105, no. 115–117; cf. Berrens 2004, 83.

¹¹⁷⁷ Berrens 2004, 7; cf. Halsberghe 1972, x.

¹¹⁷⁸ SHA *Divus Aurelianus* 25.3–6.

¹¹⁷⁹ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 35.7; Eutr. 9.15; SHA *Divus Aurelianus* 35.3; Zos. 1.61.2.

However, a few observations could be made of this coinage. First, references to Sol are scarce before the year 272.¹¹⁸⁰ Second, the coin-imagery acclaiming Sol as the force behind the victories is only gradually introduced. A coin-type, attributed to Cyzicus and referring to *restitutor Orientis*, depicts Sol holding a globe. This is dated by Estiot to the first half of 272. A little later, the same year another coin-type is introduced, acclaiming Sol as *conservator Augusti*.¹¹⁸¹ Likewise, coins acclaiming Sol as *invictus* and as *conservator Augusti* are attributed to the mint of Antioch, and are estimated to have been introduced in the early autumn of 272.¹¹⁸²

In these eastern mints, thus, Sol-imagery seems to have been introduced already after the first campaign against Palmyra. However, this imagery only becomes dominant after the second campaign against Palmyra in 273. Coins featuring the reverse legend SOLI INVICTO are attributed to coin-series struck in Tripolis and dated to the first half of that year;¹¹⁸³ it seems likely that these were struck in connection with the second campaign. The next mint to introduce Sol-imagery on a wider scale, in the summer of 273, is that of the *urbs aeterna* itself.¹¹⁸⁴

Third, imagery referring to Sol completely supplants other coin-types in all mint only from the spring of 274.¹¹⁸⁵ A fourth point concerns some coins which most often are referred to as symptomatic for the introduction of a 'state cult of Sol' under Aurelian.¹¹⁸⁶ These coins feature obverse portraits of Sol along with the legend SOL DOMINVS IMPERI ROMANI. The reverses depict the emperor sacrificing before an altar and feature the legend AVRELIANVS AVG CONS. This coinage would fit well with the spectacular triumph celebrated in Rome by Aurelian after the defeat of Tetricus, when the lavish *Templum Solis* was inaugurated. Göbl attributed these coins to the *urbs aeterna*;¹¹⁸⁷ Estiot, however, considers them to have been struck in Serdica in 274.¹¹⁸⁸ A number of coin-series with similar unorthodox imagery are securely attributed to Serdica and the period 274–275 (cf. chap. 2.5). Therefore, this seems like a more reasonable attribution.

A final point: the all-dominant 'Sol-imagery' is phased out as quickly as it was introduced. In coinage attributed to Serdica and assumed to have been struck from late 274, there are only a few references to Sol.¹¹⁸⁹ This suggests that the '*Sol dominus*-series' was a special coin-series, struck for the triumph of Aurelian. Likewise, in

¹¹⁸⁰ The one exception is a coin-type referring to *Oriens augusti* attributed to Siscia and dated to coin-series struck from the end of 271 to the autumn of 272; cf. Estiot 2004, 352.

¹¹⁸¹ Estiot 2004, 417f.

¹¹⁸² Estiot 2004, 432f.

¹¹⁸³ Estiot 2004, 438.

¹¹⁸⁴ Estiot 2004, 288 (the introduction of the *Soli invicto*-type, dated to the summer of 273); *ibid.*, 292 (the introduction of the *Oriens augusti*-type, dated to the autumn of the same year).

¹¹⁸⁵ Estiot 2004, 324f (Mediolanum); 360f (Siscia); 396 (Serdica); 422 (Cyzicus); 434f (Antioch).

¹¹⁸⁶ Cf. for instance Berrens 2004, 120f. and Fowden 2005, 557f.

¹¹⁸⁷ Cf. Göbl 1993, 49f. and Tab. 14.

¹¹⁸⁸ Estiot 2004, 102 and 399; cf. *RIC* V.1, 258 and 301, nos. 319–322.

¹¹⁸⁹ Estiot 2004, 399.

the other mints, where Sol-imagery is dominant in 274, this imagery has been augmented or, in some cases, replaced completely by 275 (*fig. 4*).¹¹⁹⁰

The coinage referring to Sol struck for Aurelian, then, should be regarded as a *Festprägung* that was struck in honour of Sol after the defeat of Palmyra and Gaul. Too much has been inferred from these coin-series. Nevertheless, there is no denying that references to Sol dominate the coinage in 274, in a way, which hardly the references to one single deity had done before. The reference to *Sol dominus imperii romani* further represents a rather strong choice of words. An additional explanation thus seems to be called for.

References to Sol after Aurelian

As has been mentioned repeatedly, the coinage struck for Tacitus represents a return to more traditional imagery – a ‘backlash’, as it were. References to Sol are scarce under Tacitus and Florian. Sol occurs much more frequently on coins struck for Probus. Berrens and Kreucher both argue that Sol regains the status as the most important deity of the empire under this emperor.¹¹⁹¹ However, I would argue that the references to Sol are used in quite a specific context, as under Aurelian. The following observations can be made.

In some instances, Sol is acclaimed as *conservator Augusti* in the earliest coin-series struck for Probus.¹¹⁹² In the following coinages, a new reverse-type depicting Sol in a *quadriga* is introduced in several mints; this type is then retained for several coin-series.¹¹⁹³ In the coinage struck in the city of Rome, references to Sol do not play any significant part, except for the coin-type mentioned above, depicting Sol Invictus. This coin-type occurs in coin-series dated to 277–280 (*fig. 40*).¹¹⁹⁴ The series of coins and medallions struck for the triumphs in the city of Rome in 281/282 also represent an exception. To this series, Pink attributes a number of medallions and aurei depicting portraits of Sol or depictions of Sol in his *quadriga*, and featuring the legend SOLI INVICTO COMITI AVG.¹¹⁹⁵ References to Sol are more frequent in Serdica and Siscia. The ‘*quadriga*-type’ mentioned above is used at both mints. Aurei attributed to Serdica feature obverse portraits of Sol, the emperor and the legend SOL COMIS PROBI AVG.¹¹⁹⁶ Similar obverse portraits of Sol and the emperor occur on

¹¹⁹⁰ Estiot 2004, 300–303 (Rome); 328f (Ticinum); 364f (Siscia); 422f (Cyzicus).

¹¹⁹¹ Berrens 2004, 134; Kreucher 2003, 197.

¹¹⁹² Cf. Pink 1949, 54 (Rome); 60 (Ticinum).

¹¹⁹³ Cf. Pink 1949, 43f (Cyzicus); 45 (Serdica); 47–51 (Siscia); 61f (Ticinum). The reverse image is very characteristic: a brave but ultimately rather unsuccessful attempt at depicting the *quadriga* of Sol frontally (most of all, it looks as if the carriage has hit a wall in quite a dramatical fashion).

¹¹⁹⁴ Cf. Pink 1949, 55–57 (Rome).

¹¹⁹⁵ Cf. Pink 1949, 58f; cf. Gneecchi II, 119f, nos. 38 and 41, and Tav. 121, nos. 7–8.

¹¹⁹⁶ Pink 1949, 46; *RIC* V.2, 108, no. 829. Webb and Bastien also both record an antoninianus with the same obverse, the reverse legend PM TRP COS III PP and the mint-mark SERD; cf. *RIC* V.2, 109, no. 835; cf. also Bastien II, 658 and *idem* III, pl. 123, no. 1.

an aureus and a medallion attributed to Siscia.¹¹⁹⁷ The evidence suggests that the most extraordinary references to Sol are connected with the triumphs of Probus. Jupiter is acknowledged as the fundament for imperial legitimacy. Sol, however, becomes used as a symbol for hopes for the future.¹¹⁹⁸

This aspect of Sol becomes more distinct in the coinage of Carus and his sons. Some antoniniani struck in Siscia in the first months of the reign and referring to *Felicitas rei publicae* are struck with obverses featuring double portraits of Carus and Sol.¹¹⁹⁹ A coin-type attributed to the city of Rome depicts Sol and feature the legend AETERNIT IMPERI. This is most likely to have been a reference to the campaigns in the east of Carus.¹²⁰⁰

As is well known, in the coinages of Diocletian and his colleagues, references to Jupiter and Hercules dominate. However, references to Sol do not disappear. A coin struck for Diocletian depicts the emperor and Sol.¹²⁰¹ A number of coins struck for all four tetrarchs and attributed to Lugdunum refer to *Oriens Augusti*. Bastien dates these coins to 294. Significantly, one of the two motifs used on these coins depicts Sol with two prisoners: the association with the campaigns against Britain seems rather obvious.¹²⁰² Bastien points out that these and the later coins, attributed to the mint of Treveri, struck with a reverse depicting Sol and featuring the legend CLARITAS AVG for the four tetrarchs, indicate that the solar symbolism is not totally discarded even under the tetrarchy.¹²⁰³ On the contrary, the role of Sol remained important; it would be restated under Constantine I.

5.5. *Receiving the world from Jupiter*

A closer investigation of the numismatic material, then, demonstrates that the importance of Sol Invictus has been somewhat overstated. Likewise, the continuing importance of more 'traditional' religious imagery and deities has been underrated.

An idea, which is fundamental for the relations between the gods and the emperor, is that the rule of a magistrate must be sanctioned by the gods. The chief magistrate of Rome was a divinely sanctioned representative on earth of Jupiter.¹²⁰⁴ Jupiter Optimus Maximus was the main divine protector of the rulers of Rome. The fundament for this notion was that Jupiter was not merely the protector of the Roman rulers, but the god

¹¹⁹⁷ Pink 1949, 49, no. 6 and 52, no. 2; cf. *RIC* V.1, 80, no. 596.

¹¹⁹⁸ Cf. Berrens 2004, 179f.

¹¹⁹⁹ Gricourt 2000, 46f; cf. *RIC* V.2, 146, no. 99.

¹²⁰⁰ Gricourt 2000, 31–34.

¹²⁰¹ Gricourt 2000, 81f; cf. Bastien II, 658 and *idem* III, pl. 131, no. 8.

¹²⁰² Cf. Bastien 1972, 225, nos. 594–595bis (depicting Sol with two prisoners); 232f, nos. 636–645 (depicting Sol).

¹²⁰³ Bastien 1972, 69f; cf. *RIC* V.2, 231, nos. 116–17 (Diocletian); 274, nos. 472–474 (Maximian); 299, nos 650–51 (Constantius); 306, no. 694 (Galerius).

¹²⁰⁴ Fears 1977, 86–89.

of the *populus Romanus*. Accordingly, divine sanction of earthly power by Jupiter could become a way of expressing that a ruler had received extraordinary powers in a constitutionally accepted way.¹²⁰⁵ In visual media, this could be expressed in a literary sense: the emperor could be demonstrated as ‘wielding Jupiter’s own power.’¹²⁰⁶

In the period following the age of Augustus, divine sanction developed as an instrument of imperial legitimation. It became one of the recurring strategies for the re-negotiation of power between the emperor and – mainly – the senate. Fears has argued that a ‘Jovian theology of power’ is fully developed under the emperors Domitian, Trajan and Hadrian.¹²⁰⁷ This suggests that the language of images that evolved in the imperial age should not merely be understood as an *imitatio Augusti*. What was developed under Augustus was rather a pattern – or ‘sets of rules of behaviour’ (cf. chap 1.4) according to which *different* languages of imperial power could be created.

Divine investiture thus presents one important basis for an ‘imperial culture.’ The frequent references in the third century to Sol could be understood as references to a divine sanction by Sol of imperial authority. However, it is evident that the divine sanction by Jupiter of imperial authority remained of a fundamental importance in the age of the soldier-emperors.

From Gallienus to Aurelian

It is perhaps not surprising that Jupiter is frequently invoked in the coinage struck for Gallienus during his sole reign; as Fears observed, divine investiture re-emerged as an important part of imperial language of power owing to the catastrophe of Valerian’s capture.¹²⁰⁸ It can be noted that in the coin-series dated by Göbl to the period directly following the year 260, Jupiter is mainly referred to with reverses featuring the legend IOVI VLTORI. This reference to ‘Jupiter the avenger’ may have been considered a fitting reference after the defeat, not least as the rest of this series puts emphasis on the military capacity of the emperor (cf. chap. 2.3).¹²⁰⁹ In later coinage, this reference is supplanted mainly by one to Jupiter Conservator. This reference occurs frequently, mainly on coins attributed to the city of Rome, but also on coins attributed to Mediolanum and Antioch.¹²¹⁰ In the city of Rome, the reference to Jupiter Conservator is joined by references to Juno Conservatrix on coins struck for Salonina.¹²¹¹ Interestingly, this reference only occurs in the city of Rome; in Siscia and Antioch however, a coin-type referring to Juno Regina is frequently used.¹²¹² Jupiter is also invoked in

¹²⁰⁵ Fears 1981a, 51–55.

¹²⁰⁶ Fears 1981b, 767f.

¹²⁰⁷ Fears 1981a, 74–89.

¹²⁰⁸ Fears 1977, 281.

¹²⁰⁹ Göbl 2000, nos. 348, 382–83 and 409–10.

¹²¹⁰ Göbl 2000, nos. 624–26 (Rome); nos. 1035–38, 1079–81 and 1186–92 (Mediolanum); nos. 1650 and 1668–69 (Antioch).

¹²¹¹ Göbl 2000, nos. 622–23 and 725–26.

¹²¹² Göbl 2000, nos. 1407, 1468, 1492, 1505, 1514 (Siscia); nos. 1593 and 1619 (Antioch).

his capacity as Jupiter Stator in the city of Rome and as Jupiter Propugnator in Rome, Siscia and Antioch; in the last mint, one single coin-type features the more novel legend IOVI PATRI.¹²¹³

In the coinage struck in the 260s for Postumus, references to Jupiter are few. The reverse of an aureus, which is dated by Schulte to 266, features the portraits of Postumus and, behind him, that of Jupiter and the legend CONSERVATORI AVG.¹²¹⁴ Otherwise, however, the only references to Jupiter occur on coins considered to have been struck rather late in the reign of Postumus, from the year 268. These coins feature the legend IOVI STATORI.¹²¹⁵ It is rather tempting to understand this as an avoidance of the image of Jupiter during the reign of Gallienus, at least until the revolt of Aureolus in Mediolanum in 268.

In the coinage struck for Claudius Gothicus, there is a lack of references to Jupiter in the coinage attributed to Mediolanum. However, references to Jupiter Stator and to Jupiter Victor occur both on gold and billon coins attributed to the city of Rome.¹²¹⁶ Perhaps the reference to Jupiter was seen as particularly desirable in the *urbs aeterna*, considering the circumstances surrounding the proclamation of Claudius Gothicus. In later coin-series attributed to the mint of Cyzicus, a coin-type referring to Jupiter Conservator is also introduced for the coinage struck for this emperor.¹²¹⁷

The frequent references to Jupiter in the early coinage struck for Aurelian in most mints is interesting. Most notably, Jupiter is invoked on the coins attributed to the Balkan mints. References to Jupiter Conservator occur on coins attributed to Mediolanum and Siscia, from the proclamation of Aurelian and onwards until the year 274.¹²¹⁸ Images of Jupiter, mainly of Jupiter Conservator, dominate the coinage attributed to Serdica, from the opening of this mint and to the end of 273.¹²¹⁹ The relations between the emperor and the god are further stressed by the motif on the Jupiter Conservator-type, which is most used frequently in Serdica. This features a reverse depicting Jupiter, presenting a globe to the emperor (*fig. 41*).¹²²⁰ The reasons for the use of this imagery seem obvious. In the early autumn of 270, Quintillus actually had the stronger position, as his claims to the purple had been accepted by the senate, while Aurelian had

¹²¹³ Göbl 2000, nos. 611–613 (Jupiter Stator); nos. 640–641, 1438 and 1658 (Jupiter Propugnator); no. 1625 (Jupiter Pater).

¹²¹⁴ Cf. Schulte 1983, 40 and 105, no. 114.

¹²¹⁵ Besly & Bland 1983, 56 and 145, no. 2449.

¹²¹⁶ Cf. Huvelin 1984, 206–08; Bland & Burnett 1988, 177–180, nos. 583–84 (rev. legend IOVI STATORI); 674–682 and 774–782 (rev. legend IOVI VICTORI).

¹²¹⁷ Gysen 1999, 37.

¹²¹⁸ Mediolanum: series 2–4, dated by Estiot to a period from summer 271 to the beginning of 274; cf. Estiot 2004, 320–323. Siscia: series 4–6, dated to a period from autumn 271 to the beginning of 274; cf. Estiot 2004, 348–357. Jupiter is also referred to in both coin series struck at the mint of uncertain location, dated by Estiot to the period from the end of 271 to autumn 273; cf. Estiot 2004, 384–87. Finally, Jupiter is also referred to in Cyzicus in series 1–2 and 4, dated to the period from the end of 270 to early 271, and to the beginning of 272 respectively; cf. Estiot 2004, 411–16.

¹²¹⁹ Estiot 2004, 389–95.

¹²²⁰ Cf. for instance Estiot 2004, pl. 31f, nos. 992–1005.

been proclaimed by troops in Sirmium. As Fears observed, the claim that Aurelian had been invested with imperial power by Jupiter himself should be understood from this point of view.¹²²¹

References to Jupiter are made in the *urbs aeterna* as well. Coins dated to the summer of 273, which was after the mint of Rome had been re-opened, feature references to both Jupiter Conservator and Jupiter Victor.¹²²² From 274, however, the role of Jupiter in the visual imagery of Aurelian is toned down, in favour of the coinage emphasising Sol.

From Tacitus to the tetrarchy

Curiously, in the coinage struck for Tacitus there are no references to Jupiter, except for two coin-types introduced on billon coins attributed to Antioch and Tripolis. These types both feature the motif of Jupiter presenting a globe to the emperor, and the legends CLEMENTIA TEMP and PROVIDENTIA DEORVM respectively.¹²²³ In the coinage of Florian, references to Jupiter are somewhat more common. In the city of Rome, a coin-type depicting Jupiter Victor is used for aurei, and another depicting Jupiter Stator for antoniniani. In addition to this, a new coin-type depicting Jupiter Conservator is introduced at the mint of Ticinum.¹²²⁴ These references, in my view, could be interpreted as symptomatic of the weaker position of Florian, by comparison with that of Tacitus.

In the coinage of Probus, references to Jupiter also play an important part. In early coin-series struck for Probus, the *Clementia temporum*-type introduced in the coinage struck for Tacitus in Antioch is used on a wide scale in the mints of the eastern part of the empire.¹²²⁵ The use of this reverse in Antioch could merely be due to the re-use of the dies used under Tacitus (cf. above). However, this alone hardly explains the use of the reverse-type on such a wide scale at other eastern mints. One key could be that the re-use of the coin-type presented an attempt to depict Probus as the legitimate successor to Tacitus, who had died in Asia Minor. Just as Aurelian had done, Probus was facing an opponent with a stronger position, and in this situation, the divine investiture represented a powerful argument.

Jupiter is invoked repeatedly in the coinage struck for Probus. The obverse of a bronze medallion attributed to the mint of Ticinum and dated to 277 depicts the portrait of Jupiter behind that of Probus. The obverse features the legend IOVI CONSERVATORI PROBI AVG.¹²²⁶ For regular coins attributed to the same mint, a more

¹²²¹ Fears 1977, 282f.

¹²²² Estiot 2004, 288–291. It may be noted that one coin referring to *Iovi Victori* is attributed to the first series of coins struck for Aurelian in the city of Rome; however, Estiot considers this coin to have been struck with a reverse of Quintillus. Cf. Estiot 2004, 286.

¹²²³ Estiot 2004, 436f (Antioch, cf. *RIC* V.1, 347, no. 210); 440 (Tripolis).

¹²²⁴ Cf. Estiot 2004, 314–17 (Rome) and 338f. (Ticinum).

¹²²⁵ Pink 1949, 40f (Antioch and Tripolis); 42f (Cyzicus); 45 (Serdica); 46f (Siscia).

¹²²⁶ Estiot & Gysen 2004, 82; cf. Bastien III, pl. 121, no. 1

conventional type featuring the similar reverse motif of Jupiter Conservator and the emperor is used throughout the large coin-series struck for the campaigns on the northern frontiers in 277–78.¹²²⁷ In coin-series attributed to the mint of Rome and dated to 280, a similar reverse depicts Jupiter and features the legend IOVI CONS PROB AVG. Although pieces of this coin-type are not attributed to the triumphal series struck in 281, it is retained for the regular coin-series struck in 282.¹²²⁸

Under Carus, references to Jupiter are scarce. A coin-type struck for Carus, attributed to the city of Rome and dated to late 282 refers to Jupiter Victor. This coin-type is later also struck for Numerian. After the death of Numerian, the type is used for coins struck for Carinus.¹²²⁹ Additionally, coins depicting Juno Regina are struck for Magnia Urbica. In Siscia, a reverse depicting Jupiter Conservator is used for coins struck for Carinus.¹²³⁰ As the motif depicts Jupiter presenting a globe to Carinus, it seems apparent that it refers to the sanction by Jupiter of the rule of Carinus. Another interesting coin-type, attributed to Cyzicus, depicts Jupiter presenting a *Victoria* to the emperor (*fig. 42*). On the whole, however, the divine investiture by Jupiter seems not to have played a major part under Carus and his sons.

As is well known, this tendency drastically changes at the ascension to power of Diocletian. There is no need to comment on the fundamental importance of Jupiter in the language of power used for the tetrarchy;¹²³¹ suffice it to say that coin-types depicting Jupiter Conservator are introduced in the first coin-series considered to have been struck for Diocletian¹²³² and gradually supplant most other types. Bastien shows that in Lugdunum, this type is joined by a coin-type featuring the legend IOVI TVTATORI AVGG and another coin-type referring to Jupiter Victor in coin-series dated to 287–289.¹²³³ Perhaps the latter should be understood as a reference to the conflict with the British usurpers.

¹²²⁷ Pink 1949, 60–64.

¹²²⁸ Pink 1949, 57–59.

¹²²⁹ Gricourt 2000, 31–36 and 42 respectively.

¹²³⁰ Gricourt 2000, 36 and 55 respectively.

¹²³¹ Cf. Fears 1977, 296–99.

¹²³² Gricourt 2000, 70–72 (Ticinum); 81 (Rome); 91 (Siscia); 97 (Lugdunum). For Lugdunum, cf. also Bastien 1972, 113–120.

¹²³³ Bastien 1972, 143–47, nos. 140–164, and 148, nos. 165–169 respectively.

All coins photographed are from the Royal Coin Cabinet, Stockholm. Photos not to scale.



Figure 1. An aureus struck for Probus, attributed to Siscia and dated to 277. The coin features the portrait of a soldier-emperor. The depiction of the emperor wearing a *paludamentum* over a cuirass is very frequent; the 'field-beard' is also characteristic. The legend reads IMP C M AVR PROBUS AVG. Pink 1949, 49, no.14 (Em. 2); cf. RIC V.2, 81, no. 603.



Figure 2. Mars, armed with a spear and carrying a trophy over the left shoulder. Beneath him, two prisoners are huddling. The legend reads VIRTVS AVGVSTI; the *Virtus* of the emperor and *Victoria* are combined in one image. Rev. of the coin depicted in fig. 1.



Figure 3. An antoninian struck for Aurelian, attributed to Ticinum and dated to 274–275. The coin features a depiction of Aurelian, characteristic of the distinct portraits introduced in the early coin-series struck for this emperor. The emperor is depicted wearing a scale-armor or a mail-shirt (*lorica squamata* or *lorica hamata*). The object covering the left shoulder of the emperor could be interpreted as an aegis. The radiate crown is also characteristic. The legend reads IMP C AVRELIANVS AVG. Cf. Estiot 2004, 328 (Em. 4); RIC V.1, 281, no. 152.



Figure 4. Rev. of the coin depicted in fig. 3. The motif depicts *Providentia* holding two standards, and Sol. The depiction of Sol, with the right hand raised and holding a globe in the left hand, is characteristic of a number of depictions of Sol, most notably the depictions occurring on the coins struck for Aurelian and featuring the legends ORIENS AVG and SOLI INVICTO. This particular motif represents one of the more rare references to Sol in the last stage of the reign of Aurelian.



Figure 5. An antoninian struck for Probus, attributed to Ticinum and dated to 281. The coin features the rare depiction of the emperor, wearing an *aegis* over the left shoulder, seen from the left. This mode of depiction makes the *aegis* resemble a shield. The legend reads *VIRTVS PROBI AVG*. Cf. Pink 1949, 67 (Em. 9); RIC V.2, 72, no. 517.



Figure 6. An antoninian struck for Probus, attributed to Rome and dated to 279. The coin depicts the emperor wearing an *aegis*, but seen from the right. This mode of depiction is far more common than that of fig. 5. In this case, the emperor appears to be depicted wearing the *aegis* over the chest and the left shoulder. The object in the middle of the *aegis* is most likely to be interpreted as a *gorgoneion*. The legend reads *IMP PROBVS AVG*. Cf. Pink 1949, 56f (Em. 4); RIC V.2, 35, no. 157.



Figure 7. An imperial *adventus*, the ceremonial arrival of the emperor to a city. The emperor is depicted holding a long sceptre in the left hand and raising the right arm in the usual *adventus*-gesture; the legend reads *ADVENTVS AVG*. The addition of a prisoner is characteristic: it adds a more explicit triumphal character to the traditional *adventus*-motif. Rev. of the coin depicted in fig. 6.



Figure 8. An antoninian struck for Probus, attributed to Ticinum and dated to 281. The 'campaign-portrait', depicting the emperor with spear and shield, becomes extremely frequent under Probus. The Corinthian helmet, which is also characteristic of Probus, is depicted with stylized decorations. The pattern of dots on the shield is also very frequent. Cf. Pink 1949, 67 (Em. 9); RIC V.2, 70, no. 491.



Figure 9. An antoninian struck for Probus, attributed to Ticinum and dated to 281. This campaign-portrait features a 'shield-image.' In this case, the 'charging rider'-motif seems to be depicted. Cf. Pink 1949, 67 (Em. 9); RIC V.2, 71, no. 500.



Figure 10. An antoninian struck for Probus, attributed to Ticinum and dated to 278. This campaign-portrait depicts the emperor with 'spear forward.' Cf. Pink 1949, 63 (Em. 4); RIC V.2, 59, no. 383.



Figure 11. Rev. of an antoninian struck for Claudius Gothicus, attributed to Siscia and dated to 268-70. The coin features a depiction of the 'charging rider'- motif. This motif appears in numerous versions under the later soldier-emperors. The legend reads VIRTUS AVG. Cf. Alföldi 1935-36, 12, no. 12.



Figure 12. An antoninian struck for Aurelian, attributed to Siscia and dated to 272–274. The coin features an example of the rare portrait-type which depicts the emperor holding a *victoriola* in his right hand. It can be noted that the *Victoria* is ‘coronating’ the emperor with her wreath, reaching towards him. A number of other rare portrait-types are similar to this one. One such type depicts the emperor carrying a *pugio* under the left arm. Others depict the emperor holding a globe in the right hand, or with the right hand raised. Cf. Estiot 2004, 358f (Em. 6); *RIC* V.1, 289, no. 218.



Figure 13. Rev. of the coin depicted in fig. 12. The coin depicts the emperor and *Concordia*, and features the legend *CONCORDIA MILITVM*. This coin-type is introduced and struck on a large scale in the earliest coin-series struck for Aurelian in Siscia and Mediolanum.



Figure 14. ‘Mars, bringer of peace.’ The legend reads *MARTI PACIF*. The rev. of an antoninian struck for Tacitus, attributed to Ticinum and dated to 275. Cf. Estiot 2004, 330 (Em. 1); *RIC* V.1, 341, no. 145.



Figure 15. The emperor, holding a spear and a globe; the legend reads *SAECVLI FELICITAS*. The *virtus* of the emperor is the guarantee for the restoration of peace and order. The rev. of an antoninian struck for Postumus and dated to c. 266–67. Cf. Besly & Bland 1983, 145, no. 2444 (Em. 4); *RIC* V.2, 344, no. 83.



Figure 16. The so-called 'tetrarchs from San Marco.' Each tetrarch firmly holds a *pugio* by the grip.



Figure 17. Rev. of an antoninian struck for Marius, emperor of Gaul, and dated to 269. The motif is two clasped hands; the legend reads *CONCORDIA MILIT*. The reference to *Concordia militum* was important for an emperor who had been proclaimed by the legions. Cf. Besly & Bland 1983, 147, no. 2503; RIC V.2, 377, no. 6.



Figure 18. An antoninian struck for Vaballathus, attributed to Antioch and dated to 270–272. On this coin Vaballathus and Aurelian are depicted on the obverse and reverse respectively. However, only Aurelian is acclaimed as *Augustus*. This combination may have been an attempt at presenting Vaballathus as a junior colleague of Aurelian. Cf. Estiot 2004, 430f (Em. 1); RIC V.1, 308, no. 381.



Figure 19. Rev. of the coin in fig. 18.



Figure 20. The so-called ‘Arch of Gallienus’ in Via S. Vito in Rome.



Figure 21. The mausoleum suggested to be the mausoleum of Gallienus, on the Via Appia.



Figure 22. The well-preserved walls of Aurelian are a recurring feature of the urban image of present-day Rome. The present appearance of the walls and gates, such as here at Porta San Paolo, is the result of a number of later re-fortifications.



Figure 23. An antoninian struck for Probus, attributed to Ticinum and dated to 278. The coin features a 'consular portrait' depicting the emperor in consular ceremonial attire: *tunica palmata*, *toga picta*, and a sceptre surmounted by an eagle. More rare versions of this portrait-type depict the emperor with a *victoriola* or globe in the left hand, in addition to the sceptre. Cf. Pink 1949, 63 (Em. 4); RIC V.2, 58, no. 375.



Figure 24. An aureus struck for Tacitus, attributed to Serdica and dated to 276. This rather heavy-set portrait is frequent on coins struck for Tacitus. The beard, different from the 'field-beard,' is also characteristic of portraits of this emperor. Estiot 1999b, 419, no. 99.



Figure 25. Rev. of the coin depicted in fig. 24. The motif depicts *Roma Aeterna*; the legend reads *ROMAE AETERNAE*. The coin also features the legend *S C*.



Figure 26. An antoninian struck for Aurelian and dated to 271. The obverse features a portrait typical of the portraits introduced in the early coinage of Aurelian. The emperor is depicted wearing a mail-shirt and, probably, a stylized *aegis* over the left-hand shoulder. Cf. Estiot 2004, 320 (Em. 2); RIC V.1, 280, no. 142.



Figure 27. Rev. of the coin depicted in fig. 26. The legend reads ROMAE AETER; the motif depicts Roma presenting a *Victoria* to the emperor. This novel motif adds a subtle statement of imperial authority to the reference to *Roma Aeterna*.



Figure 28. The portraits of Postumus wearing a Corinthian helmet are characteristic for the aurei struck for this emperor. On the helmet, there is a depiction of *Victoria* driving a *biga*. Aureus, c. 262; Elmer 1941, 47, no. 325d.



Figure 29. Rev. of the coin depicted in fig. 28. The coin depicts Hercules with club, lion-hide and a bow. The legend reads HERCVLI DEVSONIENSI. The reference to Hercules Deusoniensis, named after a local sanctuary, is characteristic for the coinage of Postumus.



Figure 30. Rev. of an antoninian struck for Postumus, dated to 260–261. The coin depicts the reclining personification of a river (the Rhine?); the legend reads SALVS PROVINCIARVM. Cf. Besly & Bland 1983, 143, no. 2372–73; RIC V.2, 344, no. 87.



Figure 31. An antoninian struck for Victorinus, featuring a campaign-image and dated to c. 269. The *virtus* of the emperors of Gaul was expressed with the same iconography as the *virtus* of the emperors of the 'central empire.' On the shield, a *gorgoneion* is depicted. Cf. Elmer 1941, 73, no. 738; Besly & Bland 1983, 150, no. 2576.



Figure 32. Rev. of the coin depicted in fig. 31. The motif depicts Fortuna; the legend reads FORT REDVX. In combination with the obverse campaign-portrait, the depiction of 'Fortuna the Bringer-back' expresses a hope for the return of the emperor after a successful campaign.



Figure 33. An antoninian struck for the *consecratio* of Claudius Gothicus and datable to c. 270; the legend reads DIVO CLAUDIO. Cf. RIC V.1, 234, no. 266.



Figure 34. Rev. of the coin depicted in fig. 33. The motif depicts an eagle; the legend reads CONSECRATIO.



Figure 35. An antoninian struck for Severina, attributed to Rome and dated to 274. The motif depicts the emperor and the empress clasping hands; the legend reads CONCORDIA AVGG. Cf. Estiot 2004, 300f (Em. 10); RIC V.1, 315, no. 3.



Figure 36. An antoninian struck for Severina, attributed to Rome and dated to 275. The hair-style, the diadem and the moon-crescent are all characteristic of portraits of empresses in the third century. Cf. Estiot 2004, 308f (Em. 12); RIC V.1, 315, no. 4.



Figure 37. Rev. of the coin depicted in fig. 36. The motif depicts *Concordia* holding two standards; the legend reads CONCORDIAE MILITVM. These coins are considered to have been struck for Severina during the 'interregnum' in late 275.



Figure 38. Rev. of an antoninian struck for Carinus, attributed to Ticinum and dated to 282. The motif depicts Carinus as *princeps iuventutis*, with a short sceptre and two standards; the legend reads PRINCIPI IVVENTV-TI. This iconography stresses the military role of the *iuentus*. Cf. Gricourt, 2000, 21f (Serie 2b); RIC V.2, 160, no. 184.



Figure 39. Rev. of an antoninian struck for Carinus, attributed to Lugdunum and datable to 282–283. The coin features another version of the *princeps iuventutis*-motif. In this case, the *princeps* is depicted with a spear and a globe. Cf. Gricourt 2000, 60f (Serie 2b-3a); RIC V.2, 156, no. 150.



Figure 40. Rev. of a coin struck for Probus, attributed to Rome and dated to 278. The motif, depicting Sol in a *quadriga*, is frequent under the soldier-emperors. The legend reads SOLI INVICTO. Cf. Pink 1949, 56 (Em. 3); RIC V.2, 39, no. 202.



Figure 41. Rev. of an antoninian struck for Aurelian, attributed to Serdica and dated to 273–274. The motif depicts the emperor receiving a globe from Jupiter: an image of the divine investiture. The legend reads IOVI CONSER. Cf. Estiot 2004, 394 (Em. 4); RIC V.1, 294, no. 260.



Figure 42. Rev. of an antoninian struck for Carinus, attributed to Cyzicus and datable to 282–283. The motif depicts Jupiter presenting a *Victoria* to the emperor; the *Victoria* is coronating the emperor with a wreath. The legend reads CLEMENTIA TEMP. With the addition of this legend, the motif is rendered even more expressive. RIC V.2, 163, no. 202.



Figure 43. Rev. of an antoninian struck for Gallienus, attributed to Rome and dated to 267. The motif depicts a centaur with a rudder; the legend reads APOLLINI CONS AVG. This coin from the 'animal-series' struck for Gallienus presents one of the rare references to Apollo in the coinages of the later soldier-emperors. Cf. Göbl 2000, no. 733 (Em. 10); RIC V.1, 145, no. 164.



Figure 44. An aureus struck for Gallienus, attributed to Rome. The emperor is depicted wearing a crown of corn-ears; the novel legend reads GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE. The image is usually interpreted as a reference to Demeter. Cf. Göbl 2000, 689 (Em. 9); RIC V.1, 136, no. 74.

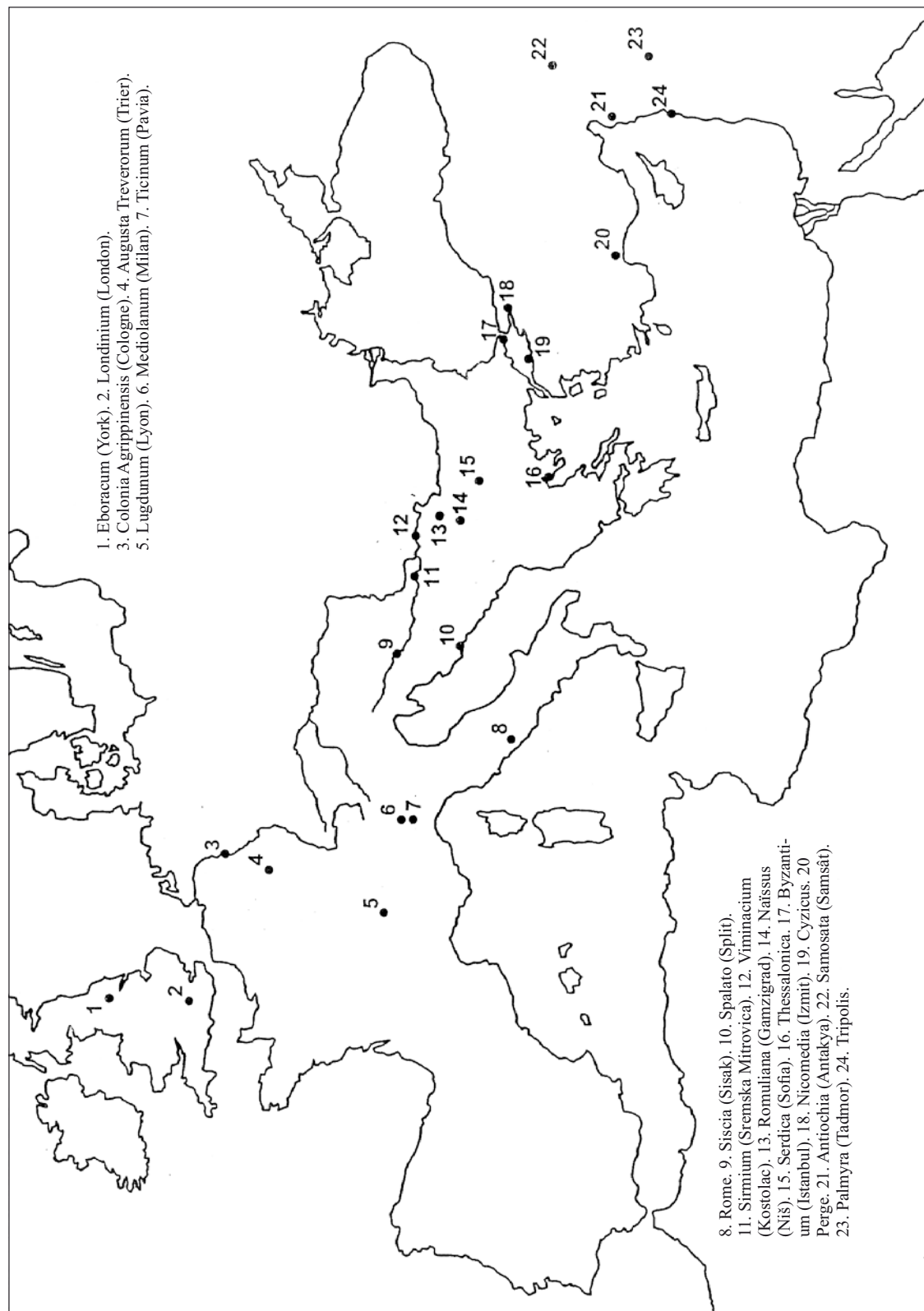


Figure 45. Rev. of the coin depicted in fig. 44. The motif depicts Victoria in a biga; the legend reads VBIQVE PAX.



Figure 46. A bronze coin (sestertius?) struck for Gallienus and attributed to Rome. The coin features the legend GENIVS P R; the motif is usually interpreted as *Genius Populi Romani*, depicted with the facial features of Gallienus. Cf. Göbl 2000, no. 703 (Em. 9).

Figure 47. Map of the Roman empire (by author) Place names given are the ancient names; present-day names are supplied within brackets.



5.6. *The other gods*

Jupiter may have enjoyed special importance for the emperor, but he was, as already seen, not the only deity to be invoked by the soldier-emperors. The desire to express a special affiliation to certain deities finds its expression in the idea of presenting them as *comites Augusti*. This implied a more ‘intimate’ relationship than defining a deity as *conservator Augusti*. The latter concept, as Nock noted, implied that the deity had a superior status: Jupiter is frequently hailed as *conservator*, but never as *comes*.¹²³⁴ Having a god as a *comes*, in his definition, simply implied having ‘special protection.’¹²³⁵ This more ‘intimate’ relations between the emperor and their *comites* is illustrated by the way the portrait of a divine *comes* frequently supplants that of the family members of the emperor on coins.

The early coin-series struck for Gallienus during his sole reign gives the impression that the emperor aimed at managing by himself, without any help from any *comites*. Apart from references to Vesta, Venus Genetrix and Venus Victrix on coins struck for Salonina,¹²³⁶ there are few coins referring to any other gods than Jupiter or Mars. One exception is the curious reference on certain aurei to *Iano Patri*.¹²³⁷ In Mediolanum, coin-types depicting Mars Propugnator, Diana Felix and Apollo Conservator are used.¹²³⁸

The difference from the contemporary coinage struck for Postumus is marked. From the outset of his rule, Postumus associates himself with Hercules. Coins featuring the legends HERC DEVSONIENSI and HERC PACIFERO appear in initial coin-series, dated to 260–262.¹²³⁹ One aureus struck for Postumus and dated to 260 depicts Hercules presenting a wreath to Postumus, who is dressed in military attire. This aureus also features the legend AETERNITAS AVG.¹²⁴⁰ In later coin-series, the references to Hercules are joined by references to Neptune and Minerva.¹²⁴¹

A dramatic development in the choice of imagery is evident in the coin-series attributed to the period after 266. On billon coins, there are references to Diana, Fortuna, Mars, Mercury, Salus and Serapis.¹²⁴² Further, an extraordinary series of aurei is struck, which display the portrait of Postumus and the portraits of a number of gods.

¹²³⁴ Nock 1947, 103.

¹²³⁵ Nock sketches a suggested relationship with a rather delightful parallel, which is an echo of the 1940s (1947, 104): “Godhead was one; there were many telephone lines and they ran through a number, smaller but appreciable, of different switchboards. You used one or another according to what seemed appropriate for a particular purpose or place; a *comes* gave you the equivalent of a private line.” Today, perhaps, one might say that having a *comes* meant possessing the number to the private cellphone of that particular deity?

¹²³⁶ Cf. Göbl 2000, nos. 365 and 418 (Vesta); 434c (Venus Genetrix) and 506 (Venus Victrix).

¹²³⁷ Göbl 2000, no. 449.

¹²³⁸ Cf. Göbl 2000, nos. 949–50, 1145–46 and 1165–73 respectively.

¹²³⁹ Cf. Besly & Bland 1983, 56 and 143f., nos. 2378–79, 2382–84, 2394–95 and 2409. Hercules Deu-soniensis was named after a local sanctuary; cf. König 1981, 118.

¹²⁴⁰ Schulte 1983, 27f. and 74, no.8.

¹²⁴¹ Besly & Bland 1983, 56 and 144, nos. 2396–2399; cf. Schulte 1983, 82–84, nos. 32–42.

¹²⁴² Besly & Bland 1983, 56 and 144–45, nos. 2419–2444.

A number of coins depict the joint portraits of Postumus and Hercules, Jupiter or Mars. Other aurei feature the portraits of *Victoria* and *Felicitas*, Apollo and Diana, Sol and Luna or Mars and *Victoria*.¹²⁴³ A subsequent series of gold coins feature reverses depicting the labours of Hercules with legends such as HERCVLI NEMAEIO, HERCVLI ARGIVO and HERCVLI ERVMANTINO.¹²⁴⁴

What prompted these references to such a number of gods? It seems apparent that they are connected to the open conflict that developed between Gallienus and Postumus in the mid-260s. The outcome of the conflict seems to have been successful for Postumus. The *Historia Augusta* claims that Postumus was besieged by Gallienus; however, he was forced to break this siege after having been wounded by an arrow.¹²⁴⁵ The coins struck after 266 could perhaps be understood as an acclamation of the divine *comites* who were summoned to the cause of Gaul.¹²⁴⁶

Moreover, these coin-series suggest an explanation for the coin-series struck for Gallienus and frequently referred to as the ‘animal series.’ This is because of the various animals that are depicted on most reverses. This coin-series is attributed to Rome and dated to a period towards the end of the rule of Gallienus. The coins in the series refer to a whole pantheon of gods – Apollo, Diana, Hercules, Jupiter, Juno, Liber pater, Mercury, Neptune and Sol – as *conservatores* of Gallienus (*cf. fig. 43*).¹²⁴⁷ Weigel observes that these nine deities were all older deities in the Roman pantheon, and suggests they were invoked in their capacities as old protectors of Rome.¹²⁴⁸ After the lack of success in the campaigns against Postumus, this invocation would have been more urgent than ever.

The role of Hercules in the visual imagery of Postumus stands out.¹²⁴⁹ It is easy to imagine that Hercules was a fitting *comes* in the situation that Postumus was facing. Similar to how Hercules had faced his labours, Postumus faced the strenuous task of making the empire survive in a critical situation. This reference became even more convenient after the successes against Gallienus. Further, the depictions of various deities – perhaps the labours of Hercules, more than anything else – testify to the fact that this imagery was not conceived in a ‘local’ or ‘provincial’ community. Rather, it is symptomatic for a community well versed in ‘Roman’ culture, and enjoying a well-developed sense of ‘Romanitas’ (*cf. chap. 4.7*).

Under Claudius Gothicus, more traditional – or mechanical – references return. Coins attributed to Mediolanum feature the unusual reference to Diana Lucifera; some coins attributed to the city of Rome refer to Apollo Conservator.¹²⁵⁰ The coin-

¹²⁴³ Schulte 1983, 102–106, nos. 108–119.

¹²⁴⁴ Schulte 1983, 106–117, nos. 120–55.

¹²⁴⁵ SHA *Gallieni* duo 4.4

¹²⁴⁶ Schulte 1983, 38; *cf.* Drinkwater 1987, 173.

¹²⁴⁷ Göbl 2000, 94 and nos. 709–751.

¹²⁴⁸ Weigel 1990, 141–43.

¹²⁴⁹ *Cf.* Drinkwater 1987, 162–64.

¹²⁵⁰ Bland and Burnett 1988, 184, nos. 1033–1038 (*ref. to Diana Lucifera*); 183, nos. 960–965 (*ref. to Apollo conservator*).

age of Claudius Gothicus struck in Antioch, however, stands out from the otherwise rather dull picture. At this mint, a number of unique coin-types appear in the coinage struck for Claudius Gothicus. For example, one coin-type depicts Isis and features the legend SALVS AVG. Another type depicts Vulcanus, and features the legend REGI ARTIS.¹²⁵¹ These coins demonstrate the way in which an increasingly complex language of imperial power is created at the provincial mints.

As has already been mentioned, in the visual imagery of Probus, Jupiter and Sol both play significant parts. However, references to Hercules are also frequent, pre-eminently in coin-series struck in the western mints in celebration of military victories. Aurei with reverses depicting Hercules and featuring the legends HERCVLI ARCADIO, HERCVLI ERVMANTHIO and HERCVLI INMORTALI (*sic*) are attributed to the coin-series considered to have been struck in Siscia in 278 in celebration of the victories on the northern front.¹²⁵² These aurei present a parallel to those struck for Postumus: once more, the labours of Hercules seem to have been considered as an apt metaphor for military success.

In the contemporary coinage attributed to Ticinum, references to Hercules are also frequent. Pink lists a number of coins struck with obverses featuring portraits of Probus and Hercules. Further, coin-types referring to Hercules Pacifer are in regular use in coin-series dated to 276–279.¹²⁵³ In Lugdunum, finally, an aureus featuring the unique legend HERCVLI ROMANO AVG is struck; for billon coins, another coin-type depicting Hercules and featuring the legend COMITI PROBI AVG is used.¹²⁵⁴ References to other gods than Jupiter, Sol and Hercules are scarce under Probus. Coins attributed to Lugdunum acclaim Minerva as *comes* of the emperor,¹²⁵⁵ while coins attributed to the coin-series struck in the city of Rome for the triumph 281/282 refer to Mars Ultor.¹²⁵⁶

In the coinage struck for Carus, references to deities generally are scarce. However, references to Venus Victrix occur repeatedly. Such references are not known from the coinages of the other soldier-emperors studied here. However, Venus Victrix is often invoked under the Antonines and Severans, and during the joint rule of Valerian and Gallienus.¹²⁵⁷ Considering this, it is significant that coins referring to Venus Victrix are attributed to the first coin-series struck in the city of Rome for Carinus. The Venus Victrix-type is then re-used for coins struck for both Carinus and Numerian.

¹²⁵¹ Huvelin 1990, 260–62; no. 2 and 3 respectively; other coins refer to Juno Regina, Neptune, Minerva (with the legend VIRTUS AVG) and Diana (with the legend DIANAE VICTR); cf. nos. 1, 5, 11 and 16 respectively.

¹²⁵² Pink 1949, 52.

¹²⁵³ Pink 1949, 60–64.

¹²⁵⁴ Bastien 1976, 172, no. 157 and 210, nos. 329–334 respectively.

¹²⁵⁵ Pink 1949, 70; cf. Bastien 1976, 207f, nos. 313–16; 213, nos. 342–44; 219f, nos. 373–79.

¹²⁵⁶ Cf. Pink 1949, 59.

¹²⁵⁷ For the Antonines, cf. *RIC* III, for instance 272, no. 736; for the Severans, cf. *RIC* IV.1, 178, no. 647; for Valerian and Gallienus Göbl 2000, no. 506.

These, too, are attributed to the city of Rome.¹²⁵⁸ The dynastic policy of Carus plays an all-important part in the visual imagery of this emperor. Therefore, it could be suggested that the reference to Venus Victrix was introduced as a reference to earlier imperial dynasties. Venus Victrix is also invoked on coins struck for Magnia Urbica and attributed to Ticinum; this might have been a reference to the wedding of Carinus and Magnia Urbica.¹²⁵⁹

In the initial coin-series following the proclamation of Diocletian, a wide range of reverse images are used. Some of these may simply have been re-utilized from the coinage of Carinus. For instance, references to Roma and Mars occur.¹²⁶⁰ However, after the most immediate coin-series, most of these coin-types are discarded and supplanted by the references to Jupiter and Hercules.

This change in 'imperial approach to the gods' is all the more significant, as the coins struck for Carausius and Allectus more resemble those struck for the later soldier-emperors, perhaps especially the emperors of Gaul. One reason for this may simply be that many coin-types struck in Britain were copied from coin-types current in Gaul. In the coinage of Carausius, Jupiter and Hercules are both acclaimed as *conservatores* of the emperor on aurei.¹²⁶¹ This status is also awarded to Neptune on a denarius.¹²⁶² On billon coins, Minerva and *Victoria* are also honoured as *comites* of the emperor,¹²⁶³ while further references are also made to Jupiter and Mars.¹²⁶⁴

From the coinage of Allectus, which features a much reduced number of motives by comparison with the coinage of Carausius, the impression is much the same; on aurei, Minerva and *Victoria* are referred to as *comites* of the emperor. The *Oriens Augusti*-type, depicting Sol, is also used.¹²⁶⁵

To sum up the points of this sub-chapter, Jupiter, Sol and Hercules play important parts in the visual imagery of the emperors under the period in focus in this study. Jupiter is invoked as the fundament for the claims to the purple of the emperor; Hercules, with his capacity for heroic deeds, is frequently acclaimed as *comes* of the emperor in military matters. Sol, finally, is referred to as a symbol for hopes for the future and the persistence of the empire. In my view, the idea of a more widespread 'cult of Sol Invictus,' however, can be discarded. In some cases, other gods are also 'summoned to the cause of the emperor.' These cases are rare. However, they demonstrate an impressive ability to resort to different strategies of legitimization of imperial authority.

¹²⁵⁸ Gricourt 2000, 29 and 37.

¹²⁵⁹ Gricourt 2000, 24–27.

¹²⁶⁰ Gricourt 2000, 70 (Ticinum); 82 (Rome); 92 (Siscia); 97 (Lugdunum). For Lugdunum, cf. also Bastien 1972, 113–115.

¹²⁶¹ Huvelin 1985a, 117, nos. 16–17.

¹²⁶² *RIC* V.2, 464, no. 8.

¹²⁶³ *RIC* V.2, 464f, nos. 13–17.

¹²⁶⁴ *RIC* V.2, 467, nos. 44–46 (Jupiter); 470, nos. 88–90 (Mars).

¹²⁶⁵ *RIC* V.2, 558, nos. 2–4.

5.7. *Being like the gods...*

A common expression of the contact of the emperor with divine spheres is the depiction of the emperor with the attributes of certain various deities. Does this manner of depiction imply that the emperor is 'merged' with the deity? As Marianne Bergmann has conclusively argued, this kind of depiction rather demonstrates that the emperor is *like* the gods.¹²⁶⁶ In certain situations, the soldier-emperors are 'likened to' certain gods in this fashion. One of the most frequent of such likenings is that with Sol. However, a more detailed survey indicates that many other likenings also occur.

As has already been mentioned, Fears argues that when the emperor wields the lightning of Jupiter, he wields Jupiter's own power.¹²⁶⁷ The most explicit visual reference to the right to rule of the emperor is the depiction of the emperor with these symbols of Jupiter. The long sceptre, which the emperor is sometimes depicted carrying on coin-reverses, obviously alludes to the long sceptre of Jupiter.¹²⁶⁸ The motif of Jupiter presenting the globe to the emperor is depicted on a number of coin-types. The globe, therefore, at least indirectly could be interpreted as a reference to Jupiter. However, in the third century, the globe can also be given to the emperor by other gods, such as Sol or Roma.¹²⁶⁹ The associations that can be tied to the globe are therefore manifold and complex (cf. below, chap. 5.8)

The way in which the symbols of Jupiter could be used is illustrated by a coin-reverse struck for Carus: as repeatedly noted, an effect of the hierarchy between Carus and his sons and their roles within the 'imperial collegium' is that they are associated with various deities. Carus, the 'senior *Augustus*,' is associated with Jupiter. The reverse of a coin, attributed to Siscia, is assumed by Gricourt to depict Carus and Carinus. Carus is depicted with the long sceptre of Jupiter, presenting a globe to Carinus.¹²⁷⁰ This motif later occurs on coins attributed to the same mint, but struck for Diocletian and Maximian. In this case, Gricourt argues that the motif should be interpreted as a depiction of Diocletian, presenting the globe to Maximian.¹²⁷¹ This, in my view, seems plausible. However, another coin referring to Jupiter Conservator, suggests that Diocletian is more careful not to emulate Jupiter: the coin features a reverse depicting Jupiter and a much smaller figure of the emperor.¹²⁷²

¹²⁶⁶ Bergmann 1998, 4: "Verschiedene Beobachtungen ... sprechen sehr stark für die Lösung, daß das theomorphe Herrscherbild metaphorisch gedacht war und für einen Vergleich von Gott und Herrscher stand."

¹²⁶⁷ Fears 1981b, 768.

¹²⁶⁸ Bastien II, 426f. Cf. for instance the reverse of a coin struck for Aurelian, depicting the emperor and Jupiter and featuring the legend IOVI CONSER, attributed to the city of Rome and dated to 273; cf. Estiot 2004, 288.

¹²⁶⁹ Cf. Bastien II, 503.

¹²⁷⁰ Gricourt 2000, 50f. and Tav. 32, no. 4257.

¹²⁷¹ Gricourt 2000, 92f. and Tav. 57, nos. 7681–7685.

¹²⁷² Gricourt 2000, 70f. and Tav. 42–43, nos. 5764–5837.

The guise of Hercules

Many explicit associations are made between the emperors and Hercules. These references can also be interpreted as implicit references to Jupiter. The *gorgoneion* and *aegis*, for instance, are suggested by Bastien to allude to the divine powers awarded to the emperor by Jupiter to his representative on earth.¹²⁷³ As Hercules is the son of Jupiter and in a sense the 'active' servant of Jupiter,¹²⁷⁴ the *gorgoneion* and *aegis* could be interpreted as allusions to Hercules. This association is accentuated by the fact that the *aegis* is usually featured in portraits depicting the emperor in 'heroic nudity.' This is characteristic of the coinages of the soldier-emperors, especially under Tacitus and Probus (cf. below).

However, the emperor could also be likened to Hercules more explicitly, for instance by depicting the emperor wearing the mane of the Nemean lion or the club of Hercules. The portrait-type depicting the emperor wearing the mane of the Nemean lion is especially common under Commodus, and is also utilized under the Severans. The type subsequently disappears, only to become reintroduced under the sole reign of Gallienus.¹²⁷⁵ Gallienus is depicted in the guise of Hercules on a number of coins and medallions in the 260s. One example is a medallion attributed to the decennialia of Gallienus in 262–263; further examples occur towards the end of the 260s. One antoninian, that depicts Gallienus with the club of Hercules, is attributed to Mediolanum and dated to 266–267; an aureus depicting Gallienus with the mane of the Nemean lion is attributed to Siscia and dated to 267.¹²⁷⁶

As previously mentioned, Postumus made frequent references to Hercules as his *comes*; however, Postumus is also himself fashioned in the guise of Hercules. One aureus depicts Postumus with the club of Hercules over the shoulder. These aurei are dated to 266 and to the same occasion as the *comites*-series (cf. chap. 5.6).¹²⁷⁷ A bronze coin dated to 264 and the celebrations of the quinquennialia of Postumus depicts the emperor with the mane of the Nemean lion.¹²⁷⁸ Obviously, they can be interpreted from the same historical context: the issue is not that Postumus is Hercules, but that he, like Hercules, has done great deeds, in saving Gaul from the barbarians. Through this, he had proved himself as the *salus provinciarum*.

As a similar reference to the *salus* of Rome, we could regard the special coin-series considered to have been struck in Mediolanum for Claudius Gothicus towards the end of 268. This coin-series contains a number of coins depicting Claudius Gothicus in 'heroic nudity,' with the large *aegis* slung over the shoulder. Some of these coins are struck with a reverse featuring the legend SALVS AVG.¹²⁷⁹ The portrait-type is also

¹²⁷³ Bastien II, 363f.

¹²⁷⁴ Cf. Fears 1981a, 79 and 113.

¹²⁷⁵ Bastien II, 373–76.

¹²⁷⁶ Bastien II, 377f; *idem* III, pl. 102, no. 9, 99, no. 3 and 102, no. 4 respectively.

¹²⁷⁷ Schulte 1983, 104, no. 111 and 112, no. 140.

¹²⁷⁸ Bastien 1967, 158, no. 129; cf. Bastien II, 378 and *idem* III, pl. 110, no. 4.

¹²⁷⁹ Huvelin 1980, 114, nos. 1 and 4.

used on billon coins and medallions struck for Tacitus and attributed to coin-series struck in 276 in Ticinum. These coins are considered to have been struck for the expected victorious return of the emperor from the campaigns against the Goths.¹²⁸⁰ Once more, heroic deeds are promised by the emperor.

As has been repeatedly noted, the main tenor of the coin-imagery of Probus is the acclamation of the invincibility of the emperor. Legends hailing Probus as *invictus* are very frequent, as are campaign-portraits. Depictions of Probus with a large *aegis* covering the left shoulder are quite common, especially on medallions.¹²⁸¹ Coins struck in Ticinum feature portraits depicting Probus with the club of Hercules.¹²⁸² A medallion and a quinarius both attributed to the city of Rome depict Probus with the mane of the Nemean lion.¹²⁸³ The latter portrait-type is also used on aurei struck for Carinus and dated to December 284. Gricourt considers the death of Numerian and the usurpation of Diocletian to have presented the motive for this coin-series.¹²⁸⁴ As his father Carus had assumed the role of senior *Augustus* and was associated with Jupiter, Carinus – the younger and active counterpart – assumes the role of Hercules. In the face of usurpation, this reference would only have been even more fitting. In the second half of the 280s, the portrait-type becomes one of many references to the military responsibilities of Maximian in the west. Coins struck in Lugdunum repeatedly depict Hercules with the club and/or with the mane of the Nemean lion.¹²⁸⁵

The guise of Sol

It is usually assumed that the radiate crown, which is usually worn by the emperor on coin-portraits in the third century, was an indication of a double denomination. This is due to the fact that this portrait-type appears on bronze coins struck for Nero.¹²⁸⁶ However, originally the radiate crown was the attribute of Helios/Sol, and was adapted as a symbol of royalty from the coinages of the Hellenistic kingdom.¹²⁸⁷ As it is still the attribute of Sol Invictus, the radiate crown also accentuates the associations between Sol and the emperor. However, the emperor does not *become* Sol. Bergmann points out that there are two distinct versions of the radiate crown. The traditional version is reserved for Sol/Helios, while the radiate crown normally used by the Roman emperors is an ‘adaption’ of this. Through putting this on, the emperor became *like* Sol.¹²⁸⁸

Another attribute closely attached to the Sol-symbolism used by the emperors is the moon crescent. When the antoninianus was introduced under Caracalla, the moon

¹²⁸⁰ Estiot 2004, 81f, 332f. and 334; cf. pl. 92, nos. 372–373 and 385–387.

¹²⁸¹ Bastien II, 355 and *idem* III, pl. 122, no. 1, 122, no. 6 and 124, no. 8.

¹²⁸² Estiot & Gysen 2004, 82f, nos. 18–20.

¹²⁸³ Bastien II, 380 and *idem* III, pl. 123, no. 6.

¹²⁸⁴ Gricourt 2000, 41.

¹²⁸⁵ Gricourt 2000, 99, nos. 1–3; cf. Bastien 1972, for instance 121, nos. 30, 31 and 34.

¹²⁸⁶ Jones 1990, 104.

¹²⁸⁷ Bastien I, 115; for the Hellenistic background of the radiate crown, cf. Bergmann 1998, 40–66.

¹²⁸⁸ Bergmann 1998, 3f.

crescent was introduced on the coins struck for the *Augustae*, as the radiate crown was used on pieces struck for the *Augusti*. Hence, the moon crescent, too, is considered to denote double denominations.¹²⁸⁹ However, just as the radiate crown provides a reference to Sol for the emperor, the moon crescent provides an association to Luna.¹²⁹⁰

One of the iconographical signs which can be associated with Sol is the raised right hand (cf. chap. 3.3).¹²⁹¹ This 'raised-hand portrait' first occurs on an aureus struck for Geta, who is one of the first junior *Caesares* to be intimately associated with Sol.¹²⁹² As many other of the more unusual portrait types, this one is used next under Gordian III, and after him under the sole reign of Gallienus.¹²⁹³ Under this emperor, the portrait-type first is re-utilized in a coin-series struck in Mediolanum, dated to 260. Therefore, the use of the portrait-type in this case is most likely to have been prompted by the events in the east of that year.¹²⁹⁴ Similarly, an aureus struck for Postumus and dated to 261 depicts Postumus with a raised hand. The portrait-type is also used for a number of bronze coins struck for that emperor.¹²⁹⁵ These conform to the general programme of the coin-series struck for Postumus, proclaiming the coming of a golden age.

The raised-hand type is also used in the special series of billon coins struck for Claudius Gothicus and attributed to Mediolanum in the period towards the end of 268.¹²⁹⁶ As under Gallienus, the portrait-type is introduced in a coin-series that must have been prompted by the circumstances. In this case, the circumstances were the unstable position of Claudius Gothicus as he assumed the purple. Further, the same coin-series uses a number of other elaborate portrait-types, which are otherwise rare. In exceptional situations, the authority of the emperor would be expressed with a wide range of interrelated images.

Two coin-types struck for Aurelian feature raised-hand portraits. One of these types is attributed to the mint of Siscia. The other type is attributed to the coin-series struck for Aurelian and Severina in the city of Rome in 275.¹²⁹⁷ The use of the portrait-type in this coin-series is especially telling. After having defeated Palmyra and Gaul, Aurelian would also have to show himself as truly superior to his adversaries. For a lasting rule, these victories may not have been enough. Or rather: victories were merely *temporary* statements of legitimacy. If lasting legitimacy has to be stated repeatedly (cf. chap. 1.4), an emperor who wanted to base his power only on military capacity would have to fight never-ceasing wars. In order to found a more lasting position, another claim to power was necessary. The purpose with the coin-series struck for Aurelian

¹²⁸⁹ Bastien II, 645.

¹²⁹⁰ Jones 1990, 265; cf. Turcan 1978, 1042.

¹²⁹¹ Berrens 2004, 217f; cf. L'Orange 1953, 147–153.

¹²⁹² Bastien II, 559; cf. Berrens 2004, 42.

¹²⁹³ Delbrück 1940, 26 and Taf. 3, no. 12 (Gordian III).

¹²⁹⁴ Doyen 1987, 89 and 99–101, nos. 8–13.

¹²⁹⁵ Cf. for the aureus Schulte 1983, 29 and 74, no. 9; for the bronze coins Bastien II, 563 and *idem* III, pl. 110.3.

¹²⁹⁶ Cf. Huvelin 1980, 115, nos. 2–3.

¹²⁹⁷ Cf. Estiot 2004, 358 (Siscia); 306 (Rome). Cf. also pl. 79, no. 126 and pl. B, no. 308 respectively.

and Severina evidently was to further boost the imperial authority with a reference to *Sol et Luna*. The reverse of the coin-type featuring the ‘raised-hand portrait’ in this coin-series is worth noting. The motif depicts Aurelian and Severina clasping hands; between them the head of Sol is depicted, hovering in mid-air, as it were. The reverse also features the legend *CONCORDIA AVG*.

The raised-hand type is known to have been used for coins struck for Probus at two mints. One coin-type is attributed to Ticinum and dated to 278,¹²⁹⁸ and the other type attributed to Lugdunum and dated to 277–278.¹²⁹⁹ The portrait-type is also used on coins struck for Numerian. As previously noted, this *Caesar* became associated with Sol and ‘hopes for the future.’ This is because Numerian was the youngest son of the emperor Carus. A quinarius struck for Carinus features a reverse depicting Numerian with the right hand raised and holding a globe. The obverse of this quinarius features a campaign-portrait of Carinus, holding a horse by the bridle.¹³⁰⁰ This combination of portraits aptly demonstrates the different aspects of imperial power that were reserved for Carinus and Numerian respectively.

Considering the overwhelming importance of Jupiter and Hercules in the imagery of the dyarchy, it could be noted that a number of coins struck for Diocletian and Maximian in Lugdunum and dated to 290 feature raised hand-portraits. Moreover, these portraits depict the dyarchs dressed in consular attire.¹³⁰¹ This is an interesting combination, as it suggests that the ‘raised-hand motif’ specifically, and ‘Sol-symbolism’ generally, is subject to certain development in the decades towards the end of the third century.

Other guises

A number of associations with other deities are created in the coinage struck for Gallienus. Firstly, the series of aurei struck for Gallienus featuring the rather unique legend *GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE* has been the focus of some debate (*fig. 44*). Historically, it was interpreted as an attempt by the moneyer to criticise Gallienus. This would have been done by insinuating, with a femininized inscription, that the emperor was, indeed, feminine.¹³⁰² Considering the control the imperial magistracies must have exercised over the choice of coin imagery (cf. chap. 1.6) – and especially over the choice of imagery for gold coinage – this must be regarded as highly unlikely.¹³⁰³

The legend has also been interpreted as a vocative acclamation of the emperor.¹³⁰⁴ A third interpretation is that the imagery and legend of this coin-type represents an association of Gallienus with the feminine deity Demeter/Ceres. An argument in favour

¹²⁹⁸ Estiot & Gysen 2004, 82f, nos 18–19.

¹²⁹⁹ Bastien 1976, 192, no. 237.

¹³⁰⁰ Berrens 2004, 137; cf. *RIC* V.2, 180, no. 333 and Bastien III, pl. 128, no. 9.

¹³⁰¹ Bastien 1972, 175, no. 324 (Diocletian); 186, no. 388 and 190, no. 417 (Maximian).

¹³⁰² Lagerqvist 1992, 221; cf. Göbl 2000, nos. 689–690.

¹³⁰³ Cf. Bastien I, 127.

¹³⁰⁴ Cf. Lagerqvist 1992, 223–225.

of this interpretation would be that the emperor is depicted wearing a wreath, which can be identified as a wreath of corn-ears, a symbol of Demeter/Ceres. Furthermore, according to this interpretation, the coins would have been struck to commemorate the initiation of Gallienus into the mysteries of Demeter that were celebrated at Eleusis.¹³⁰⁵ In my view, this seems like the most likely interpretation.

Another example of a more innovative association of Gallienus with the divine is presented by a recently found coin depicting a Janiform portrait of Gallienus. The portrait could be intended to depict the *dioscuri*, both with the facial features of Gallienus. Abdy considers that this coin-type may have been part of the same coin-series as the Gallienae Augustae-type mentioned above. This coin-series is considered to have been prompted by the *decennalia* of Gallienus in 262–263 and to have been struck until 265. As the series comprises a large number of gold coins, it may have been aimed at boosting the image of Gallienus with the senatorial elite. In that case, as Abdy points out, the portraits of the *dioscuri* would have been a fitting choice of imagery.¹³⁰⁶

A third portrait-type introduced under Gallienus is one that depicts the emperor in ‘heroic nudity’ and carrying a *caduceus* over the shoulder. This object is a reference to Mercury. This portrait-type occurs on a limited number of medallions struck for Gallienus.¹³⁰⁷ These medallions are usually dated to 264. It is interesting to note that in the coinage struck for Postumus in 265–266, where references are made to a number of deities, Mercury is depicted on antoniniani featuring the legends MERCVRIO FELICI or INTERNVTIVS (*sic*) DEORVM. The interpretation of both the medallions struck for Gallienus and the antoniniani struck for Postumus as references to some kind of ‘agreement’, if not outright peace-negotiations, is rather attractive.¹³⁰⁸

This complex relationship between the central empire and Gaul may also be the reason for a curious series of bronze coins attributed to the last years of the reign of Gallienus. The obverse features the legend GENIVS PR and the portrait of *Genius Populi Romani*, with the facial features of Gallienus, wearing a mural crown (*fig. 46*); the reverse features the legend SC in a wreath. On one version of the type, this is augmented with the legend INT VRB.¹³⁰⁹ Yonge concludes that the coins should be dated to 268, the last year of the reign of Gallienus. They would have been struck for the expected triumphal return of the emperor to the *urbs aeterna* after the military campaigns that were conducted that year. The reverse legend is suggested to be read *Intritus urbis* or *Intrata urbe*.¹³¹⁰ These conclusions suggest that the Genius PR- coins

¹³⁰⁵ Bastien I, 127; cf. de Blois 1976, 126 and 152f.

¹³⁰⁶ Abdy 2002, 349.

¹³⁰⁷ Göbl 2000, nos. 763b, 765b and 766b; Bastien II, 391f. It should be noted that nos. 763 b and 766b are only known from depictions.

¹³⁰⁸ Bastien II, 397; cf. Besly & Bland 1983, 56 and 144, nos. 2419–2420.

¹³⁰⁹ Bastien I, 135–137, cf. Göbl 2000, Tab. 19, nos. 702–703.

¹³¹⁰ Yonge 1979, 55f; cf. Bastien I, 135–37.

were the result of the same strategy as the *Gallienae Augustae*-type: the likening of the emperor to a number of deities.

After the reigns of Gallienus and Postumus, the period of creative parallels between the emperor and various deities ceases. The ‘Mercury-portrait’ occurs on antoniniani, struck for Aurelian and attributed to Siscia and to the mint of uncertain location. The coins featuring this portrait-type are dated to the period of the campaigns against Palmyra. Estiot therefore suggests that the image was a reference to the emperor who, like Mercury, would return as a messenger bringing good news.¹³¹¹ After this use of the Mercury-portrait, the experiments end. In years to come, the emperor would only be associated with Jupiter, Hercules and Sol, at least in this fashion.

Some conclusions can be drawn from the observations made in this sub-chapter. First, as previously stated, the emphasis on Sol Invictus should be played down somewhat. The emperors could choose to identify themselves with a wider range of deities. Further, these choices are in most cases rather conventional; Jupiter and Hercules occur frequently. Thirdly, when Sol is referred to, it is, as evident, in certain contexts. The association of Sol with the future and persistence of the empire makes this reference suitable for coinages struck for the *Caesares*.¹³¹² However, it is also adapted for the coinages struck for the emperors themselves, especially in connection with triumphs.

As shown, the Sol-imagery is used under the same emperors that claim to have been invested with imperial authority by Jupiter, i.e. emperors who had narrow bases for their authority. They are associated with youth, future and success, instead of Roman tradition. Prime examples are Aurelian and Probus – and, for that matter, the young Constantine I. It is further only logical that Sol-imagery preferably occurs in connection with triumphs, for instance in Ticinum and Siscia in 277–278, and the triumph in Rome in 281/282. Without daring an un-necessarily far-reaching analogy, one may draw a comparison with certain modern-day dictators. Lacking constitutional legitimation, they instead focus on strength; instead of tradition on youth, and instead of on the past, the future.

5.8. ...and being a god.

Aurelian was acclaimed as *deus et dominus*. Repeatedly, this has been referred to as a symptom of the introduction of an ‘absolute monarchy’ or even a ‘theocracy.’¹³¹³ Nevertheless, Probus and Carus, the successors of Aurelian, were also acclaimed on coins as *deus et dominus*. Does this acclamation, then, reflect the development of a role of the emperor that had more explicit ‘spiritual’ dimensions?

¹³¹¹ Estiot 2004, 85, 348f (Siscia) and 386f (Mint of unknown location).

¹³¹² Berrens 2004, 227.

¹³¹³ Cf. Halsberghe 1972, 152f; *idem* 1984, 2199f; Turcan 1978, 1049; more recently Cizek 1994, 186–188, Kotula 1997, 180 and Sommer 2004, 121f.

A first question is what is actually meant by saying that the Roman emperor is a 'god.' A fundamental point of Roman religion – or indeed, of most religions in the ancient world – is the focus on *ritual*, and not on dogmatic beliefs.¹³¹⁴ This is not to say the acclamation of the emperor as a 'god' meant nothing. The crucial point is rather, as Gradel points out, *to whom* the emperor was a god;¹³¹⁵ whether, and how, the emperor was *worshipped*. This worship of the emperor could be a way of expressing loyalty towards Rome and the empire. As mentioned earlier (cf. chap. 4.4) the development of a cult of *Roma et Augustus* can be understood in this way.¹³¹⁶

Therefore, too much should not be assumed from acclamations of the emperor as a 'god.' Still, it has been assumed that portraits in sculpture of third-century emperors reflect the development towards a 'spirituality' of late antiquity.¹³¹⁷

This 'spirituality' has been observed in certain portraits of emperors from the third century. Portraits of Gallienus were classified by L'Orange as examples of an 'imperial saviour-portrait,' designed to express a certain 'holiness.'¹³¹⁸ An exaggerated 'upward gaze' has been referred to as a characteristic of imperial portraiture of late antiquity. Such a gaze is very evident in portraits of the tetrarchs and of the family of Constantine I.¹³¹⁹ This feature could be interpreted as an expression of 'spirituality'; Rößler recognises this feature on the portraits of Gallienus and that usually identified as Probus in the Musei Capitolini in Rome.¹³²⁰ The feature has also been observed on a portrait-head, now in the Archaeological museum in Istanbul, which has been suggested to depict Aurelian or Diocletian.¹³²¹

Another strand of research has aimed at discerning various modes of depiction, which do not necessarily form a linear development. Rather, they can exist simultaneously and be the results of choices.¹³²² To me, this seems like a more fruitful approach. It is evident that portraits expressing a dimension of spirituality only represent one of several portrait-types that co-exist in the third century. Two other such types, the 'soldier-type' and the 'elderly senator-type' have already been mentioned (cf. chap. 3.2 and 4.4 respectively).

Thus, it also seems more reasonable to regard references to the 'divinity' of the emperor as another 'strategy' of imperial legitimation. An investigation of the occurrences of such references lends further strength to this view.

¹³¹⁴ Cf. Beard, North & Price 1998, ix–x; Gradel 2002, 2.

¹³¹⁵ Gradel 2002, 270: "In a world with an infinite number of gods, divinity, or at least what made divinity worth cultivating, was always relative: not whether someone, emperor, beloved, or Jupiter, was a god, but *to whom* this was so."

¹³¹⁶ Cf. Mellor 1981, 971f.

¹³¹⁷ Rößler 1993, 373f.; cf. earlier Fittschen 1975, 138.

¹³¹⁸ Cf. L'Orange 1947, 86: "The iconography of Gallienus exhibits very marked efforts to mould a 'holy' imperial physiognomy."

¹³¹⁹ Rößler 1993, 371–373; cf. Smith 1997, 181f.

¹³²⁰ Rößler 1993, 364.

¹³²¹ Cf. Ramage & Ramage 1991, 248. An identification as Diocletian seems most conclusive; cf. Meischner 1995, 375–382.

¹³²² Cf. Bergmann 1977; more recently Smith 1998.

The globe and its connotations

One iconographic object explicitly connected to the divine aspects of imperial authority is the globe. Frequently, the emperor is depicted holding this in his left hand. The simplest interpretation of the globe is that it is a representation of the earth. The association of the globe with the emperor, accordingly, could be an expression for the status of the emperor as “*Weltherrscher*”. However, judging from the modes and contexts in which the globe can be depicted, Arnaud argued that its symbolic content seems to be rather more celestial. The associations connected to the globe therefore must be more complex.¹³²³

Coin-reverses depicting the emperor holding this globe occur on coins struck for a number of soldier-emperors.¹³²⁴ However, an obverse portrait is also developed which depicts the emperor carrying this globe, very similar to the portrait-type depicting the emperor holding the *victoriola* (cf. chap. 2.4). In some cases, the emperor is depicted holding the globe and raising the right hand. This version appears on the first coins featuring this portrait-type. These coins are struck for Gordian III in Tomi and Marcianopolis in Moesia inferior. The portrait-type is then re-introduced in the coinage of Gallienus.¹³²⁵ The usual depiction of Sol on coin reverses referring to *Oriens Augusti* or *Soli Invicto* depicts Sol holding a globe.¹³²⁶ This globe could therefore be seen as a reference to the divinity of the emperor in his incarnation as Sol.¹³²⁷

However, some characteristics of the depictions of the globe should be noted. Firstly, the globe is associated with Sol, but also with Jupiter. An important reverse motif depicts the emperor *receiving* the globe from Jupiter. It could therefore be regarded as a reference to the divine investiture of Jupiter. Further, the globe could be understood as a reference to the status of the emperor as servant and vice-deputy of Jupiter, the god embodying the *Populus Romanus*. Therefore, the globe can be a symbol for the authority to rule the Roman world that has been bestowed upon the emperor *by the gods*. The globe can also be given to the emperor by other deities. Coins depict the emperor receiving a globe from Sol, Mars, or Roma.¹³²⁸ In such cases, it seems as though the globe can be interchangeable with the *victoriola*.¹³²⁹ Secondly, the globe is frequently depicted in combination with other objects. It can be combined with the *pu-*

¹³²³ Arnaud 1984, 110–112; cf. Bastien II, 492.

¹³²⁴ Cf. for example Schulte 1983, 89–91, nos. 62–71 (Postumus); *RIC* V.2, 46, no. 281 (Probus); Bastien 1976, 253, no. 548 (Carinus).

¹³²⁵ Bastien II, 491; Cf. *idem* III, pl. 91, no. 3 (Gordian III, Tomi) and pl. 91, no. 10 (Gordian III, Marcianopolis). Cf. Doyen 1987, 99f, nos. 8 and 10 (Gallienus, Mediolanum).

¹³²⁶ Cf. for instance *RIC* V.1, 271f, nos. 54 and 62.

¹³²⁷ Cf. L’Orange 1953, 152f; *idem* 1973, 331–333.

¹³²⁸ Cf. Bastien II, 503. Depictions with Sol: *RIC* V.1, 305, no. 353 (Aurelian, Cyzicus; cf. Estiot 2004, 418); Mars: *RIC* V.2, 33, no. 146 (Probus, Rome; cf. Pink 1949, 59); Roma: Estiot 2004, 380 (Florian, Siscia).

¹³²⁹ Cf. for instance Carus, Gricourt 2000, nos. 4257–58. Bastien argues that there is a clear difference between the globe and the *victoriola*; cf. Bastien II, 491. In my opinion, the iconography on the coinage from the third century does not enable a clear distinction.

gio, thereby replacing the *victoriola*.¹³³⁰ Further, the globe is often depicted in consular portraits where the emperor is holding the *scipio* in the left hand.¹³³¹ Some consular portraits actually depict the emperor holding the globe but without the *scipio*.¹³³²

The globe therefore cannot be regarded merely as a symbol of *Weltherrschaft* – its meaning is more complex. It should rather be understood with reference to the other iconography with which the globe is depicted.¹³³³ Iconographically, the globe is yet another example of how intricate images are created in the coinage of the soldier-emperors through adaptations of various simple symbols. In this case, an obverse portrait could be adapted to carry the whole content of the conventional reverses that depicted the divine investiture by the gods.

Other iconographical objects characteristic of the coinages struck for the soldier-emperors can be interpreted in the same way. The *gorgoneion*, for instance, could be understood as a reference to Minerva (cf. chap 2.2) and the ornamented shield featured in ‘campaign-portraits’ could be associated with a number of myths, deities and heroes.¹³³⁴ To sum up, the symbols of the imperial *virtus* all have mythological dimension: they all adhere to what Fears referred to as one coherent ‘theology of victory.’¹³³⁵

References to a deus et dominus

As mentioned, the reign of Aurelian has often been regarded as the most significant period as far as the development of a ‘divine ruler’ is concerned. This notion still is very firmly established; this is probably the reason why Aurelian has become the focus of both scholarly studies and more popular biographies, while the other soldier-emperors remain comparatively forgotten.¹³³⁶ There are some indications that Aurelian was an important predecessor for the emperors of late antiquity, especially as far as the public appearance, which is often regarded as characteristic for the emperors of late antiquity, is concerned. The *Epitome de Caesaribus* state that Aurelian was the first emperor to wear the diadem.¹³³⁷ Further, a fragment from the *Scythica* of Dexippus, describes the embassy of the Goths to the Roman emperor. In this recapitulation, it is described how the appearance of the emperor was a remote one. This description reminds of the account of the appearance of Constantius II during his triumphant entry into Rome, as this was described by Ammianus Marcellinus.¹³³⁸

¹³³⁰ Cf. Bastien 1976, 195, no. 250 (Probus, Lugdunum).

¹³³¹ Cf. Huvelin 1980, 115, nos. 7, 9 and 10 (Claudius Gothicus, Mediolanum); Estiot 2004, 358f and pl. 79, no. 124 (Aurelian, Siscia); Estiot & Gysen 2004, 79–81, nos. 14–16 (Probus, Ticinum).

¹³³² Bastien 1976, 191, no. 231 (Probus); Bastien 1972, 211, nos. 522–523 (Maximian).

¹³³³ Cf. Arnaud 1984, 111f.

¹³³⁴ Bastien II, 462–66.

¹³³⁵ Cf. Fears 1981b, 740–49.

¹³³⁶ Recent studies on Aurelian include Saunders 1991, Cizek 1994, Kotula 1997 and Watson 1999.

¹³³⁷ Epit. de Caes. 35.5.

¹³³⁸ Dexippus, Frag. 6.2–3; FGrH 100; cf. Amm. Marc. 16.10.9–10. Cf. also Millar 1969, 25.

Above all, of course, the references to Aurelian as *deus et dominus*, which occur in coin-legends, are handy to refer to. These acclamations, as it seems, provide a direct reference to the ‘dominate’ of late antiquity. However, András Alföldi in an important article concluded that neither this title, nor the ceremonial connected to the *adulatio* of the emperors during the dominate, were new. Rather, this language and ceremonial early became ‘unofficial’ parts of the staging of imperial power.¹³³⁹

The coin-legends acclaiming Aurelian as *deus et dominus* only appear on coins attributed to the last coin-series struck for him in Serdica. Two coin-types attributed to this series, which is characterized by a multitude of novel obverse legends, feature the obverse legends IMP DEO ET DOMINO AVRELIANO AVG and DEO ET DOMINO NATO AVRELIANO AVG respectively. This coin-series is judged by Estiot to have been struck for a coming military campaign in Asia Minor against the Goths. As Estiot states, not too much should be inferred from the coins referring to Aurelian as *deus et dominus*: only three coins featuring these legends are known.¹³⁴⁰ As all coins struck in this series feature reverses referring to the emperor as *restitutor orbis*,¹³⁴¹ the reference to the emperor as *deus et dominus* on the obverses seem like an appraisal of the victories of Aurelian, more than anything else.

Similar references occur on coins attributed to Serdica, first on a coin-type struck for Probus and featuring the legend IMP DEO ET DOMINO PROBO AVG. This coin-type is attributed by Pink to the consulate assumed by Probus in 277. This coin-type features a reverse referring to *Clementia temporum* and depicting the emperor receiving a globe from Jupiter.¹³⁴² Also in this case I suggest that the reference to Probus as *deus et dominus* should be interpreted as an acclamation of the fortunate reign of this emperor. This reference is again used on a coin-type featuring the obverse legend DEO ET DOMINO PROBO INVICTO AVG. The reverse of this coin-type features the motif of the emperor charging and riding down an enemy, and the legend VIRTUS PROBI AVG.¹³⁴³ As under Aurelian, a number of unconventional obverse legends only occur on coins attributed to Serdica.

References to the emperor as *deus et dominus* occur one last time in the coinage struck for Carus and attributed to Siscia. This reference is made on two known coin-types. One of these types is the one featuring the depiction of Sol and Carus face to face, and the legend DEO ET DOMINO CARO INVICTO AVG; the reverse depicts *Felicitas* and the legend FELICITAS REIPUBLICAE (cf. above, chap. 5.4). The second coin-type features only the portrait of Carus, and a reverse referring to *fides militum*. Both coin-types are interpreted by Gricourt to have been struck as a boost of propaganda at the beginning of the reign of Carus.¹³⁴⁴

¹³³⁹ Cf. Alföldi 1934.

¹³⁴⁰ Estiot 2004, 102f. and 401; cf. *RIC* V.1, 299, nos. 305–06.

¹³⁴¹ Cf. Estiot 2004, 400f. for an overview.

¹³⁴² Pink 1949, 45; cf. *RIC* V.2, 109, no. 841.

¹³⁴³ Pink 1949, 45; cf. *RIC* V.2, 114, no. 885.

¹³⁴⁴ Gricourt 2000, 46f; cf. *RIC* V.2, 146, nos. 99–100.

Acclamations of the emperors as *perpetuus* occur in a similar fashion. Inscriptions acclaiming the emperor as *perpetuus* are known from single inscriptions acclaiming Philippus Arabs and Carus, and a number of inscriptions acclaiming Aurelian in this fashion.¹³⁴⁵ For Probus, rare coins with obverse legends acclaiming Probus as *Perpetuus Imperator Probus Augustus* are recorded from Serdica. These coins are attributed by Pink to coin-series struck in 279.¹³⁴⁶ Di Vita-Evrard suggests that acclamations of this kind were used at the anniversaries of imperial rule, when *vota* for the future rule are taken.¹³⁴⁷ This seems like a reasonable assumption, not least due to the very limited numbers of these coins – the easiest explanation in such cases generally is to assume that they were struck some specific purposes and occasions. The reference to the emperor as *perpetuus*, just like the reference to the emperor as *deus et dominus*, seems to represent a way of acclaiming the emperor as the vice-regent of the gods in certain distinct situations.

To conclude, no evident ‘theological significance’ can be inferred from the use of references to deities and divinity under the later soldier-emperors. The emperor can be depicted together with a deity, in the guise of a deity, or referred to as a deity himself. However, I suggest that in all these cases, the purpose was to demonstrate certain qualities of the emperor, and his relations to certain deities, *in specific contexts*.

The references to the emperor as *deus et dominus* occur for a comparatively brief period of time in Serdica and only on one occasion in Siscia. This suggests that the use of such legend-types was temporary. Perhaps it was not even officially sanctioned. Further, the notion that the legend-type occurs in the provinces – which, as has already been noted, is also the case with the *Sol dominus* series – does seem to have some significance. Not only is this important for our understanding of how of the coin-imagery of the later soldier-emperors was created and used. Further, I suggest that this notion also presents a key to the shaping and dynamics of imperial propaganda in the later half of the third century, a period of transition for the Roman empire. In a closing chapter, this issue will be addressed.

¹³⁴⁵ Philippus Arabs: Peachin 1990, 226, no. 184. Carus: Peachin 1990, 466, no. 165. Aurelian: Peachin 1990, 388, nos. 40–41; 391, no. 66; 393, nos. 77–79; 397, nos. 110–112; 398, nos. 118 and 121; 400, no. 128. Cf. Di Vita-Evrard 1992, 229f.

¹³⁴⁶ Pink 1949, 44f; cf. *RIC* V.2, 110, nos. 842, 843 and 849; 111, no. 859; 113, nos. 869 and 874; 114, no. 884.

¹³⁴⁷ Di Vita-Evrard 1992, 239.

6. ON THE THRESHOLD TO THE FOURTH CENTURY

6.1. 'Neque quicque dignum memoria egit'?

Florianus, who had succeeded Tacitus, was in power two months and twenty days and did nothing worth remembering.¹³⁴⁸

Sometimes, one can sense a curious ambivalence in attitudes towards coin-imagery. On the one hand, at least in the late republic and early empire, there is an evident tendency to assume that coins explicitly told of what happened in the empire.¹³⁴⁹ Nevertheless, at the same time, the same scholars can be quite indifferent towards the images on the coins from the third century. Humphrey Sutherland expressed this opinion eloquently:

...it was not until the near-disintegration of the empire in the third century that the imperial types achieved such a degree of empty boastfulness as to show that the long discipline of accuracy was for the moment broken....¹³⁵⁰

The question that has been asked throughout this work is why and how this 'empty boast' is expressed. What does it tell us of the concept of imperial authority in the later third century? One does not need to delve deeply into the amounts of work done on third century coinage to conclude that the 'discipline of accuracy' was not at all broken. Even under the soldier-emperors, coins were occasionally, at the very least, used with an acute sense of the values and potentials of the medium.

In this last, concluding chapter, I will first attempt to summarize the methods discussed in the first chapter and the observations made in the four subsequent chapters. I will then attempt to relate these to the issue of regional change in the later imperial age. I suggest that the coinages struck from the 260s onwards indicate that the regions and provinces of the Empire were not merely copying the language of the visual imagery that was transmitted from the imperial centre. Instead, during these decades,

¹³⁴⁸ Eutr. 9.16: "Florianus, qui Tacito successerat, duobus mensibus et diebus XX in imperio fuit neque quicquam dignum memoria egit."

¹³⁴⁹ Cf. *RIC* I, 22; Sutherland 1983, 77f.

¹³⁵⁰ Sutherland 1983, 78.

the provinces were actively shaping imperial propaganda and power and adapting it to local needs.

Finally, I will conclude this study with commenting on a question asked in chap. 1. Was there a crisis of imperial authority in the later third century? Did the later soldier-emperors, as Eutropius wrote of Florian, “achieve nothing worthy of memory”? My conclusion is that imperial authority was unbroken. However, it was slow in adapting to the realities of a changing empire.

One of these realities was the process which enabled a move of political and symbolical power from the city of Rome. By the end of this development, imperial authority had established a new centre in Constantinople. In my view, the coins struck for the later soldier-emperors indicate that this process goes through a crucial phase *c.* 260–295.

6.2. *Summary: coinage and authority*

In the history of the Roman empire in the third century, there are a number of issues that are repeatedly addressed in the scholarly debate. One such issue is that of the ‘crisis of the third century’ and of ‘military anarchy.’ A growing body of research argues that the complex situation of the third century should rather be analysed as a question of different possible crises: one is the monetary crisis; another is the ‘spiritual crisis.’ I have chosen to concentrate on a third, the idea of a crisis of imperial authority (cf. chap. 1.2)

How should this issue be approached? I suggest that an understanding of the problem may be suggested using various theoretical models concerning concepts such as legitimacy and authority. I have chosen to define legitimacy as something that must be repeatedly demonstrated, i.e. as a continuous practise. Adapted to a Roman setting, this practise can be defined as a ‘demonstrative adherence to Roman norms.’ The ‘demonstrative adherence’ one should search for in this case, i.e. as far as the relationship between the emperor and his (would-be) subjects is concerned, is primarily a mode of communication. Such communication should consist of mutual assertions of loyalty (cf. chap. 1.4).

As a framework for the ‘arena’ on which this communication can be considered to have taken place, I have assumed that the power of the soldier-emperors rested on two fundaments: the city of Rome and the institutions of Roman civilian society on the one hand, and the military on the other. The emperor, civilian society and the army together form a ‘triangle of power;’ the area within this triangle functions as a field of communication (cf. chap. 1.4). As for the language used in this communication, I have attempted to utilize the concept of a ‘language of images’. I suggest that the basic characteristics of a ‘language of images’ would be simplicity, abstraction and ambiguity. The images that are used should have a generalized and universal character; further, there should be a limited number of forms and a constant combination of

these forms. Finally, these combinations should be used repeatedly and visibly (cf. chap. 1.5).

In this investigation, I have focused on whether such a language of images could be expressed on coins. The coins struck for the soldier-emperors represent the most sizeable material by far which is extant from the soldier-emperors. This study, therefore, has been an investigation of how imperial authority could be expressed on coins under the later soldier-emperors. However, the study has also aimed at providing comments on the more general potential of Roman imperial coins as carriers of visual information. As such, the coin is often regarded as a rather simple object, and only the reverse imagery is regarded. Rather, the coin could be regarded as an intricate network of images. This network was built up of various significant details on both sides of the coin. Furthermore, these images could also be combined with legends contrasting in the same way (cf. chap. 1.6)

In search of a 'language of images' on the coins struck for the later soldier-emperors, I have tried to discern some general characteristics of the imagery featured on these coins. Various kinds of military images are very characteristic. Of those, the most common type is an obverse portrait-type depicting the emperor wearing a cuirass. This portrait-type frequently depicts the emperor wearing a mail-shirt rather than the 'muscular cuirass', which is more frequent in earlier Roman imagery. Further, a group of more elaborate military portraits is also characteristic of the coinages in the second half of the third century. A first group consists of portraits that I have referred to as 'campaign-portraits.' These depict the emperor with spear, shield and sometimes a helmet. This portrait-type is first used in the coinages struck for the Severan emperors and for Gordian III. The type then disappears, only to reappear in the coinage struck for Gallienus. After this, the portrait-type occurs in all coinages c. 270–295 (cf. chap. 2.2–3).

Other characteristic portrait-types include such where the emperor is depicted holding a *victoriola*, a globe, surmounted by a statue of *Victoria*. Before the later soldier-emperors, these portrait-types occur only sparingly in the coinages of the Severans and Gordian III. Portraits featuring the *victoriola* occur in a certain number of the coinages of the later soldier-emperors (cf. chap. 2.4).

These portrait-types share an emphasis on the personal *virtus* and bravery of the emperor. I have suggested that they express the importance of the *personal presence* of the emperor on the battlefield in a case of war. The *virtus* of the emperor, which leads to *victoria*, is crucial for the strength of the Roman arms. I then examined how coins featuring this kind of imagery are used. Imagery focusing on the *virtus* and victoriousness of the emperor, in combination with other coin motives - such as reverses focusing on *pax* - form a narrative. With a limited number of simple images, this narrative expresses a Roman concept of warfare: *virtus* leads to *victoria*; through *victoria*, peace is ensured, and through peace order and the *aeternitas* of the Roman world. At the centre of this narrative stands the emperor. An important characteristic is

that these images do not seem to have been struck as narrative sequences. Rather, they tend to have been struck simultaneously, forming ‘monuments’ over War and Peace. In this sense, the coin-images rather resemble the pictorial programmes which can be found for instance on triumphal arches (cf. chap. 2.3–9).

I then went on to suggest a function for this coin-imagery. As most of the soldier-emperors were occupied by warfare along the borders of the empire, it might be assumed that, more often than not, building triumphal arches or producing portraits of the emperor was difficult in practice. I have therefore suggested that the coin-images could be understood as ‘monuments in miniature.’ They represented a kind of ‘additional propaganda’ supplanting larger scale expressions of imperial authority (cf. chap. 2.9).

Why, then, would the repertoire of coin-imagery have been expanded to convey propaganda normally expressed through other media? The incessant warfare of the third century presents a reason. However, Rome had been at war before. Therefore, the reason why the imagery that is characteristic of the coinages of the later soldier-emperors only appears in this age must be more complex. The shaping and contents of coin-images under the later soldier-emperors must be associated with certain developments in the Roman Empire in the second half of the third century.

A first such development is that of social structures. The ever-increasing importance of the army for the emperor was a crucial factor for the shaping of coin-imagery. A number of characteristic coin-images of the later soldier-emperors refer to the army. Firstly, a number of images may be interpreted as references to the legions. I suggested that the attire worn by the soldier-emperors from Aurelian to Maximian represents equipment more often used in the field than for instance the ‘muscular cuirasses.’ Various adaptations of the *adlocutio*-motif – which depicts the emperor speaking before his soldiers – have also been examined. The *adlocutiones* were ceremonies where the emperor met his soldiers and thus made evident the ties between himself and his soldiers. I have suggested that the depictions of ‘field-gear’ and certain characteristic treatments of the *adlocutio*-motif aimed at presenting a distinct image of the emperor. This was the image of an emperor who was appearing in the field with the soldiers. He was not remaining at a safe distance in the city of Rome (cf. chap. 3.2–3).

However, the reference to the legions may not have been enough. More recent research suggests that the army cannot be regarded as one single entity, but rather as a network of groups with different interests. Therefore, secondly, I examined coin-imagery that may have been conceived as references to specific units of the army. Of such units, the cavalry units proved to be of crucial importance for the emperor. However, they could also pose a most severe threat to the emperor. Certain coin-images, such as those depicting the emperor wearing ornate helmets or shields with rider-motives, should be understood as explicit references to the cavalry. I have assumed that the significance of these images is that of the depiction of an emperor who was backed by the cavalry (cf. chap. 3.4).

The soldiers closest to the emperor were the officers and bodyguards who surrounded him. I suggest that this group of soldiers could have functioned as a kind of 'military court.' The evidence suggests that the *pugio* was a weapon typical for certain elite units, such as the praetorian guards and *equites singulares*. The importance of the loyalty of such units may have been the reason for the portrait-type that depicts the emperor carrying a *pugio* (cf. chap. 3.5).

The assumption that certain groups of soldiers could function as 'military courts' has seemed fruitful. These 'courts' would have demonstrated certain weaknesses, which may have contributed to the unstable positions of the soldier-emperors. There are several reasons why the military camp would have difficulties functioning as a court. Firstly, each member of this court can resort to violence. However, the notion that the court can only control the access to rank and not the creation of rank itself presents a critical problem. One military court can only control one military camp. As it cannot control the creation of rank, the military court cannot expect to be able to control other military commanders in other camps. Accordingly, an emperor who is relying on his 'camp' as a power basis can be expected to be challenged by other military commanders who are proclaimed emperors by their soldiers. This also happened repeatedly (cf. chap. 3.5).

A further problem is connected with this. The military court may have represented a handy way of running the office in practice. However, the army had strict regulations regarding how emperors should be proclaimed by soldiers, and to relate to their soldiers. The unofficial power that a military court could wield would therefore conflict with the formal power wielded by the body of soldiers. This may explain why even certain successful emperors were eventually murdered by their own soldiers (cf. chap. 3.5).

A second development concerns regional changes. An important trend throughout the third century is that the city of Rome loses its authority in favour of provincial centres. The material traces of the later soldier-emperors in the city of Rome are, on the whole, few and uncertain. This is only to be expected, as most of them spent very little time in the *urbs aeterna*. The *Templum Solis*, constructed under Aurelian, and the walls of Aurelian are the only more important monuments in the *urbs aeterna* that can be safely attributed to the reigns of the later soldier-emperor. The significance of these building projects, however, is difficult to fully ascertain (cf. chap. 4.2). On the other hand, attempts seem to have been made to compensate this physical absence of the emperors from the *urbs aeterna* with images of 'virtual presence.' I have suggested that a number of coin-images seem to have been conceived to evoke the image of Rome. Coin-portraits depicting the emperors with consular attire are characteristic of the coinages struck for the later soldier-emperors from Gallienus to Diocletian and Maximian; further, coin-images depicting *Roma Aeterna* are also repeatedly struck. This imagery testifies to a continued symbolical importance of the *urbs aeterna* (cf. chap. 4.3–4).

However, a third significant effect of the ‘provincialisation’ is the development of ‘local centres for expression of imperial authority’, outside the city of Rome. During the second century, the Roman imperial coinage is mainly struck in the city of Rome. However, from the end of the second century, this begins to change. In the second half of the third century, changes are drastic. From the 260s, a substantial part of the Roman imperial coinage is not only struck in the city of Rome, but also in other Italic cities. Above all, large quantities of imperial coins are struck at newly established provincial mints, including Lugdunum, where an important mint was active in the first century. This was re-opened in the late 250s. Another was established in Augusta Treverorum, possibly under the Gallic usurpers. This mint was re-opened under Diocletian and was subsequently very active until the fourth century. A third mint was established in Mediolanum in 258–259; this mint was very active in the 260s, until it was moved to Ticinum in 274. Here, it was very active in the 270s and 280s. Further, a very important mint is that of Siscia, established in the beginning of the 260s and very active until the fourth century; another was established in Cyzicus towards the end of the 260s. Finally, in Serdica, a mint was established with personnel from the mint of the city of Rome in 271. Further mints would be established under the tetrarchs (cf. chap. 4.5–8).¹³⁵¹

I have noted that imagery referring explicitly to the traditions of the city of Rome, such as consular images, are used as frequently at these mints as at those of the city of Rome. For instance, the large series of aurei struck for the emperor Tacitus, featuring images of *Roma Aeterna*, are almost solely attributed to Siscia and Serdica. The establishment of these mints, and the imagery used for the coinages struck here, could therefore be regarded as symptomatic of the development of provincial Roman societies. This idea is also strongly supported by the fact that Augusta Treverorum and Mediolanum were later to become imperial residences for the tetrarchs (cf. chap. 4.5–8).

A third aspect is that of a changing role of the emperor from *princeps senatus* to a more ‘divinely inspired’ ruler. Repeatedly, such tendencies have been discerned and referred to as a characteristic of imperial legitimation in the third century. However, as far as the ‘relationship between the emperor and the divine’ was concerned, the later soldier-emperors repeatedly adhered to strategies established under their predecessors. Such strategies included consecrations of deceased predecessors. This practice could imply establishing a dynastic link between the emperor and his predecessor (cf. chap. 5.2). The importance of such dynastic strategies is further illustrated by the coin-images depicting the portraits of the emperor and other members of the family. Such occur for instance in the coinages of Gallienus for his family, Tetricus and Tetricus iunior, and Carus and his family (cf. chap. 5.3).

¹³⁵¹ For an overview of this development, cf. Jones 1990, 196–98.

Images of imperial family members and gods can be almost interchangeable on coins: the gods, as it were, become members of the family of the emperor. Sol is one of the most recurring 'divine members of the imperial family.' The frequent references to Sol could be regarded as characteristic for the age of the later soldier-emperors. However, so are references to other gods, mainly Jupiter and Hercules. Most importantly, a closer examination of coin-evidence suggests that the 'cult of Sol,' which has often been assumed to have been introduced under Aurelian, has been over-exaggerated. The coinage that carries the most explicit references to Sol Invictus is of a temporary character, as this coinage is only struck under a comparatively short period (cf. chap. 5.4–6).

A group of images depict the emperor in the guises of various deities. Most frequently, the emperor is depicted in the guise of Sol or Hercules. These depictions could be interpreted as a demonstration that the emperor himself is divine. However, it is more likely that such depictions should be understood as demonstrations that the emperor can be *like* the gods (cf. chap. 5.7).

Finally, certain coins acclaim some of the later soldier-emperors as *deus et dominus*. A survey of the coin-evidence indicates that such legends are very rare: they are only known from Aurelian, Probus and Carus. Further, they are only known from certain regional mints. It can be suggested that the coins featuring these legends represent a short-lived experiment. Moreover, I have suggested that they could be understood as *regional* experiments (cf. chap. 5.8).

On a few occasions, coinages are used by emperors and their challengers to promote contrasting ideas. The only really good example of this is the coinage that was struck in 285 for Iulianus of Pannonia. Coins struck for him proclaim a *libertas publica*. However, on the whole, the opposite seems far more common. Instead of promoting different ideas, it seems to me that the candidates to the purple all claim the monopolization of a few common, all-important concepts. This tendency is illustrated by the coinages of Gallienus and Postumus. The martial appearances of both emperors are stressed by the incorporation of helmets in the array of iconographic objects featured on the coins struck for them. The number of concepts that were central for imperial legitimation was rather limited. Therefore, Gallienus and Postumus may have been forced to 'respond' to the other's language of images. However, it is more likely that their languages of imagery were intended for their own 'home fronts.' In addition, at the 'home fronts' of Gallienus and Postumus, the same values counted. This testifies to which ideas were regarded as valuable to the empire and, thus, for which were fought.

Further, it is evident that unless serious internal shifts occurred, coinage could be issued more or less routinely, without major alterations or reconsiderings of visual programmes. For this reason, the coinage during the age of the later soldier-emperors certainly can at times appear repetitive. Nevertheless, it is also evident that sudden changes and turmoil in politics will lead to a sudden rush of coin-images. Examples include the coin-series struck by Gallienus after the disasters of 260 and the

triumphant coin-series struck by Postumus after the military successes in the mid-260s. Several times, I have mentioned that certain characteristic coin-images introduced in the coinages struck for Gallienus in the 260s had also earlier been struck for Gordian III. However, they are very scarce in the period between these two emperors.

This, I think, can hardly be a coincidence. In 238, an extremely complex political complication developed as a total of five emperors were proclaimed by different interest groups.¹³⁵² In the 260s, a political situation which was just as delicate as that of 238 was reached. There are further examples of situations when coin-images seem to refer to the actual political circumstances. The coin-series struck for Aurelian after the defeat of Palmyra presents one example. Further, the coinage struck for Tacitus can quite obviously be interpreted as a reference to the turmoil following the murder of Aurelian.

There is an apparent lack of 'conflicts of ideas' in the coinages struck for emperors and their challengers in the later third century. In addition, the ideas and values with which the soldier-emperors claim legitimacy – and fought to monopolize – seem to be the same that the emperors before them and well into the fourth century used to make claims to the imperial purple. *Virtus*, *victoria* and *pax* are keys to this imperial authority. As far as the understanding of this imperial authority is concerned, then, the Roman empire of the later third century is characterized by an astounding continuity. The Roman empire of the later third century was, at least in this sense, far from being a 'military anarchy.'

6.3. *The creation of a language of empire*

The ideas that provided the foundation for Roman imperial authority could be expressed with a limited number of simple and abstract coin-images. These could be manipulated with the addition of various value-laden iconographic objects, and combined in an infinite number of ways.

In this study, the coin-imagery of the soldier emperors has been analysed from three broad aspects: references to the 'military', to 'civilian society' and the 'divine nature of imperial rule.' On the coins struck for the soldier-emperors, these references are repeatedly combined in various ingenious ways. In a number of cases, I have been able to refer to the same coins and the same motives several times, as examples of different references. Often, there is literally 'something for everyone' on the coins.

The coins struck for the later soldier-emperors offer many examples of this development. One is presented by the aureus considered to have been struck for the *adventus* of Aurelian at Antioch after the re-capture of the city from Palmyra; on this coin, a consular portrait on the obverse and an image depicting the imperial triumph on the reverse are combined.¹³⁵³ On coins such as this one, the *processus consularis* more and more came to resemble a triumph: it became an expression of the universal

¹³⁵² For an overview, cf. Drinkwater 2005, 31–33.

¹³⁵³ Cf. Estiot 2004, 432 and pl. 87, no. 293.

domination of *Roma Aeterna*.¹³⁵⁴ The assumption of consulates and depictions of consular processions, accordingly, could represent a vow that Roman order would persist, and thus victory would follow in future wars as well. A similar impression is conveyed by the aurei struck for Tacitus with reverses depicting *Roma Aeterna*. A number of these aurei are struck with campaign-portraits on the obverses.¹³⁵⁵ With such combinations of iconographical object, the different threads of imperial legitimization are intertwined into one image of imperial authority.

Under the later soldier-emperors, this image is largely focusing on military power. One could assume that this recurring military imagery was conceived with the troops in mind. It is all too convenient to interpret the military imagery on the coins struck for the later soldier-emperors as evidence, if not for a 'military anarchy,' then at least for an all-important need to 'enrich the soldiers.'

In my view, the connection must not necessarily be that obvious. I do not see why military imagery could not have been intended for civilian societies, for instance for the network of provincial cities that was expanding in the second half of the third century. The citizens of these societies would have had an obvious interest in their own safety. Therefore, imagery intended to assure them of the military capacity of their emperor would surely have been welcome. I consider it reasonable to assume that it was urgent to convince not only the soldiers, but also the citizens of the Roman empire, of the victoriousness of the soldiers. As a consequence, the abundant military imagery on the coins struck for the later soldier-emperors could be interpreted not as a sign of military anarchy, but, rather, as a sign of an unbroken importance of civilian communities in the second half of the third century.

I would also like to suggest that images referring to civilian society could have been intended for the troops. Why should not the military – or rather, the military community/ies and society/ies – have an interest in the continued existence of *Roma Aeterna*? As has become evident, the evolving of provincial societies represents a crucial development in the third century. However, I have also pointed to evidence suggesting that these provincial societies could have consisted of military communities that become increasingly integrated in local civilian societies.¹³⁵⁶ I consider it likely that 'civilian' imagery could have been relevant for such societies. The 'provincialised troops' would have had an interest in keeping their local community going. After all, in the long run, even the troops were depending on *Roma Aeterna*.

I have suggested that the key to an understanding of the language of images of the soldier-emperors lies in the choice of *medium*. One reason for the overloading of coin-images with various imperial attributes is that the coin-imagery was adapted to convey symbols usually expressed in other media. Why this adaption of media took place is a further problem. I have suggested that the reason lies in the incessant

¹³⁵⁴ Cf. Östenberg 2003, 290f. and Grandvallet 2006a, 138.

¹³⁵⁵ Cf. Estiot 2004, 367 and pl. 93, no. 408.

¹³⁵⁶ Cf. Alföldy 2000, James 2001 and Coulston 2004.

warfare in the mid-third century, but also in regional and social changes, connected to the conflicts of the age.

The regional changes emerge as particularly important. During the course of the empire, the *urbs aeterna* in practice became an inconvenient place from which to direct imperial policy; the emperor needed to be *present*.¹³⁵⁷ However, as this ‘shift of gravity’ from the centre of the empire towards the periphery occurred, ‘Rome’ develops from an actual place to an idea of what the Roman world should be like. Roma became ‘an expression of the superior force of the Roman empire in general.’¹³⁵⁸ In the words of Aelius Aristides, Rome “caused the world ‘Roman’ to belong not to a city but to be the name of a sort of common race.”¹³⁵⁹

From this, it followed that ‘Rome’ did not necessarily have to be situated in the *city of Rome*. This development, in my view, is reflected by the imagery featured on coins struck at the provincial mints that were established in the second half of the third century. At these mints, imagery which had, until that point, largely been emitted from the mint in the *urbs aeterna* is reproduced. This reproduction of Roman imperial coinage could be understood as ‘provincial statements of consensus,’ directed towards Rome.¹³⁶⁰ However, the imagery on the coins struck at the provincial mints can also be understood as directed towards the *self-views* of these provinces. These coinages, in my opinion, testify to a process through which Rome is repeatedly ‘re-created outside the city of Rome.’

This process presented the role of the emperor with new demands. In order to prove worthy of rule, an emperor must be able to prove this worthiness repeatedly. Being obedient to Rome and adhering to Rome’s demands – simply *embodying* Rome – would necessarily imply that the emperor was willing to prove his ‘Romanness,’ and that that he possessed true Roman virtues. This could only be demonstrated through *action*, on the fields of valour. Accordingly, such a demonstration must also have implied that the emperor should *not* be in the city of Rome, if he was needed elsewhere. Furthermore, an emperor who remained in the city of Rome in such a situation could be regarded as a ‘bad emperor.’

This ‘imperial absence’ in itself, presented an incitement for numerous usurpations of imperial authority in the third century.¹³⁶¹ Further, above all, the emperor was expected to be *successful*. A successful emperor was, per definition, a good and just emperor: his success proved that he was chosen by the gods.¹³⁶² Therefore, actions and success decided who could become accepted as emperor. Likewise, if an emperor who had gained acceptance failed to attain success, the citizens of Rome could feel that they had no obligations to remain loyal. Accordingly, a new emperor could be proclaimed:¹³⁶³

¹³⁵⁷ Cf. Hartmann 1982.

¹³⁵⁸ Cf. Rees 1993, 196–97; Hekster 1999, 721–22.

¹³⁵⁹ Aristid. *Or.* 26.63.

¹³⁶⁰ Cf. Ando 2000, 168–74.

¹³⁶¹ Cf. Hartmann 1982, 141.

¹³⁶² Cf. Fears 1981b, 748–50.

¹³⁶³ Cf. Ando 2000, 45: “Thus loyalty to the imperial office was a vehicle for, indeed, the primary expression of, loyalty to the state. But loyalty to an individual emperor did not subsume loyalty to Rome herself,

Now while Gallienus, continuing in luxury and debauchery, gave himself up to amusements and revelling and administered the commonwealth like a boy who plays at holding power, the Gauls, by nature unable to endure princes who are frivolous and given over to luxury and have fallen below the standard of Roman valour, called Postumus to the imperial power; and the armies, too, joined with them, for they complained of an emperor who was busied with his lusts.¹³⁶⁴

In my view, the coinages of the later soldier-emperors testify to these ideas of 'usurpation.' The imagery of usurpers such as Postumus and their similarities to those of the emperors of the 'Central Empire' suggest that these emperors were, indeed, not regarded as 'usurpers' but as champions of the Roman cause. When coins were struck for usurpers with the legend ROMA AETERNE (*sic*),¹³⁶⁵ this was neither mere mimicry, nor flattery towards the emperor residing in the city of Rome. Neither was this the case when coins were struck for Carausius acclaiming this 'usurper' as '*renovator romanorum*,' nor when coins were struck for Iulianus referring to *Libertas Publica*.¹³⁶⁶

The idea of an 'ideological decentralisation' further suggests an explanation for the way in which certain coin-images of the later soldier-emperors are created. I have discussed the long-debated question of who chose the images on coins (cf. chap. 1.6). Traditionally, it has been taken for granted that images were chosen for the coins directly by the emperor, or at least by persons very close to the emperor. Accordingly, the imagery always represented an official imperial opinion.¹³⁶⁷ This understanding was refuted by Jones *et al.*, who took the opposite sceptical approach that there need not have been any intention at all behind coin-images. Instead, Jones argued that coin-images might have been chosen at random.¹³⁶⁸

In the 1980s, Levick suggested that coin-images were chosen by lesser officials who were trying to satisfy the *princeps* through choosing images which they thought the *princeps* would appreciate.¹³⁶⁹ I would like to return to this idea for a while. It has often been assumed that the production of coins at the provincial mints, which were established from the 260s onwards, was dictated by the presence of the emperor. This is an assumption similar to the one that coin-imagery was chosen by the emperor. When the emperor was present at a provincial mint, he could present the mint with

and it was possible under the empire for a usurper, or even the senate, to argue that the loyalty to Rome occasionally stood in contradiction to personal loyalty to the occupant of the throne."

¹³⁶⁴ SHA *Gallieni duo* 4.3: "Cum Gallienus in luxuria et improbitate persisteret cumque ludibriis et helluationi vacaret neque aliter rem publicam gereret, quam cum pueri fingunt per ludibria potestates, Galli, quibus insitum est leves ac degenerantes a virtute Romana et luxuriosos principes ferre non posse, Postumum ad imperium vocarunt, exercitibus quoque consentientibus, quod occupatum imperatorem libidinibus querebantur."

¹³⁶⁵ Cf. Schulte 1983, 79, no. 24.

¹³⁶⁶ Cf. Huvelin 1985a, 117, no. 10 and Gricourt 2000, 57.

¹³⁶⁷ A view, for which Sutherland was one of the most eloquent representatives; cf. for instance Sutherland 1959 and Sutherland 1983.

¹³⁶⁸ Jones 1956; cf. also Crawford 1983.

¹³⁶⁹ Levick 1982, 108f.

instructions regarding which images were to be used. In the absence of the emperor, and with a lack of imperial instructions as far as imagery was concerned, the mint would relapse into a routine, using only the most common images. Pink was a prominent advocate of this view. Based on the attribution of coin-series, Pink created elaborate reconstructions of the movements of the emperors through the empire. Sometimes, the emperors more or less literally seem to have moved from mint to mint.¹³⁷⁰

However, not only is it evident that creative coin-imagery could be used at provincial mints in situations when it is doubtful whether the emperor can have been present. Some coin-images, which refer to the presence of the emperor, also are used on occasions when an emperor cannot have been present.¹³⁷¹ Such images must be regarded as local creations. Earlier, I have suggested that such imagery could be understood as references to ‘pseudo-events’ (cf. chap. 3.3)

How should the creation of references to such ‘pseudo-events’ in the provinces be understood? In his study of the creation of regional imperial residences under the tetrarchs and in the age of Constantine I, Mayer argues that a condition for this development was so called *panegyrische Milieus*. Mayer seems to define the *panegyrische Milieu* as a (physical) arena, where the elite who controls the arena makes statements of loyalty towards the emperor, in the form of monuments. The basis for these expressions is that, since the elite and the emperor share the same values, the donors of a monument know what the emperor expected from them.¹³⁷²

This is an interesting approach. However, in my view, a ‘panegyric environment’ must not necessarily be physical. I suggest that the regional mints could be regarded as ‘virtual panegyric environments.’ How could the creation of an imperial language of images in these ‘environments’ be interpreted? In a recent article, Tonio Hölscher has discussed the concept of *transgression*. Hölscher defines this as a strategy of competition for public attention. This is done through a demonstrative trespassing of the rules for what was regarded as acceptable to express, in order to see how much one could ‘get away with.’¹³⁷³

In my view, the concept of transgression can be used to understand the increasingly expressive claims that are made for the emperors in the various mints of the empire. A case where the concept of transgression seems easily adaptable is that of the coin-imagery acclaiming the emperor as ‘*deus et dominus*,’ or acclaiming Sol as ‘*dominus imperii romani*.’ In cases such as these, the language of imperial authority

¹³⁷⁰ Pink assumes that under Probus, the eastern mints were active when the emperor were present; cf. Pink 1949, 27. For Pink’s reconstruction of the movements of Probus, cf. Pink 1949, 71–74. For his similar reconstruction of the movements of Carus, Carinus and Numerian, cf. Pink 1963, 58–67.

¹³⁷¹ One example is when coins referring to an *adventus* of two emperors were struck in a situation where only one of the emperors could have been present; cf. Pink 1963, 53 (Carus); Bastien 1972, 48f, 161, nos. 241–242 and 165, no. 266 respectively (Diocletian and Maximian).

¹³⁷² Mayer 2002, 5f: “Ein solches Modell schließt zwar die Möglichkeit einer direkten kaiserlichen Einflußnahme – wie bei Constantin deutlich wird – nicht aus; das Hauptaugenmerk liegt jedoch auf der gemeinsamen Wertebasis von Stiftern und Geehrtem, die ein selbstläufiges Kaiserlob ohne Repression möglich machte.”

¹³⁷³ Hölscher 2004, 84f.

was brought to drastic expressions; the limits for what had earlier been possible to claim, at least on coins, were ‘transgressed.’ Further, I think it is important that the above-mentioned imagery is not used in the city of Rome, but in the provincial mints of Siscia and Serdica. Accordingly, this imagery could be regarded not only as a result of transgressions, but also as a result of *provincial* transgressions.

Therefore, for one thing, it is evident that coinage is regionalized and that the language of imperial authority is echoed and repeated in the provincial mints. However, furthermore, I suggest that these mints could be regarded as provincial ‘panegyric environments’ competing for the attention of the emperor – an emperor no longer necessarily confined to the city of Rome – through ‘transgression’ of the norms for how the emperor could be depicted. Through this process, the language of imperial authority is also actively *re-created* and *re-shaped* by the same provinces.

Thereby, the provincial mints contributed to the re-shaping and re-negotiation of the role of the emperor. The most important aspect of this re-negotiation was the development of imperial authority, which was tied more directly to the *person* of the emperor.¹³⁷⁴ The coin-images where the emperor is presented as the carrier, in a literal sense, of the symbolic aspects of imperial rule (as for instance in the campaign-portraits) is an expression of this. The portrait-types recurring in the later third century, as Cathy King notes, focus on the iconography, which stresses the various aspects of imperial power, and on the ‘idea of the emperor,’ rather than on the individual who was carrying the purple at the time.¹³⁷⁵ In this sense, the coin-portraits of the soldier-emperors point forward towards the imagery of late antiquity.¹³⁷⁶ In this way, the coinages of the later soldier-emperors provide a link in a larger-scale process, through which the city of Rome was gradually deprived of much of its authority. The *urbs aeterna* was first replaced by the imperial residences of the tetrarchs, and then finally by the city of Constantinople.

To sum up, I have tried to make two points in this study. The first point is that during the reigns of the later soldier-emperors, coins were used intensively as ‘monuments in miniature.’ This happened because there was a need for an intensified communication of imperial authority over greater geographical distances. There was also a need for *negotiation* of imperial authority. The ‘interregnum’ in the autumn of 275 was only one result of this need. These needs were due to incessant warfare that was connected to a process of regionalisation of the empire. The ‘stages’ where imperial authority

¹³⁷⁴ Cf. Mayer 2002, 25: “Die neuen Staatsdenkmäler setzten nämlich die *res publica* mit dem Kaiser gleich...auch im Umgang mit den Fremden oder den Göttern ging es nun um den Kaiser als Einzelperson und nicht mehr als Vertreter der römischen Weltordnung oder des Staates.”

¹³⁷⁵ King 1999, 131: “In a very real sense the ‘personality’ of the emperor as depicted in this sort of coin portrait becomes of lesser importance than his clothing, his attributes and his associations, which can stress actual and/or symbolic aspects of imperial power.” Cf. Belloni 1988, 140: “Così il volto non è quello di un uomo che è anche imperatore, ma quello di un imperatore che è anche un uomo.”

¹³⁷⁶ R.-Alföldi 1980, 40: “Das spätantike Repräsentationsbild kennzeichnet also die Person primär als Trägerin ihres Amtes.”

had to be displayed and expressed were rapidly shifting. In this situation, coins were adapted to maintain the image of imperial presence.

The second point is that the creation of a language of imperial authority became regionalized. In 'regional panegyric environments' a new image of imperial authority is created. In this image, power is tied to the person of the emperor instead of to the city of Rome. Furthermore, these panegyric environments represent a crucial step in the creation of a new imperial geography. This geography featured new centres of political gravity, except the *urbs aeterna*. A number of such centres of political gravity emerged in Western Europe, the Balkans and in Asia Minor. I think that further investigations of this development of a 'geography of imperial culture,' especially in the Balkans and Asia Minor, would be interesting. Such investigations could contribute to an understanding of the development of the political geography in Europe in the 'post-Roman' period.

I conclude that there was indeed a 'crisis of imperial authority' during the later soldier-emperors – in one sense. The fact that individual carriers of the purple were repeatedly killed, challenged or deposed did not impair the credibility and integrity of the emperor itself; rather, it marked the failure of one specific individual to fulfil the expectations.¹³⁷⁷ In the third century, these expectations were changing. One of the problems was that of the city of Rome. The soldier-emperors still had to pay special reverence to the *urbs aeterna* – a city that no longer necessarily had the means to support them.

The 'crisis of imperial authority,' therefore, did not emerge because Roman imperial authority was at an end. In this sense, at least, there was no 'military anarchy.' On the contrary – Roman imperial authority was as strong as ever; only, it failed to correspond to reality. The Roman empire of the later half of the third century was not suffering from the domination of weak emperors. Rather, the emperors of this age were trying to cope with a task that was developing into something too complex. The demands on the role of the emperor had become impossible to fulfil. However, the Roman world of the later empire was a world that could only be ruled by an emperor. This problem could not be expressed more eloquently than by the opinion attributed in the *Historia Augusta* to the usurper Avidius Cassius:

Now Cassius...secretly hated the principate and could not brook even the title of emperor, saying that the name of empire was all the more onerous because an emperor could not be removed from the state except by another emperor.¹³⁷⁸

¹³⁷⁷ Cf. Ando 2000, 411: "Political historians, obsessed with personality, may suggest that the imperial office evolved with the accession of each new emperor. Rather, the charisma of the office ultimately dominated them ..."

¹³⁷⁸ SHA *Avidius Cassius* 1.4: "Hic ergo Cassius...oderat tacite principatum nec ferre poterat imperatorium nomen dicebatque esse eo gravius nomen imperii, quod non posset e re publica tolli nisi per alterum imperatorem."

APPENDIX: A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY, *c.* AD 260–295.

Unless otherwise stated, the chronology quoted here is that of Kienast; for a more thorough account, cf. Kienast 1996, 218–279.

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| 260 | The emperor Valerian is captured by Shapur, king of Persia. Revolts of Ingenuus and of Regalianus in the Danube provinces. Revolt of Macrianus, Macrianus iunior and Quietus in the east. Postumus proclaimed emperor in Gaul. Saloninus, the son of the emperor Gallienus, is promoted to <i>Augustus</i> in Colonia Agrippinensis; he is handed over to Postumus and executed. |
| 261 (autumn) | Macrianus and Macrianus iunior defeated by Aureolus in Illyricum and killed. Quietus and Ballista killed in the east. |
| 262 | Odaenathus, exarch of Palmyra, proclaimed <i>dux Romanorum</i> by Gallienus. |
| After 262? | Death of Valerian in captivity. |
| 264–265? | Journey of Gallienus to Greece; initiation in the mysteries of Eleusis. |
| 265 | Campaigns of Gallienus against Postumus. |
| 267 | Odaenathus murdered. Zenobia assumes power in Palmyra, on behalf of Vaballathus. |
| 268 | The Heruli raid Greece; sack of Athens. Revolt of Aureolus in Mediolanum. |
| 268 (autumn?) | Gallienus murdered under the siege of Mediolanum. Claudius Gothicus proclaimed emperor. Aureolus killed after the surrender of Mediolanum. Victory over the <i>Alamanni</i> by Lake Garda. |
| 269 | Victory over the Goths at Naïssus. Usurpation of Laelianus in Gaul; he is defeated by Postumus (?). Usurpation and death of Marius. Postumus murdered. Victorinus proclaimed emperor in Gaul. |
| 270 | Claudius Gothicus dies from the plague in Sirmium. Quintillus proclaimed emperor in Italy; Aurelian proclaimed emperor in Sirmium. Death of Quintillus. |
| 271 | Campaigns of Aurelian against Vandals, <i>Juthungi</i> and <i>Sarmati</i> . Victorinus murdered in Gaul; Tetricus proclaimed emperor. |
| 271 (March) | The ‘revolt of the moneyers’ in the city of Rome suppressed (cf. Cubelli 1992, 39). |

Winter 271–272	Aurelian in Rome; the construction of the walls of Aurelian begins.
272	Vaballathus acclaimed as <i>Augustus</i> and Zenobia acclaimed as <i>Augusta</i> ; first campaign of Aurelian against Palmyra.
273	Second campaign against Palmyra; final defeat of the city.
274	Defeat of Tetricus in Gaul; Gaul brought back under the control of Rome. Triumph of Aurelian in the city of Rome; inauguration of the <i>Templum Solis</i> .
275 (Sept–Oct?)	Aurelian murdered
275 (Nov–Dec?)	Tacitus proclaimed emperor
276 (summer?)	Death of Tacitus and proclamation of Florian as emperor in Asia Minor. Probus proclaimed emperor in the east.
276 (autumn?)	Death of Florian.
277–278	Campaigns on the Rhine and Danube frontiers.
279	Campaigns in Asia Minor and against Egypt.
280–281	Usurpation and defeat of Bonosus and Proculus in Colonia Agripinensis.
281	Usurpation of Saturninus in Asia Minor.
End of 281?	Triumph of Probus in the city of Rome.
282 (Sept?)	Murder of Probus and proclamation of Carus as emperor in Sirmium. Carinus and Numerian proclaimed <i>Caesares</i> .
283 (spring)	Campaigns of Carus and Numerian in the east. Campaigns of Carinus on the Rhine frontier; Carinus promoted to the rank of <i>Augustus</i> .
283 (summer?)	Death of Carus in the east; Numerian promoted to <i>Augustus</i> . Magnia Urbica proclaimed <i>Augusta</i> .
284 (November)	Death of Numerian. Diocletian proclaimed emperor in Nicomedia.
285	Carinus defeats the usurper Iulianus.
285 (autumn)	Carinus defeats Diocletian; death of Carinus.
285 (late autumn)	Maximian proclaimed <i>Caesar</i> .
286 (1 st of April)	Maximian promoted to the rank of <i>Augustus</i> .
End of 286 –	
Winter 287/288?	Carausius proclaimed emperor in Britain.
289	Failure of the naval expedition of Maximian against Britain.
293 (1 st of March)	Proclamation of the first tetrarchy (Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius Chlorus and Galerius).
293 (spring?)	Campaigns of Constantius Chlorus against Carausius.
End of 293	Carausius murdered by Allectus. Allectus proclaimed emperor.
296–297?	Allectus defeated by Constantius Chlorus; Britain brought back under the control of Rome.

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INDEX

The index comprises emperors, usurpers and other relevant persons, as well as mints and places of relevant events, *c.* 260–295 (both text and footnotes). Abbreviated name-forms are those used in the *CAH*². For modern place-names, cf. fig. 47.

- Allectus** 41, 73, 122, 135, 170, 171, 172, 216, 244
- Antioch** 64, 82, 84, 85, 100, 121, 142, 146, 153, 161, 173, 183, 184, 185, 189, 191, 192, 195, 196, 197, 215, 236
- Augusta Treverorum** 85, 164, 169, 173, 234
- Aurelian** 1, 27, 40, 46, 47, 53, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 69, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 93, 94, 95, 96, 98, 99, 102, 104, 108, 109, 110, 115, 116, 117, 121, 124, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 135, 137, 138, 139, 140, 142, 143, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 153, 154, 157, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 183, 184, 189, 191, 192, 193, 195, 196, 197, 217, 220, 221, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 232, 233, 235, 236, 243, 244
- Aureolus** 60, 109, 196, 243
- Ballista** 50, 243
- Bonosus** 244
- Byzantium** 159, 160, 162
- Carausius** 41, 58, 73, 79, 100, 122, 123, 135, 169, 170, 171, 172, 187, 190, 216, 239
- Carinus** 41, 64, 65, 71, 72, 73, 95, 105, 108, 111, 112, 116, 120, 121, 125, 133, 134, 140, 144, 146, 155, 156, 157, 158, 174, 175, 179, 180, 186, 187, 190, 198, 215, 216, 217, 219, 221, 225, 240, 244
- Carus** 10, 41, 47, 64, 65, 66, 71, 72, 76, 78, 79, 85, 89, 95, 100, 105, 108, 111, 112, 115, 116, 120, 121, 123, 124, 125, 133, 134, 139, 140, 143, 144, 145, 146, 150, 153, 155, 156, 157, 160, 178, 179, 180, 186, 187, 190, 194, 198, 215, 216, 217, 219, 221, 223, 225, 227, 228, 234, 235, 240, 244
- Claudius Gothicus** 6, 40, 46, 54, 58, 60, 61, 64, 69, 77, 78, 84, 94, 95, 98, 99, 109, 110, 111, 115, 117, 124, 129, 130, 137, 139, 142, 146, 150, 154, 158, 159, 160, 161, 163, 175, 176, 177, 178, 183, 189, 196, 214, 215, 218, 220, 226, 243
- Colonia Agrippinensis** 50, 182, 188, 243, 244
- Constantius Chlorus** 41, 58, 73, 74, 83, 100, 116, 122, 144, 147, 157, 190, 244
- Cyzicus** 46, 60, 65, 69, 70, 71, 82, 84, 85, 99, 100, 109, 110, 111, 142, 143, 158, 159, 161, 184, 189, 192, 193, 196, 197, 198, 225, 234
- Diocletian** 2, 13, 40, 41, 47, 65, 66, 72, 74, 79, 94, 95, 96, 100, 112, 116, 122, 125, 134, 135, 139, 140, 144, 145, 147, 158, 173, 179, 180, 187, 194, 198, 216, 217, 219, 221, 224, 233, 234, 240, 244

Domitian (usurper c. 270) 178, 179

Florian 13, 41, 45, 46, 47, 61, 62, 63, 64, 68, 70, 82, 83, 85, 99, 100, 102, 110, 115, 124, 137, 139, 143, 148, 155, 179, 184, 185, 188, 189, 193, 197, 225, 229, 230, 244

Galerius 73, 87, 100, 108, 116, 122, 144, 157, 158, 190, 194, 244

Gallienus 3, 27, 40, 46, 50, 51, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 68, 73, 76, 77, 80, 81, 84, 86, 88, 96, 98, 99, 101, 103, 104, 106, 107, 109, 114, 115, 117, 120, 121, 124, 128, 129, 132, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 146, 147, 153, 154, 159, 168, 175, 176, 177, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 188, 191, 195, 196, 213, 214, 215, 218, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 231, 233, 234, 235, 236, 239, 243

Gesoriacum 73

Ingenuus 50, 243

Iulianus (usurper, 285) 65, 72, 102, 157, 180, 235, 239, 244

Laelianus 46, 68, 164, 166, 178, 243

Londinium 173

Lugdunum 47, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 71, 72, 73, 74, 77, 78, 79, 82, 85, 86, 99, 104, 110, 112, 138, 144, 145, 147, 150, 155, 158, 164, 180, 184, 186, 187, 194, 198, 215, 216, 219, 221, 226, 234

Macrianus 46, 50, 81, 121, 243

Magnia Urbica 155, 186, 198, 216, 244

Marinianus 182

Marius 68, 164, 166, 168, 178, 243

Maximian 41, 47, 57, 58, 61, 65, 66, 67, 70, 72, 73, 74, 95, 100, 107, 108, 110, 112, 116, 122, 125, 134, 135, 139, 140, 145, 155, 158, 169, 187, 194, 217, 219, 221, 226, 232, 233, 240, 244

Mediolanum 59, 60, 61, 69, 77, 78, 80, 81, 84, 85, 98, 99, 101, 102, 104, 106, 107, 109, 110, 112, 117, 137, 141, 142,

146, 153, 154, 155, 157, 173, 188, 191, 192, 195, 196, 213, 214, 218, 220, 225, 226, 234, 243

Memor 50

Mint of unknown location 99, 159, 160, 161, 223

Mussius Aemilianus 50

Naïssus 40, 60, 84, 124, 160, 243

Nicomedia 65, 96, 173, 180, 244

Nigrinianus 174, 179, 186

Numerian 13, 41, 64, 65, 71, 72, 73, 85, 105, 111, 112, 116, 120, 121, 125, 134, 140, 144, 146, 153, 156, 157, 158, 160, 175, 179, 186, 187, 190, 198, 215, 219, 221, 240, 244

Odaenathus 40, 59, 120, 243

Palmyra 40, 59, 61, 62, 81, 84, 85, 86, 102, 121, 124, 131, 153, 159, 160, 163, 183, 191, 192, 193, 220, 223, 236, 243, 244

Perge 161

Piso 50

Postumus 40, 46, 50, 55, 56, 57, 59, 68, 80, 81, 84, 85, 98, 108, 109, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 178, 182, 184, 191, 196, 213, 214, 215, 218, 220, 222, 223, 225, 235, 236, 239, 243

Probus 32, 41, 47, 53, 54, 56, 63, 64, 66, 68, 70, 71, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80, 83, 85, 88, 89, 95, 100, 101, 102, 105, 108, 110, 111, 112, 115, 116, 118, 122, 124, 125, 129, 130, 133, 134, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 143, 144, 146, 148, 150, 155, 156, 157, 161, 162, 163, 175, 179, 180, 188, 189, 193, 194, 197, 215, 218, 219, 221, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 235, 240, 244

Proculus 244

Quietus 46, 50, 81, 121, 243

Quintillus 40, 46, 60, 77, 78, 98, 99, 102, 109, 110, 115, 124, 139, 142, 143, 150, 154, 163, 177, 178, 183, 185, 196, 197, 243

Regalianus 46, 50, 121, 243

Rome 2, 7, 9, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 39, 40, 41, 42, 46, 49, 50, 52, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 66, 68, 69, 72, 73, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 82, 83, 84, 87, 88, 89, 90, 93, 95, 96, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 104, 105, 109, 110, 111, 112, 119, 121, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 158, 159, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 171, 172, 173, 175, 176, 178, 179, 180, 184, 187, 188, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 223, 225, 226, 230, 232, 233, 234, 238, 239, 241, 242, 243, 244

Romuliana 158

Salonina 78, 128, 181, 182, 185, 195, 213

Saloninus 50, 181, 182, 188, 243

Samosata 153

Saturninus 122, 244

Serdica 61, 69, 70, 74, 75, 82, 85, 100, 102, 110, 111, 151, 161, 162, 163, 192, 193, 196, 197, 227, 228, 234, 241

Severina 99, 147, 150, 184, 185, 186, 220, 221

Shapur 5, 40, 50, 243

Sirmium 60, 64, 102, 110, 115, 124, 156, 157, 177, 197, 243, 244

Siscia 46, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 66, 69, 70, 71, 72, 75, 77, 78, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 88, 98, 99, 100, 102, 105, 109, 110, 111, 120, 142, 144, 145, 146, 150, 151, 154, 156, 157, 158, 159, 173, 179, 180, 182, 184, 186, 189, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 215, 216, 217, 218, 220, 223, 225, 226, 227, 228, 234, 241

Spalato 158

Tacitus 13, 40, 41, 45, 46, 47, 48, 53, 62, 63, 69, 75, 77, 78, 82, 83, 85, 89, 99, 102,

104, 105, 107, 108, 110, 115, 117, 124, 125, 133, 137, 138, 139, 143, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 155, 156, 161, 162, 163, 171, 179, 184, 185, 188, 193, 197, 218, 219, 229, 234, 236, 237, 244

Tetricus 78, 85, 124, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 176, 178, 179, 181, 183, 184, 189, 192, 234, 243, 244

Tetricus iunior 167, 176, 183, 184, 189, 234

Thessalonica 87, 108, 157, 173

Ticinum 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 69, 70, 71, 72, 75, 77, 78, 82, 89, 99, 100, 104, 105, 111, 112, 115, 120, 143, 146, 147, 150, 154, 155, 156, 158, 184, 186, 188, 189, 193, 197, 198, 215, 216, 219, 221, 223, 226, 234

Trebellianus 50

Tripolis 84, 102, 143, 192, 197

Vaballathus 61, 121, 153, 183, 189, 243, 244

Valerian 5, 13, 40, 46, 50, 54, 59, 68, 73, 84, 104, 121, 141, 146, 150, 168, 171, 176, 177, 181, 182, 195, 215, 243

Valerianus iunior 181, 182, 188

Victorinus 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 170, 171, 178, 179, 183, 243

Viminacium 153, 156, 169

Zenobia 61, 183, 185, 243, 244