

Rome and her enemies: Warfare in Imperial art

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By the end of the Republic, the Roman Empire had almost completely encircled the Mediterranean Sea, which became the *Mare Nostrum* to the Romans. For the preceding two centuries, its imperialism had mainly been directed towards old nations, many of them Greek. During this process Roman art became increasingly influenced by that of its opponents, as expressed so aptly in Horace's later words (*Epist.* 2.1.156):

Captured Greece took captive her uncivilized
conqueror and introduced the arts into rustic Latium

The expansion to come had the goal of incorporating the barbarian periphery, but continuous fighting also took place with the only other empire left, the Persian Empire. The enemies of the future were outside the Graeco-Roman cultural sphere. They were barbarians.

The late Republic had developed an iconography to portray victory, predominantly to be expressed in coinage: Barbarians, their hands tied behind their back, shrink beneath trophies, barbarians surrender, and victorious ancestors are depicted. A curious and very un-Greek representation is the depiction on a denarius (*RRC* 286/1) (plate 21) of the mighty warrior M. Sergius Silus, who lost his right arm in battle. He had an iron hook fixed into the stump; and mounted, holding both sword and the severed head of a Gaul in his raised left hand, he continued fighting. The Republic also witnessed the invention of the triumphal arch, perhaps the most successful piece of propaganda architecture ever invented. In origin, the triumphal arch was actually a

statue base carrying the victorious general in a chariot, and functioning, as Pliny (*HN* 34.12.7) tells us, to elevate the person represented over all other mortals. To pass through the arch was to symbolically pass under the yoke.

With the introduction of the principate, the refined political system, by which Augustus in 27 BC regularised his one-man rule, a new State Art was formed (Hannestad 1986, chap II; Zanker 1987). The period also witnessed a new setting: the Imperial forum (La Rocca 1995). Greek forms and prototypes were still basically the models to draw on as regards iconography. Roman State Art, however, developed in a different direction, and in representing battle the combatants are never idealised or singled out, as we know it from Greek art. Roman battle scenes are grim.

Augustus claimed to be only *primus inter pares*, but his power was based on victory in civil war, which could not to be celebrated as a *bellum iustum piunmque*, a just and fair war. The final clash was disguised as a war against Egypt and its notorious queen, Cleopatra. The conquest of Egypt was advertised by coins such as the denarius (*RIC*² (nos.) 275a-b; 544-46) (plate 22) showing Augustus on the obverse and a crocodile on the reverse, and simply stating AEGYPTO CAPTA.

After the war, Augustus is shown on coins as victorious in naval battle, in types like those showing Victory on the prow of a ship, himself crowning a rostral column or standing in a triumphal chariot; but such coins give no specific reference, only the legend IMP CAESAR. Augustus had two triumphal arches erected in his honour, one for the precarious victory over Mark Antony at

Actium in 31 BC and a second for the return from Parthia in 20 BC of the long-since-conquered military standards—a victory with no battles fought. Both arches were situated on the Forum Romanum. The first was demolished, perhaps to give room to the next, of which only the foundation and some fragments of the structure exist. A series of denarii illustrating the arch gives a better impression (*RIC*² no. 350) (plate 23). Parthian archers crown the building, but otherwise conquered foes are rare in Augustan art.

This same ‘victory’ is the motif on the breastplate of the cuirass of the Prima Porta statue of Augustus (plate 24). In the centre of the scene, the Parthian king presents an eagle-crowned standard to a cuirassed Roman, who cannot be identified with certainty. These two figures are surrounded by personifications and gods, to give the scene of surrender a touch of serenity and make it something approved of by the gods. The armoured emperor is addressing his soldiers by giving an *adlocutio*, as evidenced by his elevated right arm (the original fingers more extended). He is calmly moving towards the spectator, guiding him by this gesture and the direction of his stern gaze. Following the instruction, you know exactly where to stand in front of this commanding statue, representing the master of the world.¹

The main monument of the period is the Ara Pacis Augustae, the Altar of Peace, dedicated on 30 January 9 BC. It happens to be the first state monument of the new system of government, the Principate, to be fairly well preserved, and it continues to be considered among the founding monuments of Imperial Rome.² It celebrates the new era of peace, the *pax romana*, inaugurating a Golden Age, massively proclaimed in state art, and a key topic in poetry. However, no conquered enemies are rendered on the Ara Pacis—only a seated Dea Roma, symbolising that fighting has ceased. The tone of the Ara Pacis is aloof, and this goes for much Augustan State Art, including the portrait of the emperor himself. The previous hundred years had witnessed continued fighting, much in civil wars, and Augustus produced what people wanted most eagerly: peace. The doors of the temple of Janus were closed three times in his reign.

During the next generations of rulers, state art developed further by forming a series of set-piece motifs to illustrate the capability of the current ruler of this system,

which never formally became a hereditary monarchy. The mode of representation evolved has been termed the ‘Grand Tradition’ which came to make a great impact on later European art: the emperor mingles on equal terms with gods and personifications to represent an allegory of universal significance (Koeppel 1982). Various emperors had various politics, and they were to a very high degree able to put their mark on the state art of their period, and along the same lines, the ruler portrait, so to speak, became the political manifesto of the emperor (Zanker 1979; Hannestad 1986, *passim*). Warfare is usually rendered in an abstract way: the emperor going to war (*profectio*); enemies surrendering in front of the emperor, who forgives them, thereby demonstrating *clementia*. The emperor returns victorious (*adventus*), and finally celebrates a triumph, but the captives dragged along with the procession are never shown.

However, the military aspect is always present in State Art, as the security of the realm should be a matter of concern to a responsible ruler. It could be emphasised but also referred to in more general terms. Adding new land to the empire was basically considered a good thing. Victorious generals of the imperial family took on the republican tradition of adopting the names of the conquered people, such as Germanicus. And last, but not least, everyone was aware that the army was the main power basis of the emperor, who was the chief commander.

Almost every emperor celebrated triumphs and erected arches on such occasions. Good relationships with the army were always stressed, whether this was actually the case or not. Gaius invented the *adlocutio* motif on coins, to be used by all later emperors. The most refined version of this motif was struck under Nero, who never cared for the army. Nero also had his triumphal arch rendered on coins in a very detailed, bold, three-quarter-face composition (F. Kleiner 1985).

Claudius was the first great organiser after Augustus. Part of his scheme involved the annexing of new territories, some of them by war. The wars were, of course, not fought by the scholarly emperor himself, but he was entitled to the credit. During the Early and High Empire, the capability of the emperor as a general was not essential, and whether he or his generals fought the wars is not necessarily reflected in art. Most spectacular was the

Claudian conquest of Britain, begun in 43. Claudius gave his son the name Britannicus. A triumph was granted, coins celebrating the victory were minted, and an arch erected, spanning the Via Lata. A very provincial artistic offshoot of this war has emerged in the recently excavated *sebasteion* in Aphrodisias in Caria. A great part of the reliefs adorning this building celebrate the imperial family. One of these reliefs rather oddly depicts Claudius, in heroic nudity, knocking down the personified Britannia (R.R.R. Smith, *JRS* 77 (1987) 115-17, pls. XIV f.).

The Flavian dynasty came to power without any formal legitimacy, being in no way related to the Julio-Claudian house.³ Vespasian and his son and successor, Titus, had earned their merits by suppressing the Jewish rebellion, and much early Flavian propaganda in the arts centres around the Jewish war. It is a much-favoured motif in coinage such as the sesterce struck in 71 (plate 5). The reverse shows the emperor standing in full armour and leaning on a spear, his foot on a conquered helmet while he looks down at the female personification of Judaea, sitting in grief beneath a palm tree; the legend explains the scene as *IVDAEA CAPTA*.

The unfinished arch of Titus in the Forum Romanum is the sole preserved major monument celebrating this war. Of the planned decoration, only the twin internal panels of the archway have been carved in full scale to depict the magnificent celebration of the triumph itself.⁴

The arch of Titus remained unfinished, owing to the premature death of the emperor. His younger brother and successor, Domitian, had no share in the Jewish war. He turned the focus to the North, following the policy laid down by his father, and added new land in Germania by conquering the land wedge between the upper reaches of the Rhine and the Danube. This wedge was indeed a dangerous point on the border, as Augustus had already perceived and tried to remedy. The Germanic tribes were quickly defeated. Domitian celebrated a triumph and adopted the name Germanicus. An aureus (*BMC* II no. 143) (plate 26) refers to this war by depicting a mourning Germania, seated on a shield, before which lies a broken spear.

Domitian took great pride in State Art, but owing to

his later *damnatio memoriae*, his coinage is, like Nero's, the main evidence. Of his many triumphal monuments, only two relief panels survive, found stored beneath the Palazzo della Cancelleria—hence the name—and they show two most unique scenes. On the one, the young Domitian receives his father in Benevento, when he returns from the East. The scene demonstrates how Vespasian approved of his son's handling of affairs in Rome in the preceding period (which he did not). The second panel (plate 27) tells of a very reluctant Domitian, his face re-cut to become a Nerva, departing for the Germanic war, by his hesitance defending himself against accusations of being a warmonger (Hannestad 1986, 136). Virtus pushes him forwards while the encouraging couple, Mars and Minerva, appealingly turn their faces to him. In front is preserved a wing of Victory, flying ahead to assure the successful issue of the war. The scene differs in its entire composition from an ordinary *profectio* scene in which the emperor leaves the city firmly and steadily. These two panels must have been part of a major series showing the usual stock of set-piece compositions, including the triumph, similar to the eleven panels from a lost arch of Marcus Aurelius (see below). The two surviving panels of Domitian were apparently too strange or personal for reuse, while the rest of the series could be adapted to serve the propaganda of a new emperor.

Trajan became the great—and last—conqueror to expand the empire beyond its defensible limits.⁵ The Nabatean kingdom was annexed as the province Arabia; Dacia was conquered in two bloody wars, and finally the Persians were forced to give up Armenia and the lowland as far as the Zagros range bordering the Iranian plateau. Trajan furnished himself with three victory names, Germanicus, Dacicus and Parthicus, and he had himself depicted on coins in the act of crowning a new Parthian vassal king (*BMC* III nos. 1045ff.) or trampling the personifications of Armenia, Tigris and Euphrates with the legend *ARMENIA ET MESOPOTAMIA IN POTESTATEM P(ropuli) R(omanae) REDACTAE* (*BMC* III nos. 331f.) (plate 28). Trajan's wars exerted heavy pressure on resources, but also resulted in some short-term profit. In particular, the conquest of Dacia, with its rich gold mines, enabled him to build the vast forum in Rome, as

large as those of his three predecessors put together, and the last to be created. He could proudly announce that the cost was paid from his personal share of the booty (*ex manubiis*), and state art emphasises the role of the emperor as Commander in Chief.

The Forum of Trajan marks the zenith of Roman power and is the monument to be referred to in later times as symbolising the greatness of Rome (La Rocca, 1995; Packer 1997). The enclosure wall was bordered with bound Dacians of colossal size, eight of which have been re-placed on the Arch of Constantine. Likewise, four sections of a continuous representation of a great battle, presumably from the facade of the Basilica Ulpia, have been re-used on this same arch. In its mode of representation, this Great Trajanic Frieze is an ideal synthesis of war and the ensuing triumphal celebration, held in the Grand Tradition (Hannestad 1986, 168-70; Leander-Touati 1987). The two scenes depicting the emperor, now with his head re-cut to a portrait of Constantine, have both been placed in the central passageway. On the one, a fierce battle is fought around the central figure of the emperor, while the turmoil is easing on both sides (plate 29). To the right in this section, Roman soldiers proudly display the trophy of trophies: severed heads of the enemy. The emperor is mounted, his mantle flying above his bare head; he lifts his right arm as if he were Jupiter himself. He is the epitome of the aggressive soldier emperor, who in the following century was to become the all-dominant type. The major part of the coins which refer to the Dacian wars are correspondingly aggressive. The barbarians cringe, wretched and small, at the feet of the emperor, and like a Near Eastern monarch, Trajan, with his foot on the head of a diminutive Dacian, treads him into the dust (*BMC* III nos. 242f. and 822ff.). This very picture is evoked by the Cynical philosopher Dio Chrysostom, as showing one of the most fundamental qualities the ideal monarch (i.e. Trajan) should possess: to be terrible to his country's enemies. On the opposite panel, the scene has changed without any marked transition, to an *adventus*. With a crowd of lictors as background, Trajan stands before the gates of Rome. He is being let into the city by Virtus, and at the same time being crowned by Victory.

On this same Forum, behind the Basilica Ulpia, the

viewer could observe the Column of Trajan, showing a very different representation of the Dacian wars, held in the so-called narrative tradition, by which all aspects of warfare are registered. Up the shaft of the column in 23 turns winds a more than 200m long frieze, in the same manner as a book scroll would appear, if it were to be held in only one corner. And the column with its band is undoubtedly meant to appear like a scroll in stone. On the earlier coins depicting the column, it is not surmounted by the statue of Trajan, as it came to be, but by the library's bird, the owl of Minerva, and flanking the column were the twin buildings of the Biblioteca Ulpia, which contained the written pendant, Trajan's own *commentarii* on the wars. Both Dacian wars are pictured on Trajan's Column, separated by a standing Victory reporting success on a shield. The models for the individual scenes were probably those sketches made in the field with a view to producing paintings to be carried in the triumphal procession. The scenes are extremely detailed with a wealth of antiquarian details. They relate history, but are not historical in the strict sense. They present formally organised scenes depicting typical activities of the campaign: marches, battles (plate 30), the surrender of the enemies, sacrifices and the *adlocutio* (plate 31). As the emperor is shown addressing his soldiers, he is also shown attending his men when they are busy building roads or making fortifications, etc. He is never accompanied by the gods. In the very few instances when deities appear, they are part of the setting. From his river, Danubius looks kindly on Romans crossing, and in the great battle of Tapae (plate 30), Jupiter Tonans supports the Roman cause, but keeps in the background like an approaching thunderstorm. In nearly all scenes the emperor is represented, but in a very different mode compared to the great battle frieze. He is the *primus inter pares*, not invulnerable and god-like as in the Great Trajanic frieze. The column of Trajan had a successor in the Column of Marcus Aurelius, a replica, but very different at the same time (see below).

Hadrian had to face realities. Expansion had gone too far. He withdrew from the East, and he wished to do likewise from Dacia. The great wall across Britain was built: the empire began to entrench itself within permanent borders. Hadrian took on the appearance of a

Greek, the first emperor to wear a beard, but he was an experienced commander. His propaganda includes the military aspect, but in very general terms (Hannestad 1986, 191), and focuses instead on the empire as a commonwealth of equal members. On coins, Hadrian is received by grateful provinces, and sometime he restores them: he raises the humble female personification kneeling before him. Each province is named by an inscription and identified by attributes, such as a palm tree for Iudaea. In an early issue, he restores Oikumene with the inscription *RESTITVTORI ORBIS TERRARVM* (*BMC* nos. 121ff.). This very general representation of the emperor's concern for the realm became a main motif of the chaotic next century. Warfare is absent in Hadrian's propaganda; he never tramples conquered foes,⁶ and the defeat of the second Jewish rebellion, just as bloody as the first one suppressed by Vespasian and Titus, is silenced as regards coinage.

The relatively stable period of Hadrian continued during the reign of Antoninus Pius, but great changes lay ahead. Growing unrest along the borders turned into invasions, and during the 160's the North witnessed the first great wave of migrations. Germanic tribes besieged the great port of Aquileia in North Italy, which came as a terrible shock to Rome. Antoninus Pius had spent all his time in Rome; Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, his co-regent during the first years, had to act, taking command in person. Lucius went East to fight the Persians. They were defeated (by his generals) with heavy losses and a punishing plague followed. Along the northern border, Marcus was forced to fight enervating wars more or less continuously for eight years. In his *Meditations*, composed during his stay at the northern frontier, he takes the role of the mild father of the nation, the image also presented in other sources. The view of the battlefield was for him horrendous (*Med.* 8.34): 'You have seen a hand or foot cut off, a head severed from the trunk, and lying some way off, you have an image of what man makes of himself. But this emperor was to wage more bloody and merciless wars than the Empire had ever experienced. The battles mostly took place in what is modern Bohemia, but to annex the land was now out of the question. The coins show a predominance of military types, culminating with the triumph in

176. It was his second triumph for victory in the wars *Bellum Germanicum* and *Bellum Sarmaticum*. Marcus could now boast of four victory names (against Trajan's three) and Faustina, the empress, became the first *Mater Castrorum*, 'Mother of Camps' a title regularly to be used in the following century, and frequently appearing in coinage.

Marcus' northern campaigns have resulted in two important and very different monuments: the relief panels from a lost triumphal arch and the Aurelian Column. The first upholds the Grand Tradition, with its congeries of gods and mortals within the same frame, where 'historical' scenes alternate with allegorical ones (plate 32). Among preserved monuments of this genre these relief panels represent the culmination, but also the end. They are now found dispersed, with eight reused in the attic of the Arch of Constantine, three on exhibit in the Palazzo dei Conservatori, and a fragment with a head in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen.⁷ The architectural form and location of the monument is otherwise unknown. The 15-year old Commodus was shown standing in front of his father in the triumphal chariot but has been cut away following his *damnatio memoriae*. The panels on the Arch of Constantine have had the head of Marcus changed to one of Constantine for the new context.

The panels portray the ideal emperor by all his virtues. He goes to war, he makes proper sacrifices, he defeats the enemy, but forgives them when they surrender, thereby showing *clementia*. He brings order to the subdued land by inserting a vassal king. He returns, celebrating the triumph, finishing it with the sacrifice to Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitol, and finally he shows *munificentia* by distributing money to the Roman People. The panels follow the general trend of the 'Grand Tradition' and accordingly no fierce battles are fought. The emperor is shown philosopher-like with long hair and beard, his face worn and tired, telling its tale of what a heavy burden imperial office must have been. Always at his side, as if watching him, is his second-in-command and son-in-law, Pompeianus, a stern military-looking man, with hair and beard cut short, as it became the fashion for the ruler image of the next century (cf. plate 15). With great artistic, as well as symboli-

cal, effect, the Emperor and his second in command are set up against each other. Severe and relentless, Pompeianus appears the professional soldier of the future, while Marcus embodies all the traditional virtues, not least *humanitas*. However, Marcus' portrait was manipulated, in one of the few cases where we can tell. From the court physician, Galen, we learn that Marcus was just as closely trimmed as his staff, 'right down to the skin', for hygienic reasons, as protection against the plague (Hannestad 1986, 236).

The relief panels illustrate the horrors of war, but only indirectly. In contrast, on the Column of Marcus they are very direct and insistent (plates 33-34). This column, which was modelled on Trajan's, was voted in 180 after the death of Marcus and completed about 193. The relief band, reporting on the two wars *Bellum Germanicum et Sarmaticum*, twines upwards, and, as on Trajan's Column, the two wars are separated by a Victory writing on a shield. Although very much influenced by the predecessor, as a historical document it has nothing of its stringency and only a few scenes can be identified with certainty. Two of these are, however, markers in ancient art, as they portray miracles. In one, a bolt of lightning sets fire to an enemy siege machine, thereby saving the Emperor himself, who was besieged in a fort; in the other a thunderstorm sweeps the enemy away. This event has been described by several authors, in most detail by Cassius Dio (72.8.2). The Roman army was trapped in a valley, exhausted by the burning sun and by thirst: 'Suddenly many clouds gathered, and a mighty rain, not without divine interposition, burst upon them.' It is this deliverance we see in the form of a demonic cloud formation, from whose body the rain is pouring down. The Romans storm forth, some with their shields over their heads for protection against the cloudburst, while the barbarians are veritably flushed away. The rain demon is a peculiar figure, entirely without parallel in classical art, and is a precursor of the Medieval fable figures. At the great battle of Tapae shown on Trajan's Column (plate 10), Jupiter appears in the background, as though a thunderstorm is brewing, but he is not interfering directly in the battle. Now fate is decided by supernatural powers in quite a different manner than when there was a concrete relationship between

the Romans and their gods, when *pietas* meant the observance of sacrifices and rituals. Such events as the lightning destroying the siege machine and the sudden appearance of a saving thunderstorm were regarded as incontrovertible miracles, invoked by prayer. The two miracle scenes illustrate the ongoing change of religiousness of society. Consequently the column depicts only four very insignificant sacrifices against the many different and very detailed on Trajan's column.

Compared with its predecessor, the Aurelian Column bears an almost hysterical sense of doom. Thus, one scene (LXI) shows barbarians guarded by Roman cavalry, beheading their compatriots. The fear of the bound barbarian awaiting his fate is shown with great effect. The written sources relate that the war against the northern barbarians was exceedingly bloody. Alone in the first fateful offensive across the Danube, 20,000 men were lost. The barbarians, on their part, were pressed forward from the north and east, while the Romans were short of men and supplies and were forced to admit that their frontier defence could not withstand the pressure. The situation has thus changed fundamentally since Trajan's time, and the Column clearly shows this. During the Dacian wars, the Romans had sometimes been exposed to great pressure, but were never fundamentally in peril. Now both sides fought for survival.

The barbarians' faces are highly expressive studies in ferocity or fear, with no tendency towards personal characterisation, as is seen on Trajan's Column or on the Aurelian panels. Correspondingly, the Roman soldiers have become mere stereotypes. Generally, the faces are coarse and vulgar, representing a type which came to dominate society right up to the Emperor himself in the following century (plates 35-36).

On Trajan's Column, captives are led away in a quiet and dignified manner, or collected in camps. In the Aurelian Column, this occurs with the greatest possible violence. In one scene (plate 34), the male population of a village is killed and women and children dragged off into captivity. The emperor stands with an escort, including the ubiquitous Pompeianus, floating on a segment of turf in the midst of the turmoil and watches a soldier hacking an already fallen and defenceless barbarian to death. Often women and children try to escape,

but in vain, and the Roman soldiers do not shrink even from cutting down captive women.

The Severan dynasty is the last stable period before military anarchy. The main monument of the dynasty is the triple-gated arch on the Forum Romanum, dedicated in 203, to celebrate a victory over the Parthian Empire. It differs from earlier arches erected in Rome in that the usual relief slabs in the Grand Tradition of the Marcus Aurelius panels do not occur here, but have been replaced by four square fields which look like triumphal paintings transposed to stone. This form of presentation, which in style follows the tradition of the Aurelian Column, is not felicitous here, and had no imitators. The Grand Tradition was gone, and the later arches of Diocletian and Constantine were forced to loot older monuments for grand scale representative reliefs.

For nearly a century, until the reign of Diocletian, no major monument was built by the hastily shifting emperors of the military anarchy. The political messages of the time become low-level focussing on the capability of the emperor as a general (Hannestad, 1986, 285-301). Some of these emperors were almost illiterate, but all were keen warriors; a brutal face became the ideal. This goes for Philip, nicknamed the Arab, owing to his origin as a son of a Nabatean chieftain (plate 35), under whose rule Rome in 248 celebrated its millenary. The army became all-dominant as an economic and political power, modelling the mental framework; as a letter of the period states: 'everyone is in the army'. To cope with the horsemen of the newly founded Sassanian Empire in Persia, Gallienus introduced a military reform that created the heavy cavalry, which became the fundamental force of the Medieval period, and he excluded senators from taking commands. The army was no longer for amateurs.

The short-lived emperors all claim eternal victory. Almost by definition, the victory is absolute, and given to the person who, by being emperor, is *semper invictus*—*semper triumphator*. A common type in Aurelian's coinage portrays the emperor as RESTITVTOR ORBIS (terrarum) and he embellishes himself with victory titles in numbers that would be equalled only by Constantine the Great, all with the epithet *Maximus*, caused by the ever-increasing word inflation: Arabicus M., Carpicus M., Dacicus M., Germanicus M., Gothicus M.,

Palmyrenicus M., Parthicus M., Persicus M., Sarmaticus M. Like the coin reverses, the many titles reflect the tendency of the times. Every emperor asserts that everything is bigger, stronger, and better than ever before, so that state propaganda became reduced to pure formula without any real content.

Out of this chaos emerged with the reign of Diocletian a bureaucratic militarised system, the Tetrarchy. As guardians of the restored order, the four Tetrarchs stand in Venice, reproduced in two porphyry reliefs set into the south corner of San Marco (plate 36). With one hand they grip their sword and with the other embrace each other. *Virtus* and *concordia augustorum*, the two fundamental and essential imperial virtues since Severan times, are illustrated here. The bearded man on the left in each group is an Augustus, while the clean-shaven one at his side is the, by definition younger, Caesar. The mask-like faces are glowering fiercely at a hostile world threatening the system. They are clad in the characteristic military uniform of their times: plain cuirass with jewel-studded belt, and above this a *paludamentum*. On their heads they wear the so-called Illyrian bearskin cap, which is itself synonymous with the Tetrarchy as a system. A world of difference from the Prima Porta statue of Augustus with its almost civilian appearance, stressed by the ornate cuirass and open composition, addressing the spectator—from the emperor as *primus inter pares* to the emperor as *dominus et deus*.

Constantine had to make a fresh start. With the establishment of a universal monarchy and the foundation of a new imperial capital in Constantinople, Constantine accepts the full consequences and overtly invokes all Roman emperors' more or less secret ideal, Alexander the Great. The type is announced with the vicennalia issue, to which belongs the medallion struck in Siscia in 326/7 (*RIC* no. 206) (plate 37). Constantine is now presented as a Hellenistic ruler, unambiguously wearing a jewelled diadem. With head thrown back, and eyes wide-open, he looks to God on high. His portrait encompasses a blend of Augustus and Trajan, suiting to the imperial salutation of Late Antiquity: *felicior Augusto, melior Traiano*. Eusebius blandly states that 'monarchy excels all other kinds of constitution and government'.

The portrait of Constantine, as rendered on the me-

dallion, establishes the emperor mask of all future emperors and the reverse outlines the relation to the enemies: the emperor fully armed, carrying a trophy, drags a diminutive, bound barbarian with him while he treads down a similarly small, tied barbarian in front of him.

The old system, the principate, as invented by Augustus, had failed to cope with the world that had emerged. Run by an educated nobility, it was geared for economic and military expansion. State art was sophisticated in giving variegated messages to the viewer, and often the touch of the individual emperor is felt. Regarding 'Rome and her enemies', State Art of the Early and

High Empire tells of expansion and consolidation, but in the later period of the Adoptive Emperors, future collapse can be sensed. In order to keep the Empire intact as to internal structures, and dam up the waves of barbarians, the military aspect became all-important in the State Art of the Later Roman Empire. State art of the Early and High Empire may not tell the truth, just as Late Roman State art does not, but it says something of how Rome became increasingly stressed by her enemies.

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Notes

- 1 In the museum, the statue is turned too much to the right, thereby revealing that the right arm is oversized according to natural proportions. This same unhappy view is constantly repeated in most frontal illustrations, cf. Hannestad *Klio* 81 (1999) 284-86 (review of Elsner 1995).
- 2 For a general survey with bibliography, see S. Settis in *Kaiser Augustus* 1988, 400-26 and most recently, Conlin, 1997. On the re-working in post-Augustan time, see Hannestad 1994, 20-67. On Augustan Rome in general, Favro 1996.
- 3 On Flavian Rome in general, see Darwall-Smith 1996.
- 4 They, too, are only partly finished, Pfanner 1983. Presumably the arch should have been as richly adorned as the Arch of Trajan in Benevento.
- 5 Various aspects of the expansion to the north are treated in the

- exhibition catalogue (Ancona) *Traiano al confini dell'Impero* (ed. G.A. Popescu) (Milano: Electa 1998).
- 6 The statue of an armoured Hadrian, his foot on a subdued barbarian from Hierpytna, now in Istanbul (inv. 585) is actually reworked, presumably from a statue of Domitian. It is obvious, however, not noted, as illustrated in the Pl. 13.a in Wegner 1956, cf. N. Hannestad *JRS* 84 (1994) 192-97, review of Kleiner 1992.
- 7 G. Koepfel, 'Die historischen Reliefs der römischen Kaiserzeit IV' *Bonner Jahrbücher* 186 (1986) 47-75. It has been suggested that a parallel series featuring Commodus existed, see E. Angelicoussis, 'The Panel reliefs of Marcus Aurelius', *Römische Mitteilungen* 91 (1984) 141-205. Recently the bottom part of a relief of similar size and composition has been noted on the Forum Romanum behind the Curia—oral communication from Tonio Hölscher, who noticed it and had it transferred to the courtyard of the Antiquario Forense.