

Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași
Facultatea de Istorie • Centrul de Studii Clasice și Creștine

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FACULTATEA DE ISTORIE
CENTRUL DE STUDII CLASICE ȘI CREȘTINE

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2026

Convegno Internazionale (XIV Convegno romeno-italiano)
Crisi e declino nell'antichità greco-romana
(Iași, 17-19 settembre 2025)

a cura di

Nelu ZUGRAVU

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ISIDOR DE SEVILLA, *Etimologii. XIII-XIV*, ediție bilingvă, ediție îngrijită, traducere din limba latină, studiu introductiv, cronologie și note de Anca CRIVĂȚ, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2025 (*Nelu ZUGRAVU*) / 389; Catherine NIXEY, *Erezie. Isus Cristos și ceilalți fii ai lui Dumnezeu*, traducere din limba engleză de Radu CUCUTEANU, Editura Humanitas, București, 2025 (*Alexandru Eusebie TOMIUC*) / 393; Peter BROWN, *Augustin de Hippona. O biografie*, traducere din limba engleză de Ionela GANEA și Cristian STOICA, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2025 (*Ștefan PUȘCAȘU*) / 397; Peter HEATHER, John RAPPLEY, *De ce se prăbușesc imperiile. Roma, America și viitorul Occidentului*, traducere de Alexandru CORMOȘ, Editura Litera, București, 2025 (*Alecsandru VOICU*) / 401

CRONICA – CRONACA / 407

SIGLE ȘI ABREVIERI / SIGLE E ABBREVIAZIONI*

<i>ActaMN</i>	<i>Acta Musei Napocensis</i> , Cluj-Napoca.
<i>BHAC</i>	<i>Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium</i> , Bonn.
<i>BHL</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina</i> , Bruxelles.
<i>EDR</i>	<i>Epigraphic Database Rome</i> .
<i>EDCS</i>	Epigraphische Datenbank Claus-Slaby, Eichstätt-Ingolstadt.
<i>EN</i>	<i>Ephemeris Napocensis</i> , Cluj-Napoca.
<i>FHDR</i> , II	<i>Fontes ad historiam Dacoromaniae pertinentes</i> , II, <i>De la anul 300 până la anul 1000</i> , București, 1970.
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i> .
<i>Occidente/Oriente</i>	<i>Occidente/Oriente. Rivista internazionale di studi tardoantichi</i> , Pisa-Roma.
<i>PIR</i>	<i>Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire</i> , éd. par A. Mandouze et al., 4 voll., Paris-Rome 1982-2013.
<i>PLRE</i> , I	<i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> , I, A.D. 260-395, by A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, J. Morris, Cambridge, 1971.
<i>RE</i>	<i>Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> .
<i>RIC</i>	<i>The Roman Imperial Coinage</i> .
<i>RRMAM</i>	D. French, <i>Roman Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor</i> , Vol. III, British Institute at Ankara, 2012-2016.
<i>SCIVA</i>	<i>Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie</i> , București.
<i>TD</i>	<i>Thraco-Dacica</i> , București.
<i>ThLL</i>	<i>Thesaurus linguae Latinae</i> .

* Cu excepția celor din *L'Année Philologique* și *L'Année Épigraphique* / Escluse quelle segnalate da *L'Année Philologique* e *L'Année Épigraphique*.



UNIVERSITATEA
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din IAȘI



Centrul de Studii
Clasice și Creștine



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ISTORIE

CONVEGNO INTERNAZIONALE

(XIV CONVEGNO ROMENO-ITALIANO)

COLOCVIU INTERNAȚIONAL

(AL XIV-LEA COLOCVIU ROMÂNNO-ITALIAN)

CRISI E DECLINO NELL'ANTICHITÀ
GRECO-ROMANA

CRIZĂ ȘI DECLIN ÎN ANTICHITATEA
GRECO-ROMANĂ

IAȘI

17-19 SETTEMBRE / SEPTEMBRIE 2025

SALA H, FACULTATEA DE ISTORIE





**CONVEGNO INTERNAZIONALE
(XIV CONVEGNO ROMENO-ITALIANO)
*Crisi e declino nell'antichità greco-romana***

**INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM
(XIV ROMANIAN-ITALIAN COLLOQUIUM)
*Crisis and Decline in Greco-Roman Antiquity***

**COLLOQUE INTERNATIONAL
(XIV COLLOQUE ROUMAIN-ITALIEN)
*Crise et déclin dans l'Antiquité gréco-romaine***

**COLOCVIU INTERNAȚIONAL
(AL XIV-LEA COLOCVIU ROMÂNNO-ITALIAN)
*Criză și declin în antichitatea greco-romană***

**Iași, 17-19 settembre / septembrie 2025
Sala H₁ (Facoltà di Storia / Facultatea de Istorie)**

Organizzatori / Organizatori

**Nelu ZUGRAVU, Roxana-Gabriela CURCĂ
(PN-IV-P1-PCE-2023-1560)**

**COLOCVIU FINANȚAT DE PRIMĂRIA MUNICIPIULUI IAȘI
PRIN H.C.L. NR. 98/27.03.2025**

PROGRAMMA / PROGRAM

Mercoledì / Miercuri, 17 settembre / septembrie 2025

13.45-14.00

Moderatore / Moderator:

Nelu ZUGRAVU

13.45-14.00: Saluti istituzionali e introduzione ai lavori / Salutul organizatorilor Mihai CHIRICA, Primarul Municipiului Iași / Sindaco del Comune di Iași Liviu MAHA, Rectorul Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași / Rettore dell’Università «Alexandru Ioan Cuza» di Iași Lucrețiu-Ion BÎRLIBA, Decanul Facultății de Istorie, Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași / Preside della Facoltà di Storia, Università «Alexandru Ioan Cuza» di Iași Nelu ZUGRAVU, Directorul Centrului de Studii Clasice și Creștine, Facultatea de Istorie, Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași / Direttore del Centro di Studi Classici e Cristiani, Facoltà di Storia, Università «Alexandru Ioan Cuza» di Iași

14.00-14.45

Moderatore / Moderator:

Roxana-Gabriela CURCĂ

14.00-14.30: Relazione inaugurale / Comunicare inaugurală: Anne VIAL-LOGEAY, *Décadence de Rome, crise(s), ou phénomène cyclique ? Quelques observations sur l’Histoire naturelle de Pline l’Ancien*

14.30-14.45: Discussioni / Discuții

14.45-15.00: Pausa / Pauză

15.00-17.00

Moderatore / Moderator:

Dumitru Dănuț APARASCHIVEI

15.00-15.30: Lucrețiu-Ion BÎRLIBA, *La cohors III Collecta : origine et rôle stratégique*

15.30-16.00: Roxana-Gabriela CURCĂ, *L’épigraphie honorifique latine durant la crise en Mésie Inférieure* (PN-IV-P1-PCE-2023-1560)

16.00-16.30 (RO) / 15.00-15.30 (ES): M.a Pilar GONZÁLEZ-CONDE PUENTE, *Les témoignages épigraphiques de Trebonianus Gallus et Volusianus en Hispanie* (online)

16.30-17.00: Discussioni / Discuții

17.00-17.15: Pausa caffè / Pauză de cafea

17.15-18.30

Moderatore / Moderator:

Lucrețiu-Ion BÎRLIBA

17.15-17.45: Dan MATEI, *The reuse of lithic spolia in the interventions to the structures of the castra from Dacia in the period of the “military anarchy” (AD 235 - the Aurelianic retreat)*

17.45-18.15: Dumitru Dănuț APARASCHIVEI, *Crisis and decline of urban life in the border province of Scythia. The case of the city of Ibida*

18.15-18.45: Miguel Pablo SANCHO GÓMEZ, *The Roman army of Aurelian and Probus in the Historia Augusta*

18.45-19.00: Discussioni / Discuții

19.00: Cena / Cina

Giovedì / Joi, 18 settembre / septembrie 2025

9.00-10.15

Moderatore / Moderator:

Immacolata ERAMO

9.00-9.30: Dragoș HĂLMAGI, *Civic crisis and private aid: revisiting the epigraphic evidence on shortages and loans in Hellenistic Istros* (online)

9.30-10.00: Giusto TRAINA, *The Mithridatic crisis*

10.00-10.15: Discussioni / Discuții

10.15-10.30: Pausa caffè / Pauză de cafea

10.30-12.30

Moderatore / Moderator:

Luigi PIACENTE

10.30-11.00: Nelu ZUGRAVU, «*Cuncta ad extremum reciderant*»: *retorica della crisi nelle fonti latine tardoantiche*

11.00-11.30: Beatrice GIROTTI, *Lessico della resilienza: restitutor*

11.30-12.00: Manuela MONGARDI, *Magnia Urbica: l'ultima “Soldatenkaiserin”*

12.00-12.30: Discussioni / Discuții

12.30-15.00: Pausa pranzo / Pauză de prânz

15.00-16.15

Moderatore / Moderator:

Giusto TRAINA

15.00-15.30: Immacolata ERAMO, *La crisi dopo Adrianopoli: strategie narrative*

15.30-16.00: Antonella BRUZZONE, *Dal Cosmos al Chaos. Lo spettro della catastrofe in Claudiano*

16.00-16.15: Discussioni / Discuții

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16.30-18.30

Moderatore / Moderator:

Juan Ramón CARBÓ GARCÍA

16.30-17.00: Dan DEAC, *Isism after the Severans in the Danubian-Balkan region of the Roman world*

17.00-17.30: Sorin NEMETI, *Religious Strategies in an Age of Anxiety. Votive Dedications from Roman Dacia from the time of Barrack Emperors*

17.30-18.00: Moisés ANTIQUEIRA, *Accompanied by the gods: Diana and Hercules on the imperial coinage of Aemilian (253)* (online)

18.00-18.30: Discussioni / Discuții

18.30: Cena / Cina

Venerdì / Vineri, 19 settembre / septembrie 2025

9.00-10.45

Moderatore / Moderator:

Miguel Pablo SANCHO GÓMEZ

9.00-9.30: Lucian MUNTEANU, *Monetary “crises” in the Roman world and coin finds from Barbaricum. The case of Western Moldavia (Romania) in the first half of the 3rd century*

9.30-10.00: Juan Ramón CARBÓ GARCÍA, *Ignorantia de barbaris. Complacency, boast-fulness and security in the Roman worldview in the face of the new bordering peoples in the mid-third century A.D.: from contempt to bewilderment*

10.00-10.30: Florica MIHUȚ-BOHÎLȚEA, *The decline of personal freedom in Tacitus’ Annals thought the testamentary practices* (online)

10.30-10.45: Discussioni / Discuții

10.45-11.00: Pausa caffè / Pauză de cafea

11.00-12.15

Moderatore / Moderator:

Claudia-Dorina TĂRNAUCEANU

11.00-11.30: Emanuel GROSU, *Do ut des: la crisi della fede. Il patto col diavolo o l'estremo pragmatismo di un principio giuridico nel poema Lapsus et conversio Theophili vicedomini (Hrotsvita di Gandersheim, X secolo)*

11.30-12.00: Rino MODONUTTI, *Il declino della latinità classica nella riflessione dei primi Umanisti: il caso di Sicco Polenton*

12.00-12.15: Discussioni / Discuții

12.15-12.30 : Pausa / Pauză

12.30-13.00

Moderatore / Moderator:

Nelu ZUGRAVU

Presentazioni libri

Luigi PIACENTE presenta: MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO, *Hortensius sive de philosophia. Hortensius sau despre filosofie*, a cura di Constantin-Ionuț MIHAI, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași, 2025

Flavian-Pavel CHILCOȘ presenta: CLAUDIU-COSTEL LUCA, *Cronologia istoriei Romei în istoriografia latină păgână din a doua jumătate a secolului al IV-lea*, Editura PIM, Iași, 2024

Emanuel GROSU presenta: Claudio LEONARDI *et al.*, *Literatura latină medievală (secolele VI-XV). Un manual*, traduzione e edizione in lingua rumena a cura di Emanuel GROSU, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2025

14.30-14.45

Nelu ZUGRAVU

Conclusioni e chiusura lavori / Concluzii; închiderea colocviului



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THOMAS COLE, *THE COURSE OF EMPIRE* (1836): *THE CONSUMMATION OF EMPIRE, DESTRUCTION*

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ACCOMPANIED BY THE GODS: DIANA AND HERCULES ON THE IMPERIAL COINAGE OF AEMILIAN (253)

Moisés ANTIQUEIRA*

(Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná, Brazil)

Keywords: *Aemilian, third-century imperial coinage, divine association, Diana and Hercules.*

Abstract: *In the summer of 253 CE, Aemilian was acclaimed emperor by the legions in Moesia. It was not an unusual event at the time when successive rulers were proclaimed by their soldiers in the Lower Danube. However, given the absence of kinship links between Aemilian and his predecessors, the legitimation of his position could not be based on dynastic principles. Moreover, allusions to religious themes were abundant on coin types struck for him at the Roman mint. I am particularly interested in reverse types featuring Diana Victrix and Hercules Victor, where both deities were represented as the source of Aemilian's victories. In this sense, the presence of Aemilian in Italy not only shifted the dynamics of politics in Rome but also affected representational patterns on imperial coinage.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *Emilian, monede imperiale din sec. III, asociere divină, Diana și Hercule.*

Rezumat: Însoțit de zei: Diana și Hercule pe monedele imperiale ale lui Emilian (253). *În vara anului 253 d.Hr., Emilian a fost aclamat împărat de legiunile din Moesia. Nu a fost un eveniment neobișnuit în acea perioadă, când diferiți conducători erau proclamați de soldații lor la Dunărea de Jos. Totuși, având în vedere absența legăturilor de rudenie între Emilian și predecesorii săi, legitimitatea poziției sale nu putea fi bazată pe principii dinastice. Dar aluziile la teme religioase sunt abundente pe monedele emise de atelierele monetare romane. Mă interesează în mod special tipurile de revers care îi înfățișează pe Diana Victrix și Hercule Victor, unde ambele divinități sunt reprezentate ca sursă a victoriilor lui Emilian. În acest sens, prezența lui Emilian în Italia nu doar că a schimbat dinamica politică de la Roma, dar a influențat și modelele reprezentative pe monedele imperiale.*

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The Roman emperor *Marcus Aemilius Aemilianus*. A short-lived ruler who rose to power in mid-253 only to be killed three months later by the very soldiers who had earlier acclaimed him emperor. If any scholar describes Aemilian in this fashion, he or she will not get far from the truth. His reign typically illustrates the political crisis of the third century, mainly in the 250s and 260s. Still, his coinage marks an important phase in the development of third-century emperors' numismatic image, when local mints implemented some changes in imperial portraits and legends within a context of increasing imperial mobility¹.

However, any further details about the life and career of Aemilian are completely unknown. There is a simple explanation for that, namely that he ruled for just a few months. Written sources about him are scarce and, in some cases, even contradictory. For example, Eutropius described him as *obscurissime natus*, adding that his reign was even less distinguishable than his origins². In turn, the *Epitome of Caesaribus* erroneously refers to Aemilian's predecessor, Trebonianus Gallus (251-253), as originating from the island of Girba (modern-day Djerba, on the coast of Tunisia)³, when in fact it was Aemilian who was born in the province of Africa Proconsularis.

¹ S. Betjes, *The mind of the mint. Continuity and change in Roman imperial coin design from Augustus to Zeno (31 BCE – 491 CE)*, Nijmegen, 2022, 113. When acclaimed emperor in Moesia, in the early days of July 253, Aemilian could not have taken over any imperial mint. This would only occur between August and September of that year, after the Senate formally recognized his powers. Before that, to assert his authority and pay his soldiers, he seized control of the minting workshops available in Viminacium (a city located in Upper Moesia) to strike coins on his name. Thus, a mint that until then had only issued lower-level bronze coins for local markets came to produce silver coins that would circulate beyond Moesian areas. For this, see S. Betjes, *Meer dan een leuk plaatje. Iconografie op Romeinse rijksmunten als bron voor historische productieprocessen*, *Tijdschrift voor Mediterrane Archeologie*, 69, 2023, 1-7. Furthermore, H. Rambach (*Notes on the gold coinage of Aemilian*, *Bulletin du Cercle d'Études Numismatiques*, 54/3, 2017, 2-33 (5)) indicates that the number of silver and bronze coins struck for Aemilian – both at Rome and in provincial mints – is larger than one might expect for a reign that lasted for only a short time.

² Eutr. 9.6 (trans. Ratti).

³ *Epit. de Caes.* 31.1 (trans. Banchich). The *epitomator* called Aemilian “a Moor by race” (*Epit. de Caes.* 31.2, trans. Banchich). In turn, it reads in Zonaras (12.21, trans. Banchich and Lane) that he was a “Lybian”.

According to Huttner, Aemilian was suffect consul at some point prior to his appointment as *consularis* (a governor of consular rank) of Moesia in 251 or 252 by Trebonianus Gallus⁴. As a matter of fact, it is unclear whether Aemilian was granted an extraordinary military command and/or appointed to run the province like any other governor. Likewise, it remains indefinite whether it was the *Upper* or the *Lower* Moesia that was assigned to him. Be as it may, although it is not known what his social condition was at the time, the holding of a suffect consulship leads Berressem to assume that he belonged to the *ordo senatorius* by then⁵. Harl suggests that he became a member of the senatorial order under Severus Alexander (222-235), most probably after 230, when he was in his late twenties⁶. To put it briefly, he had somehow been appointed to an office of extreme importance in the early 250s, as was the case with the provincial government of Moesia⁷.

Furthermore, the rise of Aemilian has to be understood in a broader perspective. Ziolkowski recalls that, between 238 and 268, all emperors (excluding those traditionally labelled as “usurpers”) were men of senatorial rank. The only exception was Philip the Arab (244-249), though he rose to power from the praetorian prefecture, which means that he was close to the imperial court of Gordian III, being around the inner circles of Roman rule⁸. Nonetheless, there was a slight

⁴ U. Huttner, *Von Maximinus Thrax bis Aemilianus*, in K.-P. Johne (Hrsg.), *Die Zeit der Soldatenkaiser. Krise und Transformation des römischen Reiches im 3. Jahrhundert n. Chr. (235-284)*, Berlin, 2008, 216.

⁵ See B. N. Berressem, *Die Repräsentation der Soldatenkaiser. Studien zur kaiserlichen Selbstdarstellung im 3. Jh. n. Chr.*, Wiesbaden, 2018, 10. L. de Blois (*Image and reality of Roman imperial power in the third century AD. The impact of war*, London-New York, 2019, 71) claims that, if Eutropius was right about Aemilian’s birth, the emperor did not come from a senatorial family in Africa Proconsularis.

⁶ K. W. Harl, *Aemilian (Marcus Aemilius Aemilianus Augustus)*, in R. S. Bagnall *et alii* (ed.), *The encyclopedia of ancient history*, Malden, MA, 2013, 123, (Online edition). See also *Epit. de Caes.* 31.3 (trans. Banchich).

⁷ The Illyricum and the Lower Danube were vital in the third century, at least in two regards: firstly, the military defense of the imperial territory, especially from the reign of Philip the Arab onwards, when the Goths and other people continuously pressured the provinces stretching to the Danube *limes*. Secondly, Illyrian areas like the two Pannoniae and Upper Moesia provided the largest number of new recruits to the imperial army. See G. Brizzi, *Ancora sul Illyriciani e ‘Soldatenkaiser’: qualche ulteriore proposta per una messa a fuoco del problema*, in G. Urso (a cura di), *Dal-l’Adriatico al Danubio. L’Illyrico nell’età greca e romana*, Pisa, 2004, 321, 326.

⁸ A. Ziolkowski, *Trasfondo de la crisis del Imperio Romano en el siglo III*, in D. Santos (ed.), *Aspectos de la historia del Imperio Romano. Textos de Morstein-*

but significant difference that can be observed right after the death of Philip the Arab. From Pacatian (249) to Aemilian (253), the legions of the Lower Danube proclaimed their commanders as emperors. Men like Decius (249-251), Trebonianus Gallus, and Aemilian were all senators appointed to rule provinces along the Danube frontier when the soldiers declared them emperors. It means, using the witty conclusion from Ziolkowski, that “*Los militares volvieron a ubicarse en las primeras filas de la política por la puerta trasera [...]*”⁹.

So, on the one hand, this process demonstrates that Roman emperorship still relied on the city of Rome and its traditional institutions (namely the Senate). But, on the other hand, new rulers emerged in places far from Rome, chosen by groups, like the soldiers, that maintained only tenuous (if so) connections with Rome and the Senate. However, it took only fifteen years to a man like Claudius Gothicus (268-270) to assume the imperial power, signalling the beginning of an era in which Roman emperors rose basically from the military ranks – thus making the rule what was the exception at the time of Maximinus Thrax (235-238)¹⁰. On the whole, the reign of Aemilian, a man born in Africa and proclaimed emperor in Moesia, provides an example of what Garnsey and Humfress describe as the “provincialization” of Roman emperorship during the Principate, especially after Septi-

Marx, Rosenstein, Mattingly, Ziolkowski, Gray y Drinkwater, La Plata, 2017, 69. See also K.-P. Johne, *Die Illyrischen Kaiser als Herrscher neuen Typs*, in K.-P. Johne, T. Gerhardt, T. Hartmann (Hrsgg.). *Deleto paene imperio Romano. Transformationsprozesse des Römische Reiche im 3. Jahrhundert und ihre Rezeption in der Neuzeit*, Stuttgart, 2006, 125 and L. Grozdanova, *Trebonianus Gallus and Volusianus (251-253): ruling the Empire between the East and the West*, *Ancient West & East*, 13, 2014, 117-137 (126).

⁹ A. Ziolkowski, *op. cit.*; A. Mócsy (*Pannonia and Upper Moesia. A history of the Middle Danube provinces of the Roman Empire*, London-Boston, 2014 [1974], 200-201) wrote that, from the Severans until the middle of the third century, those who commanded the troops in the Illyricum were not born in the Danube basin area. They were, to a large extent, men who belonged to the Senate. It was only after the murder of Gallienus (253-268) that men born in the Illyricum came to assume imperial power, as in the case of Claudius Gothicus. In turn, the soldiery who served the Roman army in Danube provinces comprised not only those who were born there, but also men of Celtic or Thracian origins, among others.

¹⁰ Likewise, it would take another four decades for an emperor like Carus (282-283) to not travel to Rome to be recognized by the Senate as a legitimate ruler.

mius Severus (193-211) and the civil wars at the end of the second century¹¹.

In addition, between 249 and 253 Northern and Central Italy figured as a critical geopolitical area due to the displacement of successive emperors and their respective armies, which migrated from the Lower Danube towards the city of Rome, following a route along the Noricum, the plains of the Po River and, finally, the Flaminian Way. This geopolitical dynamic, notably the growth of civil and military traffic in Northern and Central Italy, shifted the strategic balance over the region. Several battles occurred along the Po Valley and the Flaminian Way involving provincial governors who came from the Illyricum or the Lower Danube to Italy, because once they were acclaimed emperors by their troops, they had to travel to Rome to obtain a formal confirmation from the Senate¹².

Accordingly, when emperors conferred upon senators (like Decius, Trebonianus Gallus or Aemilian) an extensive power over volatile and unstable provinces, they made a political move whose result they could not predict or entirely control¹³. However, a Roman emperor necessarily had to delegate powers in order to rule the Empire, especially in the second half of the third century. To give just one example, Trebonianus Gallus and his son, Volusian (251-253), had to deal with an epidemic in places like Rome and, at the same time, with a military crisis in the East, particularly in Mesopotamia and Syria, invaded by the Persians (who defeated the Romans at Barbalissos, near the Euphrates, in 252), while the Goths kept pressuring the Lower Danube. The emergence of Aemilian was nothing but a typical response from provincial armies and local people to this unsolved puzzle regarding Roman emperorship in a period of crisis.

It seems that Trebonianus Gallus had granted Aemilian a supra-provincial command over the two Moesiae and the two Pannoniae alike. Grozdanova indicates that Aemilian focused on the central areas of Lower Moesia, where Germanic peoples and Sarmatians concentrated

¹¹ P. Garnsey-C. Humfress, *The evolution of the Late Antique world*, Cambridge, 2001, 11.

¹² P. Porena, *Verso la provincializzazione dell'Italia romana: la carriera di A. Vitellius Felix Honoratus*, *ὄρμος - Ricerche di Storia Antica*, n.s., 13, 2021, 251-286 (259).

¹³ C. Davenport, *Rome and the rhythms of imperial life from the Antonines to Constantine*, *AntTard*, 25, 2017, 23-39 (29).

their incursions since the days of Philip the Arab. Aemilian abandoned the policy established by Trebonianus Gallus since the peace treaty made with the Goths in mid-251: he opted to no longer pay them a *tributum* and, instead, he undertook a successful punitive raid against them beyond the frontiers of the Empire. The military expedition appeased his soldiers, which ultimately proclaimed him emperor¹⁴.

To put it in another way, emperors could not simply command the armies in person in a context where different provinces were simultaneously under attack. So, the legions in the Lower Danube became *kingmakers*, proclaiming an emperor of their own, rather than obeying a ruler living in a distant place like Rome¹⁵.

On this point, the reign of Aemilian throws light on the unsurmountable demanding over Roman rulers to be present *both* at the heart of the Empire (Rome and Italy) as well as in the provinces. As Davenport points out, Aemilian was aware about it and clearly decided to stay in the provinces¹⁶ – at least if one assumes that Zonaras was correct when stating that the emperor had written to the Senate to inform that he would leave the administration of the *res publica* to the senators, whereas he would take personally charge of military affairs¹⁷.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to unravel the role the Senate might have played in the short reign of Aemilian, as well as in his fall¹⁸. It is worth remembering that, after his acclamation by the soldiers in

¹⁴ L. Grozdanova, *op. cit.*, 124, 133-134. See also M. Christol, *A propos de la politique extérieure de Trébonien Galle*, *RN*, 6^e série, 22, 1980, 63-74 (68).

¹⁵ C. Davenport, *op. cit.*, 29. It is also important to highlight the existence of an internal rivalry among different troops in the imperial army. As external pressure on the frontiers increased, political disputes in the Roman military came to the fore. Soldiers on the Danube *limes* were in an unfavorable position, since they were far from the center of imperial power, that is, Rome/Italy. Moreover, they were involved in defensive campaigns regularly every year, at least from the second part of Philip the Arab's reign to Aemilian's. Therefore, they tried to mitigate their disadvantage by proclaiming as *Augusti* their own commanders, with whom they kept personal ties (and from whom they expect to receive greater financial rewards). Not surprisingly, these legions were frequently involved in civil conflicts at the time. See F. Hartmann, *Herrscherwechsel und Reichkrise. Untersuchungen zu den Ursachen und Konsequenzen der Herrscherwechsel im Imperium Romanum der Soldatenkaiserzeit (3. Jahrhundert n. Chr.)*, Frankfurt am Main-Bern, 1982, 90.

¹⁶ C. Davenport, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Zon. 12.22 (trans. Banchich and Lane).

¹⁸ F. Hartmann, *op. cit.*, 121.

early July¹⁹, Aemilian was declared *hostis publicus* by the senators (not surprisingly, since he was rebelling against the ruling *Augusti*). But, approximately a month later, after the murders of Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian in Interamna Nahars (modern-day Terni), the Senate recognized Aemilian as emperor. Aemilian spent his brief reign traveling and campaigning (it seems that he had not even visited Rome when he ruled). In September 253, another senator of consular rank, Valerian (253-260), rose to power in Raetia. Zosimus informs us that he had been summoned by Trebonianus Gallus to bring reinforcements from the Rhine to Italy in order to fight Aemilian²⁰. In the meantime, Valerian was also acclaimed by his troops. Although it is not clear how many senators supported Valerian, it corroborates the view that Aemilian did not have a solid basis of social acceptance as emperor. Probably in mid- to late September, Aemilian died by the hands of his own men, near the town of Spolegium (Spoleto).

As stated by Huttner, the quick sequence of events related to the rise and assassination of Aemilian reveals how fragile his position as emperor was. Putting it in a broader context, his short-lived reign emphasizes the political instability that marked the history of the Roman Empire in the 250s and 260s²¹.

In sum, it is no wonder that a commander in the Lower Danube came to be proclaimed emperor by his own legions at the time. But it is somehow surprising that these same men would come to murder Aemilian just a little later, after having marched towards Italy under his command. Zonaras gave a straightforward explanation for this, namely that Aemilian's soldiers killed him to avoid engaging in battle

¹⁹ The chronology of the reign of Aemilian is based on G. Watson, *The provincial coinage of Aemilian: a study in imperial communication*, *The Numismatic Chronicle*, 178, 2018, 185-212 (plates 16-17) (188).

²⁰ Zos. 1.28.3 (trans. Ridley). Cf. T. Banchich (*Marcus Aemilius Aemilianus* (ca. July – ca. September, 253), *De imperatoribus Romanis. An online encyclopedia of Roman emperors*, 2002, URL: <https://roman-emperors.sites.luc.edu/aemaem.-htm>), who affirms it is likely that Valerian, after hearing about Aemilian and the deaths of Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian, decided on his own about moving into Italy with troops from Gaul and Germany to confront Aemilian for the *imperium*.

²¹ U. Huttner, *op. cit.*, 217-218. F. Hartmann (*op. cit.*, 83) explains that Aemilian's military failure was the main reason for his fall, which puts him under the same unfavorable light as Trebonianus Gallus, Volusian, or Florian (276). Strictly speaking, however, Aemilian did not suffer any setbacks on the battlefield, since his own soldiers eliminated him in favor of Valerian, whose legions apparently outnumbered his troops.

with the stronger forces led by Valerian and, thus, to escape an imminent defeat²². Banchich elaborates on it, citing that Aemilian could only just assemble a small army to invade Italy since he could not deprive Moesia of soldiers. Consequently, he had limited manpower at his disposal which would make it nearly impossible for him to advance on Rome²³.

Brizzi adds that the acclamation of emperors like Aemilian was, in fact, due to the decision of a small, elite group that was unofficially formed within the Roman-Danube legions, composed by men who shared a common origin – they were born in different places across the Danube *limes* – and strengthened social ties among themselves by serving the imperial army²⁴. However, this top-level group did not exhibit high internal homogeneity at that time, lacking a more definite course of action. This situation may explain why they get rid of Aemilian so quickly, despite the fact that he had successfully led them against the Goths, for example. Accordingly, there would have been no consensus over Aemilian's name even among those who had chosen him to rule the Empire.

Furthermore, one must bear in mind the absence of dynastic ties linking Aemilian to any previous ruler as well as the fact that he

²² Zon. 12.22 (trans. Banchich and Lane).

²³ T. Banchich, *op. cit.*

²⁴ G. Brizzi, *op. cit.*, 326-327. In another study, Brizzi (*Soldatenkaiser: la lunga genesi di una figura*, in M. V. Casella (a cura di). *Continuità in (una) crisi? Casi-studio sulle provincie danubiane durante il III° secolo*, Bordeaux, 2024, 59) also states that these men acquired much influence between 248 and 253 due to the creation of a powerful supra-provincial command over Moesia and Pannonia. After the assassination of Aemilian and the rise of Valerian and his son, Gallienus, this command was suppressed. In accordance with Mócsy (*op. cit.*, 205), it disappeared momentarily because, on the one hand, Valerian and Gallienus wished to curb the power held by officials serving the Roman-Illyrian legions, removing them from command posts in the army. On the other hand, Gothic tribes and their allies temporarily ceased to attack provinces such as the two Moesiae and Thrace. However, a few years later instability arose again in the Illyricum. In about 256-257, the oldest son of Gallienus (a seven-year-old boy named Valerian II) was established in Sirmium and granted an extraordinary command over the Pannoniae and the Moesiae alike. This suggests that the situation in Illyricum had changed so badly that it became imperative for Valerian and Gallienus to send a close relative there to maintain the fidelity of the soldiers to the ruling house, regardless of the young age of Valerian II.

(apparently) had no children, or even brothers²⁵ (which corresponds to what Claes appropriately classifies as *retrospective* and *prospective kinship*, respectively)²⁶. In turn, coins were struck in the name of his wife, Cornelia Supera, about whom there are no records other than these coins²⁷. More than 13% of the coin types produced under Aemilian were dedicated to her, in line with the growing prominence female relatives of emperors acquired on imperial coinage in the third century²⁸.

Essentially, Roman emperorship was a dynastic system whose roots can be traced back to Augustus (27 BCE-14 CE) and the succession arrangements that marked his principate. Likewise, kinship was a core component of Roman social relationships. In short, dynastic ties were extremely important for legitimizing the power of an emperor, consistent with the expectations that different social groups nurtured about the safety of the Empire. The stability of the imperial house was regarded as connected to the fate of the Empire, so a childless ruler like Aemilian would only secure peace for his subjects in his lifetime; however, he could not do so in relation to the future²⁹. In this sense, Valerian had an upper hand when compared to Aemilian, since Valerian had a forty-year-old son (Gallienus) elevated to the rank of *Augustus* by the Senate shortly after his father became emperor in September 253.

Be as it may, I agree with Davenport who defines the mid-third century as a “period of difficult negotiation” for Roman emperors, because their position required balancing the increasing expectations of being personally in frontier zones to command the legions and eliminate foreign invaders with the need to be present at Rome in order to take part in the *sacra publica* and perform religious rituals on behalf of all Roman citizens³⁰.

²⁵ Comprehensibly, M. Christol (*L'image du phénix sur les revers monétaires au milieu du IIIe siècle: une référence à la crise de l'Empire?*, RN, 6^e série, 18, 1976, 82-96 (88)) asserts that there was no evidence that Aemilian pursued a dynastic policy.

²⁶ L. Claes, *Kinship and coins. Ancestors and family on Roman imperial coinage under the Principate*, Nijmegen, 2013, 14-15.

²⁷ G. Watson, *op. cit.*, 186.

²⁸ L. Claes, *op. cit.*, 214.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, 13. See also L. de Blois, *op. cit.*, 238-239.

³⁰ C. Davenport, *op. cit.*, 24.

Therefore, the supreme authority emperors held as *pontifices maximi* invariably linked them to Rome. But their growing absence from the City resulted in several changes in the modes of imperial representation in the second half of the third century, especially in religious terms³¹. Because of this, scholars like Manders and Hekster affirm that the role of emperors as *sacerdotes* on imperial coinage was overshadowed by the emphasis given to the ties between rulers and certain deities³². So, “The less the emperor was present in Rome, the more he seems to have emphasized the divine. It could, then, be argued that in the third century, emperors considered it more important to reduce the distance between themselves and the gods than to emphasize their priestly function”³³.

It cannot go without saying that the greater or lesser presence of religious aspects (both the depiction of specific deities and the representation of the emperor as a priest) on Roman imperial coins varied according to the period or a particular dynasty. As Gartrell puts it, since the beginning of Roman history any ruler or political leader had to claim the support of the gods to pave their way to achieve or hold power and, consequently, to legitimize that power³⁴. Clearly, the relationship between human and divine, and the ways of representing it, differed from time to time. Even so, it is possible to affirm that the support of the gods reflected, to a large extent, “[...] a strategy to either attain or consolidate [the] power [of a ruler]: they gave the claimant an advantage over a political competitor, helped push through a programme of religious development, and set a young man of great promise on the road to military glory”³⁵.

Throughout Roman history, the relationship between political leaders and deities was based on interconnected principles, resulting

³¹ E. Manders, O. Hekster, *Identities of emperor and Empire in the third century AD: some considerations*, in S. Benoist, A. Daguët-Gagey, C. Höet-van Cauwenberghé (eds.). *Figures d'empire, fragments de mémoire. Pouvoirs et identités dans le monde romain impérial (II^e s. av. n. è.-VI^e de. n. è.)*, Villeneuve d'Ascq, 2011. (Édition en ligne).

³² *Ibidem*. See also B. N. Berressem, *op. cit.*, 38.

³³ E. Manders, O. Hekster, *op. cit.*

³⁴ A. Gartrell, *A divine right to rule? The gods as legitimators of power*, in S. Betjes, O. Hekster, E. Manders (eds.). *Tradition and power in the Roman Empire. Proceedings of the Fifteenth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Nijmegen, 18-20 May 2022)*, Leiden-Boston, 2024, 11.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 15.

in a virtuous circle, that is, the achievements of a ruler served to attest that he had divine support³⁶. Consequently, his deeds would confirm that the gods favored him. Thus, as long as he proved himself successful in battle, he would claim that he enjoyed divine blessings. So, one must keep that in mind when examining coin types struck for Aemilian, like those linking him with Diana *Victrix* and Hercules *Victor*, as demonstrated below. For now, suffice it to say that Aemilian's victories over the Goths and the assassinations of Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian were not enough to effectively bound the army to him, which eventually caused his death.

Aemilian and the divine: Diana and Hercules as givers of victory

To start with, the most striking feature of the coinage of Aemilian associating him with Diana and Hercules lies in the following inscriptions on the reverses in the usual dative form of dedication:



Fig. 1 Silver *antoninianus* of Aemilian (19mm diameter, 3.56g)³⁷
Obverse: Bust of Aemilian, radiate, cuirassed, draped, right, with titulature (IMP
 AEMILIANVS PIVS FEL AVG)

Reverse: Diana is draped, standing left, holding bow in left hand and arrow in right hand. The legend reads DIANAE VICTRI (“to the victorious Diana”)
 Münzsammlung des Seminars für Alte Geschichte der Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, Freiburg (Image files are licensed under Public Domain Mark 1.0)

URL: <https://ikmk.uni-freiburg.de/object?id=ID1706>

³⁶ *Ibidem*, 16.

³⁷ *RIC* IV.3, Aemilian, no. 2B. See also *RIC* IV.3, Aemilian, no. 2A (gold *aureus*). H. Rambach (*op. cit.*, 4) warns us for the existence of a previously unpublished billon coin whose reverse casts Diana standing right and pulling an arrow from her quiver with her right hand and a bow with her left hand. She is surrounded by the legend DIAN VICT (“to the victorious Diana”). This coin (22mm diameter, 3.79g) should probably be assigned to a Balkan mint (possibly Viminacium).



Fig. 2 Silver *antoninianus* of Aemilian (21 mm diameter, 2.80 g)³⁸
Obverse: Bust of Aemilian, radiate, cuirassed, draped, right, surrounded by titula-
 ture (IMP AEMILIANVS PIVS FEL AVG)
Reverse: Hercules is nude, standing right, with the lion-skin draped over left arm.
 His right hand leans on club and he holds a bow in left hand. The legend reads
 HERCVL VICTORI (“to the victorious Hercules”)

© Courtesy of the Classical Numismatic Group, LLC (www.cngcoins.com)
 URL: <https://auctions.cngcoins.com/lots/view/4-7NCTZG/aemilian-ad-253-ar-antoninianus-21mm-280-g-7h-rome-mint-vf>

It is imperative to stress that it was the very first time that Diana and Hercules were labelled as *Victrix*³⁹/*Victor*⁴⁰ on Roman coins⁴¹, implying that they offered Aemilian nothing but success in war. To illustrate this, Christol affirmed that the coinage of Aemilian, through legends like *DIANAE VICTRI* and *HERCVL VICTORI*, “[...] *développent clairement les thèmes d’une rhétorique de guerre*”⁴². Therefore, the

³⁸ *RIC* IV.3, Aemilian, no. 3B. See also *RIC* IV.3, Aemilian, no. 3A (gold *aureus*). A slight variation can be observed on bronze *sestertii* (see *RIC* IV.3, Aemilian, no. 44) whose reverse legends end with *SC* (*senatus consulto*, “by decree of the Senate”).

³⁹ For Diana as *Victrix*, see F. Barna, *Apollo Propugnator, Diana Victrix: Erscheint die Militär und Siegesthematik bei den Darstellungen der Götter Apollo und Diana in der Münzprägung der Zeit der Soldatenkaiser (235-284/285 n. Chr.)?*, *ACD*, 51, 2015, 115-134 (119, 122). Barna (*op. cit.*, 119) also mentions that Fig. 1 shows a reverse iconography that had no exact parallel on previous coins. It is possible to find variations from a basic type, where Diana holds a bow and an arrow, on coins struck for Hadrian (117-138), Marcus Aurelius (161-180) and his wife, Faustina the Younger, for example. None of these, however, bear the adjective *uictrix*.

⁴⁰ The legend *HERCVLI VICTORI* appeared on reverses of gold, silver and bronze coins dating to the late third and especially the early fourth century, under the authority of different emperors and minted in several places like Alexandria, Antioch on the Orontes, Cyzicus, Heraclea, Nicomedia, Ostia, Rome, Serdica, Siscia, Thessalonica and Trier.

⁴¹ I think Banchich (*op. cit.*) misses the point when he estimates that “The [...] numismatic evidence for Aemilian’s reign is *unremarkable*” (my emphasis).

⁴² M. Christol, *L’image...*, 90.

reference to these specific gods as “victorious” could not be seen as fortuitous⁴³. Notwithstanding the fact that Diana and, especially Hercules could be found on Roman coins since the Republic, there are some iconographical elements whose prominence increased only from Aemilian onwards. Berressem says that Hercules assumed a prominent role on Aemilian’s coinage, anticipating significant aspects concerning imperial messages through coins as observed under the Tetrarchy⁴⁴. To conclude with, the coinage of short-lived third-century rulers was not as derivative as it might seem.

In addition, Aemilian was portrayed in military fashion on his obverse types, in a typical third-century portraiture-style, while images of gods commonly displayed on reverses, like Victoria or Pax, were also disseminated through his coins. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that some of his obverse types bear the inscription *Pius Felix Augustus* in the exact same abbreviated manner (P F AVG) found in provincial coins struck for him in Viminacium⁴⁵. Although an identical use of this legend could be noted in the provincial coinage of Elagabalus (218-222)⁴⁶, it was only under Aemilian that it began to be systematically inscribed on coins produced at Rome, the primary mint of the Empire. It was a rare case where an iconographic innovation designed in the provinces became the standard formula regarding a very common Late Antique imperial title like *Pius Felix Augustus*⁴⁷.

⁴³ Gold coins are rare among surviving specimens struck during the brief reign of Aemilian. Among these *aurei*, the only three types undoubtedly attested as genuine are those celebrating Diana *Victrix* and Hercules *Victor*. About this, see H. Rambach, *op. cit.*, 7. Rambach (*op. cit.*, 9) further states that “[...] Diana would have had a special significance for the army he had left in Moesia, and these coins may belong to an issue distributed as a reward to the men who had accompanied him from the Danube to Rome”.

⁴⁴ B. N. Berressem, *op. cit.*, 37, 341. See also E. Manders (*Coining images of power: patterns in the representation of roman emperors on imperial coinage, A.D. 193-284*, Leiden-Boston, 2012, 110, 304), who points out that the representation of Jupiter on imperial coins notably increased after the rise of Aemilian to power.

⁴⁵ S. Betjes, *Meer dan...*, 4-5.

⁴⁶ According to S. Betjes, (*The mind...*, 110 and *Meer dan...*, 4), this can be found on coins minted in Apamea Myrlea (Bithynia) when Elagabalus and his entourage were traveling from Syria to Rome in 218.

⁴⁷ S. Betjes, *The mind...*, 113. Betjes (*op. cit.*, 279) goes on by calling to attention the coinage of Hadrian as a turning point in the imperial titulature inscribed on obverses. Until then, engravers inserted as many names and titles as possible on the field of a coin (which, obviously, had an extremely small size), as if the full, and heavily

Be as it may, it was quite implausible that Aemilian, nor any emperor whatsoever, would get personally involved with such trivial details pertaining to his coinage. Most probably, imperial officials of lower rank carried them out. Betjes suggests that it is likely that Aemilian marched from the Lower Danube to Italy taking with him those in charge of his coinage in Viminacium, maybe the *a rationibus* or the *procurator monatae*, perhaps even his first engraver⁴⁸. After the elimination of Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian, “about half of the portraits” of Aemilian minted at Rome “were surrounded by a legend ending with P F AVG”⁴⁹.

Moreover, it should be noted that the imperial coinage of Aemilian is conventionally separated into two main, iconographic, groups⁵⁰. The first one, composed by a lesser number of pieces, shows great similarity with coins issued for Trebonianus Gallus, which denotes that engravers simply reproduced previous coin types and inscribed the name of Aemilian on their obverses⁵¹. It does not necessarily mean that these moneyers had not known how the new emperor looked like; rather, in the very first days after the deaths of Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian, the coinage of Aemilian still lacked a more personal design⁵².

In turn, a second group includes coins whose obverses reveal a personalized depiction of Aemilian, portraying his bust with a nasolabial fold and a prominent forehead⁵³. Besides, there are only two types

compressed, legend should emulate the combination of titles and all honorific epithets anyone could see in monuments dedicated to rulers in urban landscapes all over the Empire. Under Hadrian, obverses started to show only a limited number of *cognomina* in order to broadcast the extraordinary and charismatic nature of the emperor. In the third century, *cognomina* like *Pius* and *Felix* (abbreviated as P F from Aemilian onwards) served another purpose, that is, to promote the idea of an emperor as a gifted military leader guided by the gods. Thus, the abbreviation P(IVS) and F(ELIX) on imperial coinage reinforced the overlapping between divine inspiration and military prowess in the person of the emperor.

⁴⁸ S. Betjes, *The mind...*, 113. See also S. Betjes, *Meer dan...*, 5. It should be recalled, as Watson (*op. cit.*, 186) does, that Aemilian was personally in Viminacium at the moment when coins were struck there for him. Watson continues by saying that the Roman mint also produced coins in his name while he visited the City, which seems unlikely (see above, p. 27).

⁴⁹ S. Betjes, *The mind...*, 112.

⁵⁰ B. N. Berressem, *op. cit.* and G. Watson, *op. cit.*

⁵¹ G. Watson, *op. cit.*, 191.

⁵² B. N. Berressem, *idem*, 187.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, 186.

of obverse legends⁵⁴, namely IMP AEMILIANVS PIVS FEL AVG (for the first group) and IMP CAES AEMILIANVS P F AVG for the second one (that is, bearing its distinctive abbreviation of the epithets *Pius* and *Felix*, as pointed out above).

In light of this, the presence of Aemilian in Central Italy not only changed the dynamics of imperial politics but also affected the inscriptions on coins produced by the mint of Rome.

So, it should be noted that the imperial coinage of Aemilian includes two inter-related elements. Scholars like Manders and Betjes explain that allusions to religious motifs were abundant on coin types minted at Rome under his rule⁵⁵. In her in-depth investigation into the third century imperial coinage, Manders demonstrates that no other ruler in that period reached the same proportion of coin types propagating “divine association” than Aemilian⁵⁶. No less than 45% of all types minted in his name (in a total of 68) depicted some god⁵⁷. In other words, through these coins Aemilian aimed at standing in a special relationship with the divine.

That said, one must not forget that “a central authority could broadcast more than one message simultaneously”⁵⁸. Thus, Huttner asserts that Aemilian’s coins are greatly related to military themes⁵⁹. On the one hand, most of the deities represented on the reverses of these types are followed by military epithets, like *Diana Victrix*, *Hercules Victor* or *Mars Propugnator*⁶⁰. On the other hand, the absence

⁵⁴ Right after his acclamation, a small number of coins were issued for Aemilian in the Balkans, whether in Viminacium or not. Only provincial coins of Aemilian added his *gentilicium* (“*Aemilius*”), in Latin or, for the matter, in Greek, to his imperial titulature. The Roman mint, on the contrary, did not struck coins bearing his *gentilicium* in his obverse legends. See G. Watson, *op. cit.*, 191.

⁵⁵ E. Manders, *op. cit.* and S. Betjes, *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ In fact, Manders (*op. cit.*, 51) analyses coin types from Pertinax (193) to Carinus (283-285). Interestingly enough, the highest proportion of coin types of the kind belongs precisely to Pertinax (57% of all 51-coin types).

⁵⁷ For the sake of comparison, in this matter the emperor whose ratio (nearly 30%) comes closest to that of Aemilian was Herennius Etruscus (250-251), the oldest son of Trajan Decius. See E. Manders, *op. cit.*

⁵⁸ L. Claes, *op. cit.*, 17-18.

⁵⁹ U. Huttner, *op. cit.*, 217. See also M. Christol, *L’image ...*, 90, 94.

⁶⁰ R. Iula (*Il significato della guerra su alcuni rovesci di Emiliano, Il Giornale della Numismatica*, 12, dicembre 2012) argues that “*Emiliano si affida alla moneta per delineare un’idea dei conflitti tutta particolare, come lo sono lo stile e la legenda di alcuni suoi esemplari*”. This is exactly the case of the use of the adject-

of coin types celebrating key civic virtues (like *liberalitas*, for example) or the *aduentus* of the emperor stands out⁶¹. In conclusion, the huge importance of military affairs in that context shaped the way Aemilian wanted to be perceived by the audience.

Of course, the length of a reign had an impact on the messages to be publicized by different means. A short-lived emperor simply might not have had enough time to communicate, through legends and images on coins, another type of message, for instance⁶². Betjes underscores the changing nature of numismatic discourse over the third and fourth centuries, because emperors were constantly on the move and campaigning. This imperial mobility resulted in a new visual language to be explored on coins⁶³. Despite the fact that Aemilian ruled for approximately three months, his rule provides a striking example about it, seeing that a number of coins struck for him in Rome bore his titlature ending with the abbreviation P F AVG that was designed earlier at a local/provincial level.

Besides that, the *cognomina Pius* and *Felix* had a long-standing tradition as political catchwords in Roman history, dating back at least to the Late Republic, when in 82 and 81 BCE Cornelius Sulla and Quintus Cecilius Metellus were officially granted the titles of *Felix* and *Pius*, respectively⁶⁴. Clearly, it is not my intention to track down the historical evolution of these terms. Suffice it to say it was only under Commodus (180-192) that they were combined, probably in connection with the *Decennalia* celebrated by the emperor in 185. From Caracalla (211-217) onwards, *Pius* and *Felix* “[...] would become part of the imperial titlature of all emperors [...]”⁶⁵. Both adjectives had a strong political and religious connotation: while *pietas* corresponded to one of the main virtues among ancient Romans, describing the dutiful relation someone had to keep not only with his family but also with the state and the divine, *felicitas* implied a condition in which someone

tives *uictrix* and *uictor* to invoke a distinct aspect of Diana and Hercules. As indicated above, it was only under Aemilian that these epithets came to be specifically associated with Diana and Hercules.

⁶¹ It seems likely that Aemilian did not arrive at Rome when he was emperor, as previously mentioned. In this case, it is no surprise that there were no ADVEN- TVS-type issues in his name.

⁶² E. Manders, *op. cit.*, 52.

⁶³ S. Betjes, *Meer dan...*, 4.

⁶⁴ J.-P. Callu, *Pia Felix*, *RN*, 6^e série, 155, 2000, 189-207 (192).

⁶⁵ O. Hekster, *Commodus. Emperor at crossroads*, Nijmegen, 2002, 94.

counted on the favours bestowed by the gods. Being *felix*, a ruler would consequently secure well-being to his subjects⁶⁶.

So, Aemilian was described as *Pius* and *Felix* in association with gods like Diana and Hercules, thus being depicted as a military leader inspired by deities. In this regard, the use of the abbreviation P F AVG on obverse legends comprised an iconographical discourse in which the military qualities of the emperor were combined with divine allusions. This is reinforced by the specific epithet that both Diana and Hercules were addressed on these coins (that is, *uictrix* and *uictor*). They played the part of *givers of victory*, an appealing message at that moment of political and military unrest. To put it differently, the expectation of achieving victory over the enemies (and, subsequently, the stability and peace a successful ruler would bring to the Empire) was consistent with the innovations one can note on the imperial coinage of Aemilian, which perhaps resulted from “[...] *una visione ideologica del potere imperiale peculiare ad Emiliano*”⁶⁷.

However, Fig. 1 shows a portrait of Diana which, at first glance, hardly matches a coin imagery that relied so heavily on military elements. In the likeness of a huntress, she was represented in a way that had no relation to war, except for the legend where she was defined as “victorious”. Iula claims that Diana was depicted on these coin types as “[la] *donatrice del potere imperiale*”⁶⁸ on account of a story told by Livy in his *Ab urbe condita* about a dispute between Romans and Sabines over sovereignty involving the sacrifice of a cow at the altar of the Temple of Diana on the Aventine Hill when Servius Tullius (578-535 BCE) was the king of Rome⁶⁹. Based on this mythological narrative,

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, 93-94.

⁶⁷ C. Perassi, *Soggetti monetali dall'età post-severiana a Gallieno. Fra tradizione e innovazione*, in F. Barello, G. Spagnolo Garzoli (eds.), *Mala tempora curunt. La crisi del III secolo attraverso il ripostiglio di Pombia*, Gravellona Toce, 2009, 69 and pls XV-XVII. See also H. Rambach, *op. cit.*, 8.

⁶⁸ R. Iula, *op. cit.*

⁶⁹ In Livy (1.45.2-7, transl. Foster), it reads that an extraordinary heifer was born to a herd owned by a Sabine *paterfamilias*. The animal was so exquisite that it was regarded as a prodigy. Consulted, the augurs foretold that sovereignty belonged to the city whose citizens were able to sacrifice the cow to Diana. A Sabine man came to Rome and drove the animal to the shrine of the deity. But, before he could proceed with the sacrifice, the Roman priest of the temple intervened, claiming that the man should cleanse his impure hands in the Tiber in order to execute the ritual. Once the man headed toward the river, the priest sacrificed the heifer to the goddess.

Diana would have appear on Aemilian's coins as a goddess who empowered him. In addition, the epithet *Victrix* put forward the message that Diana would grant the ruler the victories he needed to stay in power⁷⁰.

Surely, by labelling Diana as "victorious", Fig. 1 promoted the idea that, associated with the goddess, the emperor possessed *uirtutes* to ensure peace and order in the Empire. But to conclude that the reference to Diana *Victrix* was connected to some kind of Roman sovereignty myth seems too far-fetched. Had the audience considered Diana *Victrix* a "giver of power" on the grounds of a tale like the one reported by Livy, it should be otherwise expected that her presence on imperial coinage would have been much more frequent. Nonetheless, the reverse legend "Diana *Victrix*" reappeared only once, on *antoniniani* struck for Claudius Gothicus in Antioch on the Orontes⁷¹. Again, one must consider, for instance, that Diana was celebrated in Fig. 1 in her capacity as huntress, in contrast to the function of light-bearer (DIANA LUCIFERA) she assumed on the nearest previous gold *aurei* and silver *denarii* in which she was portrayed a decade earlier, under Gordian III (238-244)⁷².

As a matter of fact, the link between Diana and the idea of victory emerges only incidentally on the coinage of Aemilian, brought about by the epithet *Victrix*. There was nothing unusual in the image of the goddess with her hunting weapons; instead, as a goddess of the chase, her standard image in Roman culture and art naturally linked her to the bow and the arrow⁷³. It does not seem relevant for her role as a divine source of victory as implied on Fig. 1. But, considering that adjectives like *uictrix* had a strong military connotation in Roman society, their use on coinage was traditionally combined with human and/or divine images carrying weapons. In view of this, Barna suggests that the epithet *Victrix* perhaps alluded to Diana's successes in hunting⁷⁴. Ultimately, one might think this is consistent with the military

⁷⁰ R. Iula, *op. cit.*

⁷¹ *RIC* V.1, Claudius Gothicus, no. 205 (DIANAE VICTR). It basically contains the same elements as noted on the coin types issued for Aemilian, except for showing Diana before a stag. The presence of the animal reiterates her role as a deity of the chase. See also F. Barna, *op. cit.*, 121.

⁷² *RIC* IV.3, Gordian III, nos. 121, 127. For this, see C. Perassi, *op. cit.*, 68.

⁷³ F. Barna, *op. cit.*, 123, 128.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, 127-128.

character of Aemilian's coinage, even though Fig. 1 displays a conventional depiction of Diana which only loosely departed from representational patterns commonly associated with her throughout Roman history.

With regard to Fig. 2, representing Hercules *Victor*, Manders writes that it meant to proclaim the invincibility of the deified hero. This was connected with another coin type⁷⁵ whose reverse contains an image of Hercules in line with Fig. 2, with the inscription VIRTUS AVG ("virtue of the *Augustus*")⁷⁶. It is worth remembering, as Daniels puts it, that "Hercules was a model for Rome's rulers because he was a symbol of social power with a long history, recognized across numerous cultural groups who were incorporated into the Empire"⁷⁷. More specifically, Hercules was very popular among Roman soldiers, who worshipped him as their protector, and not surprisingly as a giver of victory⁷⁸.

The link between the demi-god and war and victory was not new, dating back at least to the third century BCE, when the worship to the "victorious" Hercules (Hercules *Victor* or *Inuictus*) is securely attested at Rome, being introduced there along with other war deities⁷⁹. Weinstock elucidated that some rituals celebrating victory were related to Hercules *Victor* at the time. It was the case of the dance the *Salii* of Tibur (Tivoli) performed in honour of the god, which was closely associated with Mars, the god of war *par excellence* to whom the *Salian* priests of Rome made an annual procession around the City⁸⁰.

Moreover, during the third century deities like Hercules and Mars were more and more represented on coinage as "symbols of im-

⁷⁵ See *RIC* IV.3, Aemilian, no. 26 (silver *antoninianus*). The obverse has the same portrait of Aemilian as seen in Figs. 1 and 2, except for the legend with the distinctive abbreviation of *Pius* and *Felix* (IMP M AEMIL AEMILIANVS P F AVG). Whether this type had been struck at Rome or in another, Balkan, mint is not known.

⁷⁶ E. Manders, *op. cit.*, 110-111.

⁷⁷ M. Daniels, *Hērōs invictus and pācātor orbis: Hercules as a war god for Roman emperors*, in M. Dillon, C. Matthew (eds.), *Religion & classical warfare. The Roman Empire*, Barnsley, 2022, 94.

⁷⁸ L. Tyszler, A. Jankowiak, *The symbolism of Hercules in the religious and political propaganda of the Roman Empire as attested by a terra sigillata bowl from Górzycza in Słubice County*, *Archaeologia Polona*, 55, 2017, 211-224 (222). For Hercules as an extremely popular god in the Roman world, see O. Hekster, *op. cit.*, 12, 160.

⁷⁹ S. Weinstock, *Victor and Invictus*, *HThR*, 50/3, 1957, 211-247 (223).

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, 216-217.

perial qualities”, a process in which those features most frequently attributed to them, particularly their fighting prowess, were connected to the emperor’s virtues through the use of legends like *VIRTUS AVG*⁸¹. Nevertheless, there is a slight difference between Hercules and Mars with respect to the imperial *uirtus*: “whereas Mars connoted war, Hercules proclaimed more general invincibility⁸²”, as illustrated by the epithet *Victor* in Fig. 2.

So, third-century coins have not just associated an individual ruler with some god, but they also came to link a divine being with the virtues of an emperor⁸³. In this sense, as long as Diana and Hercules were cast as *Victores* in Figs. 1 and 2, so was Aemilian too.

Conclusion

As demonstrated above, the period from 249 to 253 can be seen as a difficult one for Roman emperors, who had to maintain a delicate balance between the need to personally command imperial armies in frontier zones and the expectation of being physically present in the city of Rome in order to perform, for example, the *sacra publica* on behalf of their subjects. Despite its brevity, the reign of Aemilian offers a clear example of it. In addition, given the absence of kinship links between Aemilian and any previous ruler, the legitimation of his power could not be based on dynastic principles. Perhaps he could, for instance, claim an artificial connection to his imperial predecessors in order to strengthen his position, as Septimius Severus had done half a century earlier when he linked himself to the Antonines.

However, it was not the case of Aemilian, who could not manage to rule long enough to (eventually) do so. Be as it may, Aemilian’s bid for imperial power proved successful, since he had defeated the ruling emperors (Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian) in battle and obtained senatorial recognition. But, since Aemilian ruled for just a couple of months, one can find some traces about his short reign only in the ico-

⁸¹ S. Betjes, *The mind...*, 143. As Manders (*op. cit.*, 112, 174-175) puts it, with the exception of Claudius Gothicus, every emperor from Gordian III onwards whose coinage depicted Hercules established a link between his own *uirtus* and the demi-god.

⁸² E. Manders, *op. cit.*, 112.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, 69, 143-144.

nography of coin messages, where religious as well as military themes were abundant.

Finally, the imperial coinage of Aemilian reveals that new rulers in the beginning of the 250s still had to claim a strong connection with the city of Rome for legitimizing their power. In the case of Aemilian, it involved new political messages which, although they did not break from iconographical patterns commonly observed at the mint of Rome, created an image associating him with deities like Diana and Hercules in a somewhat distinct manner. While he was campaigning in Northern and Central Italy, Aemilian's coins showed him as if he was accompanied by *victorious* gods. So, despite the brevity of his reign, the coinage of Aemilian represented a minor but meaningful shift in regard to imperial ideology.

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