

***Abolitio memoriae* of Roman sovereigns and usurpers in the 1st - 4th centuries AD – exclusion from the citizen body**

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Abstract: *Abolitio memoriae of Roman sovereigns and usurpers in the 1st-4th centuries – exclusion from the citizen body.* This article examines the phenomenon of *abolitio memoriae* in the Roman Empire, with a focus on the annulment of the legal status of emperors and usurpers during the 1st to 4th centuries A.D. The study analyzes how Roman legal and narrative sources describe the process through which rulers considered *hostes*, *hostes publici*, *tyranni*, or *rebelles* were systematically deprived of their citizenship status and expelled from collective civic memory. A central element of this analysis is the identification of legal phrases that highlight this reality. For instance, terms such as *hostis publicus*, *publicus grassator*, *oppugnator*, *publicus turbator*, *perduellis*, and *proscriptus* underscore the intention of the initiators of the act of condemnation, either the Senate or the emperor, to transform certain disgraced figures into non-persons. These expressions reveal the complex dynamics of *abolitio memoriae* as a means of cultural erasure and political retribution, with the ultimate goal of restoring social and moral order. Through an analysis of narrative, legal, and epigraphic sources, the study examines how *abolitio memoriae* was used as a tool to control collective memory, stigmatizing emperors, usurpers, and rebels considered threats to social and political stability.

Keywords: *hostis*, *tyrannus*, *usurper*, *rebel*, social disgrace

Rezumat: *Abolitio memoriae a suveranilor romani și uzurpatorilor în secolele I-IV – excluderea din corpul cetățenesc.* Acest articol examinează fenomenul *abolitio memoriae* în Imperiul Roman, atenția fiind concentrată asupra anulării statutului juridic al împăraților și uzurpatorilor în secolele I-IV e.n. În textul studiului se analizează modul în care sursele juridice romane și cele narative

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descriu procesul prin care conducătorii considerați *hostes*, *hostes publici*, *tyranni* sau *rebeldes* erau sistematic lipsiți de statutul de cetățeni și expulzați din memoria colectivă civică. Un element central al acestei analize este identificarea sintagmelor cu valoare juridică ce evidențiau această realitate. De exemplu, termeni precum *hostis publicus*, *publicus grassator*, *oppugnator*, *publicus turbator*, *perduellis* și *proscriptus* subliniază intenția inițiatorilor actului de condamnare, Senatul sau împăratul, de a transforma în non-persoane anumite figuri căzute în dizgrație. Aceste expresii dezvăluie dinamica complexă a *abolitio memoriae* ca mijloc de ștergere culturală și răzbunare politică, cu scopul final de a restaura ordinea socială și morală. Printr-o analiză a surselor narrative, juridice și epigrafice, în studiu s-a examinat modul în care *abolitio memoriae* a fost utilizată ca instrument de control al memoriei colective, stigmatizând împărații, uzurpatorii și rebelii considerați amenințări pentru stabilitatea socială și politică.

Cuvinte-cheie: *hostis*, *tyrannus*, uzurpator, rebel, dizgrație socială

Introduction

At the beginning of the movie *Gladiator*, the character Maximus Decimus Meridius, played by Russell Crowe, utters the words: "What we do in life echoes in eternity". In order to emphasize the significance of narrative sources in conducting scientific research, we will also refer to the work of Tacitus, *Historiae*, in the pages of which he expresses the following: *mortem omnibus ex natura aequalem oblivione apud posteros vel gloria distingui*¹⁵¹. These phrases perfectly reflect the Roman view of posterity, as the actions during one's life determined how a person was remembered in the collective consciousness - either commemorated or damned through a harsh process known as *abolitio memoriae*. Another modern phrase used by researchers to highlight this complex ancient phenomenon, which has persisted in various forms up until the contemporary period, is *damnatio memoriae*.

The condemnation to oblivion took place in several stages. Initially, the person in question was excluded from the civic body, a fact highlighted in narrative, legal, and epigraphic sources through the use of judicially significant terms such as *hostis* or *hostis publicus*. The action was initiated either by a *senatus consultum* issued by the Roman Senate, a practice specific to the period between the first century and the second half of the second century, or by the direct will of a sovereign, a situation observable from the

¹⁵¹ Tacitus, *Hist.*, I, 21.1.

reign of Septimius Severus (193-211). The latter practice began to solidify in the 3rd century, reaching its full development in the fourth century

Other stages of the condemnation included: confiscation of property, annulment of wills, and invalidation of all rulings, decisions, and customs imposed by the deceased sovereign/usurper. His name was erased from official records, and inscriptions made in his honour, as well as iconographic representations, were altered or destroyed. His honours were revoked, his commemoration was prohibited, and his body was desecrated. Among the vexations applied to the body were: decapitation and the procession of the head; dismemberment through: mutilation, tearing or breaking into pieces; other punitive measures included: strangulation, hooking, throwing the body into rivers or burning it; leaving the body to the birds or dogs; throwing the body to the lions; desecrating the body with a horse; stripping the body; tying it up; crucifixion; the sack punishment; the pitchfork punishment; interference with the burial ritual.

In addition to those previously mentioned, we also add verbal and physical violence intended to affect the victim emotionally and psychologically, but it is important to note that these actions did not have a legal character: the corrosion of personality or physique; insult, throwing filth, pulling hair or beard, slapping the face, and, last but not least, stabbing the throat with a sword. The same punishments were applied to supporters of the condemned. Society generally reacted with joy, considering the removal of these socially harmful elements as beneficial. The victim's birthday became a *dies nefastus*.

The first century

Caius Iulius Caesar (Caligula) (37-41 AD) was the first Roman ruler whose memory faced a form of condemnation to oblivion, although it is important to note that this was not enacted within an official context or through a *senatus consultum* issued by the Senate¹⁵². Thus, his condemnation was *de facto*. Nonetheless, records indicate that within the Senate, there was an intention to issue a legal decree to elicit public disdain toward him. However, as Cassius Dio and Zonaras reported, Claudius (41-54 AD), Caligula's successor, opposed this initiative¹⁵³. Despite the fact that the Senate did not condemn his memory, in the view of several ancient and

¹⁵² Zugravu 2012, 262, n. 97.

¹⁵³ Cassius Dio, LX, 4; Zonaras, XI, 8. See also Drijvers 2006, 13, 17-18; Haymann 2018, 265.

Byzantine authors, including Philo of Alexandria, Pliny the Elder, Flavius Iosephus, Cassius Dio, Zosimus, and Georgius Monachus, the sovereign became an enemy of the cities; a devourer of the people; a plague; the cause of all evils; a torment of humanity; a tyrant¹⁵⁴.

In the year 42 AD, shortly after Claudius was appointed as Augustus, Lucius Arruntius Camillus Scribonianus, *legatus Augusti pro praetore* of the province *Dalmatia*, at the insistence of Lucius Annius Vinicianus, a Roman senator who was among the leaders of a pro-republican faction, expressed intentions to seize power. However, his ambition was doomed to fail at an early stage, as he and his collaborators were eliminated and labelled as *hostes*. Scribonianus was considered a provocateur of civil war; an author of a popular movement intended to divide society; an individual who harboured thoughts and plans to rebel; a seducer of the legions to persuade them to change their oath; his action was regarded as a revolt; a rebellion against Claudius¹⁵⁵.

If the *abolitio memoriae* of his predecessor, Caligula, was *de facto*, in the case of Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus (54-68 AD), the first official condemnation of a Roman emperor was carried out. Tacitus reported that until that time, there had been no condemned emperor¹⁵⁶. Nero was designated as *hostis* shortly before ending his life, which enabled the enforcement of actions against him¹⁵⁷. This episode was recorded by Suetonius, Cassius Dio, Eutropius, Orosius, John of Antioch, and Zonaras¹⁵⁸. In an effort to emphasize the bloody nature of the emperor, Pliny the Elder described Nero as *hostis generis humani*, while Eutropius employs the phrase *bonis omnibus hostis fuit*¹⁵⁹. Confronted with the new reality and abandoned

¹⁵⁴ Philo, *Leg. ad Gai.*, 4; 14; 31; 44; Iosephus, *AI*, XIX, 1.3; 10; 12-13; 16; 19; 2.2-4; 3.3; Pliny the Elder, VII, 45; Cassius Dio, LIX, 3; 20; Zosimus, I, 6.2; Georgius Monachus, *Chron.*, III, 116 (in PG 110, 383).

¹⁵⁵ Tacitus, *Hist.*, I, 89.2; II, 75; *Ann.*, XII, 52; Suetonius, *Claud.*, 13.2; 29.2; 35.2; *Otho*, 1.2; 3; Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* III, 16; Cassius Dio, LX, 15-16; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, IV, 5; Orosius, VII, 6, 6-8; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 7. See also Kienast 2004, 95; Zugravu 2012, 265-266, n. 108; Parat 2016, 191-207; Zugravu 2022b, 321-322, n. 75.

¹⁵⁶ Tacitus, *Hist.*, I, 16.1.

¹⁵⁷ Varner 2001, 48; Flower 2006, 199-200, 212, 332 (n. 4), 333 (n. 6); Varner 2004, 47, 49-50, 66, 71, 73, 78-81, 84-85; Kienast 2004, 97; Potter 2004, 98; Drijvers 2006, 13, 18; Zugravu 2012, 280, n. 144; Pearson 2016, 132; Haymann 2018, 265, 267; Królczyk 2018, 869; de Jong 2019, 23.

¹⁵⁸ Suetonius, *Nero*, 49.2; Cassius Dio, LXIII, 27; Eutropius, VII, 15.1; Orosius, VII, 7.13; John of Antioch, fr. 174; Zonaras, XI, 14.

¹⁵⁹ Pliny the Elder, VII, 46; Eutropius, VII, 14.1. See also Champlin 2003, 40-41, 280 (n. 11); Zugravu 2022b, 352, n. 147.

by most of his supporters, Nero decided to flee to the country house of one of his freedmen, Phanon, located north of Rome. Among those who followed him, besides Phanon, were Sporus, Epaphroditus, and Neophytus¹⁶⁰.

Shortly after his escape, during the night of June 9-10, the emperor decided to take his own life, but not before uttering the well-known phrases: *nec amicum habeo nec inimicum* and *qualis artifex pereo*¹⁶¹. Thus, the Julio-Claudian dynastic continuity came to an end, and socio-political instability began to take hold.

According to some researchers, including John Pollini and Fred S. Kleiner, Nero was subjected to a *de facto* condemnation¹⁶². Other historians, such as Edward Champlin, argue that the emperor was not condemned to oblivion at all¹⁶³.

The rise of L. Sulpicius Galba (68-69) was prompted by the revolt of Vindex. When he was proposed as emperor, Galba rejected the titles of *Caesar* and *Imperator* but accepted that of *legatus senatus ac populi Romani*¹⁶⁴. When the news reached Nero, he persuaded the Senate, as reported by Plutarch, to declare Galba *πολέμιος*, which is the Greek equivalent of the Latin term *hostis publicus*¹⁶⁵. In the same vein, his successors, Marcus Otho (69), Aulus Vitellius (69), and Flavius Vespasianus (69-79), were regarded as *hostes*. In the context of the civil wars that ensued after Nero's death, the term *hostis* had multiple meanings - it signified exclusion from the political body; it reflected the

¹⁶⁰ Iosephus, *BI*, IV, 9.2; Tacitus, *Hist.*, III, 68.1; Suetonius, *Nero*, 48.1 and 3; 49.2-3; Cassius Dio, LXIII, 27 and 29; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 5.16; Eutropius, VII, 15.1; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, V, 7; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 68; Orosius, VII, 7, 13; John of Antioch, fr. 174; Cassiodorus, *Chron.*, a. 69. See also Bruun 1989, 41, 48, 52; Champlin 2003, 4-5, 272 (n. 8); Zugravu 2012, 280, n. 144; Zugravu 2022b, 355, n. 154.

¹⁶¹ Suetonius, *Nero*, 47.3; 49.1-3; Cassius Dio, LXIII, 28-29; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, V, 8; John of Antioch, fr. 174. See also Champlin 2003, 5-6, 37, 49-51, 272 (n. 10), 282 (n. 29); Zugravu 2012, 281, n. 147. Concerning Nero's death, the sources present varying accounts: some authors, such as Flavius Iosephus (*BI*, IV, 9.2), Aurelius Victor (*Caes.*, 5.16), Eutropius (VII, 15.1), and Orosius (VII, 7.13), supported the account of suicide; others, including Suetonius (*Nero*, 48.3; *Dom.*, 14.4), Cassius Dio (LXIII, 29; LXVII, 14), and John of Antioch (fr. 174), mentioned that he was assisted by Epaphroditus. Furthermore, Pseudo-Aurelius Victor (*Epit. Caes.*, V, 7) is the only one who noted that he was aided by Sporus, while Evagrius Scholasticus (*HE*, III, 41) wrote that he was killed by his own soldiers. See also Zugravu 2012, 280-281, n. 145; Zugravu 2022b, 355-356, n. 155.

¹⁶² Pollini 1984, 547; Kleiner 1985, 94-95.

¹⁶³ Champlin 2003, 29.

¹⁶⁴ Suetonius, *Galba*, 10.1; 11; Plutarch, *Galba*, 5.1; Cassius Dio, LXIV, 1.

¹⁶⁵ Plutarch, *Galba*, 5.2. See also Kienast 2004, 102; Flower 2006, 212; Haymann 2018, 265, 267.

perceptions of the factions competing for supreme power, and characterized the rivalries among emperors. According to Tacitus, after his defection from Galba, Otho addressed his soldiers in the camp, questioning whether he would be perceived as a *princeps* or as an enemy of the Roman people¹⁶⁶. After his death, the citizens of Rome altered their attitude toward him. Initially, they praised him at the beginning of his reign. During the conflict with Vitellius, they prayed for his success. However, after he chose to commit suicide, hoping that his death would put an end to the Roman bloodshed, the population of the capital ridiculed his memory; his name was no longer associated with that of a *princeps* but rather with the term *πολέμιος*¹⁶⁷. Regarding Vitellius, Tacitus reported that, in the early stages of the conflict with Otho, the Senate declared him a *hostis publicus* and a parricide¹⁶⁸. Furthermore, the Roman historian addresses the legal degradation of Vitellius while emphasizing the humane attributes of Otho. Despite being embroiled in a civil war, Otho chose to overlook the situation and granted clemency to Lucius Vitellius, the brother of his adversary; he resolved that Lucius would accompany Cornelius Donabella into exile¹⁶⁹. Both Suetonius and Pseudo-Aurelius Victor noted that at the conclusion of the civil war between Vespasian and Vitellius, which culminated in the victory of the former, the leader of the Flavian camp ensured that the daughter of his former enemy received a substantial dowry and was married¹⁷⁰. In a similar context, during the military conflicts occurring between 68 and 69 AD, Othonian supporters perceived the Vitellians as *hostes*¹⁷¹; the Vitellians held the Othonians in the same regard¹⁷²; the Vitellians classified the Flavians as adversaries¹⁷³; while the

¹⁶⁶ Tacitus, *Hist.*, I, 37.2.

¹⁶⁷ Cassius Dio, LXV, 1. For the suicide of Otho, see Iosephus, *BI*, IV, 9.9; Tacitus, *Hist.*, II, 49.2-3; Suetonius, *Otho*, 11.2; *Vit.*, 10.3; Plutarch, *Otho*, 17.3; Dio Cass., LXIV, 14-15; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 7.2; Eutropius, VII, 17.3; Orosius, VII, 8.6; John of Antioch, fr. 177; Chronicon Paschale (in PG 92, 590). See also Drijvers 2006, 15; Zugravu 2012, 287, n. 168; Haymann 2018, 265, 267; Zugravu 2022b, 364, n. 178.

¹⁶⁸ Tacitus, *Hist.*, II, 85.5.

¹⁶⁹ Tacitus, *Hist.*, I, 88.1.

¹⁷⁰ Suetonius, *Vesp.*, 14.1; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, IX, 2. See also Zugravu 2012, 293, n. 185.

¹⁷¹ Suetonius, *Otho*, 9.1; Tacitus, *Hist.*, II, 42.2; Plutarch, *Otho*, 10.3; 11.2-3; 12.2 and 4; 15.1 and 3; Cassius Dio, LIV, 11.

¹⁷² Suetonius, *Vit.*, 10.3; Tacitus, *Hist.*, II, 41.1-2; 43.2; 45.1.

¹⁷³ Suetonius, *Vit.*, 15.2; 16.1; 17.1 Tacitus, *Hist.*, III, 8.4-6; 22.1; 23.3; 38.8; 41.4; 42.3; 54.5; 61.2-5; 77.1-2; 79. 4; 84.6; Cassius Dio, LXV, 10-11; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 8.6.

Flavians reciprocated this perception towards the Vitellians¹⁷⁴. Against Titus Flavius Domitianus (81-96), who was subjected to *abolitio memoriae*, Lactantius wrote that the Senate issued decrees ensuring that even after his death, he would suffer eternal disgrace (*ignominiam sempiternam*):

- it was decreed that the former *princeps* should receive a burial befitting a gladiator. Consequently, Domitianus's body was retrieved by undertakers with extraordinary mockery, as described by Eutropius, and placed in a pauper's coffin, buried without any form of pomp. The funeral, held at his estate on the outskirts of Rome, was organized by Phyllis, his wet nurse. Shortly thereafter, she moved the emperor's remains to the mausoleum of the Flavian family and mixed them with the ashes of Julia, the daughter of Titus (79-81)¹⁷⁵;

- his decrees were annulled¹⁷⁶. Additionally, at the beginning of Nerva's reign (96-98), exiled individuals were recalled; those arrested for violating imperial majesty were released; and unlawfully confiscated properties were restored¹⁷⁷; furthermore, Nerva enacted a law that annulled marriages between uncles and nieces; this measure aimed to abolish a custom practiced by Domitianus himself¹⁷⁸;

- his shields were taken down posthumously, with the Senate deciding to bring ladders to reach them¹⁷⁹.

The imposition of *abolitio memoriae* on Domitianus and the actions undertaken by the Senate reveal a significant repudiation of his legacy, highlighting the shift in his social standing from *princeps* to *hostis*. Additionally, these measures reflect an intention to eradicate any remnants of his influence within society, as evidenced by the defacement of inscriptions that had been established in his honour.

In the second half of the first century, there were additional rebellions:

1. during the reign of Nero:

¹⁷⁴ Tacitus, *Hist.*, III, 8.3; 9.1; 10.1; 15.1; 16.1; 17.1; 18.1; 20.2; 23.2-8; 26.4; 28.2; 48.2-4; 73.2.

¹⁷⁵ Pliny the Younger, *Pan.*, 52.4; Suetonius, *Dom.*, 17.3; Lactantius, *Mort.*, III, 3; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 11.8; Eutropius, VII, 23.6; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XI, 13; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 96; Orosius, VII, 10.7; John of Antioch, fr. 190. In contrast, Cassius Dio (XVII, 18) wrote that his body was secretly buried by his wet nurse. See also Zugravu 2012, 314, n. 248; Zugravu 2022b, 393-394, n. 265.

¹⁷⁶ Lactantius, *Mort.*, III, 4.

¹⁷⁷ Cassius Dio, LXVIII, 1-2; Eusebius, *HE*, 20.8-9; Jerome, *Chon.*, a. 97; Orosius, VII, 11.2.

¹⁷⁸ Cassius Dio, LXVIII, 2.

¹⁷⁹ Suetonius, *Dom.*, 23.1.

a) Lucius Clodius Macer, the *legatus* in *Africa*, instigated a rebellion in 68 AD but was subsequently killed by the procurator Trebonius Garutianus on the orders of Galba¹⁸⁰;

b) Caius Iulius Vindex, the governor of *Gallia Lugdunensis*, who had Celtic origins, organized a rebellion in the early part of 68 AD but was defeated by Lucius Verginius Rufus, who was commanding *Germania Superior*, and chose to commit suicide¹⁸¹.

2. during the reign of Galba: Caius Nymphidius Sabinus, the son of Nymphidia, a former slave, and prefect of the guard, promised the Praetorian Guard a substantial reward if they abandoned Nero and supported Galba. He subsequently claimed descent from Caligula; however, Plutarch identified his father as the gladiator Martianus. He attempted to have himself proclaimed emperor, an endeavour that ultimately failed, leading to his death at the hands of Galba's soldiers¹⁸².

3. during the reign of Domitianus: Lucius Antonius Saturninus, the governor of *Germania Superior*, orchestrated a rebellion against Domitianus from 88 to 89 AD. In response, A. Bucius Lappius Maximus, the governor of *Germania Inferior*, and Norbanus, the procurator of *Raetia*, were dispatched to suppress the insurrection. Saturninus ultimately met his end by decapitation, and following the quelling of the revolt, retaliatory measures and executions were carried out¹⁸³.

4. False Neros:

a) between the end of Galba's reign and the beginning of Otho's reign: *Pseudo-Nero I*, a slave from *Pontus* or a freedman from Italy skilled in playing musical instruments and reportedly resembling the former emperor, managed to manipulate various social groups, including deserters, soldiers, and

¹⁸⁰ Tacitus, *Hist.*, I, 7.1; II, 97.2; IV, 49.4; Plutarch, *Galba*, 6; 13; 15; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 9. See also Kienast 2004, 10.

¹⁸¹ Pliny the Elder, *XX*, 160; Iosephus, *BI*, IV, 8.1; Tacitus, *Hist.*, I, 51.1-3; 65.2-4; III, 62.2; IV, 17.3; 57.2; Pliny the Younger, *Ep.*, VI, 10; IX, 19; Suetonius, *Nero*, 40.1 and 4; 41; *Galba*, 8.1; 9.2; 11; Plutarch, *Galba*, 4-6; 29.1; Cassius Dio, LXIII, 22-26; Emperor Julian, *Caes.*, 310 D; *SHA*, *Alex. Seu.*, I, 7; *Quadr. tyr.*, I, 1; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, V, 6; Orosius, VII, 8.1; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 9; John of Antioch, fr. 174; Synkellos, *Chron.*, 645. See also Kienast 2004, 100-101; Zugravu 2012, 279-280, n. 141; Zugravu 2022b, 354-355, n. 153.

¹⁸² Tacitus, *Hist.*, I, 5.1 *Ann.* XV, 72.4; Plutarch, *Galb.* 8.1; 14-15. See also Champlin 2003, 4, 7, 146-147; Kienast 2004, 104.

¹⁸³ Suetonius, *Dom.*, 6.2; 7.3; 10.5; Cassius Dio, LXVII, 11; *SHA*, *Pesc.*, IX, 2; *Alex. Seu.*, I, 7; *Quadr. tyr.*, I, 1; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XI, 9-10; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 14. See also Kienast 2004, 119; Zugravu 2012, 312-313, n. 244 and 245; Zugravu 2022b, 391, n. 260.

physically strong slaves, in exchange for grand promises. He was ultimately killed by Lucius Nonius Calpurnius Asprenas, the governor of *Galatia* and *Pamphylia*, after which his body was taken to Rome¹⁸⁴;

b) during the reign of Titus: Terentius Maximus (*Pseudo-Nero* II), originally from *Asia*, allegedly bore a resemblance to the deceased emperor in both appearance and voice, and he managed to attract various peoples to his side. He sought refuge with Artabanus III (79-81), the king of the Persians; however, when his true identity was discovered, the false Nero was killed¹⁸⁵;

c) during the reign of Domitianus: *Pseudo-Nero* III, an impostor of uncertain social status, allegedly succeeded in gaining the support of the Persians, who were prepared for a potential confrontation with the Roman Empire. Emperor Domitianus reportedly struggled to secure the "extradition" of this individual¹⁸⁶;

5. refused usurpation: after the revolt of Caius Iulius Vindex was suppressed, the troops commanded by Lucius Verginius Rufus proclaimed him emperor. Additionally, the soldiers tore down the portraits of Nero, mocking them as they threw them to the ground and smashed them¹⁸⁷. Verginius declined the throne, and despite one soldier inscribing imperial titles on the standards, he succeeded in pacifying the troops and convincing them to abandon such plans. Following the death of Otho, the soldiers attempted once again to bestow the imperial purple upon him, but once again, they were met with refusal¹⁸⁸.

The second century

In the second century AD, the following examples are known: Avidius Cassius (175), Commodus (180-192), Septimius Severus (193-211), Didius Iulianus (193), Pescennius Niger (193-194), and Clodius Albinus (193-197).

The genesis of Caius Avidius Cassius' aspirations for the imperial throne must be situated within the context of rumours regarding the death of the legitimate ruler, Marcus Aurelius (161-180). The actions of the protagonist of the rebellion in April 175 significantly influenced his fate;

¹⁸⁴ Tacitus, *Hist.*, II, 8-9; Cassius Dio, LXVI, 9; Zonaras, XI, 15. See also Pappano 1937, 385-390.

¹⁸⁵ Cassius Dio, LXVI, 19; John of Antioch, fr. 187; Zonaras, XI, 18. See also Pappano 1937, 390-391.

¹⁸⁶ Suetonius, *Nero*, 57.2; Tacitus, *Hist.*, I, 2.1. See also Pappano 1937, 391-392.

¹⁸⁷ Cassius Dio, LXIII, 25. See also Hainsworth 1962, 93, n. 45; Varner 2004, 47.

¹⁸⁸ Tacitus, *Hist.*, I, 8.1; II, 5.1; Pliny the Younger, *Ep.*, II, 1; VI, 10; IX, 19; Plutarch, *Galba*, 6.2-3; Cassius Dio, LXIII, 25. See also Hainsworth 1962, 93-95; Levick 1985, 320, 329 (n. 55), 332, 334-336, 341, 343; Brunt 1990, 15; Królczyk 2018, 868.

although he gained the support and recognition of the troops under his command, the majority of Roman senators, remaining loyal to Marcus Aurelius, declared him a *hostis publicus* and decided to confiscate his wealth. He was also perceived as *tyrranus*; *rebellis*; *suspectus*; an ingrate; an opportunist seeking succession; an individual with the intention of seizing the empire by force; a traitor whose actions would undermine faith in people, in the importance of virtues, in the concept of friendship, and would sow discord among those around him; a treacherous individual who lacked the courage to directly engage with the legitimate emperor and the Senate to present his grievances; a general less skilled in military strategy than Verus, the governor of Cappadocia, who remained loyal to Marcus Aurelius; a descendant of the Cassii family who despised imperial rule, could not tolerate the emperors' names, and used diatribes when referring to them; naturally inclined towards rebellion, which led him to adopt a hostile attitude towards the emperor. His reign represented: a *furor*; a *tyrannis*; an *impietas*; a *rebellio*; a *defectio*; a *consensus*; the result of a tumultuous judgment; a horror that would surpass, in its gravity, conflicts with external enemies or civil wars; an act of public indiscipline that would affect the citizens; the manifestation of vile conspiracies; an injustice against legitimate governance. The usurper was slain by a centurion named Antonius and a decurion; his head was delivered to the emperor.

His supporters, generals, senators, and the populations of *Syria*, *Iudeea*, *Cilicia*, and *Aegyptus*, were considered: *hostes*; *inimici*; *conscii*; *seditiosi*; *rebelles*; *proscripti*; conspirators; disloyal; militarily inferior to the Roman troops; ungrateful for their military deeds, and despite their leader, Cassius, being likened to an eagle or lion, they were nothing but crows and deer¹⁸⁹.

Marcus Aurelius Commodus Antoninus, frequently compared by ancient authors to emperors like Caligula, Nero, and Domitianus due to his character, faced *abolitio memoriae* as a result of an official Senate decree, enacted promptly after his death. Ancient historians employed various terms to highlight his new social status as a public enemy: *hostis*; *hostis publicus*;

¹⁸⁹ Codex Justinianus, IX, 8.6; Cassius Dio, LXXI, 17; 22-31; Tertullian, *Apol.*, 35.8-10; *ad Scapulam*, 2.5; Philostratus, *V. soph.*, II, 1.32; Ammianus Marcellinus, XXI, 16.11; XXII, 5.4-5; *SHA, Marc.*, XV, 6; XXIV, 5-9; XXV, 1-10; XXVI; XXVII, 1; *Au. Cass.*, I, 4-9; II; VI, 6; VII, 1-7; VIII, 2-11; X; XI, 1-3; XII, 1-10; XIII, 4; *Clod. Alb.*, VI; *Quadr. tyr.*, I, 1; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 19; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XVI, 11; John of Antioch, fr. 201. For an analysis of the *abolitio memoriae* of Avidius Cassius and his supporters, see Chilcoş 2024, 89-101.

*hostis patriae; hostis senatus; hostis deorum; hostis deorum atque hominorum; hostis generis humani*¹⁹⁰.

In the early months of 193 AD, the reign of Publius Helvius Pertinax represented a hope that all injustices committed during the previous regime would be avenged. However, it was not long before the edge of the sword became an instrument of fate, as the Praetorian Guard terminated his life, turning his head into an object of pride and display¹⁹¹. After his death, Marcus Didius Iulianus bid a significant sum for the throne, and the ancient writers painted a negative portrait of him, highlighting his extravagant, disorganized character and indulgence in pleasures. Additionally, he was perceived as indifferent to public affairs and greedy for pleasure¹⁹². In the Roman collective mindset, Didius Iulianus came to be regarded as the moral author of Pertinax's death, viewed as a usurper, a parricide, and a briber¹⁹³. The hatred and contempt expressed by the citizens, along with the criticisms, curses, and mockery directed at Didius Iulianus, led to social tensions in the Roman capital reaching a critical level, necessitating military intervention; the name of Caius Pescennius Niger was also called out, given his significant popularity in Rome, as a means to aid the city¹⁹⁴. Due to the lack of widespread support for Didius Iulianus, on April 9, the year 193, just 11 days after his acclamation as *Augustus*, Lucius Septimius Severus was proclaimed emperor by his soldiers. During the same period, Pescennius Niger was also

¹⁹⁰ Cassius Dio, LXXIII, 2; Eutropius, VIII, 15; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 17,10; Orosius, VII, 16.4; *SHA, Comm.*, XVIII, 2-5; 12; XIX, 1. For a detailed analysis of the condemnation of Commodus, the various implications of the term *hostis*, the perception of the emperor, and the specific stages of the phenomenon of *abolitio memoriae* that unfolded following his death, see Chilcoş 2020, 172-185.

¹⁹¹ Cassius Dio, LXXIII, 10; *SHA, Pert.*, XIV, 7; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XVIII, 2. Herodian (II, 5), Aurelius Victor (*Caes.*, 18.2; 20.1 and 9), Eutropius (VIII, 16); Jerome (*Chron.*, a. 193; 194), Orosius (VII, 16.5-6; 17.1), Zosimus (I, 7.1; 8.2), John of Antioch (fr. 205), Cassiodorus (*Chron.*, a.193), Jordanes (*Rom.*, 274; 275), Malalas (*Chron.*, XII, 14) only noted that he was killed by the soldiers. See also Zugravu 2012, 364, n. 364 and 365; Zugravu 2017, 51-52, n. 58; Zugravu 2022b, 460, n. 404.

¹⁹² Cassius Dio, LXXIII, 11-12; Herodian, II, 6-7; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 19.4; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XIX, 1; John of Antioch, fr. 206. The author of the *SHA* (*Did. Iul.*, III, 8-10) describes him as a temperate man who showed respect for his predecessor. See also Zugravu 2012, 368, n. 376.

¹⁹³ Cassius Dio, LXXIII, 13; *SHA, Did. Iul.*, III, 7; IV, 6.

¹⁹⁴ Cassius Dio, LXXIII, 13; Herodian, II, 7-8; 11; *SHA, Did. Iul.*, IV, 2-7; VI, 1; VII, 9-11; *Seu.*, V, 1; *Pesc. Nig.*, II, 2-3; John of Antioch, fr. 206. See also Varner 2004, 160; Zugravu 2012, 368, n. 377; Zugravu 2022b, 467-470, n. 433.

recognized as emperor, while Decimus Clodius Albinus initially declined the offer from his troops.

On the eve of the civil war, Didius Iulianus succeeded in convincing the Senate to declare Septimius Severus a *hostis publicus*. He granted his supporters a one-day grace period during which they could switch allegiance; otherwise, they would also be considered *hostes*¹⁹⁵. Ultimately, fate favoured Septimius Severus, while the one in Rome, abandoned by most of his supporters, sought the mercy of the victors. Didius Iulianus planned for senators, priests, and vestal virgins to act as the representatives of his intentions, who were to go out to meet the Severan army. However, the augur Pautius Quintillus disagreed and, rallying the senators to his side, insulted Didius Iulianus by stating: “he who cannot resist an opponent with arms should not be emperor”¹⁹⁶. Furious, Didius Iulianus ordered the punishment of the senators, but he later reversed this decision, as he did not want to be seen as an enemy himself¹⁹⁷. Septimius Severus was offered a partnership in rule; however, suspecting his opponent of hidden intentions, he chose to remain an enemy and to eliminate him¹⁹⁸. At the conclusion of the war, as he still regarded his former adversaries as *hostes*, Septimius Severus did not leave his tent until a procession of 100 senators came to greet him¹⁹⁹.

In the section dedicated to Septimius Severus, the anonymous writer of the fourth century employs the term *hostis* in close connection with highlighting a phenomenon that affected the Roman Empire during the years 205-207 – banditry. In this context, the phrase *latronum ubique hostis* serves as an example in which a term predominantly bearing negative connotations – *hostis* – is assigned a positive significance. This underscores the emperor's role as a restorer of public order and his intention to resolve the conflict – *latrocinium* – initiated by harmful social elements, thieves, robbers, and criminals, who coalesced around a central figure, Bulla Felix²⁰⁰.

¹⁹⁵ Cassius Dio, LXXIII, 16; *SHA, Did. Iul.*, V, 3-4; VI, 8; *Seu.*, V, 5; VI, 6; Herodian, II, 12; John of Antioch, fr. 206. See also Kienast 2004, 156; Birley 1999, 98; Southern 2004, 31; Sage 2020, 47, 184 (n. 88).

¹⁹⁶ *SHA, Did. Iul.*, VI, 6.

¹⁹⁷ *SHA, Did. Iul.*, VI, 8.

¹⁹⁸ *SHA, Did. Iul.*, VII, 7.

¹⁹⁹ *SHA, Seu.*, VI, 1.

²⁰⁰ Cassius Dio, LXXVI, 10; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 20.21; *SHA, Seu.*, XVIII, 5; Zosimus, I, 8.2. See also Birley 1999, 169; Shaw 2004, 363-364, 366-371; Zugravu 2012, 375-376, n. 387; Sage 2020, 119-120, 201 (n. 62); Zugravu 2022b, 475-476, n. 454.

Ultimately, their leader was captured and subjected to the punishment of being thrown to the beasts – *damnatio ad bestias*.

After consolidating his power in Rome, Septimius Severus turned his attention to the East, where Pescennius Niger held significant political and military power. The emperor did not delay in declaring war against his rival, but not before designating both Niger and Asellius Aemilianus, the proconsul of *Asia* and his most loyal supporter, as *hostes publici*²⁰¹. Several confrontations ensued between the two armies, but the most notable took place at *Perinthus* in Thrace, *Cyzicus*, *Nicaea*, and near *Issos* in *Cilicia*. The outcome favored the Severan faction, and Pescennius Niger, who sought refuge in Antioch, attempted to reach the territory controlled by the Parthians but was captured and executed²⁰². Three years later, a new civil war would challenge the newly established Severan dynasty, with Clodius Albinus as the leader of the opposing faction. During his campaign in the East, Septimius Severus sought to secure the support of the troops in the western regions of the empire by granting Clodius Albinus the title of *Caesar*, thereby creating the impression that he was associated with the imperial authority and was a legitimate successor to the throne²⁰³. However, once the eastern provinces were pacified, Septimius Severus revealed his true intentions: to establish himself as the sole ruler of the empire. To legitimize his claims to the throne and to confer succession rights upon his heirs, Geta and Bassianus (Caracalla), he asserted a connection to the former imperial family by declaring himself the son of Marcus Aurelius and the brother of

²⁰¹ *SHA, Seu.*, VIII, 13; *Pesc. Nig.*, V, 7. See also Kienast 2004, 160; Varner 2004, 157, 160; Haymann 2018, 265, 267; Sage 2020, 55.

²⁰² Cassius Dio, LXXIV, 6-8; Herodian, II, 7-8; III, 1-4; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 20.8; Eutropius, VIII, 18.1; Ammianus Marcellinus, XXVI, 8.15; *SHA, Seu.*, VIII, 6-17; IX, 1; *Pesc.*, V, 2-8; VI, 1; *Quadr. tyr.*, I, 1; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XX, 2; Orosius, VII, 17.2 and 5-6; Zosimus, I, 8.1; John of Antioch, fr. 206-209; Synkellos, *Chron.*, 670; Malalas, *Chron.*, XII, 21. See also Birley 1999, 98, 105, 107-121, 246 (n. 13); Potter 2004, 99, 103-105, 108, 110, 112, 116, 121, 605 (n. 135); Southern 2004, 28, 32-38, 46-47, 84, 290 (n. 30 and 31), 291 (n. 34) 292-293 (n. 41), 294 (n. 44), 344-345 (n. 1); Varner 2004, 7, 157-158, 160; Mennen 2011, 39, 108 (n. 106), 146, 196-199, 214; Zugravu 2012, 371, n. 382; Pearson 2016, xvii, 14; Sage 2020, 9-10, 45-46, 53-64, 67-68, 70-71, 74, 77, 81, 83, 85, 98, 101-102, 138, 145, 149, 185 (n. 20), 194 (n. 13); Zugravu 2022b, 467-470, n. 433.

²⁰³ Cassius Dio, LXXIII, 15; Herodian, II, 15; III, 5; 7; *SHA, Clod. Alb.*, III, 3 and 6; VI, 7; X, 3. See also Birley 1999, 98, 244 (n. 22); Potter 2004, 102; Southern 2004, 31-31, 290 (n. 29); Varner 2004, 157; Mennen 2011, 23, 194; Zugravu 2012, 372, n. 384; Pearson 2016, 14; Sage 2020, 45; Zugravu 2022b, 467-470, n. 433.

Commodus. In this regard, according to the account provided in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, in 196, he persuaded the Senate to declare Clodius Albinus, his former ally, a *hostis publicus*; this legal degradation also extended to his supporters²⁰⁴.

On the other hand, Herodian states that the army, following a speech delivered by Septimius Severus, declared Clodius Albinus an enemy. This address by the emperor reportedly took place shortly before the capture of the city of *Byzantium* and was crafted to have a profound psycho-emotional impact on the soldiers. Severus highlighted the qualities of his own army – bravery, combat experience, and loyalty – as well as his own virtues, such as benevolence and keeping his promises. Albinus was labelled a traitor, coward, ignorant, and incapable of commanding troops; he was described as negligent for allegedly favouring the company of dancers, and his actions were deemed hostile. He was compared to Niger; however, unlike Niger, against whom Severus had waged war on equal terms and "out of necessity", Albinus was accused of attempting to illegitimately seize the throne. Furthermore, his army was regarded as one of islanders and was perceived to be numerically inferior²⁰⁵.

In reality, Albinus anticipated the events that were to unfold, proclaimed himself *Augustus*, and moved into Gaul with his troops in 196 or 197. Following extensive preparations, the two factions confronted each other on the battlefield. Initially, Albinus' faction appeared to have favourable prospects, but the decisive battle took place north of the city of *Lugdunum* (Lyon) on February 19 (197). Defeated, Albinus sought refuge in a house near the *Rhodanus* (Rhône) River, where he subsequently committed suicide²⁰⁶.

²⁰⁴ *SHA, Seu.*, X, 2; *Clod. Alb.*, IX, 1; XII, 3. See also Kienast 2004, 161; Birley 1999, 119, 121, 247-248 (n. 1); Southern 2004, 35 (n. 36); Varner 2004, 158; Birley 2005, 175, 179; Mennen 2011, 201; Zugravu 2012, 372, n. 384; Haymann 2018, 265, 267; Sage 2020, 68; Zugravu 2022b, 467-470, n. 433.

²⁰⁵ Herodian, III, 6. Also see Birley 1999, 247-248 (n. 1).

²⁰⁶ Cassius Dio, LXXV, 6-7; Herodian, III, 5-8; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 20.10-11; Eutropius, VIII, 18.4; *SHA, Seu.*, X-XI; *Clod. Alb.*, VII-IX; *Quadr. tyr.*, I, 1; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XX, 2; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 205; Orosius, VII, 17.5-6; Zosimus, I, 8.1; John of Antioch, fr. 210; Synkellos, *Chron.*, 671; Malalas, *Chron.*, XII, 19: places the defeat in Thrace. See also Birley 1999, 121-28; Potter 2004, 110, 112-113, 128; Southern 2004, 28, 34-39, 42, 46-48, 84, 251, 289-290 (n. 25), 291 (n. 35), 292-293 (n. 37-43), 297-298 (n. 62); Varner 2004, 100, 158-159; Mennen 2011, 57, 64, 200-204; Zugravu 2012, 372, n. 384; Pearson 2016, xvii, 14; Sage 2020, 7-9, 41, 45, 52, 54, 62, 64, 67-75, 77, 81, 126-127, 136-138, 145, 148-150, 171 (n. 13); Zugravu 2022b, 467-470, n. 433.

There is also epigraphic evidence regarding the exclusion from the citizen body of Septimius Severus's two former opponents, as well as their supporters, as follows:

An inscription discovered at *Terraco* in *Hispania*, dated between 198–199 AD, was dedicated by Silius Hospes, a *hastatus* of *legio X Gemina* and *strator*, in honour of Tiberius Claudius Candidus, who is referred to as *optimus praesidus* - EDCS-05503146.

According to the inscription, Tiberius Claudius Candidus held key roles across the reigns of Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus, actively participating in major military conflicts during this period. His career began as *praefectus* of the unit *cohors II civium Romanorum* in *Germania Inferior*, likely between 171-174, during the rule of Marcus Aurelius. He was subsequently promoted to *tribunus militum* in *legio II Augusta* in *Britannia* around 174-177. Between 177/178-180, he served as *praepositus copiarum* during the Germanic expedition (*expeditio Germanica*). From 180-182, he held the position of *procurator XX hereditatium* in *Gallia Lugdunensis*, *Belgica*, and *Germania*, tasked with collecting the 5% inheritance tax on property transfers. Under Commodus, who granted him senatorial rank and praetorian insignia, Candidus managed the financial affairs of various eastern cities, such as Nicomedia and Ephesus, and served as *legatus* to the governor of *Asia*. During the civil wars at the close of the second century, he aligned with Septimius Severus, acting as *dux exercitus Illyrici* in campaigns against Pescennius Niger (*expeditio Asiana*), the Parthians (*expeditio Parthica*), and Clodius Albinus (*expeditio Gallica*). Cassius Dio recounts that during a confrontation between Severus and Niger near *Nicaea* and *Cius*, Candidus chastised his troops for their lack of courage, a weakness nearly resulting in a severe setback for Severus' forces. Remorseful, the soldiers rallied, ultimately securing a victory. In 195, Candidus was tasked with quelling remaining support for Severus' former opponents, designated as *hostes publici*, in *Asia* and *Noricum*, where he served as *dux terra marique*. Following Clodius Albinus' defeat in 197, Candidus was appointed governor of *Hispania Citerior*. Notably, Candidus' name on the inscription was chiseled out but later restored, suggesting subsequent changes in his posthumous reputation²⁰⁷.

²⁰⁷ Cassius Dio, LXXIV, 6. See also Fitz 1966, 831-846; M. Avi-Yonah 1966, 139, n. 11; Alföldy, 1968, 120, 123 (n. 68), 126, 127 (n. 77), 128, 139, 140; Fitz 1969, 132, n. 1; Birley 1999, 109-110, 116, 118, 121-122, 125, 131, 246 (n. 4 and 9), 247 (n. 20 and 24), 248 (n. 2, 5 and 15), 250 (n. 5); Potter 2004, 104, 605 (n. 139); Southern 2004, 33, 47, 290 (n. 30), 291 (n. 32); Birley 2005, 310, n.

1. An inscription discovered at *Caesarea Maritima* (Har Qesari) was placed on the base of a column statue made of gray-blue marble. It was dedicated by Mevius Romanus, a centurion and *strator*? of *legio VI Ferrata Fidelis Constantiana*, to his superior officer, Lucius Valerius Valerianus, who was referred to as *vir incomparabilis*. The column currently bears three inscriptions: two are in Latin and one in Greek. However, the column has been reused at least five times, as noted in academic literature. The first text is dedicated to Lucius Valerius Valerianus and shows signs of erasure to make way for another. The second text was erased to accommodate the one numbered four, while the third text suffered the same fate as the second, being removed for the fifth inscription. The fourth text, composed in Greek and dating from 260-276 AD, was dedicated by Novius/Nonius Alexander, an unknown figure likely serving as a *ἐκατόνταρχος* or a tribune, who honoured Aurelius Maron, the imperial procurator and governor of the province of *Syria Palestine*, who was regarded as a *φίλος*²⁰⁸. The fifth text was composed in Latin, dates from 284-305, and the dedicant was Aurelius Clemens, a procurator with the rank of *vir perfectissimus*, who honored Emperor Diocletianus²⁰⁹.

The distinguished career of Lucius Valerius Valerianus is presented in reverse chronological order - *HD*, 006228. Based on the text and subsequent reconstructions outlined in various scholarly studies and *corpora* of inscriptions, his *cursus honorum* began in *Pannonia*, where he held two roles: initially as *praefectus* of a cohort, although its name is lost, followed by *tribunus cohortis I milliariae Hemesenorum civium Romanorum*. Later, he served as *praefectus* of the cavalry unit *ala I Hispanorum Campagonum* in *Dacia*. These posts were held under Emperor Commodus, who eventually appointed him as *procurator* of the imperial estate in *Cyprus*. It is widely accepted that Valerianus attained the title *praepositus equitum peregrinorum* also during Commodus' reign, likely in a Danubian province. From there, at the outset of hostilities between Septimius Severus and Didius Iulianus, he joined the former's faction, evidenced by his role as *praepositus* of a military contingent during the campaign against Rome, indicated by the term *expeditio urbica*. Following this, he participated in the campaign against Pescennius Niger in

44; Speidel 2005, 62; Mennen 2011, 146, 196-199, 201-202, 206, 209, 214; Sage 2020, 55-57, 65-66, 71-72, 74, 101, 185 (n. 20).

²⁰⁸ Negev 1961, 83; M. Avi-Yonah 1966, 135; Christol 1976, 170-176; Speidel 1981, 363; Eck 2010, 179.

²⁰⁹ Negev 1961, 83; M. Avi-Yonah 1966, 135, 141; Christol 1976, 169; Speidel 1981, 363-364; Speidel 1985, 322, n. 3; Eck 2010, 179.

the East, as marked by the phrase *expeditio Asiana*, where he served as a commander during the decisive battle at *Issus* in 194, alongside Publius Cornelius Anullinus, as noted by Cassius Dio²¹⁰. Both Niger and his supporters are labeled as *hostes publici* in the text. Valerianus' military service continued without pause; in 194-195, he engaged in another campaign, this time *adversus Arabes*, where he held the position of *praepositus sumae*, overseeing either military or financial matters, denoted as *expeditio Mesopotamena*. Due to a gap in the inscription, it is thought that Valerianus subsequently gained the rank of *procurator* in an unknown province before assuming the same role in *Syria Palestina*.

The online epigraphic platforms *Epigraphische Datenbank Heidelberg* and *Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss-Slaby* date the inscription to 212–220 and 212–215, respectively. In various issues of the French journal for epigraphic studies, *L'Année épigraphique* (from the years 1968, 1972, 1975, and 1988), the inscription was attributed to Caracalla's reign, while the 1994 issue provided a more precise dating to 212–214/215²¹¹. Regarding *corpora* of inscriptions, the situation is as follows: in *The Greek and Latin Inscriptions of Caesarea Maritima*, edited by C.M. Lehmann and K. G. Holum, the inscription is dated between the early third century and 222²¹². In *Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae. Inscriptiones extra fines Daciae repertae Graecae et Latinae (saec. I.II.III)*, vol. II: *Illyricum – Oriens – Africa septentrionalis* (IDRE, II), edited by Constantin C. Petolescu, it is suggested to postdate 212²¹³. Barnabás Lőrincz, in *Die römischen Hilfstruppen in Pannonien während der Prinzipatszeit. I: Die Inschriften*, did not provide a specific date but referenced secondary bibliography²¹⁴. In *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae / Palaestinae*, II: *Caesarea and the Middle Coast 1121–2160*, edited by Walter Ameling, Hannah M. Cotton, Werner Eck, Benjamin Isaac, Alla Kushnir-Stein, Haggai Misgav, Jonathan Price, and Ada Yardeni, with contributions from Robert Daniel, Avner Ecker, Michael Shenkar, and Claudia Sode, with the assistance of Marfa Heimbach, Dirk Koßmann, and Naomi Schneider, the inscription is chronologically positioned between 212–217²¹⁵.

²¹⁰ Cassius Dio, LXXIV, 7; LXXV, 3.

²¹¹ AE 1966, 495 = AE 1969/1970, 612 = AE 1971, 476 = AE 1985, 829 = AE 1991, 1579 = AE 2000, 1233 = AE 2001, 1968.

²¹² GLICMar, 4.

²¹³ IDRE II, 415.

²¹⁴ RHP, 285.

²¹⁵ CIIP II, 1284.

Opinions among scholars remain divided. For instance, M. Avi-Yonah dates the inscription to 218–222, thus within Elagabalus's reign, whereas Jenö Fid and Lajos Balla assert it belongs to Caracalla's reign²¹⁶.

Richard Duncan-Jones suggests a date no earlier than 211, probably between 219–220, while Michael P. Speidel places it during the reign of either Septimius Severus or Caracalla²¹⁷. The inscription is also mentioned by other researchers, among whom we mention A. Negev, Michael Christol, Anthony R. Birley, Werner Eck, Michael Sage²¹⁸.

The third century

In the first half of the third century, the following emperors were declared *hostes*: Geta (211–212), Macrinus and his son Diadumenianus (217–218), Elagabalus (218–222); during the period of military anarchy, Maximinus Thrax and his son Maximus (235–238), Priscus (250), and Aemilianus (253).

Publius Septimius Geta and Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (Caracalla) (211–217) were the successors of Septimius Severus. In the works of ancient historians, the personalities of these two emperors are presented in antithetical terms. Geta is portrayed as possessing a gentle nature and refined interests, in stark contrast to Caracalla, whose character is described as cruel, vengeful, unfriendly, envious, suspicious, and even murderous²¹⁹. Caracalla was also accused of having an incestuous relationship with his mother, Iulia Domna; however, as numerous historians have pointed out, this information is nothing more than a malicious allegation²²⁰. Although they were brothers, the two harboured intense hatred toward each other. Each feared assassination by the other and, as a result, they were constantly accompanied by guards. Despite attempts at reconciliation, the animosity between them was too great, ultimately culminating in the murder of Geta

²¹⁶ M. Avi-Yonah 1966, 136–141; Balla 1967, 85–88; Fitz 1969, 126–140; Fitz 1990, 161–162.

²¹⁷ Duncan-Jones 1970, 107–109; Speidel 1981, 363–364; Speidel 1985, 321–326.

²¹⁸ Negev 1961, 83; Christol 1976, 169, n. 1; Eck 1996, 131; Birley 1999, 98, 113, 117, 244 (n. 24), 246 (n. 13); Eck 2007, 97 (n. 77), 244–245; Eck 2010, 179; Sage 2020, 59–61, 66, 186 (n. 35 and 36).

²¹⁹ Cassius Dio, LXXVII, 11–13; Herodian, IV, 3; Eutropius, VIII, 20.1; *SHA, Seu.*, XX, 3; *Carac.*, I, 3–4; II, 1 and 3; IX, 3; *Get.*, IV, V, 1; 4; VII, 4 and 6; Orosius, VII, 18.2; Zosimus, I, 9.2; John of Antioch, fr. 213. Aurelius Victor (*Caes.*, 21.2), described Caracalla as a "patient, friendly, and calm man". See also Zugravu 2022b, 484 (n. 478), 487–488 (n. 485).

²²⁰ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 21.3; Eutropius, VIII, 20.1; *SHA, Seu.*, XX, 2; XXI, 7; *Carac.*, X, 1; *Get.*, VII, 3; *Macr.*, II, 4. See also Zugravu 2012, 382–384, n. 408; Zugravu 2022b, 488, n. 487.

in 211²²¹. Herodian notes how Caracalla ran through the palace, exclaiming that he had escaped a great danger. Upon encountering the soldiers, he requested an escort to the Praetorian barracks; after promising them large sums of money, he persuaded them to acclaim him as sole emperor and to declare Geta an enemy of the state. Eutropius and Orosius wrote that the condemnation of the emperor began during his lifetime, first branding him *hostis* before his death. According to the anonymous fourth-century writer, Caracalla claimed that his brother "beset him on all sides with hostile intrigues" and accused him of treason, ultimately declaring him *hostis publicus*²²². Caracalla ruled alone until April 8, 217, when he was assassinated by Iulius Martialis near *Carrhae* during his campaign against the Parthians. The conspiracy was orchestrated by Marcus Opellius Macrinus, the *praefectus praetorio*²²³. According to Cassius Dio, many wished for *abolitio memoriae* to be applied to the deceased, but this was not officially enacted. Out of fear of the soldiers, Macrinus refrained from declaring his predecessor a *hostis*, instead preferring to leave such matters to the Senate and the Roman people²²⁴; pretending to be in mourning, Macrinus commanded that the body be cremated and granted him deification²²⁵. However, in the *Scriptores*

²²¹ Cassius Dio, LXXVII, 1-5; LXXVIII, 23; Herodian, IV, 4; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 20.32-34; Eutropius, VIII, 19.2; *SHA, Seu.*, XX, 3; XXI, 6-8; *Carac.*, I, 1; II, 5; VIII, 5-6; *Get.*, VI, 1; *Macr.*, II, 4; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXI, 3; Zosimus, I, 9.2; John of Antioch, fr. 213; Evagrius Scholasticus, *HE*, III, 41; Synkellos, *Chron.*, 672. See also Birley 1999, 188-189, 256 (n. 3); Potter 2004, 133-138; Varner 2004, Mennen 2011, 150, 172, 209; Zugravu 2012, 380-381, n. 405; de Jong 2019, 21-22; Sage 2020, 113, 117, 135-136, 145-146; Zugravu 2022b, 484, n. 479.

²²² Herodian, IV, 6; Eutropius, VIII, 19.2; *SHA, Carac.*, I, 1; II, 4; VIII, 4; Orosius, VII, 17.8. See also Kienast 2004, 166; Birley 1999, 189; Potter 2004, 138; Varner 2004, 6-7, 77, 156, 163, 168, 170-172, 174-176, 179-180, 182-184, 198-199, 215, 276; Drijvers 2006, 17; Zugravu 2012, 380-381, n. 405; Haymann 2018, 265, 267; de Jong 2019, 21; Sage 2020, 194 (n. 14); Zugravu 2022b, 350, n. 479.

²²³ Cassius Dio, LXXVII, 18-19; 21; LXXVIII, 1-6; 9; 11; 17-18; 41; Herodian, IV, 10-13; *SHA, Carac.*, VI, 4-7; VII, 1-2; IX, 5; *Macr.*, IV, 7-8; V, 2-5; *Diad.*, I, 1; *Hel.*, II, 3; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 217; Orosius, VII, 18.2; Zosimus, XII, 12; John of Antioch, fr. 214-215; Chronicon Paschale, a. 219; Evagrius Scholasticus, *HE*, III, 41 Zonaras, XII, 12. Aurelius Victor (*Caes.*, 21.5), Eutropius (VIII, 20.2), Festus (21.3), Pseudo-Aurelius Victor (*Epit. Caes.*, XXI, 6), Cassiodorus (*Chron.*, a. 218), Synkellos (*Chron.*, 672) and Jordanes (*Rom.*, 277) wrote that he died of natural or unspecified causes in *Edessa*. Malalas (*Chron.*, XII, 25) wrote that he was killed in the palace. See also Birley 1999, 190-192; Potter 2004, 121, 144-147; Southern 2004, 54, 193, 299 (n. 70); Mennen 2011, 30 (n. 24), 160-162, 166-167, 210, 212 (n. 80); Zugravu 2012, 384, n. 409; Sage 2020, 112, 137, 237; Zugravu 2022b, 489-490, n. 490.

²²⁴ Cassius Dio, LXXVIII, 17-18.

²²⁵ Kienast 2004, 163; Potter 2004, 147; Southern 2004, 55, 57, 300 (n. 71); Varner 2004, 184; Zugravu 2012, 385, n. 411; Zugravu 2022b, 490-491, n. 492.

Historiae Augustae, the expression *paricida et incestus, patris, matris, fratris inimicus* was used, with the author intending to emphasize the emperor's contentious nature²²⁶.

Caracalla's successor, Macrinus, was the first sovereign of equestrian origin²²⁷; He was proclaimed emperor three days after Caracalla's death, on April 11 (217), coinciding with the birthday celebration of Septimius Severus²²⁸. Initially, the new sovereign enjoyed the support of both the Senate and the army, but Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (Elagabalus) was able to gather sufficient backing to depose him. When the news of the demise of Macrinus and Diadumenianus reached Rome, the Senate, as noted by Cassius Dio, declared the former emperors *hostes* as a demonstration of loyalty to the new regime represented by Elagabalus²²⁹. In Herodian's view, the novelty of the situation alarmed the senators and citizens, but they recognized that Macrinus was solely to blame for his own death. Constrained by the circumstances, they accused him of negligence and superficiality. The author of the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* notes that the senators hurled reproaches and curses at him²³⁰. After being declared *hostes*, both suffered *abolitio memoriae*²³¹. The supporters of the former emperors were also regarded as *hostes*²³².

In the context of the civil war that preceded the restoration of the Severan dynasty, Macrinus sent a letter to Rome to inform the Senate of Elagabalus's rebellion, stating that "war was declared against him <Avitus>, his cousin, and against their mothers and grandmother". In other words, this resulted in the designation of Elagabalus as *hostis publicus*²³³. Additionally,

²²⁶ *SHA, Carac.*, XI, 5.

²²⁷ Cassius Dio, LXXVIII, 11; 15; 41; Herodian, V, 1; *SHA, Macr.*, IV, 1; V, 6; VII, 1. See also Birley 1999, 192; Potter 2004, 146, 236; Southern 2004, 2, 54-55, 246, 254, 299-300 (n. 70); Varner 2004, 184; Mennen 2011, 23, 184; Zugravu 2012, 385-387, n. 412; Sage 2020, 137; Zugravu 2022b, 491-492, n. 494.

²²⁸ Cassius Dio, LXXVIII, 11; Herodian, IV, 14; Aurelius Victor, 22.1; Eutropius, VIII, 21; *SHA, Macr.*, VI, 5; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXII, 1; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 218; Zosimus, I, 10.1. According to Zonaras (XII, 13), four days after the death of Caracalla. See also Varner 2004, 184; Zugravu 2012, 385-387, n. 412; Zugravu 2022b, 491-492, n. 494.

²²⁹ Cassius Dio, LXXIX, 2.

²³⁰ Herodian, V, 5; *SHA, Hel.*, III, 3.

²³¹ Kienast 2004, 169, 171; Varner 2004, 185; Zugravu 2012, 387-389, n. 414; Haymann 2018, 265; Zugravu 2022b, 494-495, n. 500.

²³² Zosimus, I, 11.1.

²³³ Cassius Dio, LXXVIII, 38. See also Southern 2004, 58, 300-301 (n. 73).

the faction supporting Macrinus believed that they faced a declared enemy on the battlefield²³⁴. Elagabalus was considered *hostis* even after he was killed and removed from power, as the Senate issued several sanctions intended to undermine his socio-political identity²³⁵.

Throughout Elagabalus's reign, multiple rebellions occurred:

1. Aelius Decius Triccianus, who served as governor of *Pannonia Inferior* during Macrinus's reign, organized a rebellion in 218 but was killed by soldiers²³⁶. *Abolitio memoriae* was applied to him, as evidenced by several inscriptions in which his name was chiseled out: EDCS-32300144 (a. 217); 29601468 (a. 217-218); HD, 006036 (a. 217); 018323; 073557 (a. 217); 073941 (a. 217); 073942 (a. 217); 074886 (a. 217-218); 074897 (a. 217-218); 074898 (a. 217); 074985 (a. 217-218);

2. Gellius Maximus, the son of one of Caracalla's physicians and a senatorial tribune of the *Legio IV Scythica*, organized a rebellion in 219 but was sentenced to death²³⁷;

3. Verus, the commander of *legio III Gallica*, dared to aspire to supreme power in the region of *Syria* in 219²³⁸. *Abolitio memoriae* was applied to him, and the legion was disbanded, as indicated by several inscriptions in which the name of the military unit was chiselled out: EDCS-22300040 (a. 213-217); 79700091 (a. 211-212); HD, 022130 (a. 211-217); 027253 (a. 211-222); the legion was reestablished under Severus Alexander;

4. Seius Carus, an influential, wealthy, and prominent figure, was allegedly accused of harbouring separatist sentiments; he was said to have conspired with the soldiers of the *legio II Parthica*. However, he was captured, and his trial took place in the imperial palace, where he was subsequently executed²³⁹;

²³⁴ Herodian, V, 4.

²³⁵ Cassius Dio, LXXIX, 1; 20-21; Herodian, V, 8; Eutropius, VIII, 22.1; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 222; Orosius, VII, 18.5; *SHA, Hel.*, XVII, 1-3; 5-6; XXXIII, 7; *Seu. Alex.*, VI, 5; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit., Caes.*, XXIII, 6-7; John of Antioch, fr. 218; Zosimus, I, 11.1; Cassiodorus, *Chron.*, a. 223; Evagrius Scholasticus, *HE*, III, 41; Zonaras, XII, 14-15. See also Drijvers 2006, 15; Zugravu 2012, 396-397, n. 427; Haymann 2018, 265; Zugravu 2022b, 503, n. 509.

²³⁶ Cassius Dio, LXXVIII, 13; LXXIX, 4; LXXX, 4; *SHA, Carac.*, VI, 7. See also Southern 2004, 56, 58, 300 (n. 72); Mennen 2011, 166-167; McHugh 2017, 30-31, 58-59.

²³⁷ Cassius Dio, LXXIX, 7. See also Kienast 2004, 176; Potter 2004, 152, 614 (n. 136); Mennen 2011, 31, n. 29; McHugh 2017, 55, 59, 320.

²³⁸ Cassius Dio, LXXIX, 7. See also Kienast 2004, 176; Potter 2004, 152, 614 (n. 136); Mennen 2011, 31, n. 29; McHugh 2017, 55, 59.

²³⁹ Cassius Dio, LXXIX, 4. See also Southern 2004, 58; McHugh 2017, 58-59, 133.

5. Caius Iulius Septimius Castinus, known to the soldiers for his energy and the numerous responsibilities he held, as well as for his friendship with Caracalla, was said to have orchestrated a rebellion in *Bithynia*, for which he was executed²⁴⁰;

6. Sulla, a senator and former governor of *Cappadocia*, is said to have become entangled in intrigues. On his journey back to Rome, he encountered Gallic soldiers and attempted to win their support; he ultimately ended up being killed²⁴¹;

7. Seleucus, who according to Polemius Silvius was a usurper against Elagabalus, led a rebellion dated between 221 and 222²⁴². This could refer to Iulius Antonius Seleucus, governor of *Moesia Inferior* who was transferred to Syria, or Marcus Flavius Vitellius Seleucus, *consul* in 221; there is an inscription in which the name Seleucus has been chiselled out: *HD*, 026367 (a. 221);

8. *Ignotus* I, the son of a centurion, he allegedly sought to incite turmoil within the same *legio III Gallica*²⁴³;

9. *Ignotus* II, a cloth weaver allegedly sought to incite a rebellion within *legio IV Scythica*²⁴⁴;

10. *Ignotus* III, a private citizen allegedly dared to address the fleet anchored at *Cyzicus*, his actions fueled by thoughts of rebellion; he may have been a supporter of Castinus²⁴⁵;

11. Valerianus Paetus, who worked as a sculptor of effigies, was allegedly accused by Elagabalus, as noted by Cassius Dio, of conspiring to incite a rebellion in *Cappadocia*, leading to his execution. Paetus was originally from *Galatia*, but according to the Bithynian historian, the art in which he was trained allowed him to create ornaments that he presented to his wives. Indeed, these gold ornaments bore his portrait, which may have prompted Elagabalus to consider a potential usurpation²⁴⁶;

²⁴⁰ Cassius Dio, LXXIX, 4. See also Southern 2004, 58, 300 (n. 72); McHugh 2017, 55-57, 59, 97, 250, 324.

²⁴¹ Cassius Dio, LXXIX, 4. See also McHugh 2017, 57.

²⁴² Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 31. See also Kienast 2004, 176; Zugravu 2012, 399-400, n. 433; McHugh 2017, 70, 324.

²⁴³ Cassius Dio, LXXIX, 7. See also McHugh 2017, 55.

²⁴⁴ Cassius Dio, LXXIX, 7. See also McHugh 2017, 55.

²⁴⁵ Cassius Dio, LXXIX, 7. See also McHugh 2017, 56.

²⁴⁶ Cassius Dio, LXXIX, 4.

12. according to Cassius Dio, there were also other attempts at usurpation in various regions, as the unscrupulous ambition of those aspiring to power had grown to such an extent that, in the absence of any real chances of success and without genuine merits, numerous individuals engaged in the pursuit of authority, causing disturbances²⁴⁷.

The tragic fate of Severus Alexander (222-235) brought the ruler into contact with the mechanism of social disgrace on two occasions. The first episode occurred during his early childhood, in a context where he had been adopted by his cousin Elagabalus and had attained the status of *nobilissimus Caesar*. According to Cassius Dio, Herodian, the anonymous author of *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, John of Antioch, and Zonaras, Elagabalus began to regret the act of adoption and consequently sought the Senate's approval to revoke the title of *Caesar* from his cousin; however, this request was met with reluctance and ultimately failed. The situation did not end there; upon realizing that his will was disregarded by the senators, Elagabalus devised plans to eliminate his relative through assassination. Thus, the one who was supposed to adopt the conduct of a father and serve as a role model for his adopted son resorted to hiring assassins to carry out his intention. He allegedly commanded members of Severus Alexander's inner circle to take his life, whether in the bath or by using poison or a dagger, offering large rewards and honours to those who would undertake such a mission. He also sought to convince soldiers to annul Severus Alexander's status as *Caesar*. Moreover, agents were dispatched to deface the inscriptions and statues of his cousin, an act that, once executed, incited the anger of the soldiers, who harboured affection for the young emperor and desired vengeance. Although the troops were calmed by Elagabalus's promise to change his ways and distance himself from harmful social elements, the old thoughts and intentions resurfaced in the ruler's mind. This ultimately could not protect him from the sword that brought about his death in the latrine, serving as an instrument of fate that facilitated the transition of Roman imperial governance from an infamous *princeps*, remembered in the annals of history by the epithets *Impurus*, *Tiberinus*, *Tractatius*, *Sardanapalus*, to one regarded as "too good and necessary for the state", as Severus Alexander was considered in the writings of the anonymous author²⁴⁸.

²⁴⁷ Cassius Dio, LXXIX, 7.

²⁴⁸ Cassius Dio, LXXIX, 19-20; Herodian, V, 8; *SHA, Hel.*, XIII, 6-8; XIV, 2; John of Antioch, fr. 218; Zonaras, XII, 14. See also Zugravu 2012, 396-397, n. 427; Zugravu 2022b, 503, n. 509.

The second episode was orchestrated posthumously, and was initiated by Maximinus Thrax, who was responsible for the assassination in 235²⁴⁹. Herodian, Eusebius of *Caesarea*, Orosius, Rufinus of *Aquileia*, the author of *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, John of Antioch, Georgius Monachus, Zonaras, and Georgius Cedrenus have provided accounts regarding the manifestations of this phenomenon. Consequently, individuals close to the deceased emperor, specifically those related to his family, as well as his servants and friends, were regarded as *suspecti*. The wrath of Maximinus Thrax was directed at them, resulting in various executions; furthermore, his edicts were no longer deemed worthy of consideration²⁵⁰.

During the reign of Severus Alexander, several rebellions occurred:

1. Lucius Seius Herennius Sallustius, the father-in-law of Severus Alexander and father of his wife, Gnaea Seia Herennia Sallustia Barbia Orbiana, allegedly incited the Praetorian Guard to revolt around the year 227 due to misunderstandings with the empress mother, Iulia Mamaea²⁵¹;
2. Taurinius / Taurinus have been proclaimed *Augustus* in *Mesopotamia* around 226-227 or 231-232, and, fearing capture by the legitimate sovereign, he reportedly threw himself into the Euphrates River²⁵²;
3. Uranius, who is thought to have had obscure origins based on the notion that his ancestors were slaves, as noted by Zosimus, was reportedly proclaimed emperor in the region of *Edessa* sometime in 229, but he was captured and killed. However, Polemius Silvius placed him during the reign of Elagabalus. It is possible that he was a relative, likely the father, of another usurper of the same name who later emerged between 253 and 254²⁵³;
4. the fictitious usurper: Ovinus Camillus, as described in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, is portrayed as a senator from an ancient family who harboured thoughts of rebellion and aimed to seize power. Upon

²⁴⁹ Broșteanu 2020, 104; Broșteanu 2022, 45; Luca 2022, 165.

²⁵⁰ Herodian, VII, 1; Orosius, VII, 19.1-2; Eusebius, *HE*, VI, 28; *SHA, Maxim.*, IX, 7-8; John of Antioch, fr. 220; Georgius Monachus, *Chron.* (in PG 110, 543); Cedrenus, *Hist., Comp.* (in PG 121, 491); Zonaras XII, 16.

²⁵¹ Herodian, VI, 1; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 31. See also Kienast 2004, 181-182; Mennen 2011, 255; Zugravu 2012, 399-400, n. 433; McHugh 2017, 134, 136-138, 325.

²⁵² Herodian, VI, 4; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXIV, 2; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 31. See also Kienast 2004, 182; Potter 2004, 618, n. 217; Mennen 2011, 255; Zugravu 2012, 399-400, n. 433; McHugh 2017, 184, 203, 250, 326; Syväne 2021, 29-30; Broșteanu 2023, 135.

²⁵³ Zosimus, I, 12.2; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 31; Synkellos, *Chron.*, 674-675. See also Kienast 2004, 176; Potter 2004, 166; Southern 2004, 62, 302 (n. 80), 308-309 (n. 96); Mennen 2011, 255; Zugravu 2012, 399-400, n. 433; McHugh 2017, 184-186, 203, 250, 291 (n. 25), 326; Syväne 2021, 30.

learning of Camillus's intentions and confirming them, Severus Alexander summoned him to the palace, expressing gratitude for his willingness to take on state responsibilities. Subsequently, the emperor introduced Camillus to the Senate as a partner in imperial authority and bestowed upon him insignia more valuable than his own as a sign of recognition. In anticipation of a campaign against barbarian forces, the sovereign encouraged Camillus to participate, and upon observing the effort he exerted, provided him with constant support. Ultimately, when Camillus decided to relinquish his position, the emperor, demonstrating clemency, allowed him to retire safely to his estate, ensuring he would be respected by the soldiers. This fictional character would later be killed by Maximinus Thrax²⁵⁴.

In 238, after the Senate aligned itself with the two Gordians, Maximinus Thrax, his son Maximus, and all their regime's supporters were officially declared *hostes publici*, *hostes senatus*, and *hostes populi Romani*, marking the formal initiation of their condemnation to oblivion. This ruling continued to be upheld during the reigns of emperors Pupienus and Balbinus (238)²⁵⁵. Upon learning of the events in Carthage, specifically the acclamation of the two Gordians as *Augusti* and the Senate's defection against him, Maximinus addressed the army. The emperor praised his soldiers for their bravery displayed in battles against the Germanic tribes, Sarmatians, and Persians, ridiculed the Carthaginians for their support of the Gordians, and criticized the Roman populace, blaming them for their fickle, unstable, and easily frightened nature. He described the senators as adversaries of discipline and promoters of a dissolute lifestyle. Ultimately, he resolved to wage war against Rome and the senators, who were cursed and regarded as enemies²⁵⁶.

There are also two inscriptions that utilize the term *hostes publici* to emphasize the exclusion of the two Maximini from the civic body; furthermore, in one of these inscriptions, it is noted that their reign was perceived as a *saevissima dominatio*, as follows:

²⁵⁴ *SHA, Alex. Seu.*, XLVIII. See also Kienast 2004, 182; Mennen 2011, 255; McHugh 2017, 246, 300 (n. 3).

²⁵⁵ Herodian, VII, 7-9; 11; VIII, 6; *SHA, Max.*, XV, 2; 5; 9; XVI, 5-6; XVII, 6; XVIII, 2; XX, 8; XXIV, 2; XXVI, 2-4; *Gord.*, XI, 1; 7; 9-10; XII; XIII, 6; XIV, 3; *Max. Balb.*, I, 4; II, 11; X, 2-3; John of Antioch, fr. 224. See also Kienast 2004, 183, 185; Potter 2004, 169-170; Southern 2004, 67; Varner 2004, 200-202, 205; Zugravu 2012, 407-408 (n. 444), 409-410 (n. 447); Pearson 2016, 132, 134, 151; Haymann 2018, 265; Antiquiera, Da Silva 2022, 20; Zugravu 2022b, 523-526 (n. 547), 528-529 (n. 552).

²⁵⁶ Herodian, VII, 8; 10; VIII, 1; *SHA, Max.*, XVII-XVIII; *Gord.*, XIII-XIV; John of Antioch, fr. 224.

A dedication to Mars Gravidus, dating from 238 to 249, was discovered in *Aquincum* (Budapest), located in *Pannonia Inferior*. This dedication was made by Clodius Celsinus, likely a centurion in *legio II Adiutrix* - HD, 027768.

The dedicant was dispatched in the presence of *vexillationes* from *Moesia Inferior* to *Viminacium* to ensure the removal of the names of certain *hostes publici*. The identities of those labeled as enemies have been a topic of intense debate within historiography. Referring to the French journal of epigraphic studies, *L'Année épigraphique*, the situation is as follows: in the 1936 issue, it was stated that the individuals in question were the sons of the usurper Fulvius Macrianus, namely Titus Fulvius Iunius Macrianus and Titus Fulvius Iunius Quietus, who had expressed separatist intentions in 259/260, during the reign of Gallienus; the 1940 issue highlighted that G. Heuten published a study that included the inscription, aiming to compile all texts containing the term *cantabrum*; the 1950 issue noted that Maximinus Thrax and his son, Maximus, were implicated; the 1975 issue announced the publication of a new study on this subject, while the 1976 issue pointed to studies in which Trebonianus Gallus and Volusianus were considered the sovereigns referenced in the inscription; the 1980 issue featured an article in which Philippus Arabs and his son were described as the emperors labeled as public enemies; the 2011 issue showcased scientific contributions that focused on either the Maximinus or Philippus²⁵⁷.

In the *corpus* of inscriptions titled *Tituli Aquincenses, I: Tituli operum publicorum et honorarii et sacri*, published in 1989 in Budapest and edited by Péter Kovács and Ádám Szabó, it was asserted that the condemned emperors were either the Maximinus Thrax and his son or the Philippus Arabs and his son. Additionally, a comprehensive bibliography was provided²⁵⁸.

Among scholars, four hypotheses have been proposed regarding the identities of the respective emperors:

a) The Macrian hypothesis, which was proposed by András Alföldi and adopted by Arthur Stein; E. M. Shtajerman acknowledged the contribution of Egger but aligned with Alföldi's viewpoint²⁵⁹; The Maximinian hypothesis, initiated by Rudolf Egger, who argued that the

²⁵⁷ AE 1935, 164b = AE 1939, 181 = AE 1949, 151 = AE 1949, 201b = AE 1972, 377 = AE 1973, 435 = AE 1976, 547 = AE 2008, 1145.

²⁵⁸ TitAq I, 213.

²⁵⁹ Alföldi 1935, 280-284; Stein 1940, 105; Shtajerman 1964, 433-435.

Macriani or Regalianus and his wife, Sulpicia Dryantilla, should not be considered. This hypothesis has been further adopted in the research of historian Florian Matei-Popescu; in the context of several scientific meetings organized by the Center for Classical and Christian Studies (Faculty of History / „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iaşi), historian Nelu Zugravu expressed his viewpoint, which aligned with the hypothesis that the two sovereigns considered *hostes* were Maximinus Thrax and his son, Maximus²⁶⁰;

b) The hypothesis concerning Trebonianus Gallus and Volusianus, which was accepted by Jenő Fid and Radnóti Aladár. The latter, while referencing the studies of Alföldi, Egger, and Stein, concluded that the dedicant, Clodius Celsinus, might have perceived the reign of these two emperors as a *saeuissima dominatio*. This perspective was also considered more credible by István Stefaits²⁶¹;

c) The hypothesis concerning the two Philippi, which was supported by Slobodan Dušanić and Christian Körner. Miroslava Mirković also advocated this idea, noting Alföldi's publication while acknowledging that it had been corrected by Egger. Moreover, Mirković commended Egger for rightly observing that the power mentioned in the inscription was characterized as a *saeuissima dominatio*, suggesting that, under certain circumstances, it could have lasted longer than the brief usurpation of the Macriani²⁶².

In a different context, Bálint Kuzsinszky merely noted the circumstances surrounding the discovery of the inscription, identified the dedicant, and outlined his assigned mission, which involved the removal of the names of certain adversaries. Concurrently, Thomas Pekary points out that the inscription was edited by Alföldi and discussed by Egger and Jenő Fid, concluding that special military units known as *vexillationes* were dispatched for the destruction of images and the erasure of the names of the condemned. Finally, François Chausson suggested that the inscription could pertain to any of the following sovereigns: the two Maximini, the two Philippi, or Trebonianus Gallus and Volusianus²⁶³. An inscription dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus and other deities, dating from July 1 242, during

²⁶⁰ Egger 1940, 219-224; Matei-Popescu 2010, 272.

²⁶¹ Aladár 1954, 60-61; Fitz 1971, 249-253; Stefaits 1972.

²⁶² Mirković 1969, 58-61; Dušanić 1976, 434-438; Körner 2002, 296-299.

²⁶³ IMS II, 51-52. See also Kuzsinszky 1934, 200, n. 384; Pekary 1985, 136-137; Chausson 1998, 180-181.

the consulship of Caius Vettius Gratus Atticus Sabinianus and Caius Asinius Lepidus Praetextatus, was discovered in *Mogontiacum* (Mainz), in *Germania Superior*. This inscription was erected by [---]us Annianus, the son of Lucius - *HD*, 055289.

Anninus expressed his wishes for well-being, security, and victory for Emperor Gordianus III, his wife, Furia Sabinia Tranquillina, and their entire family. The dedicant detailed his accomplishments as a member of a judicial college and a military tribune in the legions, outlining his administrative and military responsibilities. Of particular interest to our research are the lines in which it is noted that Anninus was dispatched, in the context of the tumultuous events of 238, to the *regio Transpadana*, specifically to *Mediolanum* (Milan), where he was tasked with recruiting men and manufacturing arms, an objective that was to be achieved against the *hostes publici*, a term employed to describe the two Maximini and their supporters²⁶⁴.

Regarding the emperors whose reigns coincide with various phases of what is contemporarily referred to as the "Crisis of the Third Century" or "Military Anarchy", which followed the leadership of Gordianus III (238-244), it is known that specific measures related to the phenomenon of *abolitio memoriae* were applied in relation to their socio-political identities. This reality can be supported not by narrative sources, but rather by epigraphic evidence related to the following emperors: Philippus I *Arabs* (244-249) and his son Philippus II (244-249) - *HD*, 000270 (a. 247); 007026 (a. 248); 022565 (a. 244-247); 023125 (a. 244-249); 076303 (a. 245) etc.²⁶⁵; Traianus Decius (249-251) and his sons Herennius Etruscus (250-251) and Hostilianus (250-251) - *HD*, 001517 (a. 250); 007089 (a. 251); 020349 (a. 251); 078643 (a. 250) etc.²⁶⁶;

Trebonianus Gallus (251-253) and his son Volusianus (251-253) - *HD*, 000736 (a. 251-253); 001006 (a. 253); 012115 (a. 252); 054805 (a. 251-253); 054806 (a. 251-253) etc.²⁶⁷; Valerianus I (253-260) and his successors Gallienus (253-268), his first son from his marriage to Egnatia Mariniana, while from another marriage to Cornelia Gallonia, he had Licinius Valerianus, and Valerian II (256-258) and Saloninus (258-260), who were his grandsons - *HD*, 013638 (a. 253-260); 022571 (a. 254); 026286 (a. 256-257); 052648 (a. 261-268);

²⁶⁴ Egger 1940, 222.

²⁶⁵ Kienast 2004, 198, 200; Zugravu 2012, 418-419, n. 458; Pearson 2022, 33, 261 (n. 2), 283 (n. 19); Zugravu 2022b, 539-540, n. 579 and 580.

²⁶⁶ Kienast 2004, 204, 206-207; Zugravu 2012, 424-425 (n. 469), 428 (n. 474); Pearson 2022, 262 (n. 9), 275 (n. 15); Zugravu 2022b, 546-549, n. 592 and 593.

²⁶⁷ Kienast 2004, 209-210; Zugravu 2012, 429-430, n. 476; Zugravu 2022b, 551-552, n. 598.

061764 (a. 253-260) etc.²⁶⁸; Aurelianus (270-275) - *HD*, 021135 (a. 272-274); 025875 (a. 270-275); 043071 (a. 274); 045578 (a. 270-272); 055847 (a. 274) etc.²⁶⁹; Probus (276-282) - *HD*, 026164 (a. 276-282); 027640 (a. 280); 028870 (a. 282); 045580 (a. 282); 061765 (a. 276-282) etc.²⁷⁰; Carus (282-283) along with his sons Carinus (283-285) and Numerianus (283-284) - *HD*, 006789 (a. 283-284); 023246 (a. 283-284); 033589 (a. 284); 045032 (a. 282-283); 045581 (a. 284) etc.²⁷¹.

We note that two of the aforementioned emperors were first granted apotheosis before being condemned to oblivion:

1. Traianus Decius and Herennius Etruscus - *HD*, 030921 (a. 251): the term *divus* was applied in reference to the emperors²⁷²;
2. Carus - *HD*, 006789 (a. 283-284); 25404 (a. 283-284); 033577 (a. 284); 033580 (a. 284); 053081 (a. 284): terms such as *divus* and *genitor* were employed²⁷³.

Furthermore, three of the emperors mentioned above were rehabilitated and granted apotheosis, as confirmed by narrative and epigraphic sources through the use of the term *divus*:

1. Trebonianus Gallus and Volusianus - *EDCS*-22901808 (a. 253-260)²⁷⁴;
2. Aurelianus - *HD*, 013726 (a. 275)²⁷⁵;
3. Probus - *HD*, 005279 (a. 285-290)²⁷⁶.

A unique case in this period is represented by *Marcus Aemilius Aemilianus*, the governor of *Moesia Inferior*, who was proclaimed emperor by the soldiers in July 253. While en route to Rome, Trebonianus Gallus persuaded the Senate to declare him *hostis*. Following Gallus's death, the senators retracted their decision and, compelled by circumstances,

²⁶⁸ Kienast 2004, 218, 221; Zugravu 2012, 442-443 (n. 501), 446-448 (n. 508); Zugravu 2022b, 583, n. 650.

²⁶⁹ Kienast 2004, 234; Zugravu 2012, 465-466, n. 547; Zugravu 2022b, 599-601, n. 687.

²⁷⁰ Kienast 2004, 253; Zugravu 2012, 478-479, n. 564; Zugravu 2022b, 615, n. 716.

²⁷¹ Kienast 2004, 258, 260-261; Zugravu 2012, 482-483 (n. 569), 484-485 (n. 573); Antikeira 2017, 31-32, n. 71; Zugravu 2022b, 618-619, n. 723.

²⁷² Kienast 2004, 204; Zugravu 2012, 424-425, n. 469; Zugravu 2022b, 546-547, n. 592.

²⁷³ Kienast 2004, 258; Zugravu 2012, 482-483 (n. 569), 484-485 (n. 573); Zugravu 2022b, 618-619, n. 723.

²⁷⁴ Kienast 2004, 209; Zugravu 2012, 429-430, n. 476; Zugravu 2022b, 551-552, n. 598.

²⁷⁵ Eutropius, IX, 15.2; *SHA, Aur.*, XXXVII, 1; XLI, 1; 13; John of Antioch, fr. 238. See also Kienast 2004, 234; Zugravu 2012, 465-466, n. 547; Zugravu 2022b, 599-601, n. 687.

²⁷⁶ *Panegyrici Latini*, IV [8], 18.3. See also Kienast 2004, 253; Zugravu 2012, 478-479, n. 564; Zugravu 2022b, 615, n. 716.

acknowledged Aemilianus as *Augustus*. Several editors of the work *Liber de Caesaribus*, including P. Dufraigne, H. W. Bird, K. Groß-Albenhausen, and Nelu Zugravu, have underscored the "cowardly and duplicitous behaviour of the senatorial aristocracy"²⁷⁷. Following the removal of Aemilianus by Valerianus I, it is known that the former was subjected to *abolitio memoriae*, as evidenced by epigraphic material, since several inscriptions dedicated to him were erased - *EDCS*-46400015 (a. 253); 65600129 (a. 253); 65600130 (a. 253); *HD*, 028851 (a. 253).

Between the years 235 and 284, separatist movements, rebellions against legitimate authority, and acts of usurpation became endemic within Roman society; consequently, multiple claimants to the throne emerged:

1. during the reign of Maximinus Thrax:

a) Caius Petronius Magnus, a former *consul* who opposed the emperor in 235, saw his plans unravel at an early stage and was subsequently eliminated along with his supporters²⁷⁸; his name was also erased from inscriptions - *EDCS*-08201037 (a. 223);

b) Titus / Quartinus, who in 235 aspired to supreme power, encouraged by the discontented Osrhoene archers angered by the death of Severus Alexander, ultimately met his end through decapitation by his associate, Macedo (or Macedonius). Macedo presented his severed head to Maximinus, only to subsequently be eliminated himself²⁷⁹.

2. during the reign of Gordianus III: Marcus Asinius Sabinianus, *proconsul* of *Asia* from 239 to 240, orchestrated a plot in *Africa* in 240. In response, the governor of *Mauretania* was dispatched against him. After a siege, Sabinianus' supporters, perceived as conspirators, ultimately

²⁷⁷ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 31.1-3; Eutropius, IX, 5-6; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXI, 1-3; Zosimus, I, 28-29; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 254; John of Antioch, fr. 229; Jordanes, *Get.*, XIX, 105; *Rom.*, 285-286; Zonaras, XII, 21-22. See Potter 2004, 252; Southern 2004, 76-78, 193, 223, 236, 309 (n. 97 and 98), 346-347 (n. 16), 353-354 (n. 63), 356 (n. 80); Zugravu 2012, 428-429, n. 475; Zugravu 2022b, 553, n. 602 (the phrase in quotation marks above). See also Kienast 2004, 212; Varner 2004, 209; Haymann 2018, 265; Broșteanu 2022, 49; Pearson 2022, 115-116, 122-123, 141-152, 160, 162; Antikeira 2023, 177, 195-196 (n. 137); Broșteanu 2023, 133, 135.

²⁷⁸ Herodian, VII, 1; *SHA, Maxim.*, X; *Tr. Tyr.*, XXXII, 2. See also Kienast 2004, 186; Potter 2004, 169; Southern 2004, 303, n. 82; Mennen 2011, 255; Zugravu 2012, 406, n. 442; Pearson 2016, 88-89; Syväne 2021, 68-69.

²⁷⁹ Herodian, VII, 1; *SHA, Maxim.*, XI, 1-6; *Tr. Tyr.*, XXXII, 1. See also Kienast 2004, 186-187; Potter 2004, 169; Southern 2004, 64, 303 (n. 82); Mennen 2011, 255; Zugravu 2012, 406, n. 442; Pearson 2016, 89-90; Syväne 2021, 69.

surrendered him to the authorities, pleading for clemency from the legitimate ruler. This event is believed to have taken place in Carthage²⁸⁰.

3. during the reign of Philippus Arabs:

a) Marcus F. Ru. Iotapianus initiated a usurpation movement in 248 or 249, finding fertile ground in one of the Eastern regions - *Cappadocia*, *Mesopotamia*, or *Syria* - driven by the excesses committed by Caius Iulius Priscus, *rector Orientis* and brother of Emperor Philippus. The central figure of this separatist movement was ultimately stripped of his social status by the sword, as he was executed by decapitation²⁸¹;

b) Tiberius Claudius Marinus Pacatianus, who in 248 received the support of troops from the Danubian region - specifically those stationed in *Moesia* and *Pannonia* - in his bid for supreme power, was swiftly suppressed, as noted by Zosimus²⁸²;

4. during the reign of Trainus Decius:

a) Iulius Valens Licinianus, whose usurpation took place in Rome in 250, capitalized on the absence of the legitimate emperor, who was engaged on the Balkan front against the Carpi and Goths²⁸³;

b) Titus Iulius Priscus, governor of *Thracia*, proclaimed himself emperor around the year 250 after reaching an agreement with the Goths. His rule was short-lived, and he was subsequently declared *hostis patriae*²⁸⁴;

²⁸⁰ SHA, *Gord.*, XXIII, 4-5; Zosimus, I, 17.1. See also Kienast 2004, 197; Potter 2004, 229-230, 632 (n. 57); Southern 2004, 68; Mennen 2011, 59, 255; Pearson 2016, 185-186; Syväne 2021, 114, 126.

²⁸¹ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 29.2; Zosimus, I, 20.2; 21.2; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 38. See also Kienast 2004, 202; Potter 2004, 239-240, 248, 250; Southern 2004, 73, 251, 307-308 (n. 93); Mennen 2011, 39, 255; Syväne 2021, 177-181, 183-184, 189, 192; Broşteanu 2022, 48; Pearson 2022, 22-26, 34, 67, 147, 185, 227; Zugravu 2022b, 543-544, n. 587; Antikeira 2023, 21, 88, 133-134, 182 (n. 32).

²⁸² Zosimus, I, 20.2; 21.1-3; Zonaras, XII, 19. See also Kienast 2004, 201; Potter 2004, 240, 244, 250, 635 (n. 108), 636 (n. 18); Southern 2004, 73-74, 251, 307-308 (n. 93); Mennen 2011, 143 (n. 25), 255; Syväne 2021, 164-165, 177, 179, 182-189, 192, 211; Antikeira, Da Silva 2022, 20; Pearson 2022, 20-23, 25-29, 52, 147, 227; Antikeira 2023, 119 (n. 30), 133-138, 141, 180 (n. 7), 181 (n. 12 and 13), 183 (n. 32).

²⁸³ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 29.3; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXIX, 5; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 40; SHA, *Tr. Tyr.*, XX, 3; Cyprian of Carthage, *Ep.* 55.9. See also Kienast 2004, 208; Southern 2004, 75, 308 (n. 95); Mennen 2011, 255; Zugravu 2012, 425, n. 471; Pearson 2022, 61-62, 267 (n. 7); Zugravu 2022b, 545-546, n. 590; Broşteanu 2023, 133.

²⁸⁴ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 29.3; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 40; Jordanes, *Get.*, XVIII, 103. See also Kienast 2004, 208; Potter 2004, 246, 250; Southern 2004, 222; Mennen 2011, 255; Pearson 2022, 71-72; 81, 268 (n. 23); Syväne 2021, 181-182; Zugravu 2022b, 544-545, n. 588; Antikeira 2023, 22.

5. between the reign of Trebonianus Gallus and the beginning of that of Valerianus I: Lucius Iulius Aurelius Sulpicius Severus Uranius Antoninus, a usurper who is believed to have operated in *Emesa* between 253 and 254, is known to us primarily through numismatic sources. His rebellion is likely a consequence of the attacks by Sapor on the region; he was probably eliminated by Valerianus I after 254²⁸⁵.

6. at some point between 248 and 253: Mar. Silbannacus, possibly a usurper, perhaps even a Roman emperor, known to us through numismatic sources; 'Mar.' could be an abbreviation for one of the following names: Marcus, Marcius, Marius, or Marinus²⁸⁶.

7. during the reign of Gallienus:

a) Ingenuus, the commander of the troops in *Pannonia* and *Moesia*, was proclaimed emperor in 258 or 260 but was defeated at the Battle of Mursa by Gallienus, whose forces were led by the general Aureolus. The usurper ultimately met his end by either being captured and killed or by choosing to commit suicide by strangulation. Claudius II Gothicus, the future emperor, also played a role in the effort to eliminate this usurper²⁸⁷;

b) P. Cassius Regalianus, or P. Cornelius Regalianus, *dux Illyrici* and governor of *Pannonia Superior*, usurped power in 259 or 260 with the support of the Moesian troops, following the capture of Valerianus I by the Persians. His removal did not occur due to the intervention of Gallienus, but as a result of a conflict with the Sarmatians, during which he perished on the battlefield²⁸⁸;

²⁸⁵ Kienast 2004, 211; Potter 2004, 249-250, 277, 301; Southern 2004, 76, 308-309 (n. 96 and 99); Mennen 2011, 255; Zugravu 2012, 399-400, n. 433; Syv  nne 2021, 30; Pearson 2022, 140-141, 164-165, 185; Antikeira 2023, 21, 194 (n. 121).

²⁸⁶ Estiot 1996, 105-117; K  rner 2002, 277 (n. 2), 386-388, 393; Kienast 2004, 202; Potter 2004, 250; Mennen 2011, 255; Syv  nne 2021, 153-157, 163, 179, 186, 189, 209 (n. 12); Pearson 2022, 147-150, 279 (n. 46); Antikeira 2023, 21, 27 (n. 26), 134, 180 (n. 6).

²⁸⁷ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 33.2; Eutropius, IX, 8.1; Ammianus Marcellinus, XXI, 16.10; *SHA*, *Tr. tyr.*, IX; X, 1 and 14-15; *Claud.*, VII, 4; Orosius, VII, 22.10; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 45; Zonaras, XII, 24. See also Kienast 2004, 223; Potter 2004, 256, 639 (n. 177); Southern 2004, 79, 212, 252, 309-310 (n. 100), 314 (n. 15), 363 (n. 9); Mennen 2011, 216-218, 119 (n. 100), 220, 222 (n. 115), 238, 255; Zugravu 2012, 436 (n. 491), 441-442 (n. 498), 449-450 (n. 517); Bro  teanu 2022, 48, 52; Pearson 2022, 187-189, 192, 195, 213, 224, 289 (n. 20); Zugravu 2022b, 550-551 (n. 597), 560-562 (n. 612 and 613), 580-581 (n. 645), 585-587 (n. 657).

²⁸⁸ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 33.2; Eutropius, IX, 8.1; *SHA*, *Gall.*, IX, 1; *Tr. tyr.*, X; *Claud.*, VII, 4; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXII, 3; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 45. See also Kienast 2004, 223-224; Potter 2004, 256, 639 (n. 177); Southern 2004, 79, 87-88, 103, 250, 309-310 (n. 100), 314 (n. 15), 317-318 (n. 27); Mennen 2011, 216, 218-219, 222 (n. 115), 238, 255; Zugravu 2012, 436-437, n. 492; Bro  teanu 2022, 48, 52; Pearson 2022, 224, 228, 232, 289 (n. 20); Zugravu 2022b, 561-

c) Cyriades / Mareades / Mariades / Mariadnes, a character who, according to the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, is said to have had an impressive social status, being wealthy and of noble origin, but around his personality revolved two negative variables - debauchery and degenerate morals. These negative traits would have fuelled a conflict between him and his father, the latter being disappointed by the kind of heir he had. As a result, Cyriades fled to the Persians, but not before plundering his own family of large amounts of gold and silver. Using his persuasive qualities, he would have convinced Shapur, the Persian king, to attack Roman territory, leading to the conquest of Antioch, *Caesarea*, and, consequently, the emergence of usurpation tendencies. The outcome was his acquisition of the titles *Caesar* and *Augustus*. Reaching this new social rank, Cyriades would have become the protagonist of a great social anxiety in the East, shaking it with his own forces. Continuing along this negative path, he would have killed his own father, but all of this, along with his reign, which was compared to tyranny and audacity, would not last long, as Cyriades would be killed in a conspiracy led by his own subordinates. His elimination occurred in the context of Valerianus initiating war against the Persians. The anonymous author of the fourth century concluded the section dedicated to this tyrant by stating that history had not recorded anything further worthy of remembrance, except that he was a traitor who had sought refuge with the Persians, a parricide who killed his father, and whose rule was characterized as *aspera tyrannis* and *summa luxuria*.

In the version found in the work of Ammianus Marcellinus, a certain Mariades, who guided the Persians to Antioch, an event that led to the plundering of the city and the killing of many of its inhabitants, is said to have ended up being burned alive by his former allies.

In the version provided by the anonymous continuation of Cassius Dio's work, the character is named Mariadnes. According to the author, he was positioned in Sapor's camp near Antioch, and the more prudent citizens decided to abandon the city, while most of the common people chose to align with him.

According to John Malalas, during the reign of Valerianus, Mariades was an official of Antioch who was expelled from the council due to his mismanagement of the chariot races he was responsible for; he had embezzled public funds allocated for the hippodrome. As a result, he fled to

Persia and promised the Persian emperor, Shapur, that he would betray Antioch. After the Persians plundered, burned, and destroyed the city, Mariades was beheaded for his treason against his own country²⁸⁹;

d) Titus? Fulvius Macrianus (Macrianus *maior*), a *rationibus*, proclaimed his sons, Titus Fulvius Iunius Macrianus (Macrianus *minor*) and Titus Fulvius Iunius Quietus, as *Augusti*, an event that took place in *Syria*. Their usurpation, which was supported by Balista/Ballista/Callistus, lasted from 260 to 261. The downfall of the Macriani occurred within the context of a campaign initiated by them in *Thracia*, with their demise orchestrated by none other than Aureolus. The younger son, Quietus, who remained in the East, sought refuge in *Emesa*, where he was besieged by the forces of Odaenathus and ultimately killed by the city's inhabitants, likely incited by Balista. The latter was subsequently killed by Odaenathus²⁹⁰;

e) Lucius Calpurnius Piso Frugi, a general subordinate to the Macriani, was dispatched by them in 261 against Valens *Thessalonicus*, the governor of *Achaia*. As Valens reportedly thwarted his plans, Piso retreated to *Thessalia*, where, with the support of certain supporters, he seized power. Unfortunately for him, this new social status brought him nothing more and nothing less than his own death, as he was ultimately killed²⁹¹;

f) Valens *Thessalonicus*, the proconsul of *Achaia*, seized power at a time when Piso was marching toward him in 261. However, he could not enjoy his newly elevated position, as after eliminating his opponent, he himself ultimately met his demise at the hands of soldiers²⁹²;

²⁸⁹ Anonymus post Dionem, fr. 1 (in *FHG* IV, 192) = Petrus Patricius, fr. 171; Ammianus Marcellinus, XXIII, 5.3; *SHA, Tr. tyr.*, II, 1-4; Malalas, *Chron.*, XII, 26. See also Kienast 2004, 216-217; Potter 2004, 248-249, 252, 301; Syväne 2021, 180; Pearson 2022, 127-129, 276 (n. 2, 3 and 6), 277 (n. 7).

²⁹⁰ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 33.3; *SHA, Gall.*, I, 2-5; II-III; *Tr. tyr.*, X, 14-15; XI, 2; XII-XIV; XV, 4; XVIII-XIX; XXI, 1; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 45; Zonaras, XII, 24. See also Kienast 2004, 224-227; Potter 2004, 256, 259, 263, 274, 639 (n. 177 and 180); Southern 2004, 79, 100-101, 103, 237, 250, 309-310 (n. 100), 316 (n. 21), 317-318 (n. 27), 360 (n. 13); Mennen 2011, 30 (n. 6), 32, 147-148, 165, 222-226, 255; Zugravu 2012, 436 (n. 491), 441-442 (n. 498); Syväne 2021, 181, 210 (n. 40); Pearson 2022, 177, 205-207, 209, 213-214, 216, 228, 232-233, 294 (n. 2); Zugravu 2022b, 565-566 (n. 619), 580-581 (n. 645).

²⁹¹ *SHA, Gall.*, II, 2-4; *Tr. tyr.*, XIX, 2; XXI. See also Kienast 2004, 226; Mennen 2011, 226-227, 238, 255; Zugravu 2012, 436 (n. 491), 441 (n. 497).

²⁹² Ammianus Marcellinus, XXI, 16.10; *SHA, Gall.*, II, 2-4; *Tr. tyr.*, XIX; XX, 1; XXI, 1-2; Pseudo- Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXII, 4. See also Kienast 2004, 227; Mennen 2011, 222, 226-227, 238, 255; Zugravu 2012, 441, n. 497.

g) Lucius Mussius Aemilianus *signo* Aegippius, the prefect of Egypt, is believed to have usurped power following a revolt in Alexandria, supported by soldiers. Gallienus personally intervened to eliminate him, dispatching General Aurelius Theodotus against Aemilianus, who captured him and ultimately strangled him in prison²⁹³;

h) Memor, a Moor responsible for supplying Egypt with grain, is reported to have planned a conspiracy but was killed due to the interventions of General Aurelius Theodotus²⁹⁴;

i) Aureolus, the former commander of Gallienus, whose military training contributed to the elimination of other usurpers, harbored hidden ambitions and seized power in 267 or 268 in *Mediolanum*, despite having been dispatched to the region to confront Postumus I²⁹⁵;

j) fictional usurpers:

j.i. Celsus, *privatus ex tribunis in Africa*, purportedly lived on his own lands and was proclaimed emperor sometime between 260 and 268 by Vibius Passienus, the proconsul, and Fabius Pomponianus, a general. However, after a mere seven days of rule, he was assassinated by Galliena, a supposed cousin of Gallienus. Following his death, his body was reportedly thrown to the dogs, and the inhabitants of *Sicca* subsequently hanged it. The same indignity was inflicted upon his iconographic representations, which were hung on a cross while the crowd gathered to insult the memory of the deceased²⁹⁶;

j.ii. Trebellianus, a pirate leader, reportedly instigated a revolt and was proclaimed emperor in *Isauria* sometime between 260 and 268. He is said

²⁹³ Eusebius, *HE*, VII, 11; *SHA, Gall.*, IV, 1-2; V, 6; IX, 1; *Tr. tyr.*, XXII; XXVI, 4; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXII, 4. See also Kienast 2004, 227-228; Southern 2004, 103, 317-318 (n. 27); Mennen 2011, 148, 222, 226, 255; Zugravu 2012, 440, n. 496; Pearson 2022, 178.

²⁹⁴ Anonymus post Dionem, fr. 4 (in *FHG* IV, 193) = Petrus Patricius, fr. 177; Zosimus I, 38. See also Kienast 2004, 228; Mennen 2011, 222, 226, 255.

²⁹⁵ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 33.17; *SHA, Gall.*, II, 6-7; III, 1; IV, 6; V, 6; VII, 1; IX, 1; XIV, 6-9; XXI, 5; *Tr. tyr.*, X, 14-15; XI; XII, 13-14; XIII, 3; XIV, 1; XV, 4; XVIII, 1 and 3; *Claud.*, V, 1-5; *Aur.*, XVI, 1; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, I, 45; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXII, 4; Zosimus, I, 40.1; John of Antioch, fr. 233; Zonaras, XII, 25. See also Kienast 2004, 228-229; Potter 2004, 256, 259, 263-264, 372; Southern 2004, 89, 100-101, 104, 106, 108-109, 272, 309, 310 (n. 100), 312 (n. 7 and 8), 316 (n. 20), 317 (n. 26), 319 (n. 32), 368 (n. 34); Mennen 2011, 161, 216-219, 221-222, 224, 231-232, 234-237, 239, 255; Zugravu 2012, 441-442 (n. 498), 445-448 (n. 507 and 508), 450 (n. 518); 461 (n. 538); Pearson 2022, 188, 212; Zugravu 2022b, 513-515 (n. 528), 560-561 (n. 612), 580-582 (n. 646), 583-585 (n. 653).

²⁹⁶ *SHA, Tr. tyr.*, XXIX; *Claud.*, VII, 4. See also Kienast 2004, 230; Zugravu 2012, 436, n. 491.

to have minted coins and constructed palaces but was ultimately defeated and killed by Camsioleus, a general in the service of Gallienus, who hailed from Egypt and was the brother of Aurelius Theodotus²⁹⁷;

j.iii. Saturninus, regarded as one of the most distinguished generals in Gallienus's service, as portrayed in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, reportedly accepted the title of emperor conferred upon him by soldiers sometime between 260 and 268 due to widespread discontent with the policies of the legitimate sovereign. However, not long thereafter, due to his strictness, he was killed by the very soldiers who had elevated him to supreme power²⁹⁸.

8. during the reign of Claudius II *Gothicus* (268-270): Claudius Censorinus, a fictional usurper mentioned solely in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, is said to have held several significant offices. While working his lands near *Bononia* (Bologna), he was proclaimed emperor and humorously referred to as Claudius. His usurpation reportedly occurred sometime between 268 and 270. Due to his excessively harsh treatment of the soldiers, a behavior that catalyzed growing resentment towards him, he eventually reached a point where he was no longer tolerated by those around him. According to the anonymous author, he was killed by the very soldiers who offered him the social status of sovereign²⁹⁹.

9. during the reign of Aurelianus:

a) Domitianus II, *dux Aureoli fortissimus et vehementissimus*, who was involved in the battles against the Macriani and, according to the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, claimed to be part of the family of Domitianus and Domitilla, purportedly usurped power in the region of Gaul sometime between 270/271 and 272. According to Zosimus, he was suspected of plotting against the legitimate authority, which ultimately led to his arrest and subsequent punishment³⁰⁰;

b) Felicissimus, *procurator a rationibus/rationalis/procurator fisci*, rose to prominence as the leader of a revolt by the mint workers in Rome, which took place between 270 and 271. The uprising was violently suppressed,

²⁹⁷ SHA, *Tr. tyr.*, XXVI. See also Kienast 2004, 229; Potter 2004, 647, n. 86; Zugravu 2012, 436-437, n. 491 and 492.

²⁹⁸ SHA, *Gall.*, IX, 1; *Tr. tyr.*, XXIII. See also Kienast 2004, 230; Zugravu 2012, 436, n. 491.

²⁹⁹ SHA, *Tr. tyr.*, XXXIII. See also Kienast 2004, 232.

³⁰⁰ SHA, *Gall.*, II, 6; *Tr. Tyr.*, XII, 14; XIII, 3; Zosimus, I, 49.2. See also Kienast 2004, 237; Southern 2004, 112; Mennen 2011, 222, 224, 255; Zugravu 2012, 461, n. 538; Antiquiera 2013, 207.

leading to considerable bloodshed and the deaths of numerous senators, equestrians, and soldiers in the process³⁰¹;

c) Septimius / Septiminus, a Roman soldier who claimed the title of emperor in *Dalmatia* between 271 and 272 was quickly killed by his soldiers following his attempted usurpation³⁰²;

d) usurpers of doubtful existence:

d.i. Firmus, an influential merchant originating from *Seleucia*, reportedly seized control of Egypt driven by anger, despite lacking the formal attributes of an emperor. Known to have been an associate of Zenobia, he was swiftly defeated by Emperor Aurelianus and ultimately met his end, either by suicide or execution by hanging³⁰³;

d.ii. Sponsianus, a presumed usurper, is thought to have operated in *Dacia* during the latter half of the third century, within a timeframe approximately between 244 and 274. Alleged coins bearing his name have been discovered, yet his existence has sparked significant debate among scholars. Some argue for the historical reality of Sponsianus, while others question the authenticity of such claims³⁰⁴;

d.iii Urbanus, who reportedly organized a conspiracy sometime between 271 and 272, was swiftly punished, as recorded by Zosimus³⁰⁵.

10. the Gallic Empire:

a) Marcus Cassianius Latinus Postumus, *praeses* of the province of *Germania Inferior*, usurped power in 259/260 amidst the socio-political instability facing the Empire, establishing what became known as the Gallic

³⁰¹ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 35.6; Eutropius, IX, 14.1; Ammianus Marcellinus, XXX, 8.8; *SHA, Aurel.*, XVIII, 4; XXI, 5-6; XXXVIII, 2-4; XXXIX, 8; L, 5; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXV, 4; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 49; Zosimus, I, 49.2; 61.3; John of Antioch, fr. 236; Malalas, *Chron.*, XII, 30. See also Kienast 2004, 238; Southern 2004, 112-113, 220 (n. 38); Mennen 2011, 255; Zugravu 2012, 461-462, n. 539; Antikeira 2013, 202-216; Zugravu 2022b, 596-597, n. 681.

³⁰² Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXV, 3; Zosimus, I, 49.2. See also Kienast 2004, 237-238; Southern 2004, 112; Mennen 2011, 255; Zugravu 2012, 461, n. 538; Antikeira 2013, 207.

³⁰³ *SHA, Aur.*, XXXII, 2; *Quadr. tyr.*, I-VI. See also Kienast 2004, 238; Southern 2004, 117-118, 122, 322-323 (n. 47); Mennen 2011, 255; Zugravu 2022b, 321-322, n. 75.

³⁰⁴ Körner 2002, 277 (n. 2), 389-391; 393; Kienast 2004, 203; Potter 2004, 250; Mennen 2011, 255; Syv  ne 2021, 153-157; Pearson 2022, 225-228, 232, 292-293 (n. 23, 24 and 27), 294 (n. 30); Pearson et al. 2022, 1-33; Antikeira 2023, 21, 27 (n. 27), 180 (n. 6). For the perspective of Romanian researchers Emanuel Petac and Florian-Matei Popescu, see <https://hotnews.ro/monedele-cu-chipul-mparatului-roman-din-dacia-sponsianus-un-fals-ridicol-din-toate-punctele-de-vedere-opinia-specialistilor-95157> (accessed at 20.10.2024).

³⁰⁵ Zosimus I, 49.2. See also Kienast 2004, 237; Southern 2004, 112; Mennen 2011, 255; Zugravu 2012, 461, n. 538.

Empire. He engaged in warfare against barbarian tribes and, predictably, against Gallienus, who made several attempts to overthrow him. Postumus met his end in 269 while suppressing a usurper within his own realm, Laelianus; this occurred after he restrained his own troops, who, having secured victory over their former adversary, had sought to pillage in celebration³⁰⁶; he was subject to *abolitio memoriae*, as evidenced by various inscriptions - HD, 022224 (a. 260-269); 044953 (a. 260-262); 069874 (a. 263-268);

b) Ulpius Cornelius Laelianus, *legatus* of *legio XXII Primigena* stationed at *Mogontiacum* (Mainz), or governor of the province of *Germania Superior*, revolted against Postumus between February and June/July/November 269, following victories over the Germanic tribes. However, the rebellion was short-lived, as Postumus organized a military campaign against him, culminating in a siege of *Mogontiacum*, during which Laelianus was killed, either by his own soldiers or by his adversary³⁰⁷;

c) Marcus Aurelius Marius, referred to by some ancient authors as a *ferri opifex*, but in reality a figure well-versed in military art, was proclaimed emperor by the soldiers who had killed Postumus. His name alluded to Gaius Marius (157-86 BC), the renowned Roman general known for his military reforms, or to the emperor Marcus Aurelius. His reign was brief, likely lasting only three months, between June/July/September and

³⁰⁶ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 33.8; Eutropius, IX, 9.1; *SHA, Gall.*, IV, 3-6; *Tr. tyr.*, III-IV; Orosius, VII, 22.10; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXII, 3; Jerome., *Chron.*, a. 267; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, I, 45; Zosimus, I, 38.2; John of Antioch, fr. 230; Zonaras, XII, 24. See also Kienast 2004, 243-244; Potter 2004, 257, 260-261, 263, 266, 276, 278, 640 (n. 104), 641 (n. 213); Southern 2004, 36, 79-80, 84, 88-89, 93, 97-98, 100, 103-104, 118, 186, 216-217, 250-253, 309-310 (n. 100), 312-313 (n. 9), 315 (n. 19), 316 (n. 20), 323-324 (n. 50 and 51), 354 (n. 64 and 65), 362-363 (n. 8 and 9), 367-368 (n. 31 and 34); Mennen 2011, 32-34, 40, 216, 220-221, 235, 238, 256; Zugravu 2012, 437-440 (n. 493 and 495), 441 (n. 498), 443-444 (n. 504), 449-450 (n. 517), 451-452 (n. 520); Broșteanu 2020, 168; Broșteanu 2022, 48-49; Pearson 2022, 189, 201, 219, 221-223, 228-229, 231-233, 272 (n. 22), 291 (n. 15, 16 and 17), 292 (n. 18), 294 (n. 30); Zugravu 2022b, 360-361 (n. 170), 472 (n. 443), 513-515 (n. 528), 563-564 (n. 615), 572-576 (n. 630, 631, 632, 633, 634 and 635), 580-581 (n. 645), 585-587 (n. 657), 611 (n. 710); Broșteanu 2023, 133.

³⁰⁷ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 33.8; Eutropius, IX, 9.1; *SHA, Gall.*, XXI, 4; *Tr. tyr.*, III, 7; IV, 1; V, 4-5; 8; VI, 3; VIII, 1; XXXI, 2; *Claud.*, VII, 4; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXII, 4; Orosius, VII, 22.11; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 45. See also Kienast 2004, 244-245; Potter 2004, 265-266; Southern 2004, 118, 323 (n. 50); Mennen 2011, 235, 256; Zugravu 2012, 437-440 (n. 493 and 495), 451-452 (n. 520); Zugravu 2022b, 472 (n. 443), 574 (n. 632), 575-576 (n. 634 and 635).

August/September/November of 269, with his base in *Augusta Treverorum* (Trier), where he was ultimately killed on the orders of Victorinus³⁰⁸;

d) Marcus Piavonius Victorinus, who had a military career and attained the social status of *consul* in 268 alongside Postumus, was proclaimed emperor by the soldiers at *Augusta Treverorum*, which became his base. The main concerns of his reign, which lasted from late 269 to 271, revolved around preventing the escalation of separatist tendencies within the Gallic Empire, as some regions, particularly *Hispania* and parts of *Gallia Narbonensis*, expressed intentions to recognize the authority of Claudius II *Gothicus*. Victorinus ultimately met his demise in *Colonia*; he was killed by a jealous husband whose wife he allegedly attempted to seduce, according to ancient sources. The *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* states that he had a son, Victorinus II, to whom he or his mother, Victoria or Vitruvia - thus the child's grandmother - bestowed the title of *Caesar*. The fate of Victorinus II was tragic, as he was killed by soldiers shortly after his father's removal. Both father and son were reportedly buried together near *Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium*. Researchers generally consider the son to be a fictional character³⁰⁹;

e) Gaius Pius Esuvius Tetricus (Tetricus I), a representative of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy and *praeses* of *Aquitania*, was proclaimed emperor with the support of the soldiers, although it is less likely that this occurred at the behest of Victoria, as some ancient authors have claimed. His reign lasted from 271 to 274, during which Tetricus faced challenges arising from military pressures. Between 272 and 273, he bestowed the title of *Caesar* upon his son, Tetricus II. During the battle of *Campus Catalaunicus* (Châlons-sur-Marne), Tetricus defected to Aurelian, leading to the reintegration of the separatist provinces back into the Empire³¹⁰;

³⁰⁸ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 33.9-12; Eutropius, IX, 9.2; *SHA, Tr. tyr.*, VIII, 1; 3; XXXI, 1; Orosius, VII, 22.11; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, I, 45. See also Kienast 2004, 245; Potter 2004, 265-266; Southern 2004, 118, 323 (n. 50); Zugravu 2012, 451-452, n. 520; Zugravu 2022b, 575-576, n. 634 and 635.

³⁰⁹ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 33.9-12; Eutropius, IX, 9.3; *SHA, Gall.*, VII, 1; *Tr. tyr.*, VI-VII; XXIV, 1; XXXI; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXIV, 3; Orosius, VII, 22.11; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 49. See also Kienast 2004, 246; Potter 2004, 261, 266, 272, 641 (n. 213); Southern 2004, 118-119, 217, 265, 315 (n. 19), 323-324 (n. 50, 51 and 52); Mennen 2011, 256; Zugravu 2012, 451-452, n. 520; Zugravu 2022b, 573 (n. 631), 576 (n. 635), 577-579 (n. 639 and 643).

³¹⁰ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 33.14; 35.3-4; Eutropius, IX, 9-10; *SHA, Tr. tyr.*, V, 3; XXIV-XXV; XXXI, 2-3; *Aur.*, XXXII, 3-4; XXXIII-XXXIV; XXXIX, 1-3; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXV, 7; Orosius, VII, 22.11; 23.5; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 268; 273-274; Zosimus, I, 61.2; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 49; Zonaras, XII, 27. See also Kienast 2004, 247-249; Potter 2004, 261, 272; Southern 2004,

f) Faustinus, the governor of *Gallia Belgica*, instigated a rebellion against Tetricus I between 273 and 274, with his base of operations located at *Augusta Treverorum*. This insurrection had a significant impact on Tetricus I's reign, prompting him to seek assistance from Aurelian³¹¹.

11. Palmyra:

a) Septimius Odaenathus and Septimius Herodianus (Hairan I); Odaenathus played a pivotal role during the Crisis of the Third Century, stepping forward as a key leader in the defense of the Eastern Roman provinces after the disastrous defeat and capture of Valerianus. He successfully pushed back the Persian forces and secured major victories, including the capture of Ctesiphon, the capital of the Persian Empire. For his achievements, he was honoured with the title *corrector totius Orientis*, granting him authority over the Roman East. Despite this recognition, he governed with considerable autonomy, laying the groundwork for the brief but influential Palmyrene Empire. His reign brought stability to the region and was instrumental in protecting the Roman Empire from collapse in the East. Additionally, he played a crucial role in eliminating usurpers like Quietus and Balista, serious threats to the security of the Roman Empire. Odaenathus's life and leadership came to an abrupt end when he was assassinated alongside his son in 267. In the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Odaenathus was categorized among the tyrants. However, this classification, as well as the association of the title *imperator* by the anonymous author with this skilled defender of Roman state interests, should not lead us to interpret that he usurped power, as historian Nelu Zugravu has also emphasized.

b) Odaenathus is likewise referred to as a *tyrannus* in the work of Polemius Silvius. Conversely, other authors, such as Eutropius, Festus, Zosimus, Hieronymus, Jordanes, Orosius, Synkellos, Malalas and Zonaras, portrayed him in a positive light, while John of Antioch merely noted that he was assassinated³¹²;

119-120, 217, 315 (n. 19), 323-324 (n. 51, 52 and 53), 354 (n. 66); Mennen 2011, 33, 256; Zugravu 2012, 463-465, n. 543 and 545; Broșteanu 2022, 49, 54; Zugravu 2022b, 573 (n. 651), 577-580 (n. 643 and 644).

³¹¹ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 35.4; Eutropius, IX, 13.1; Orosius, VII, 23.5; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 49. See also Kienast 2004, 249; Southern 2004, 119-120; Mennen 2011, 256; Syv  ne 2021, 158, 181, 210 (n. 40); Zugravu 2022b, 594, n. 674.

³¹² Eutropius, IX, 10; 11.1; 13.2; Festus, 23.2; *SHA, Val.*, IV, 2-4; *Gall.*, III, 1-5; V, 6; X; XII, 1; 6; XIII, 1-5; *Tr. Tyr.*, XIV, 1; XV-XVII; XVIII, 1; XXI, 5; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 45; Zosimus, I, 39.1-2; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 266; John of Antioch, fr. 231; Orosius, VII, 22.12; 23.4; Jordanes, *Rom.*, 290-

c) Maeonius, a relative of Odaenathus; regarded as the nephew by Zonaras or the cousin according to the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Maeonius is alleged to have killed both Odaenathus and his first son. The anonymous author suggests that Maeonius was driven by envy, which fuelled his desire to usurp power, possibly with encouragement from Zenobia. Zonaras recounts that conflicts between Maeonius and Odaenathus ended in tragedy with a double homicide. In Synkellos's account, he is referred to simply as Odaenathus³¹³;

d) Septimia Zenobia, L. Iulius Aurelius Septimius Vaballathus Athenodorus and Herennianus (Hairan II), her sons, are noted in historical accounts. There was also another son, Timolaus, who, according to the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, was a brother of Herennianus. Zenobia was the ambitious queen of the Palmyrene Empire in the third century, known for her strategic and diplomatic skills. After the assassination of her husband, Odaenathus, who had defended the Roman East against Persian invasions, she assumed control of Palmyra. Zenobia expanded her empire by conquering Egypt, parts of *Asia Minor*, and *Syria*. She declared her son, Vaballathus, emperor and took the title of *Augusta*, establishing a virtually independent Palmyrene state that challenged Roman authority. Her rise to power led to a confrontation with Aurelianus, who sought to reassert Roman control over the East. In 272 AD, following a series of military campaigns, Aurelianus defeated Zenobia and captured her. She was brought to Rome, where accounts of her fate vary - some suggest she was paraded in Aurelianus' triumph and lived out her life in relative comfort, while others indicate a more tragic conclusion.

According to the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Zenobia ensured that both Herennianus and Timolaus were adorned in garments befitting emperors during public assemblies or discussions of state matters. The anonymous author further remarked that there was little else of significance to note about Timolaus, aside from his inclination towards study and his potential to become an accomplished rhetorician. Among historians, it is widely accepted that he may represent a fictional character³¹⁴;

291; Malalas, *Chron.*, XII, 26-28; Synkellos, *Chron.*, 716-717; Zonaras, XII, 23-24. See also Zugravu 2003, 347-348, n. 382; Kienast 2004, 239-240; Mennen 2011, 30, 32-33, 70, 222, 224-226, 231-232, 238, 240, 256; Zugravu 2012, 436, n. 491; Broşteanu 2020, 168; Pearson 2022, 185-186, 193, 217, 228, 232-233, 287 (n. 12 and 13), 290-291 (n. 7); Zugravu 2022b, 565-568, n. 619.

³¹³ SHA, *Tr. tyr.*, XV, 5; XVII; Synkellos, *Chron.*, 717; Zonaras, XII, 24. See also Kienast 2004, 241.

³¹⁴ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 33.3; 34.7-8; Eutropius, IX, 13.2; Festus, 24.1; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 273-274; SHA, *Gall.*, XIII, 1-5; *Tr. tyr.*, XXIV, 4; XXVII-XXVIII; XXX; *Aur.*, XXII, 1; XXV-XXVIII; XXX, 1-2;

e) Septimius Antiochus, likely a relative of Zenobia, was proclaimed emperor in 273 by the Palmyrenes following her removal. Although Aurelianus did not execute him, he instead sought revenge on the cities that had supported Antiochus. In the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, he is referred to as Achilleus³¹⁵.

12. during the reign of Probus:

a) Bonosus, who usurped power at *Colonia Agrippina* between 280 and 281, was ultimately defeated by Probus and chose to hang himself³¹⁶;

b) Proculus, who seized the imperial purple at *Lugdunum* around the year 280, was captured by Probus and subsequently killed³¹⁷;

c) Caius Iulius Saturninus, believed to have been an associate of Probus, allegedly usurped power in *Syria* around 279, 280, or 281. After being abandoned by his supporters, he fled to *Apamaea*, where he was ultimately killed, although not through the direct intervention of the legitimate sovereign³¹⁸;

d) An *Ignotus* in *Britannia*, believed to have served as the governor of the province due to the influence of a friend, Pomponius Victorinus, over the

XXXI; XXXIII, 2; XXXIV, 3; XXXV, 4; XXXVIII, 1; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 49; Zosimus, I, 39.2; 44.1; 50-56; 59; Orosius, VII, 23.4; Cassiodorus, *Chron.*, a. 274; Jordanes, *Rom.*, 291; Malalas, *Chron.*, XII, 26; 28; 30; Sykellos, *Chron.*, 717; 721; Zonaras, XII, 27. See also Zugravu 2003, 348-349, n. 384; Kienast 2004, 241-242; Potter 2004, 251, 260, 263, 266-268, 270-272, 275, 288, 641 (n. 1), 643 (n. 23), 644 (n. 31 and 33); Southern 2004, 6, 102, 109, 116-117, 120, 239-240, 278, 316 (n. 22), 317 (n. 25), 321-322 (n. 43, 44, 45 and 46), 324 (n. 53), 360 (n. 13 and 14); Mennen 2011, 34, 231-232, 256; Zugravu 2012, 458-459, n. 533; Broșteanu 2022, 54; Pearson 2022, 233; Zugravu 2022b, 567-568 (n. 619), 590-591 (n. 667 and 668), 593 (n. 671), 595 (n. 677), 623-624 (n. 730).

³¹⁵ *SHA, Aurel.*, XXXI, 2; Zosimus, I, 60.2; 61.1. See also Kienast 2004, 242; Southern 2004, 117, 322-323 (n. 47); Mennen 2011, 256.

³¹⁶ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 37.4; Eutropius, IX, 17.1; *SHA, Prob.*, XVIII, 5; XXIV, 7; *Quadr. tyr.*, XIV-XV; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXVII, 2; Orosius, VII, 24.3; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 53. See also Kienast 2004, 255; Potter 2004, 277; Southern 2004, 130, 329 (n. 70); Mennen 2011, 256; Zugravu 2012, 477, n. 562; Zugravu 2022b, 550-551 (n. 597), 612-613 (n. 712); Broșteanu 2023, 133.

³¹⁷ Eutropius, IX, 17.1; *SHA, Prob.*, XVIII, 5; XXIV, 7; *Quadr. tyr.*, XII-XIII; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXVII, 2; Orosius, VII, 24.3; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, I, 53. See also Kienast 2004, 255-256; Potter 2004, 277, 647 (n. 84); Southern 2004, 130, 329 (n. 70); Mennen 2011, 256; Zugravu 2012, 477, n. 562; Zugravu 2022b, 550-551 (n. 597), 612-613 (n. 712); Broșteanu 2023, 133.

³¹⁸ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 37.3; Eutropius, IX, 17.1; *SHA, Prob.*, XVIII, 4; *Quadr. tyr.*, VII-XI; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXVII, 2; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 281; Orosius, VII, 24.3; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 53; Zosimus, I, 66.1; 67, 1; Jordanes, *Rom.*, 293; John of Antioch, fr. 241; Synkellos, *Chron.*, 723; Zonaras, XII, 29. See also Kienast 2004, 256-257; Potter 2004, 277; Southern 2004, 130, 329 (n. 70); Zugravu 2012, 476, n. 561; Zugravu 2022b, 612-613, n. 712.

sovereign Probus, allegedly organized a rebellion in the region. The specific year of the usurpation remains unknown. This rebellion was suppressed by Probus with the assistance of Pomponius Victorinus, a Moor, whom he accused of being responsible for the events in *Britannia*; Victorinus was sent to atone for his errors. To remove the usurper, Victorinus resorted to an ingenious ruse. As a reward for his efforts, he was appointed consul in 282³¹⁹.

13. during the reign of Carinus: Marcus Aurelius Sabinus Iulianus, *corrector Italiae regionis Venetiae et Histriae*, usurped power upon hearing the news of Carus's death, around the years 283/284-285, with his authority extending into *Pannonia*. He was ultimately defeated by Carinus *in campis Veronensibus* or in *Illyricum*³²⁰.

The fourth century

In the fourth century, alongside the term *hostis*, other phrases emerged to emphasize usurpation, violations of imperial majesty, and deviations from the law: *tyrannus*, which became synonymous with usurper; *rebellis*; *rusticus*; *latro*; *pirata*; *grassator*; *oppugnator*; *turbator*; *perduellis*. The term *tyrannus* designated one who seized power either of their own volition or at the urging of an associate. It also referred to an emperor who, despite his legitimacy, was defeated by an opponent of the same social standing. The term *tyranni* encompassed former rulers whose memory was not "rehabilitated by a successor", as highlighted by Adrastus Omissi³²¹.

In the panegyric delivered at *Augusta Treverorum* in 313, commemorating the victory at the Milvian Bridge, Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maxentius (306-312) was labelled *hostis rei publicae*, indicating that he was regarded in this light even during the civil conflict. It is possible that he was declared *hostis* prior to his ultimate defeat, particularly during the so-called "conference" at *Carnuntum* in 308, which included Diocletianus (284-305), Maximianus I *Herculius* (285-308/310), and Maximianus II Galerius (c. 293-

³¹⁹ Zosimus, I, 66.2; 67.1; John of Antioch, fr. 241; Zonaras, XII, 29. See also Potter 2004, 277; Southern 2004, 329 (n. 68).

³²⁰ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 39.9-10; Zosimus, I, 73.3 = John of Antioch, fr. 246; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXVIII, 6; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 57. See also Kienast 2004, 263; Southern 2004, 134-135, 331 (n. 2); Mennen 2011, 256, 267; Zugravu 2012, 483-484, n. 571; Zugravu 2022b, 625-626, n. 733.

³²¹ Humphries 2008, 85-86; Szidat 2010, 27-32; Omissi 2016, 180-182; Omissi 2018, 21-34 (30 the expression in quotes above); Tantillo 2021, 28, 35.

311), and sought to address the tensions present within the Tetrarchy³²². The initial phase of the final conflict between Constantinus and Maxentius was advantageous for the Constantinian faction, prompting the Roman populace to label the latter as a deserter and a betrayer of public safety³²³. Overwhelmed by anxiety, the usurper sought the support of certain senators to consult the Sibylline Books. Lactantius and Zosimus recorded that the response received - that on that day the enemy of the Romans would die - emboldened him to lead his troops into battle and confront his opponent³²⁴.

The prophecy was fulfilled; however, the defeated enemy turned out to be Maxentius himself, as he, overwhelmed on the battlefield, perished in the waters of the Tiber³²⁵. Additionally, historiographical and patristic sources have highlighted various negative traits, including arrogance, cruelty, violence, inability to govern, and debauchery³²⁶.

³²² *Panegyrici Latini*, IX [12], 18.2; Lactantius, *Mort.*, XXIX, 1-2; Eusebius, *HE*, VIII, 13.14; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 40.8; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXIX, 6; Zosimus, II, 10.4-5; John of Antioch, fr. 253; Chronicon Paschale, a. 307 (in PG 92, 694). See also Kienast 2004, 291; Potter 2004, 435; Southern 2004, 171; Varner 2004, 216; Zugravu 2012, 493 (n. 582), 498 (n. 594), 502 (n. 601); Kristensen 2016, 327, 332; Tantillo 2021, 29, 35; Zugravu 2022b, 659-660 (n. 792), 668-669 (n. 810).

³²³ Lactantius, *Mort.*, XLIV, 7; Zonaras, XII, 1.

³²⁴ Lactantius, *Mort.*, XLIV, 8; Zosimus, II, 16.1. See also Potter 2004, 357-358, 667 (n. 116).

³²⁵ *Panegyrici Latini*, IX [12], 17.2; 18.3; X [4], 29-31; Lactantius, *Mort.*, XLIV, 1-9; Eusebius, *HE*, IX, 9, 4-8; VC, I, 38; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 40.23; Eutropius, X, 4.3; *SHA*, XXXV, 6; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 312; Orosius, VII, 28.16; Socrates Scholasticus, *HE*, I, 2.2-7; Sozomos, *HE*, I, 3-4; Prudentius, *Contra Symm.*, I, 481-483; Anonymus Valesianus, IV, 12; Zosimus, II, 15.2-4; 16.2-4; Chronicon Paschale, a. 306; 311; Consularia Constantinopolitana, a. 312; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chron.*, a. 5802 [309/10], 5814 [321/2]; Zonaras, XIII, 12. See also Varner 2001, 56; Kienast 2004, 299; Potter 2004, 357-358, 362-364, 375, 381-382, 403, 435, 439, 456; Southern 2004, 172-175, 342-343 (n. 57 and 58); Varner 2004, 4, 6, 11, 100, 214-220, 223; Humphries 2008, 85-86, 88-97, 100; Szidat 2010, 161-162, 289-290, 296, 335; Zugravu 2012, 502-503, n. 601; Omissi 2016, 181; Kristensen 2016, 323-343; Tantillo 2017, 134, 143, 145, 149; Haymann 2018, 265; Omissi, 2018, vii, 39, 46 (n. 30), 48, 56-57 (n. 78), 72 (n. 2), 106, 109-110, 116-135, 138-139, 141-143, 145-151, 159, 176-177, 271 (n. 90), 303-305; Zugravu 2019a, 102; Zugravu 2019b, 253; Tantillo 2021, 16-18, 20, 28-29, 36, 39; Zugravu 2021, 125-126; Zugravu 2022b, 668-669, n. 810.

³²⁶ *Panegyrici Latini*, IX [12], 4.4; 14.2 and 5; 16.2; X [4], 8.3; 9.4; 30.1; Lactantius, *Mort.*, XVIII, 9; Eusebius, *HE*, VIII, 14.2-6 and 11-14; VC, I, 33-36; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 40.19-20; Eutropius, IX, 4.3; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XL, 14; Socrates Scholasticus, *HE*, I, 2.1; Zosimus, II, 14.4; Zonaras, XII, 33. See also Potter 2004, 362; Southern 2004, 174; Varner 2004, 216; Zugravu 2012, 506-507, n. 612; Zugravu 2022b, 666-667, n. 806.

There are also inscriptions - four in the Italian region and two in the African region - that highlight the reality shaped around the perception of Maxentius as a *tyrannus* and his rule as a *saevissima tyrannis*:

a) inscriptions discovered in the Italian region:

1. An inscription dating from 315-316, placed on the triumphal arch constructed by the Roman Senate and people in honor of Constantinus I, commemorates his victory in the war against Maxentius and his faction. This outcome was attributed to divine inspiration and the greatness of mind of the first sovereign, who was proclaimed *liberator urbis* and *fundator quietis*. Additionally, the inscription celebrated the ten-year anniversary of his rule - EDCS-17600785³²⁷.

2. An inscription dating from 312-324, 313, or 313-316, discovered in the *Forum Romanum*, was commissioned by the Roman Senate and people in honor of Constantinus I and another sovereign, though the name of the latter has not been preserved. The two emperors were described as undefeated in bravery and divine virtue, as well as *liberatores* and *restitutores rei publicae* - HD, 027236³²⁸.

3. An inscription discovered in the *Forum Romanum*, dating from 324- 337, does not preserve the name of the emperor to whom it was dedicated; in any case, the recipient of the message, likely Constantinus I, is referred to as *conservator nominis romani*, *propagator orbis sui*, *extinctor factionum tyrannicarum*, and *domitor gentium barbarum*. The phrase *factionum tyrannicarum* was intended to highlight the emperor's victories in the campaigns initiated against Maxentius and Licinius - HD, 027239³²⁹.

4. An inscription dating from 315-316, discovered at *Antina* in the province of *Latium et Campania / Regio I*, was placed at the base of a statue by the Senate and people of the respective settlement in honour of Caius Vettius Cossinius Rufinus, *vir clarissimus*, who was designated *patronus dulcissimus* in gratitude for his just conduct in fulfilling the duties associated with the role of *corrector Campaniae* and for the protection he provided to the

³²⁷ Potter 2004, 360-362, 375, 435; Southern 2004, 176; Varner 2004, 144, 216; Humphries 2008, 95, n. 68; Clauss 2013, 294-296; Mitthof 2013, 201, no. 57; Humphries 2015, 156-157, 159, 162; Kristensen 2016, 325-327; Omissi 2016, 181; Tantillo 2017, 142-145; Omissi 2018, 131-132, 135, 152 (n. 241).

³²⁸ Kalas 2015, 183 (n. 1), 185 (n. 60); Tantillo 2017, 145, n. 45; Tantillo 2021, 41-42, no. 4.

³²⁹ Kalas 2015, 185, n. 140; Tantillo 2021, 31, 42 (no. 7); Mathisen 2023, 101 (n. 72), 102 (n. 80).

community mentioned above during the *saeuissima tyrannis* of Maxentius - EDCS-20400852³³⁰.

b) African inscriptions:

5. An inscription, placed on the base of a statue shortly after 312, was discovered in *Lambaesis* (Tazoult), in the province of *Numidia*. The dedicants may have been soldiers from *legio III Augusta*, the inhabitants/civilians of the colony, or those from the entire province. Ignazio Tantillo proposed the idea that the statue base most likely did not support an effigy of Constantinus I, but rather one of the *genius* of the legion, or of the colony, or even of the entire province - EDCS-24800717³³¹.

6. An inscription dating from 313, placed at the base of a statue of the sovereign Constantinus I, was discovered at *Thugga* (Dougga) in the province of *Africa Proconsularis*. The dedicant was Caius Annius Ceionius Anullinas, *vir clarissimus* and *legatus Nimidia*. The victor of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge was described as *extinctor tyrannicae factionis*, *victor*, and *defensor provinciarum suarum atque urbium* - HD, 045350³³².

In the following sections, we will focus our attention on the usurpers of the fourth century, with the objective of identifying the phrases used in legal or literary sources to highlight them, as well as those that emphasized the very act of rebellion against the *imperium*.

Initially, for the Tetrarchic period (284/293-324), we will refer to Marcus Aurelius Mausaeus Carausius (286-293), who usurped power in *Britannia*. He was considered a *usurpator*, *rebellis*, *pirata*, and *archipirata* – *abducere classem; occupare legionem; intercludere peregrinum; contrahere mercatorem; sollicitare barbaros; haurire imperium; capessere imperium; remittere imperium; sumere purpuram; efficere imperatorem; vindicare imperium; retinere imperium*³³³.

³³⁰ Potter 2004, 388; Davenport 2013, 228-229; Tantillo 2021, 33, 42 (no. 6).

³³¹ Tantillo 2017, 145-146; Tantillo 2021, 30 (n. 55), 41 (no. 1).

³³² Khanoussi, Mastino 2003, 424-427; Mastino, Ibba 2014, 374; Tantillo 2017, 146-148; Tantillo 2021, 30 (n. 52), 33, 41 (no. 3).

³³³ *Panegyrici Latini*, IV [8], 12.1; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 39.20-21 and 39-40; Eutropius, IX, 21.1; 22.1-2; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXIX, 3; Orosius, VII, 25.3-4 and 6; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 289; John of Antioch, fr. 247; Jordanes, *Rom.*, 297; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chron.*, a. 5788 [295/6]; Zonaras, XII, 31. See also Potter 2004, 284-285, 288, 297, 650 (n. 123 and 137); Southern 2004, 6, 32, 138-143, 149-150, 186, 203, 218, 269, 332-333 (n. 6-9 and 11); Kienast 2004, 278; Varner 2004, 212-213; Humphries 2008, 85-86; Szidat 2010, 413, 415; Zugravu 2012, 490-491, n. 578; Haymann 2018, 265; Zugravu 2019a, 102; Zugravu 2021, 119-121; Zugravu 2022b, 634- 645, n. 749.

In the same vein, Allectus (293-296), who was *rationalis summae rei* or *praefectus praetorio* under Carausius, killed the latter and replaced him as *tyrannus* in *Britannia*. He was considered a *hostis, latro*, leader of a *nefariae factionis*, and his rule was compared to a *coniuratio, nauticae rebellionis, lues*, and *scelus*; his supporters were *hostes, inimici, latrones – extorquere imperium; eripere imperium*³³⁴.

Also, Aelius (Helianus) / Aelianus and Amandus, the leaders of the *Bagaudae* movement in Gaul during the early part of Diocletianus' reign, were perceived as *hostes, rustici, latrones, rebelles, agrestes*, while their followers were seen as an *imperitam et confusam manum, monstrorum biforminum, ignori agricolae, rustici vastatores*. Their end came during the military campaign initiated by Maximianus I Herculus between 285-286³³⁵.

Around the year 286, a certain Iulianus is said to have caused disturbances. According to Aurelius Victor, he acted in *Africa* alongside the *quinquegentanae*, who represented a confederation of Mauritanian tribes that had come into conflict with Roman authority. In the view of Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, Italy was the scene of the public disorder orchestrated by Iulianus, who, to avoid capture, allegedly drove a dagger into his ribs and threw himself into the fire³³⁶.

Furthermore, Aurelius Achilleus (297-298), the former *corrector Aegypti* of the usurper Lucius Domitius Domitianus (Domitianus III / 297), who is known through numismatic and papyrological sources, continued the rebellion but was killed during a long eight-month siege coordinated by Diocletianus. He was considered *rebellis, perduellis, tyrannus*, and *concitator* of

³³⁴ *Panegyrici Latini*, IV [8], 12; 13.4; 14; 15.1 and 5; 16.2-4; 17.1-2; 18.1 and 6-7; 19; Aurelius Victor, 39.41-42; Eutropius, IX, 22.2; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 300; Orosius, VII, 25.6; Zonaras, XII, 31. See also Kienast 2004, 279; Potter 2004, 288, 292; Southern 2004, 6, 149-150, 186, 218, 335 (n. 20 and 21); Varner 2004, 212-213; Humphries 2008, 85-86; Szidat 2010, 207, 415; Zugravu 2012, 490-491, n. 578; Haymann 2018, 265; Zugravu 2019a 102; Zugravu 2022b, 643-644, n. 765 and 766.

³³⁵ *Panegyrici Latini*, II [10], 4.3-4; III [11], 5.3; VII [6], 8.3; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 39.17 and 19; Eutropius, IX, 20.3; Orosius, VII, 25.2; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 288; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chron.*, a. 5788 [295/6]; Zonaras, XII, 31. See also Kienast 2004, 276-277; Potter 2004, 281, 649 (n. 112); Southern 2004, 137, 155, 200, 252, 331-332 (n. 4-6); Szidat 2010, 413, 415; Zugravu 2022b, 629-632, n. 744 and 745.

³³⁶ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 39.22; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXIX, 3-4. See also Kienast 2004, 277; Zugravu 2012, 492, n. 580; Zugravu 2022b, 635-636, n. 750.

a *sediti*; his leadership was perceived as *perduellio* – *induere dominationem; efficere imperatorem; desciscere romanam potestatem; invadere Aegyptum*³³⁷.

In 303, as Eusebius of *Caesarea* mentioned, an unknown individual (*Ignotus*) attempted to seize power in Melitene³³⁸.

In the same vein, Eugenius, the commander of a military unit of 500 soldiers stationed in *Syria*, at *Seleucia*, was proclaimed emperor by his subordinates in 303, becoming an unwilling usurper, as highlighted by Libanius, the famous rhetoric teacher from Antioch, known for his writings on rhetoric, culture, urban life, politics, and religion in the fourth century AD. This revolt was also mentioned by Eusebius of *Caesarea*, but Libanius was the one who provided accurate information about the causes of the rebellion, its unfolding, its suppression, and, as expected in such contexts of socio-political instability, the reprisals that followed. Thus, the soldiers responsible for this insurrection were tasked with deepening the port's mouth in *Seleucia*, and at night they were forced to bake their bread for their rations; consequently, they no longer had time to rest. According to Libanius, these unbearable conditions led the soldiers to conceive thoughts of rebellion, and acting on impulse, they compelled Eugenius to assume the status of emperor, although it should be noted that he had the choice between the new social position or death, if he had refused. After carrying out their intentions, the soldiers resorted to a perpetual Bacchic initiation, an activity that lasted for several hours and during which the plan that would bring them death was conceived - namely, organizing a march to Antioch. At dusk, the soldiers entered the city, but the effects of their drunkenness were still strong and made them disoriented; the city's citizens offered armed resistance, using bars against the spears of the troops; even women participated actively in the fight. By nightfall, each soldier lay dead, and the rebellion itself was neutralized. After this episode, Diocletianus, whom Libanius characterized as a ruler lacking the virtue of restraint in attacking the lives of his subjects, instead of honouring the citizens for their sacrifices in eliminating the rebels, took revenge on both cities, even though they had

³³⁷ *Panegyrici Latini*, IV [8], 5.2; V [9], 21.1; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 39.22-23; 33 and 38; Eutropius, IX, 22.1; 23.1; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XXXIX, 3; Orosius, VII, 25.8; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 289; 298; Jordanes, *Rom.*, 297; 300; *Get.*, XXI, 110; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chron.*, a. 5786 [293/4]; 5787 [295/296]; Zonaras, XII, 31. See also Kienast 2004, 267, 270-271; Potter 2004, 334, 660 (n. 2); Southern 2004, 150, 335 (n. 22), 361 (n. 16); Szidat 2010, 207, 265 (n. 1066), 413, 415; Zugravu 2012, 491-492, n. 579; Zugravu 2019b, 253; Zugravu 2022b, 635-636, n. 750.

³³⁸ Eusebius, *HE*, VIII, 6.8.

no blame in the events. In both cases, the execution of the leaders of each city was ordered, among the victims being representatives of Libanius' family, such as his grandfather, who was beheaded³³⁹.

Lastly, Lucius Domitius Alexander (308-310/311), who usurped power in North Africa, was considered *stolidus, debilis, timidus*; he allied with Constantine I against Maxentius, but was eliminated following the incursion of the Praetorian Prefect Caius Ceionius Rufius Volusianus – *incubare dominatum; facere imperatorem apud Carthaginem*³⁴⁰.

In the second part of Constantine I's reign, the protagonist of the subversive actions was Calocaerus (333/334-335), *magister pecoris camelorum*; he usurped power in *Cyprus* but was defeated by Flavius Dalmatius, the emperor's half-brother, after which he was sent to *Tarsus* in *Cilicia*, where he received the punishment he deserved; after the rebellion was suppressed, the usurper was captured, tortured and burned alive; he was considered *usurpator, demens* and was likened to *serviles* and *latrones* – *capessere regnum; moliri rem novam; aspirare rem novam*³⁴¹.

A particular case from the period following the death of Constantine I is represented by Constantine II (337–340), one of his sons, whose base was in *Augusta Treverorum*. As a successor to his father, after 337, he had to share the empire with his brothers, Constans (337–350) and Constantius II (337–361). The dynastic principle provided him with the legitimacy of power. Each of the brothers inherited certain territories: Constantine II was allocated the prefecture of Gaul, Constans received the prefectures of Italy,

³³⁹ Eusebius, *HE*, VIII, 6.8; Libanius, *Or.*, 19.45; 20.17-21. See also Potter 2004, 570.

³⁴⁰ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 40.17-19; 28; *SHA, Hel.*, XXXV, 6; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XL, 2; 6; 20; Zosimus, II, 12.2-3; 14.2-3. See also Kienast 2004, 293; Potter 2004, 351, 388, 666 (n. 91); Humphries 2008, 96; Szidat 2010, 280 (n. 128), 289-290, 296, 415; Zugravu 2012, 499 (n. 595), 502 (n. 600), 509 (n. 621); Zugravu 2022b, 664-665, n. 804.

³⁴¹ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 41.11-12; Orosius, VII, 28.30; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 334; Anonymus Valesianus, VI, 35; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, I, 63; Philostorgius, *HE* (A7, 11a-b); Theophanes the Confessor, *Chron.*, a. 5825 [332/3]. See also Neri 1992, 20-21, 23, 32, 55, 230, 280; Kienast 2004, 300, 308-309; Potter 2004, 289, 345 (n. 9); Szidat 2010, 258 (n. 1029), 413, 415; Omissi 2018, 153, 155; Tantillo 2021, 17, n. 6; Zugravu 2022b, 683-684, n. 837. Regarding the manner of Calocaerus' death, the works of Orosius (VII, 28.30), Jerome (*Chron.*, a. 334), and the fragmentary Latin chronicles commonly referred to as the Anonymus Valesianus (*Excerpta Valesiana*) only mention that he was slain in the context of his *seditio*. According to some editors of the antic source materials who have interpreted the passage from Aurelius Victor regarding the usurper, Calocaerus was not burned alive, but rather crucified, as this was the punishment applied to bandits.

Africa, and *Illyricum*, and Constantius II controlled the prefecture of the East. As the eldest, Constantinus II assumed the title *maximus triumphator Augustus* and sought to assert his superiority over his brothers. This personal ambition served as the catalyst for tensions with Constans, which eventually materialized in a series of armed incursions. The most significant of these, sealing Constantinus II's fate, took place in March–April 340 near *Aquileia*. Here, Constantinus II fell into a trap set by Constans' commanders and was killed. The aforementioned Roman city once again witnessed the deposition of a *princeps*, as it had in 238 with Maximinus Thrax, who became a victim of military betrayal, and as it would again in 388 during the final confrontation between Theodosius I (379–395) and Magnus Maximus (383–388). Shortly after his elder brother's removal, Constans proclaimed himself *maximus victor ac triumphator Augustus*. As a final form of social disgrace, Constantinus II was publicly declared *publicus et noster inimicus*, his status effectively reduced from emperor to an "unperson", as Timothy Barnes notes. Additionally, he was labelled as *hostis publicus*³⁴².

It was not the first time that the Constantinian dynasty experienced a tragedy involving violence against another family member. In this context, we may recall the elimination of Crispus (317–326), the eldest son of Constantinus I, at *Pola*, and Fausta, the emperor's second wife, in Rome in 326. It is possible that the decision to execute them and subsequently condemn them to oblivion was driven by allegations of an adulterous relationship between the son and his stepmother³⁴³. In the autumn of 337, shortly after the death of Constantinus I, the majority of the collateral branch

³⁴² Codex Theodosianus, X, 8.4; XI, 12.1; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 41.22; Eutropius, X, 9.2; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XLI, 21; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 340; Rufinus of Aquileia, *HE*, X, 16; Orosius, VII, 29.5; Socrates Scholasticus, *HE*, II, 5; 15.1; 25.4; Sozomenos, *HE*, III, 2; Philostorgius, *HE*, III, 1; Theodoret of Cyrus, *HE*, II, 16.21; Zosimus, II, 41.1; Cassiodorus, *Chron.*, a. 342; Malalas, *Chron.*, XIII, 15; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chron.*, a. 5831 [338/9]; Cedrenus, *Hist., Comp.* (in PG 121, 520); Zonaras, XIII, 5. See also Barnes 2014, 5 (the expression between quotation marks above), 159, 197, 212–213 (n. 19); Kienast 2004, 310, 312; Szidat 2010, 31 (n. 52), 59, 61, 162, 212, 403; Zugravu 2012, 525–526, n. 665; Haymann 2018, 265; Omissi 2018, 156; Humphries 2020, 158, n. 7; Zugravu 2022b, 694–696, n. 862.

³⁴³ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 41.11; Eutropius, X, 6.3; Ammianus Marcellinus, XIV, 11.20; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XLI, 11–12; Orosius, VII, 28.26; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 325; *Vir. ill.*, LXXX; Sozomenos, *HE*, I, 5.1–2; Philostorgius, *HE*, II, 4; Zosimus, II, 29.2; Evagrius Scholasticus, *HE*, III, 40; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chron.*, a. 5816 [323/4]; Zonaras, XIII, 2. See also Kienast 2004, 305, 306; Varner 2004, 221–22; Szidat 2010, 49–50, 402; Zugravu 2012, 505–506 (n. 609), 517–518 (n. 645); Zugravu 2022b, 682–683, n. 836.

of the dynasty was eliminated. This episode took place in Constantinople. During this purge aimed at removing potential claimants to the throne, Flavius Dalmatius and Iulius Constantius, half-brothers of the emperor from their father Constantius *Chlorus'* marriage to Theodora (likely the daughter of Maximianus I *Herculius*), lost their lives. Also killed were Flavius Iulius Dalmatius, *Caesar* (335–337), and Hannibalianus, who held the titles *nobilissimus* and *rex regum et Ponticarum gentium*, both sons of Flavius Dalmatius. The only survivors, spared due to their young age, were the children of Iulius Constantius - Flavius Claudius Constantius Gallus and Flavius Claudius Iulianus - and Iulius Popilius Nepotianus Constantinus, who would later become emperors³⁴⁴.

Lastly, Gallus *Caesar* (351–354), the half-cousin of Constantius II, was dismissed and eliminated due to his numerous excesses, as well as suspicions surrounding a potential usurpation of the throne. Ammianus Marcellinus portrayed Gallus's physical appearance in a favourable light: he was strikingly handsome, with well-proportioned features, blond, wavy hair, and a beard that lent him "an air of mature authority"³⁴⁵. Nevertheless, Gallus's character was notably bloodthirsty, leading to perceptions of him as follows: a man with a savage spirit, a killer of both men and innocents, the author of numerous atrocities, a person of fierce temperament inclined toward tyranny, and one whose actions were marked by cruelty and tyranny³⁴⁶.

In the mid-fourth century, a new architect of intrigues stepped onto the Roman political stage: Flavius Magnus Magnentius (350–353), *gentis barbarae*, who orchestrated a conspiracy against Constans. This plot culminated during a banquet on January 18, 350, in *Augustodunum*, where he was proclaimed *Augustus*. Magnentius was regarded as a *usurpator*, a

³⁴⁴ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 41.22; Eutropius, X, 9.1; Ammianus Marcellinus, XXI, 16.8; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 338; Orosius, VII, 29.1; Anonymus Valesianus, VI, 35; Socrates Scholasticus, *HE*, II, 25.3; III, 1.8; Sozomos, *HE*, V, 2.8; Zosimus, II, 40.1-3; 45.1; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chron.*, a. 5829 [336/7], 5830 [337/8]; Zonaras, XIII, 5. See also Kienast 2004, 307-308; Szidat 2010, 57, 403; Zugravu 2012, 523-524 (n. 660), 525-526 (n. 664); Zugravu 2022b, 693-694, n. 861.

³⁴⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, XIV, 11.28.

³⁴⁶ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 42.12; Eutropius, X, 13.1; Ammianus Marcellinus, XIV, 11.1-23; XXI, 13.11; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 354; Orosius, VII, 29.14; Socrates Scholasticus, *HE*, II, 34.1-5; Sozomenos, *HE*, IV, 7.5-7; V, 2.19; Philostorgius, *HE*, IV, 1; Zosimus, II, 55.2-3; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 67; John of Antioch, fr. 260; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chron.*, a. 5846 [353/4]; Zonaras, XIII, 9. See also Kienast 2004, 318-319; Szidat 2010, 42 (n. 119), 47 (n. 136), 171, 195, 209, 212, 244, 259, 271, 322, 403; Haymann 2018, 265; Zugravu 2022b, 705-706, n. 879, 880 and 881.

tyrannus, and the perpetrator of a criminal act, possessing a cruel nature, and his rule was labeled a *tyrannis*, and a *usurpatio*; his followers, particularly his soldiers, were perceived as *hostes*. He fought numerous battles against Constantius II but, facing defeat, chose to kill his relatives and associates to prevent their capture by his opponent and then died by his own sword at *Lugdunum*. Following his death, Magnus Decentius Caesar (350–353), his brother, also chose the path of suicide by hanging himself – *capere habitum venerabilem; obtinere imperium; arripere imperium; occupare regnum; usurpare imperium; invadare imperium; movere rebellio*³⁴⁷.

There are also inscriptions that attest to Magnentius being referred to as a *tyrannus*, and his reign has been placed in a synonymous relationship with the concept of tyranny or plague, being regarded as a *pestifera tyrannis*:

a) inscriptions discovered in Rome:

1. An inscription dating from 352–353, which was placed at the base of a statue in the Roman Forum, near the Arch of Septimius Severus, and whose dedicant was Neratius Cerealis, *vir clarissimus* and *praefectus urbi*. The sovereign Constantius II was titled *restitutor urbis Romae atque orbis, extincor pestiferae tyrannidis, victor ac triumphator, semper Augustus* -EDCS-17600800³⁴⁸.

2. An inscription dating from 357, placed on the base of an obelisk situated in the Circus Maximus, commemorates the monument erected during the visit of Constantius II to the Roman capital. The event was described by Ammianus Marcellinus, who recounted that the erection of the obelisk was considered an operation that was believed to be extremely

³⁴⁷ Codex Theodosianus, IX, 38.2; XV, 14.5; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 41.23 and 25; 42.5 and 9–10; Eutropius, X, 10.2; 11.1; 12.1–2; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XLI, 22; XLII, 4–6 and 8; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 350; 351, 353; Orosius, VII, 29.8 and 12–13; Socrates Scholasticus, *HE*, II, 25.32 and 39; Sozomenos, *HE*, IV, 1 and 7; Philostorgius, *HE*, III, 22; 25–26; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 67; Zosimus, II, 45.3–4; 46–54; John of Antioch, fr. 260; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chron.*, a. 5849 [356/7]; Zonaras, XIII, 6–8. See also Kienast 2004, 313, 319–321; Potter 2004, 456–457, 471–474, 477; Humphries 2008, 85; Szidat 2010, 10, 31 (n. 55), 35 (n. 74), 42 (n. 120), 149, 162, 192, 199, 209, 215, 217, 219, 222–224, 226, 228, 233, 236–239, 241, 244–245, 248, 251, 259, 261, 264 (n. 1058), 268, 272, 274–275, 277–278, 280, 282, 285, 287, 289, 292, 296–297, 302–303, 305, 306 (n. 1257), 307, 309, 310 (n. 1281), 311, 314–315, 317–319, 321–322, 325, 327, 328 (n. 1376), 329–330, 332 (n. 1393), 333 (n. 1394 and 1397), 335–336, 338–340, 388–389, 403, 413, 415; Zugravu 2012, 531 (n. 682), 532–534 (n. 684–690); Humphries 2015, 156, 158–164, 166; Antikeira 2018, 3–5, 9, 13, 15–16; Haymann 2018, 265; Omissi 2018, 163–168; Zugravu 2018, 364; Antikeira 2019, 2–3, 5, 8–10; Zugravu 2019b, 253; Humphries 2020, 159–179; Zugravu 2020, 492, n. 95; Tantillo 2021, 21, 25, 32, 39; Zugravu 2022b, 696–698 (n. 865), 701–704 (n. 875–878); Zugravu 2023, 527.

³⁴⁸ Humphries 2015, 160–161, 163–164; Kalas 2015, x (no. 3.5), 177 (n. 72), 178 (n. 96), 180 (n. 32), 186 (n. 73), 191 (n. 50); Omissi 2018, 179; Tantillo 2021, 32, 42–43 (no. 8).

difficult, even impossible, and posed significant risks to the lives of those involved in such an endeavour. Due to the large number of scaffolding beams used, the area was said to have transformed into a "forest of scaffolding", which even blocked the sun's rays from reaching the ground. Thousands of men were summoned to contribute their efforts towards raising the monumental structure, and the exemplary cooperation among them facilitated the realization of such a grandiose project - EDCS-18200409. Based on the verses inscribed on the obelisk, several categories of characters are delineated. On one side, there are two main characters: Emperor Constantius II, the protagonist, and the Eternal City, Rome, which is designated as the victim. There is an interdependent relationship between the two, as the actions of the former have a direct impact on the development of the latter. Additionally, there is an antagonist, the cruel tyrant (*taetro tyranno*), a phrase used to refer to Flavius Magnus Magnentius, who was ravaging (*vastante*) Rome, which urgently needed a saviour. In this context, Constantius II intervenes, being the only one capable of restoring the honour of the city tarnished by the enemy's actions, a mission entrusted to him based on his status as *dominus mundi*. The protagonist succeeds in killing the tyrant, an action highlighted by the verb *caedo/caedere*, and ultimately recovers the entire land (*toto orbe recepto*).

Once the tyrant is defeated, the stage for the revitalization of Rome's dignity can be initiated, a process that is difficult but not impossible. Constantius II, who is both *victor* and *ovans*, has several supporting characters and allies on his side. The first and most important of these is the obelisk, which is associated with certain phrases intended to highlight the multiple significances tied to the role this grand monument was to play, namely, that of restoring the prestige of the city on the seven hills:

- phrases that conferred legitimacy to Constantius II's actions, based on the fact that, as the son of Constantinus I, he inherited a task initiated by his father, also highlighting his adoption of a benevolent, affectionate, and caring approach toward the city. Thus, the monument was referred to as the *opus* of Constantinus I, who is emphasized in the text by the noun *pater*; the *munus* of Constantius II for the city; the *donum* of Constantius II; a *decus* that Constantinus I, with the desire (*volens*) to bestow it as an honor (*ornatum*) for the city bearing his name, that is, Constantinople, had torn from the rocks of Thebes;

- phrases that emphasize the utility of the obelisk within the city: it was perceived as a construction meant to equal the gifts of renowned triumphs (*clari exaequet dona triumphis*);

- phrases that demonstrate the relationship between Constantius II and the obelisk, as well as the monument's role in establishing the idea of prosperity and peace within the Roman collective consciousness, which society achieved thanks to the sovereign's rule, and the fact that, under his leadership, victories against those threatening public safety became a constant outcome, while the maintenance or restoration of peace during times of distress became recurring themes: thus, the obelisk became a sublime trophy, a gift worthy of the sovereign's triumphs (*sublime tropaeum principis et munus condignis usque triumphis*); a glory that was wrenched from reddish metals, preserved for the sovereign for a long time, and then returned to him, but only after the removal of the tyrant (*nunc veluti rursus rufis avulsa metallis emicuit pulsataque polos haec gloria dudum auctori servata suo cum caede tyranni redditur*);

- phrases illustrating the grandeur of such a monument and, implicitly, the efforts required to move it: the obelisk was described as a something that had never been borne by any land nor seen by any era (*et quod nulla tulit tellus nec viderat aetas*); it was compared to the Caucasus mountains, considered a massive Caucasian mass, a considerable portion of the mountain, about which it was rumored that no skill, effort, or strength of hands could move it (*quod nullo ingenio nisuque manuque moveri caucaseam molem discurrens fama monebat*); it was characterized as an enormous mass of stone, about which no one believed it could be raised to the heavens (*non crederet ullus tantae molis opus superas consurgere in auras*).

The transportation of the obelisk to Rome becomes an objective that concerns the gods, who are portrayed as witnesses to all the stages of the process, just as Constantinus I is, thus giving special significance to the plan itself (*sed gravior divum tangebatur cura vehendi*). However, the idea of *Virtus*, which governed the sovereign and represented another ally, to whom everything was subject, intervened in favour of Constantius II, granting him the power to command (*iussit*) the earth and the turbulent waters - thus, nature itself - to facilitate the monument's transportation (*Constantius omnia fretus cedere virtuti terris incedere iussit haut partem exiguum montis pontoque tumentis*). Another witness to the entire relocation of the obelisk is the Tiber, who admires the transport vessel (*credidit et placido vexerunt aequora fluctus litus ad Hesperium Tiberi mirante carinam*).

In the end, Constantius II manages to fulfil the long-unrealized desire to move the obelisk, a project that had remained unaccomplished for a long time, not due to contempt, but because such a task was considered arduous; this positive outcome was highlighted through phrases such as: *dicavit; condidit; emicuit; pulsat*³⁴⁹.

3. An inscription dating from 353-357, which was placed in the Forum Boarium, near the Arch of Ianus. According to the text, Constantius II was referred to as: *maximus triumphator totius orbis terrae; liberator urbis et fundator quietis; extingtor superbi tyranni factio; vindex libertatis Populi Romani in hostes*, the latter being accused of savagely murdering Constans, the sovereign's brother, with cruel brutality, giving themselves free rein to act - AE 1997, 123³⁵⁰.

b) inscriptions discovered in *Latium et Campania / Regio I*:

4. An inscription, dating from the period 312-360, which was placed on the base of a statue and discovered in *Laurentium Lavinium* (Pratica di Mare / Pomezia). According to the text, a *tyrannus* had reduced the privileges of the inhabitants of the aforementioned settlement by withdrawing the grain rations they were receiving. These rations were later reinstated by a legitimate emperor, possibly Constantinus I or Constantius II. Thus, the antagonist mentioned could be Maxentius or Flavius Magnus Magnentius - HD, 029919.

Regarding the perspective adopted in the French journal of epigraphic studies *L'Année épigraphique*, the situation is as follows: in the 1911 issue, it was pointed out that the term *tyrannus* was used in reference to Maxentius, the adversary of Constantinus I; in the 2016 issue, it was noted that a new reconstruction had been published and a new study was indicated. On a different note, in volume IX of the *Ephemeris Epigraphica corpus* of inscriptions, the hypothesis formulated around Magnentius was adopted. Concerning the online epigraphic platforms that have included the inscription in their databases, the following can be observed: on the *Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss / Slaby*, the chronological framework was highlighted; on the *Epigraphische Datenbank Heidelberg*, no dating was specified; on the *Electronic Archive of Greek and Latin Epigraphy*, the dating was established, and it was considered that it could refer to either Maxentius or Magnentius³⁵¹.

³⁴⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVII, 4.1-23. See also Humphries 2015, 156, 158-160, 167; Omissi 2016, 180, 181 (n. 53), 185 (n. 70); Omissi 2018, 190-191; Tantillo 2021, 32, 43 (no. 10).

³⁵⁰ Tantillo 2021, 43, no. 9.

³⁵¹ EE IX, 592 = AE 1910, 162 = AE 2013, 200 = EDR, 072376.

When analysing the text, Walter Dennison, one of the first researchers to dedicate studies to this inscription, noted that the term *tyrannus* was used in the singular, and thus late usurpers, such as Magnus Maximus and his son Flavius Victor, could not be considered. Furthermore, based on the fact that the text emphasized that a sovereign had restored grain rations in the region, he concluded that the author of this action was none other than Constantinus I, and the tyrant was Maxentius. In supporting his argument, Walter Dennison referred both to juridical and narrative sources. Among the latter, he used three texts that state that during Maxentius' regime, there was a great shortage of food, and the people suffered as they had never suffered before: *Vita Constantini*, written by Eusebius of *Caesarea*; *Chronographus anni CCCLIV*, a compilation of chronological and calendrical texts created in 354 by Furius Dionysius Filocalus, a well-known stone engraver from the second half of the fourth century; and the panegyric delivered at *Augusta Treverorum* in 313. Additionally, the author consulted the works of Aurelius Victor and Zosimus³⁵².

In addition, G. A. Cecconi considered Walter Dennison's arguments to be pertinent. Fritz Mitthof appreciated that it referred to one of the two contenders for legitimate power mentioned above, Maxentius or Magnentius. Carlos Machado added the inscription to a table of reused statue bases in the Italian space of the late antiquity. Ignazio Tantillo included the inscription in a concise study on the incidence of the term *tyrannus* on monuments and agreed with the inconclusive hypothesis regarding the identity of the figure in question, upon which *abolitio memoriae* was applied³⁵³.

A survivor of the purges within the Constantine dynasty, which, as previously highlighted, followed immediately after 337, was Flavius Iulius Popilius Virius Nepotianus (350), the grandson of Constantinus I, as he was the son of Eutropia, the emperor's step-sister. He usurped power in Rome on June 3, 350. His "adventure" of seizing imperial power was facilitated by the support he received from a band of gladiators. Although he eliminated the city's prefect, Anicetus, who had been appointed by Magnentius, he encountered fierce resistance from the latter's supporters. After 27/28 days of holding power, during which "everywhere, houses, markets, streets, and temples were filled with blood and corpses, like funeral pyres", Nepotianus was killed along with his mother by Marcellinus, the *magister officiorum* of

³⁵² Dennison 1910, 285-290.

³⁵³ Cecconi 1994, 119, n. 35; Mitthof 2013, 201, no. 57; Machado 2017, 354; Tantillo 2021, 33, 46 (no. 21).

Magnentius. This member of the Constantine family was not only seen as a usurper. For Magnentius' faction, he became a *hostis*, a *tyrannus*, and the Roman plebs perceived him as a man of foolish nature. His reign was considered a *tumultus*, *rebellatio*, *improbitas*, the product of his cruel beginnings, which made him hated by all. His supporters were seen as *hostes* and *perditi* – *facere imperatorem apud Romam; rapere Augustum nomen; vindicare imperium; invadare imperium*³⁵⁴.

A special case would be Vetranio, *magister peditum/militum* in *Pannonia*, who between March 1 and December 25, 350, is believed to have usurped power at *Sirmium* or *Mursa*, but not as a result of any rebellious plans, rather at the insistence of Constantia, sister of Constantius II, who sought to ensure that this region of the Empire would not fall under the control of Magnentius. As highlighted by several scholars and source editors, including Nelu Zugravu and Moisés Antigueira, Vetranio's social condition would be synonymous with that of a "loyal usurper"³⁵⁵.

The list of usurpations in the mid-4th century concluded with Silvanus (355), *magister peditum*. After abandoning the cause of Magnentius in favour of Constantius II, he was sent by the latter to Gaul, with the mission of driving out the barbarians who were ravaging the province. Due to the intrigues of several imperial officials, including Dynamius, a servant in the emperor's transport services (*actuarius sarcinalium principis iumentorum*), Lampadius, *praefectus praetorio*, Eusebius Mattyocopa, former officer of the emperor's domains (*ex comite rei privatae*), and Aedesius, former head of the

³⁵⁴ *Panegyrici Latini*, XI [3], 13.2-3; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 42.6-8; Eutropius, X, 11.1; Ammianus Marcellinus, XXVIII, 1.1; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XLII, 3; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 350; Orosius, II, 29.11; Socrates Scholasticus, *HE*, II, 25.10-11; Sozomenos, *HE*, IV, 1.2; Philostorgius, *HE*, VII, 24; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 67; John of Antioch, fr. 260; Zosimus, II, 43.2-4; Chronicon Paschale, a. 349; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chron.*, a. 5849 [356/7]. See also Kienast 2004, 314, 321; Potter 2004, 472, 691 (n. 160), 707 (n. 93); Szidat 2010, 134, 177, 196 (n. 776), 217, 219, 222, 226, 237 (n. 942), 238, 244, 251, 253, 259, 268, 274, 278, 289-290, 307, 359, 388, 403, 413, 415; Zugravu 2012, 531-532, n. 683; Humphries 2015, 162, 166; Haymann 2018, 265; Omissi 2018, 215-216, n. 110; Antigueira 2019, 2; Humphries 2020, 161-164, 166-168, 174 (n. 75); Zugravu 2022b, 701-702, n. 876.

³⁵⁵ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 42.1-3; Ammianus Marcellinus, XV, 1.2; Emperor Julian, *Or.* I, 30 d; 33 a-b; III, 76 d-e; 77; Eutropius, X, 11.1; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XLI, 25; Libanius, *Or.* I, 81; II; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 351; Orosius, VII, 29.10; Socrates Scholasticus, *HE*, II, 28.16-20; Sozomos, *HE*, IV, 4.2-3; Philostorgius, *HE*, III, 22; Zosimus, II, 44.1-4; Chronicon Paschale, a. 350 (in PG 92, 727, 729); Consularia Constantinopolitana, a. 351; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chron.*, a. 5849 [356/7]; Zonaras, XIII, 7. See also Kienast 2004, 321-322; Zugravu 2012, 529-530, n. 679; Antigueira 2018, 1-21; Antigueira 2019, 1-12; Zugravu 2022b, 324 (n. 85), 398 (n. 279), 512 (n. 526), 513-515 (n. 528), 629 (n. 743), 699-700 (n. 869, 870 and 871); Zugravu 2023, 527.

imperial chancery (*ex magistro memoriae*), Silvanus was accused of attempting to usurp power. The only person who defended him, denying the slanders against him, which reached Constantius II, was Malarichus, the commander of the foreign guard (*gentilium rector*). Thanks to Florentius, the deputy head of the chancery (*agens tunc pro magistro officiorum*), who was able to demonstrate that the accusations against Silvanus were unfounded, he was absolved of any guilt, and legal proceedings were initiated against the conspirators. However, Silvanus, having learned only of the plots devised against him, and urged by Laniogaisus, a *tribunus*, decided to usurp power on August 11, 355. Against him was sent Ursicinus, *magister equitum*, accompanied by a relief corps that included Ammianus Marcellinus and Verinianus. On September 7, 355, Silvanus was assassinated by his own soldiers, who had been swayed by the emperor's envoy.

Among all the usurpations of the 4th century, that of Silvanus stands out because, unlike the others, the individual involved in the 355 episode did not have a well-established plan for seizing imperial insignia. As noted by Ammianus Marcellinus, Aurelius Victor, and Zonaras, he was compelled to assume power, and among his reasons were the following: the awareness that Emperor Constantius II had a capricious personality; the anxiety that, if surrendered to the barbarians, he would be betrayed to the official authorities; the fear that the emperor would believe falsehoods and, without trial or investigation, would have him executed.

He was perceived as a man capable of solving problems, a worthy general, a person with a gentle nature, calm and resilient. On the other hand, he was considered a usurper, a *tyrannus*, a man driven by *metus* or *dementia*, *timidus*, *proscriptus*, *fortissimum perduellem*; his reign was regarded as *tyrannis*, *res novae*, *defectio* – *efficere imperatorem*; *usurpare habitum Caesarem*; *surgere ad culmen imperialem*; *colere purpureum a draconem et vexillum insignis ad tempus abstractum*³⁵⁶.

³⁵⁶ *Panegyrici Latini*, XI [3], 13.3; Aurelius Victor, *Caes.*, 42.14-16; Eutropius, X, 13.1; Ammianus Marcellinus, XV, 5.1-38; 6.2-3; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, LXII, 10-11; Jerome, *Chron.*, a 354; Orosius, VII, 29.14-15; Socrates Scholasticus, *HE*, II, 32.11; Sozomos, *HE*, IV, 7.4; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 67; Theodore of Cyrus, *HE*, II, 16.21; John of Antioch, fr. 260; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chron.*, a. 5849 [356/7]; Zonaras, XIII, 9. See also Kienast 2004, 322; Potter 2004, 473, 480-482, 504, 521; Szidat 2010, 30 (n. 51), 131 (n. 522), 186, 188, 201, 218, 220 (n. 850), 222, 224, 232, 236, 238 (n. 949), 239, 245, 249, 251, 261, 275, 278, 289, 300, 309 (n. 1273), 312-314, 318, 321 (n. 1330), 324-326, 328-329 (n. 1375 and 1376), 334, 335 (n. 1417), 403, 413, 415; Zugravu 2012, 535-536, n. 692 and 693; Zugravu 2017, 45-46, 61 (n. 98), 64 (n. 108), 104 (n. 42), 143 (n. 264, 265 and 272); Omissi 2018, 17-18,

Some scholars argue that during this period, there may have been another figure driven by ambitions of usurpation, potentially identified as Carausius II, who may have assumed power in Britannia between 354-358 or in 409. His existence is suggested by certain coins discovered in Britain. However, his reign remains contentious, with historians debating whether this figure was real or merely fictional³⁵⁷.

During the joint reign of the brothers Valentinian I (364-375) in the West and Valens (364-379) in the East, Roman society faced a "tetrarchy of machinations", with the key figures of this phenomenon operating in different regions of the Empire and at different points in time.

Following the chronological course of events relevant to this study, Procopius (365-366), a career military officer and diplomat, was the first figure in the latter half of the fourth century to display dissident tendencies against legitimate authority. Due to his familial ties with the former ruler, Iulianus the Apostate (361-363), Procopius assumed power in Constantinople on September 28, 365. The events during his eight-month usurpation represented the final attempts of the waning Constantinian dynasty to re-establish its influence on the Roman political scene. Upon learning of this troubling situation, Valens, the legitimate emperor of the Eastern Empire, was overtaken by anxieties, while his brother, Valentinian, faced the dilemma of whether to intervene militarily, a decision that ultimately did not materialize. Procopius was labeled as *usurpator*, *tyrannus*, and *hostis*. Valentinian himself called him *hostem suum fratrisque solius* but refrained from assisting Valens, as the Alamanni posed a threat to the entire Roman world. Though Valens struggled with this *bellum intestinum*, he received crucial support from Flavius Arbitio, a former *consul* and Roman general noted for his military accomplishments under both Constantinus I and Constantius II. Through Arbitio's influence, Procopius was condemned as a *publicus grassator*, *rebellis*, *novator*, *oppugnator internae quietae*, *praesumptor*, and *protervitas auctor*. Owing to his subversive character, Procopius was perceived as a crafty spy, due to his frailty and dishevelled appearance, he was likened to a beast or brute, a man capable of skilled deception, whose behavior was a disgrace to all honours. His supporters were branded as *hostes*, *perduelles*, *desertoris*, *homines despecti*, and *umbratiles*, condemned for their complicity in the revolt. Procopius's rule was

24, 30, 50, 86 (n. 60), 169, 180, 193, 201, 215; Zugravu 2018, 368, n. 347; Humphries 2020, 159; Tantillo 2021, 29; Zugravu 2022b, 706-708, n. 883.

³⁵⁷ Evans 1887, 191-219; Boon 1957, 235-237; Sutherland 1945, 125-133; Stevens 1956, 345-349; Kent 1957, 78-83.

thus regarded as *res novae*, *seditio*, *tyrannis*, *ausus tumultus*, *publicus turbamentum*, and *infaustus dominatus* – *invadare imperium*; *adfectare imperium*; *insurgere contra imperatorem*; *assumere potestatem*; *appellere imperatorem*³⁵⁸.

The usurpation of Procopius attracts attention also due to the way his death was described. Based on historiographic and patristic sources, we can identify three different versions on this subject. According to a first perspective, which we find in Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, Jerome, Orosius, Zosimus, and Jordanes, the usurper Procopius either lost his life during the civil war or was executed by order of Valens; no details are provided regarding the manner in which he was eliminated³⁵⁹. In a second version, which is closer to historical truth and found in the writings of Ammianus Marcellinus and Philostorgius, Procopius was beheaded; afterward, a procession of his head followed, with it being displayed in the cities that had supported him, after which it was sent to the West, to Valentinian³⁶⁰. A third version of his death can be found in the works of Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomen, Theodorus Lector, John of Antioch, Theophanes the Confessor, and, much later, in the 11th–12th centuries, in the writings of Georgius Cedrenus and Zonaras. According to these authors, the usurper was not beheaded but instead received a far more severe punishment: he was tied to two trees bent to the ground, and, when the trees were released, he was torn in two³⁶¹.

³⁵⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVII, 14.3; XXVI, 5.8-9 and 13; 6.1-6; 10 and 11-18; 7.1-14; 8.1-14; 9.1-10; 10.1-15; XXVII, 2.10; 4.1; 5.1; XXXI, 3.4; Philostorgius, *HE*, IX, 5; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, LXVI, 4; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 366; *Ep.* LX, 15; Orosius, VII, 32.4; Socrates Scholasticus, *HE*, IV, 5.1-4; 9.8; Sozomenos, *HE*, VI, 8.1-3; 39.4; Zosimus, IV, 4.2-3; 5.2 – 5; 6.1-5; 7.1-4; 8.1-5; 10.1; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 72; John of Antioch, fr. 276; Theodorus Lector, *Ep.* 162.3-8; Jordanes, *Rom.*, 308; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chron.*, 5859 [366/7]; Cedrenus, *Hist., Comp.* (in PG 121, 542-543); Zonaras, XIII, 16. See also Kienast 2004, 332; Potter 2004, 480, 517, 522-525, 533, 536, 700 (n. 235); Szidat 2010, 23 (n. 22), 29-30 (n. 43, 44, 51), 35 (n. 74), 39 (n. 99), 42 (n. 117), 56, 58, 72 (n. 230), 74 (n. 239), 75 (n. 245), 86, 105, 108, 133, 164 (n. 644), 168, 180, 186, 195, 208, 210 (n. 824), 216, 222, 231 (n. 907), 233, 234 (n. 917), 236-237, 238-241, 243-245, 247, 250 (n. 997), 259-260, 265 (n. 1066), 268, 271, 273 (n. 1105 and 1106), 274, 276, 279, 282-283, 285-286 (n. 1159), 287-290, 292, 295, 297-298, 300 (n. 1232 and 1234), 302-305, 308-310, 313, 317, 335, 337, 339 (n. 1440), 372, 376-377, 393, 401, 404, 414-415; Zugravu 2012, 565-566, n. 772; Humphries 2015, 167; Zugravu 2017, 42 (n. 21), 45-46, 54 (n. 66), 58; Haymann 2018, 265; Omissi 2018, 24, 46 (n. 30), 50, 94, 228-250, 260, 305; Zugravu 2018, 344, n. 68; Tantillo 2021, 39.

³⁵⁹ Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XLVI, 4; Jerome, *Chron.*, a. 366; *Ep.*, LX, 15; Orosius, VII, 32.4; Zosimus, IV, 8.3-4; 10.1; Jordanes, *Rom.*, 308.

³⁶⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXVI, 9.9; 10.6; XXVII, 2.10; Philostorgius, *HE*, 9.5.

³⁶¹ Socrates Scholasticus, *HE*, IV, 5.1-4; Sozomenos, *HE*, VI, 8.1-3; Theodorus Lector, *Ep.* 162; John of Antioch, fr. 276; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chron.*, 5859 [366/7]; Cedrenus, *Hist., Comp.* (in PG 121, 542-543); Zonaras, XII, 16.

This extreme form of punishment recalls the manner in which Sinis, the giant bandit from Greek mythology, was punished. Sinis is mentioned in Bacchylides' *Dithyramboi*, Pseudo-Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca*, Diodorus Siculus' *Bibliotheca Historica*, Caius Iulius Hyginus' *Fabulae*, Publius Ovidius Naso's *Metamorphoses*, Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, and Pausanias' *Description of Greece*. According to legend, Sinis terrorized travellers. Under the pretense of needing help, he would force his victims to bend trees to the ground with him. Suddenly, he would release his hold, catapulting his victims into the air, causing them to perish upon hitting the ground. In another version, Sinis himself bent two pine trees to the ground, tied his victims' limbs to the trees, and released them, tearing his victims apart. Because of his behaviour, Sinis was called *Pityocampites*. His misdeeds ceased when he encountered Theseus. The Greek hero defeated him in battle and, as a form of humiliation, subjected him to the same punishment he had inflicted on others, using two pine trees³⁶².

Regarding this version adopted by some writers, it is nothing more than a pure invention intended to discredit Valens. However, in Roman society, there was another instance in which dismemberment using trees was prescribed, but this occurred in an earlier period, before the reign of Procopius. This refers to an episode mentioned in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, which is believed to have taken place during the reign of Aurelianus. It describes a measure that the soldier-emperor is thought to have implemented primarily during military campaigns, in which he severely punished soldiers guilty of committing adultery with the wives of their hosts³⁶³. This form of punishment is also mentioned by Eusebius in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in the section dedicated to the methods by which Christians were martyred. He specifies that special machines were used to bend the trees to the ground³⁶⁴.

Similarly, Marcellus (366), *protector* and commander of the garrison in *Nicaea*, who was related to Procopius, usurped power for a brief period after his death. His rule was considered a *rebellio*, a *praesumptio levis*, a *trepidatio*, and he was viewed as a "sinister shadow of a ruler", a *dux rebellio*, and a *noxius mancipium*. His followers became *hostes*, though some, in their

³⁶² Bacchylides, *Dith.*, XVII [XVIII]; Apollodorus, III, 16; Diodorus of Sicily, 4, 59.3; Hyginus, *Fab.*, 38; Ovidius, *Met.*, VII, 440; Plutarch, *Thes.*, 8.2; Pausanias, I, 37.4; II, 1.4. See also Cohen 2001, 112; Powell 2001, 194; Powell 2015, 432-434, 448.

³⁶³ *SHA, Aurel.*, VII, 4. See also Allard 2001, 31.

³⁶⁴ Eusebius, *HE*, VIII, 9.2.

criminal actions, were driven by poverty and despair. His end came when Equitius, Valens' *magister militum*, captured him and threw him into prison, where he suffered horrible tortures – *capessere principatum*³⁶⁵.

In a similar vein, Theodorus (372), a *secundicerius notariorum*, was implicated in a trial concerning magic and the offense against imperial majesty initiated in 371/372 in Antioch. His trial, along with that of other individuals, took place within the context of religious persecutions during the reign of Valens. The reason for his arrest, torture, and execution was his aspiration to the status of *princeps*, following an oracle's prediction that Valens' successor would be a person whose name contained the letters *th*, *o*, and *d*³⁶⁶.

No less significant was the usurpation of Firmus (372/3-374/5), who was proclaimed emperor by the *equites quartae sagittariorum cohortis* and the *pedites Constantiani*, encompassing the regions of *Mauretania* and *Numidia*. Thanks to a military intervention orchestrated by Theodosius the Elder, after three years of conflict, Firmus was defeated and ultimately committed suicide by hanging. He was labelled *perniciosus*, *contumax*, *hostis implacabilis*, *rebellis*, *publicus turbatoris*, *perduellis*, *temerator quietae*, and *latro*. His supporters, especially the African tribes such as the Mazices, Isafenses, Jubaleni, and Iesalenses, were branded *hostes*, *perfidii*, and *feroces*. Firmus himself regarded his rebellion as criminal and a reckless endeavour, though he justified his actions on the grounds that Romanus, the *comes Africae* (Count of Africa), had committed numerous abuses – *desciscere imperium; constituere regem; invadare regnum*³⁶⁷.

During the joint reign of Emperors Flavius Gratianus I (367/375-383) and Flavius Valentinianus II (383-392) in the West, and Flavius Theodosius I (379-395) in the East, two usurpations took place that left a lasting impact on

³⁶⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXVI, 10.1-6; Zosimus, 4.4-5; 8.3-5; John of Antioch, fr. 277. See also Kienast 2004, 332; Szidat 2010, 210, 222, 310, 389, 404, 415; Zugravu 2017, 50 (n. 56), 59 (n. 93).

³⁶⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXIX, 1. 5-44; 2; Philostorgius, *HE*, IX, 15; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XLVIII, 4; Socrates Scholasticus, *HE*, IV, 19.1-7; Sozomenos, *HE*, VI, 35.1-9; Zosimus, IV, 13.3-4; John of Antioch, fr. 277; Theodorus Lector, *Ep.*, 209; Cedrenus, *Hist., Comp.* (in PG 121, 548); Zonaras, XIII, 16. See also Szidat 2010, 183, 238, 258, 264, 322, 390-391; Zugravu 2017, 49 (n. 54), 78-79 (n. 183), 80 (n. 191), 81 (n. 193), 82 (n. 200 and 201), 106.

³⁶⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXIX, 5.1-56; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XLV, 7; Orosius, VII, 33.5-7; Zosimus, IV, 16.3. See also Camps 1984, 185-188; Kienast 2004, 329; Laporte 2004, 282-297; Potter 2004, 544, 708 (n. 117 and 118); Szidat 2010, 17 (n. 8), 31 (n. 54), 201, 218-219, 231 (n. 907), 258, 293, 313, 338, 343, 372, 405, 414-415; Zugravu 2012, 558-559, n. 755; Zugravu 2016, 337, 351 (n. 236 and 237); Zugravu 2017, 91-92, 133-134, 184-185 (n. 18), 197 (n. 100), 199 (n. 105), 200 (n. 108), 210-211 (n. 146); Zugravu 2018, 347-348 (n. 112), 348, 364.

the Roman collective consciousness. The central figure of the first was Magnus Maximus (383-388), *comes Britannianum*, who was proclaimed emperor by the soldiers in *Britannia* in the spring of 383. From there, he crossed into Gaul, where, after a battle near the *Parissi* (Paris), he defeated the forces of Gratianus; the latter was forced to flee but was captured and killed at *Lugdunum* (Lyon). Maximus' son, Flavius Victor, was appointed *Caesar*, and later, in the second half of 383 or in 384, elevated to the status of *Augustus*. Although recognized by Theodosius I, Maximus invaded territories under the control of Valentinianus II, forcing him to seek refuge in *Thessalonica*. Ultimately, Theodosius I intervened in the conflict, and after a series of victorious battles, captured the Hispano-Roman emperor, ordering his punishment and disgrace through decapitation. His successor was soon killed by the Frankish general Arbogastes.

Magnus Maximus was regarded as *hostis, usurpator, tyrannus, carnifex, carnifex purpuratus, latro, avarus, cruentus, impius, nefarius caput, praedo, publicus proditor, publicus spoliatur, fugitivus*. He was also compared to a *servus seditiosus, belua furens, cliens, rebellis servus, amens*, and to Phalaris, the tyrant of Agrigentum (Acragas), known for his cruel nature. Moreover, he was accused of aligning himself with *perfidia, nefas, iniuria, impietas, libido, and crudelitas*. Lastly, his reign was perceived as a *tyrannis, scelus, and mallum pestis*. His supporters were judged as *insulani, exules, perfidi, miseri, publici proditores, hostes, rebelles, agmen infernum*, partisans of a *sacrilegae factio*, and a *nefariae factio* – *arripere tyrannidem; vindicare Galliam; facere Augustum; emergere tyrannidem; creare imperatorem apud Britanniam; insurgere contra imperatorem; affectare regnum; habere regnum*³⁶⁸.

³⁶⁸ Codex Theodosianus, XV, 14.6-8 and 10; *Panegyrici Latini*, II [12], 23.1 and 3-4; 24.1-2 and 5-6; 25.1 and 5; 26.3; 28.3; 29.4; 30.5; 31.1-3; 32.1 and 3; 34.1-2 and 4; 35.1 and 4; 36.2; 37.2-3; 38.1; 40.3-4; 42.3; 43.3; 44.3; 45.5; 46.4; Ambrosius, *Ep.*, 40.22; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XLVII, 7; XLVIII, 6; Jerome, *Ep.* LX, 15; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 73; Palladius of Galatia, *HL*, 35.2; Orosius, VII, 34.9-10; 35.1-10; Augustine, *Ciu.*, V, 26; Hydatius, *Chron.*, a. 386, 388; Prosper Tiro, *Chron.*, a. 388; Zosimus, IV, 35.3-6; 37.1-3; 43.1-3; 44; 45.3-4; 46.2-3; 47.1-2; Philostorgius, *HE*, X, 5 and 8-9; Rufinus of Aquileia, *HE*, XI, 14; 15; 17; Socrates Scholasticus, *HE*, V, 11.1-2 and 6-9; 12.1 and 9-11; 14.1-10; Sozomenos, *HE*, VII, 13.1 and 8-11; 14.2; Theodore of Cyrus, *HE*, V, 12.1; 15; Cassiodorus, *Chron.*, a. 384; Jordanes, *Rom.*, 316; John of Antioch, fr. 279-280; Malalas, *Chron.*, XIII, 36; Procopius of Caesarea, *Bella.*, III, 4.16; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chron.*, a. 5874 [381/2], 5877 [384/5], 5880 [387/8]; Zonaras, XIII, 18. See also Kienast 2004, 339, 342; Potter 2004, 545, 550-552, 561, 564-567, 709 (n. 154), 710 (n. 165 and 166); Humphries 2008, 85; Szidat 2010, 22, 30 (n. 45 and 50), 32, 36 (n. 85), 42 (n. 118), 59, 62, 66, 99, 102, 197, 216, 222-223, 237, 249, 260-261, 266 (n. 1071), 269 (n. 1085), 270, 273-275, 277-278, 293, 302, 307, 310-312,

Six inscriptions have been identified that were created in honour of Theodosius I, Valentinianus II, and Arcadius. These inscriptions contain phrases such as *tyranni* and *saevi tyranni dominatio* to characterize Magnus Maximus and Flavius Victor, as well as to describe what their reigns would have represented.

Four of these inscriptions were discovered in Rome, near the Roman Forum, in the area of the *Comitium*. These were placed at the bases of statues depicting the aforementioned emperors. In the case of the first three, dating from 389-391, the dedicant was Ceionius Rufius Albinus, *vir clarissimus* and *praefectus urbi*; for the fourth inscription, dating from 388-392, the name and social status of the dedicant are unknown. The emperors were characterized as *extinctores tyrannorum*, *auctores publicae securitatis*, *defensores aeternae urbis*, and *depulsores saevorum tyrannorum dominationis* - EDCS-19900156³⁶⁹; 19000535³⁷⁰; HD, 028279³⁷¹; 030756³⁷².

In the same vein, two inscriptions were discovered in Constantinople, representing *carmina*. The message of the first inscription sought to highlight the urban policy implemented by a ruler named Theodosius to enhance the city's appearance, but after the defeat of a *tyrannus* - HD, 019287. The dating of the inscription, the identity of the mentioned sovereign, and that of the defeated tyrant have been intensely debated among scholars. First and foremost, it should be noted that the two verses that make up the inscription were first mentioned in the 17th century by Jean Sirmond (1582-1649), a representative of French Humanism who built his career closely connected to the royal court of France; he was a historian, poet, royal counsellor, writer, diplomat, editor of classical Latin works, and the official historiographer for King Louis XIII (1613-1643)³⁷³. The

313 (n. 1288), 315-318, 323, 327 (n. 1361), 331, 340, 405-406, 415; Zugravu 2012, 571-573 (n. 792), 577-578 (n. 805-807); Humphries 2015, 156-157, 160, 164-167; Szidat 2015, 121-123, 125, 133; Zugravu 2017, 51-52, n. 58; Haymann 2018, 265; Zugravu 2019b, 89, 95; Humphries 2020, 160-167; Tantillo 2021, 18 (n. 8), 21, 29, 37, 40 (n. 89), Zugravu 2021, 127, 129-131; Zugravu 2022a, 23-24 (n. 43) and 24; Zugravu 2022c, 213, n. 36; Zugravu 2023, 517.

³⁶⁹ Humphries 2015, 161 (n. 43), 169; Kalas 2015, 192, n. 64; Omissi 2016, 177, n. 33; Omissi 2018, 286, n. 176; Tantillo 2021, 32-33, 44 (no. 13).

³⁷⁰ Humphries 2015, 161 (n. 43), 169; Kalas 2015, 192, n. 64; Omissi 2016, 177, n. 33; Omissi 2018, 286, n. 176; Tantillo 2021, 32-33, 43-44 (no. 11).

³⁷¹ Humphries 2015, 161 (n. 43), 169; Kalas 2015, x (no. 3.8), 192 (n. 64); Omissi 2016, 177, n. 33; Omissi 2018, 286, n. 176; Tantillo 2021, 32-33, 44 (no. 12).

³⁷² Omissi 2016, 177, n. 33; Omissi 2018, 286, n. 176; Tantillo 2021, 32-33, 44 (no. 14).

³⁷³ Jean Sirmond, 700.

existence of the inscription was confirmed in 1889 by Josef Strzygowski, who published it in 1893³⁷⁴. According to one perspective, adopted by Jonathan Bardill, Mark Humphries, and Adrastus Omissi, the inscription would date from 388-391, the sovereign would be Theodosius I, and consequently, the defeated tyrant would be Magnus Maximus. The verses themselves would have been placed on a triumphal arch built by the sovereign after the conflict with Magnus Maximus and Flavius Victor, which, over time, would have been incorporated into the city's fortification system, now known as the Golden Gate³⁷⁵. According to another hypothesis, accepted by Philipp Schweinfurt, R. Janin, Wolfgang Müller-Wiener, Cyril Mango, and Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger, the inscription would date from 425, with the emperor being Theodosius II (408-450), while the tyrant would be John (423-425), *primicerius notariorum*, who usurped power after the death of Honorius and was eliminated following a civil war³⁷⁶. According to another viewpoint, found in Simon Malmberg's studies, the tyrant in question could be Priscus Attalus, *prefectus Urbi* in 409, who usurped power in the West in two contexts, with the support of the Visigoths: the first rebellion occurred around 409-410, and the second in 414-415, but both were doomed to failure. The protagonist of these separatist tendencies ended up being socially disgraced in the context of a triumph organized in Rome in 416 by Emperor Honorius, after which he was exiled; the inscription has also been included in the studies of Ignazio Tantillo³⁷⁷.

The second inscription, dating from 388-392, was placed on an obelisk, under the direction of the city prefect, Proculus; the monument itself was mentioned by Emperor Julian the Apostate. The inscription was meant to poetically evoke Theodosius' victory over Magnus Maximus. The verses stated that, initially, the monument was reluctant to obey the serene masters (*dominis serenis*), as the legitimate sovereign and his sons were called, even when it was commanded (*iussus*) to proclaim the victory over the slain tyrants (*extinctis tyrannis*), referring to Magnus Maximus and Flavius Victor. However, since all things would bow to Theodosius and his everlasting offspring (*omnia Theodosio cedunt subolique perenniter*), the monument

³⁷⁴ Strzygowski 1893, 1-3.

³⁷⁵ Bardill 1999, 671, 683-686, 690; Humphries 2015, 161; Omissi 2016, 190-194; Omissi 2018, 286, n. 176.

³⁷⁶ Schweinfurt 1952, 265-266, 270-271; Janin 1964, 269-270; Müller-Wiener 1977, 297; Mango 2000, 179, n. 45; Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger 2007, 54-61.

³⁷⁷ Malmberg 2014, 156-161; Tantillo 2021, 33, 44 (no. 16).

ultimately accepted being defeated (*victus*) and subdued (*domitus*), before being raised to the heavens (*elatus ad auras*), an action that took place under the supervision of Proclus. There is also a Greek inscription that points out how the obelisk lay on the ground for a long time, like a burden, and that the only one who could raise it was Theodosius, indicating that there had been previous attempts to lift it, but without success - *HD*, 065179³⁷⁸.

The core of the second usurpation centred around Flavius Eugenius (392-394), *magister scrinorum*, who was proclaimed emperor by Arbogastes but was eliminated by Theodosius I. He was considered *hostis*, *tyrannus*, *usurpator*, and *praedo*, while his supporters were regarded as *hostes*. His reign represented a *mota*, *seditio* – *invadare regnum; affectare regnum*³⁷⁹.

The fourth century concluded with the rebellion of Gildo (397-398), a Roman general of Berber origin from the region of *Mauretania Caesariensis*. He was the son of King Nubel and the brother of Firmus, the usurper of 372/3-374/5, as well as of Mascezel, Sammac, Dius, and Mazuca; he also had a sister, Cyria³⁸⁰. In the context of the military operation orchestrated by Theodosius the Elder against Firmus, Gildo served under Roman general's command, facilitating the arrest of Vicentius, the *vicarius* of Romanus, as well as the capture of several rebel leaders, namely Belles and Fericius³⁸¹. As a reward for his role during the turbulent period of his brother's rebellion,

³⁷⁸ Emperor Julian, *Ep.*, 48. See also Schweinfurt 1952, 265, 270; Bardill 1999, 684 (n. 36), 689, 695 (n. 122), 696; Malmberg 2014, 159, n. 18; Humphries 2015, 161; Omissi 2016, 178-186; Omissi 2018, 287-288; Tantillo 2021, 33, 44 (nr. 15).

³⁷⁹ Codex Theodosianus, VII, 18.9.2; XV, 14.9 and 11-12; Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epit. Caes.*, XLVIII, 7; Palladius of Galatia, *HL*, 35; Philostorgius, *HE*, XI, 2; Jerome, *Ep.* LX, 15; Orosius, VII, 35.10-21; Polemius Silvius, *Lat.*, 76; Rufinus of Aquileia, *HE*, II, 31-33; Ambrosius, *Ep.*, 61.1-7; 62.1-4; Augustinus, *Ciu.*, V, 27; Socrates Scholasticus, *HE*, V, 25.1-16; Sozomenos, *HE*, VII, 22.4-8; 24.1-9; Theodoret of Cyrus, *HE*, V, 24.1-17; Hydatius, *Chron.*, a. 392; 394; Prosper Tiro, *Chron.*, a. 392; 395; Zosimus, IV, 54-58; Cassiodorus, *Chron.*, a. 392; 394-395; Jordanes, *Rom.*, 317; John of Antioch, fr. 280; Malalas, *Chron.*, XIII, 33; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chron.*, a. 5882 [389/90]; 5884 [391/2]; 5885 [392/3]; 5886 [393/4]; Zonaras, XIII, 18. See also Bardill 1999, 689, 693-694; Kienast 2004, 343; Potter 2004, 529-530, 532-533, 552, 569, 705 (n. 41), 710 (n. 171); Szidat 2010, 27 (n. 36), 28 (n. 41), 32, 39 (n. 98), 55, 129, 133, 153, 164, 182, 214, 215 (n. 836), 221 (n. 857), 222, 229, 265, 274, 281 (n. 1137), 376, 395 (n. 1639); Zugravu 2012, 578-580 (n. 807), 581 (n. 816); Malmberg 2014, 153, n. 5; Szidat 2015, 122-126, 130-132; Haymann 2018, 265.

³⁸⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXIX, 5.2; 6.11; Claudian, *de bello Gild.*, 335-336; 347; 389-390; Zosimus, V, 11.3-4; Orosius, VII, 36.4; Jordanes, *Rom.*, 320; Marcellinus Comes, *Chron.*, a. 398. See also Kienast 2004, 329.

³⁸¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXIX, 5.6; 21.24.

Emperor Theodosius I appointed him *comes et magister utriusque militiae per Africam*, a position he held from 386 to 398³⁸². Gradually, he distanced himself from legitimate imperial authority, with the first episode of alienation occurring during the confrontation between Theodosius I and Eugenius, the usurper of 392-394, when Gildo refused to send reinforcements to the Theodosian faction³⁸³.

In the autumn of 397, he revolted against the rule of Honorius (395-425), halted the grain shipments from Africa to Rome, and recognized the authority of Constantinople. These actions were a result of the intrigues of Eutropius, a notable figure of the era who rose to the highest social ranks, being appointed *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, patrician, and consul in the East³⁸⁴.

The events outlined above sparked what is known as the Gildonic War, which ended unfavourably for the rebels. In this context, Mascezel, the brother of the rebel Gildo, driven by a desire for revenge after his relative ordered the murder of his children, and serving under Stilicho, the *magister militum* in the West, initiated hostilities. Gildo's forces were defeated, and he chose suicide by hanging. He was declared *hostis publicus* and was perceived as: *usurpator; rebellis; demens; praedo; tyrannus*; a despiser of the dual youth rule of Honorius and Arcadius (395-408), and a man who longed for power; a person whose soul was agitated by envy; one who used deceit to kill his relatives; driven by madness; fearful on the battlefield; a private individual who came to possess a province; a victim of a range of vices, from greed to carnal desires; a terror to the living; an heir to the wealth of the dead; a defiler of unmarried girls and corrupter of married women; an element of discord between the imperial brothers, Honorius and Arcadius; a possessor of wavering loyalty; a wicked individual who deserved the punishment used by Tullus Hostilius, the legendary king of Rome (672-640 BC), in the case of the traitor Mettius Fufetius, the dictator of Alba Longa, that of being torn apart by having his limbs tied to chariots moving in opposite directions;

³⁸² Codex Theodosianus, IX, 7.9; Claudian, *de bello Gild.*, 153-156

³⁸³ Claudian, *de bello Gild.*, 246-247; *de VI cons. Hon.*, 104-105; 108-110.

³⁸⁴ For an analysis of the rise of Eutropius, a notable figure of late 4th-century Roman society, his condemnation to oblivion following the imperial edict issued on August 17, 399, by emperors Arcadius (383-408) and Honorius (393-423), addressed to Aurelianus, the prefect of the praetorian guard, and the sanctions imposed against him, as well as the perception of his personality, see Chilcoş 2022, 443-504.

an ominous figure; a deserter; a traitor; a malicious person; an odious character; a prisoner. His supporters, including the Donatists, were perceived as enemies *hostes; satellites*; the mad offspring of Juba. His Nasamonian soldiers were considered cowardly and lazy; his Garamantean troops were described as not skilled in swordsmanship, but rather in begging; his Autolole forces were seen as swift of foot, particularly in retreating to the desert. His reign represented *dementia; ausus; res novae; rebellio; crimen*, a criminal act orchestrated by the East; an evil, profaning deed, which, under the false auspices of transferring loyalty from Rome to Constantinople, sought to create the impression of legitimate governance; a perfidy based on Eastern power; a perfidy that needed to be condemned; a terrifying disaster that was surpassed in shame and dishonour only by the appointment of Eutropius as *consul* – *usurpare Africam excerptam a societatem publicam se ausum; niti obtinere Africam; commovere rebellionem in Africam; rapere Libyam; tenere Libyam*³⁸⁵.

There are also inscriptions that record Gildo's designation as *hostis publicus* and *rebellis*. Near the Arch of Septimius Severus, in the Roman Forum, fragments of an inscription were gradually discovered, with the first finds occurring in the mid-16th century and others at the beginning of the 20th century. Although the majority of the inscription has been lost, the full text is known due to a copy made at the time of the discovery. The inscription dates from 398 and was placed at the base of a statue, commemorating the defeat of the usurper Gildo. It was dedicated by the Senate and the Roman People, who rejoiced in the suppression of the rebellion and the restoration of Africa to the Empire (*vindicata rebellione Africae restitutione laetus*). The text was composed in honor of the emperors-brothers, Honorius and Arcadius, who were referred to as *invictissimi* and *felicissimi*; in another fragment, it is emphasized how Honorius, described as *armipotens*, protected, defended, and intervened in support of Libya – *EDCS-17600825*³⁸⁶.

³⁸⁵ Codex Theodosianus, VII, 8.7; IX, 40.19; 42.19; Chronica Gallica of 452, a. 397-398; Claudian, *de bello Gild.*, 6; 15-16; 66-67; 69; 113; 147; 157-158; 161-200; 205; 236; 247; 253-255; 257; 261; 263-265; 282; 323; 332; 339-340; 381; 388-404; 437; 466; in *Eutr.*, I, 399-400; 412-414; 504-505; II, *praef.*, 69-71; *de cons. Stil.*, I, 1-6; 7-10; 18-20; 245-270; 271-281; 333-385; II, 256-262; III, 13; Symmachus, *Ep.*, IV, 5.2-3; Prosper Tiro, *Chron.*, a. 398; Orosius, VII, 36.2-12; Marcellinus Comes, *Chron.*, a. 398; Zosimus, V, 11.2-4; Jordanes, *Rom.*, 320; Paulinus the Deacon, *V. Amb.*, 51. See also Szidat 2010, 26, 27 (n. 34), 28, 30, 160, 201, 204, 211, 213-214, 280-281, 358, 405-406; Wijnendaele 2019, 299, 308-312, 318-319, 322; Tantillo 2021, 21.

³⁸⁶ Baldarotta 1998, 317.

A second inscription, dating from the period 400-405, was placed at the base of a statue and reflects the celebratory atmosphere in Rome following the defeat of Gildo and the restoration of the grain supply. The dedication was made by the barge-owners and fishermen of the city, with the recipient being Flavius Stilicho, who was referred to as *vir clarissimus et illustri magistro utriusque militiae* - HD, 024202³⁸⁷.

Finally, a third inscription, dating from 398 and placed at the base of a statue, was created in honor of Stilicho, who is referred to as *vir illustrissimus*. The text highlights the social rise of the recipient of the message, who had reached the pinnacle of glory (*ad columen gloriae*), as well as his familial ties to the imperial family. Furthermore, it emphasizes how Africa was liberated, thanks to his advice and oversight (*Africa consiliis eius et provisione liberata*). The dedication was made by the Senate and the Roman people - EDCS-18100539³⁸⁸.

Conclusions

As observed, exclusion from the civic body was defined and reinforced through a series of juridical and symbolic terms, each contributing to the process of "civil death" applied to the condemned. The article highlights essential terms used in various contexts, intended to designate the following social categories: the disgraced sovereign, the counter-emperor defeated by his opponent, the usurper who sought supreme power, the supporters of such figures, and, ultimately, the way in which their reign or act of rebellion was perceived:

- phrases used in relation to legitimate sovereigns who fell into disgrace or were eliminated by political opponents, as well as towards usurpers: *hostis, hostis publicus, proscriptus, tyrannus, saevus tyrannus, rebellis, latro, usurpator, suspectus; pirata, archipirata, rusticus, agrestis, perduellis, concitator, stolidus, debilis, timidus, demens, servillis, fortissimum perduellem, publicus grassator, novator, oppugnator internae quietae, praesumptor, protervitas auctor, ferinus, bestia, dux rebellio, noxius mancipium, perniciosus, contumax, hostis implacabilis, publicus turbatoris, temerator quietae, carnifex, carnifex purpuratus, avarus, cruentus, impius, nefarius caput, praedo, publicus proditor, publicus spoliatur, fugitivus, servus seditiosus, servus rebellis, belua furens, cliens, amens, privatus, monstrum, transfuga, malignus, profanus, captivus;*

³⁸⁷ Wijnendaele 2019, 310.

³⁸⁸ Baldarotta 1998, 317.

- phrases used to designate the supporters of deposed sovereigns or usurpers: *hostes, hostes publici, suspecti, latrones, factio, rustici, rebelles, imperitam et confusam manum, monstrorum biforminum, ignori agricolae, rustici vastatores, perditii, desertoris, homines despecti, umbratiles, factionis conscios, inimici; conscii; seditiosi; perfidi, feroces, insulani, exules, miseri, proditores publici, agmen infernum, sacrilegae factio, nefariae factio, satellites, vesana, ignavi; proscripti;*

- phrases that highlighted the reign of such figures: *usurpatio, coniuratio, tyrannis; saevissima dominatio; saevissima tyrannis; pestifera tyrannis; rebellio, nauticae rebellionis, impietas; furor; consensus; lues, scelus, seditio, aspera tyrannis, summa luxuria, perduellio, tumultus, ausus; ausus tumultus, rebellatio, improbitas, saevis exordiis, res novae, defectio, protervitas, publicus turbamentum, infaustus dominatus, praesumptio levis, trepidatio, temeritas, mallum pestis, mota, dementia, crimen, terror.*

These terms were used not only to mark official exclusion but also to emphasize the social danger these individuals represented. The aim was not merely to discredit them but to sever them completely from the values of the Roman state. Such labeling served to justify the removal of these figures from collective memory and to reinforce public hostility against them.

In particular cases, like that of Emperor Nero, expressions such as *hostis generis humani* and *bonis omnibus hostis fuit* were also employed. In the case of Commodus, the following phrases predominated: *hostis patriae; hostis senatus; hostis deorum; hostis deorum atque hominorum; hostis generis humani*. The two Maximini became, among other things, *hostes populi romani*. Maxentius was referred to as *hostis rei publicae*. The social status of Constantinus II underwent a transition, from that of *princeps* to that of *publicus et noster inimicus*. Procopius became, for Valentinian, *hostem suum fratrisque solius*.

Thus, the extreme nature of the condemnation was emphasized, aimed at reinforcing the idea of the absolute danger these individuals posed to public order and morality. As we can observe, the practice of *abolitio memoriae* extended beyond the secular boundaries of Roman society, beyond relations with political entities such as the Senate, the concept of the republic, or the members of the community, showing that the condemned individual was excluded even from the fundamental values of humanity and from divine protection.

The majority of those subjected to *abolitio memoriae* attempted to usurp legitimate power, thus seeking to instate disorder, as highlighted by the use of the following phrases: *abducere classem; occupare legionem; intercludere peregrinum; contrahere mercatorem; sollicitare barbaros; haurire imperium; capessere imperium; capessere regnum; remittere imperium; sumere purpuram; efficere imperatorem; vindicare imperium; retinere imperium; extorquere imperium; eripere imperium; induere dominationem; efficere imperatorem; desciscere romanam potestatem; invadere Aegyptum; incubare dominatum; facere imperatorem apud Carthaginem; moliri rem novam; aspirare rem novam; capere habitum venerabilem; obtinere imperium; arripere imperium; occupare regnum; usurpare imperium; invadare imperium; movere rebellio; facere imperatorem apud Romam; rapere Augustum nomen; usurpare habitum Caesarem; surgere ad culmen imperialem; colere purpureum a draconem et vexillum insignis ad tempus abstractum; adfectare imperium; insurgere contra imperatorem; assumere potestatem; appellere imperatorem; capessere principatum; desciscere imperium; constituere regem; invadare regnum; arripere tyrannidem; vindicare Galliam; facere Augustum; emergere tyrannidem; creare imperatorem apud Britanniam; insurgere contra imperatorem; affectare regnum; habere regnum; usurpare Africam excerptam a societatem publicam se ausum; commovere rebellionem in Africam; rapere Libyam; tenere Libyam.*

Therefore, each of the terms highlighted in this study contributed to the process of "legal marginalization" applied to those considered a threat, reflecting a juridical and symbolic process by which they were formally and morally removed from the civic body of the Roman state. Through the use of specific legal language, the practice of *abolitio memoriae* thus functioned as an instrument of social and political control, legitimizing state authority and reshaping collective memory in favor of preserving order and unity within the Roman Empire.

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