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**The *constitutio Antoniniana*  
An Edict for the Caracallan Empire**

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Doctor of Philosophy  
The University of Edinburgh  
2015

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely of my own composition and work. It contains no material previously submitted for the award of any other degree or professional qualification.

Alex Imrie

I dedicate this thesis to my darling Rachael:  
my soul mate, my starry-eyed lassie and my constant inspiration.

*As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,  
So deep in luv am I:  
And I will luv thee still my dear,  
Till a' the seas gang dry.*

## ABSTRACT

The *constitutio Antoniniana* represents one of the most important legal documents of the Roman imperial period. By means of this edict, the emperor Caracalla enfranchised nearly every free person living within the borders of his empire. Despite its apparent significance, though, the *constitutio* remains a controversial document among modern scholars. Some consider it to be the logical conclusion to an evolutionary process in Roman citizenship that took over two centuries to achieve. Others, however, believe that it is a meaningless document given retrospective importance, changing little in the daily lives of the empire's population and representing nothing more than a superficial initiative brought forth by an absolute monarch.

The primary focus of this thesis concerns the various reasons that Caracalla might have had for passing the *constitutio Antoniniana* in the opening half of AD 212. By considering elements such as the emperor's fascination with Alexander the Great and religious perspective, as well as issues surrounding the Roman imperial economy and army, I will construct an image of the *constitutio* that is more multi-faceted than has been presented in the past. The common thread running through these chapters, however, is that Caracalla employed his edict as a tool in a programme of refashioning the Severan dynasty – a programme that he found himself compelled to undertake in the aftermath of the murder of his brother and co-emperor, Geta. I will also argue that modern scholars have been wrong to dismiss the testimony offered by Cassius Dio, in which the senator claimed that a fiscal rationale underlay the legislation. Whilst the detail of Dio's argument is undoubtedly questionable, this thesis will demonstrate that, on a basic level, the senator was correct to identify a fiscal initiative contained within the terms of the *constitutio* text.

The final chapter of the thesis will form a case study of Caracalla's imperial visit to Alexandria in AD 215/6. This is a challenging episode to analyse, since the hostile literary tradition appears content to label the violence which marked the emperor's stay in the city as the result of a merciless massacre ordered by Caracalla in revenge for an assortment of minor slights and insults. This chapter will re-assess the events of the imperial visit and argue that the disturbances were not the result of the emperor's uncontrollable temper, but rather that they resulted from riots among the local population that the local authorities were unable to control. Following this hypothesis, I will examine to what extent the effects and implications of the *constitutio Antoniniana* had a bearing on the disturbances in Alexandria. I contend that, although it is obviously impossible to draw a direct link between the edict and the unrest, it is possible to see that the social and fiscal implications of the legislation would have exacerbated pre-existing local sensitivities and pressures to breaking point.

This work will represent one of the largest studies of Caracalla's *constitutio* undertaken in the English language to date. The aim of my study is not to function as an apology for the emperor, but it is an attempt to view the *constitutio Antoniniana* in a more rational way. My thesis thus acknowledges that the context in which the legislation was passed is of critical importance not only to our understanding of the *constitutio* as a document, but also to our assessment of Caracalla's actions following the murder of his younger brother.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As a mind far greater than mine once remarked: *I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious.* The time that I have spent as a doctoral candidate at the University of Edinburgh has formed the most challenging and exciting period of my life to date. I have experienced bouts of soul-wrenching introspection and periods of uncontrollable happiness. And I would not change a single moment. The emperor Caracalla has been my constant companion since 2010, and yet I could never have finished this project without the unstinting support and guidance of a great many others.

I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Sandra Bingham. Since our first meeting in 2006, during my first degree, she has helped to transform me from a nervous undergraduate into someone who passionately desires a career in Classics. I will always appreciate her unerring integrity and her selfless dedication to my academic and personal development; I cannot imagine having had a better research supervisor. In fact, it is her humanity as much as her intellect that makes her the model of the professional academic that I aspire to be.

I would like to thank my secondary supervisors and reviewers, Lucy Grig, Ulrike Roth and Eberhard Sauer, for providing me with a wealth of different perspectives from which to consider my research. I am also grateful to Andrew Erskine and Olivier Hekster, who graciously agreed to act as the examiners to this thesis. Their input has been informative and has allowed me to refine my argument further, and improve the structure of the dissertation.

At the outset of my doctoral studies, I possessed some knowledge of Latin, but next to no Ancient Greek to speak of. I must therefore thank Anthony Ellis, Juan Lewis, Calum Maciver, Pavlina Saoulidou and Stephanie Winder for their continual good humour when faced with the prospect of having to remind me *yet again* of some fundamental grammar point that I'd mistaken. Their unceasing patience still astounds me.

For their assistance in proofreading this work and their valued friendship, I would like to thank my colleagues in the graduate school of History, Classics and Archaeology: Amy Bratton, Nicole Cleary, Raphaëla Dubreuil, Fiona Mowat, Peter Morton, Alana Newman and Cas Valachova. Their willingness to listen to my latest 'idea about Caracalla' has always been noted and appreciated.

Special mention and thanks must go to the following people: David Greenwood, for his dry sense of humour and the calming influence that only a senior colleague can exert, and for his dedication to 'Mindsplat!' To my great friend, Darren Maley, for, among other things, all of our stimulating conversations over the past decade and for introducing me to the much needed distracting quality of board games. And to Belinda Washington – for the many walks around George Square Gardens, come rain or shine, and for her unceasing programme of motivational strategies... My success in submitting this thesis is, to a large degree, theirs too.

My final thanks must go to my darling wife, Rachael. She has shared me with a long dead emperor for five long years and has always been there to inspire me and settle me, to energise me and to keep me going throughout every high and low that doctoral study can conjure. Were it not for Rachael's keen mind and never-ending support, I doubt that I would even have commenced this endeavour, let alone finished it. I cannot sufficiently express how much I owe her. I only hope that the rest of my life will be long enough to pay her back.

\* \* \*

This thesis was generously funded by the Kerr-Fry PhD Scholarship, without whose assistance I would never have been able to undertake doctoral study.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER I</b> <i>Contextualising the constitutio Antoniniana</i>	<b>13</b>
<b>CHAPTER II</b> <i>The constitutio Antoniniana as an Act of Alexander imitatio</i>	<b>34</b>
<b>CHAPTER III</b> <i>The Political Expediency of the constitutio Antoniniana</i>	<b>49</b>
<b>CHAPTER IV</b> <i>The Economic Purpose of the constitutio Antoniniana</i>	<b>71</b>
<b>CHAPTER V</b> <i>The Military Application of the constitutio Antoniniana</i>	<b>102</b>
<b>CHAPTER VI</b> <i>The constitutio Antoniniana and the Alexandrian Incident</i>	<b>120</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>APPENDIX I</b> <i>The constitutio Antoniniana: text, translation and commentary</i>	<b>181</b>
<b>APPENDIX II</b> <i>A Case of Mistaken Identity: Julia Domna as Concordia on RIC 380 and 381</i>	<b>192</b>
<b>APPENDIX III</b> <i>The Prefect and the Plot: a reassessment of the murder of Plautianus</i>	<b>199</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>212</b>

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Citations of papyri included in this study conform to the standard abbreviations contained in the *Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic, and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets*, which is continuously updated at:

<http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/scriptorium/papyrus/texts/clist.html>

### Ancient Authors and Works

Ael. Ar.	Aelius Aristides
<i>Or.</i>	<i>Orations</i>
Amm. Marc.	Ammianus Marcellinus
Arr.	Arrian
<i>Anab.</i>	<i>Anabasis</i>
Aur. Vict.	Aurelius Victor
<i>Caes.</i>	<i>Caesars</i>
Cic.	Cicero
<i>Har. Resp.</i>	<i>De Haruspicum Responso</i>
CTh.	<i>Theodosian Code</i>
Dig.	<i>Digest of Justinian</i>
Dio	Cassius Dio
Diod. Sic.	Diodorus Siculus
Euseb.	Eusebius
<i>Hist. Eccl.</i>	<i>Ecclesiastical History</i>
Eutrop.	Eutropius
Gaius <i>Inst.</i>	Gaius, <i>Institutes</i>
Gnomon	<i>Gnomon of the Idios Logos</i>
HA	<i>Historia Augusta</i>
<i>Avid.</i>	<i>Life of Avidius Cassius</i>
<i>Car.</i>	<i>Life of Caracalla</i>
<i>Comm.</i>	<i>Life of Commodus</i>
<i>Geta.</i>	<i>Life of Geta</i>
<i>Hadr.</i>	<i>Life of Hadrian</i>
<i>Marc.</i>	<i>Life of Marcus Aurelius</i>
<i>Niger.</i>	<i>Life of Pescennius Niger</i>
<i>Pius.</i>	<i>Life of Antoninus Pius</i>
<i>Quad. Tyr.</i>	<i>Lives of the Four Tyrants</i>
<i>Sev.</i>	<i>Life of Septimius Severus</i>
<i>Ver.</i>	<i>Life of Lucius Verus</i>
Hdn.	Herodian
Jerome	Hieronymous (Jerome)
Juv.	Juvenal
Libanius	Libanius
<i>Or.</i>	<i>Orations</i>
Livy	Livy

Lucian	Lucian
<i>Alex.</i>	<i>Alexander</i>
M. Aur.	Marcus Aurelius
<i>Med.</i>	<i>Meditations</i>
Oros.	<i>Oros.</i>
Phil.	Philostratus
VA	<i>Life of Apollonius</i>
Philo	Philo
<i>Spec. leg.</i>	<i>Special Laws</i>
Plin.	Pliny the Elder/Pliny the Younger
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Letters of the Younger Pliny</i>
<i>HN</i>	<i>Natural History</i>
<i>Pan.</i>	<i>Panegyricus</i>
Plut.	Plutarch
<i>Alex.</i>	<i>Life of Alexander</i>
<i>Moralia.</i>	<i>Moralia</i>
Polyb.	Polybius
Sen.	Seneca the Younger
<i>De Ben.</i>	<i>De beneficiis</i>
Strabo	Strabo
Suet.	Suetonius
<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Life of Augustus</i>
<i>Cal.</i>	<i>Life of Gaius (Caligula)</i>
<i>Claud.</i>	<i>Life of Claudius</i>
<i>Dom.</i>	<i>Life of Domitian</i>
<i>Nero.</i>	<i>Life of Nero</i>
<i>Vesp.</i>	<i>Life of Vespasian</i>
Syncellus	George Syncellus
<i>CSHB</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae</i>
Tac.	Tacitus
<i>Ann.</i>	<i>The Annals</i>
<i>Hist.</i>	<i>The Histories</i>
Tert.	Tertullian
<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apologeticus</i>
<i>Resurr.</i>	<i>De resurrectione carnis</i>
Val. Max.	Valerius Maximus
Vall. Pater.	Valleius Paterculus
Veg.	Vegetius

### Modern Titles

AE	<i>L'Année Epigraphique</i>
Aegyptus	<i>Aegyptus: rivista italiana di egiptologia e di papirologia</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJN	<i>American Journal of Numismatics</i>
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
AJPhA	<i>American Journal of Physical Anthropology</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt</i>
Arctos	<i>Arctos: acta philologica Fennica</i>
Athenaeum	<i>Athenaeum: studi di letteratura e storia dell'antichità</i>
BABesch	<i>Babesch: bulletin antieke beschaving</i>
BASP	<i>Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists</i>
BMCRE	<i>Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum</i>
Britannia	<i>Britannia: a journal of Romano-British and kindred studies</i>
CdE	<i>Chronique d'Égypte</i>
Chiron	<i>Chiron: Mitteilungen der Kommission für Alte Geschichte und Epigraphik des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts</i>
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
CJ	<i>The Classical Journal</i>
CPJ	<i>Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum</i>
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CRAI	<i>Comptes rendus / Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres</i>
EA	<i>Epigraphica Anatolica: Zeitschrift für Epigraphik und historische Geographie Anatoliens</i>
Eos	<i>Eos: organ Polskiego Towarzystwa Filologicznego</i>
G&R	<i>Greece and Rome</i>
Gerión	<i>Gerión</i>
GIC	<i>Greek Imperial Coinage</i>
Hermes	<i>Hermes: Zeitschrift für klassische Philologie</i>
Historia	<i>Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte</i>
Histos	<i>Histos: the new electronic journal of ancient historiography</i>
IAM	<i>Inscriptions antiques du Maroc</i>
IGRR	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes</i>
IL Afr	<i>Inscriptions latines d'Afrique (Tripolitaine, Tunisie, Maroc)</i>
ILS	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i>
JAH	<i>Journal of Ancient History</i>
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JJP	<i>Journal of Juristic Papyrology</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
Klio	<i>Klio: Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte</i>
Ktèma	<i>Ktèma: civilisations de l'Orient, de la Grèce et de Rome antiques</i>
Latomus	<i>Latomus: revue d'études latines</i>
MBAH	<i>Münstersche Beiträge zur antiken Handelsgeschichte</i>
Mnemosyne	<i>Mnemosyne: bibliotheca classica Batava</i>

Oliver	<i>Greek Constitutions of Early Roman Emperors from Inscriptions and Papyri</i>
Opus	<i>Opus: rivista internazionale per la storia economica e sociale dell'antichità</i>
PBSR	<i>Papers of the British School at Rome</i>
Philologus	<i>Philologus: Zeitschrift für antike Literatur und ihre Rezeption</i>
Phoenix	<i>Phoenix: Journal of the Classical Association of Canada</i>
PNAS	<i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States</i>
RBN	<i>Revue belge de Numismatique et de Sillographie</i>
RIC	<i>The Roman Imperial Coinage</i>
RIN	<i>Rivista italiana di numismatica e scienze affini</i>
RSA	<i>Rivista storia dell'Antichità</i>
SDHI	<i>Studia et documenta historiae et iuris</i>
TPAPA	<i>Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association</i>
Topoi	<i>Topoi: Orient-Occident</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>
ZRG	<i>Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Romanistische Abteilung</i>

## LIST OF FIGURES

1. Statue of 'Caracalla as Sol'	40
2. <i>Koinon</i> of Philippopolis, AD 211-17	44
3. Graph illustrating declining fineness of <i>denarii</i>	83
4. Graph illustrating fluctuating weight of <i>aurei</i> and <i>denarii</i>	84
5. <i>Antoninianus</i> of Caracalla, AD 215	85
6. Table illustrating changing legal status of the <i>auxilia</i>	110

## INTRODUCTION

In AD 212, the emperor M. Aurelius Severus Antoninus Pius, better known simply as Caracalla, fundamentally changed the nature of Roman citizenship. In one proclamation, he extended the previously exclusive rights of *civitas* to nearly every free person in his empire. Following the discovery of a papyrus containing a copy of this edict, over a century ago, Caracalla's *constitutio Antoniniana* has proven to be one of the most perplexing and controversial artefacts to survive from the Roman imperial period. It has piqued the interest of historians of antiquity and law, as well as dedicated Greek linguists and papyrologists, provoking a profusion of publications across every decade of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first.<sup>1</sup> This academic interest has been rekindled and intensified in recent years with the 1800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the edict's promulgation falling in 2012, a milestone that was commemorated through a variety of exhibitions, symposia and conferences occurring worldwide.<sup>2</sup>

Despite such a consistent and significant level of interest in the Antonine Constitution, however, there are still remarkably few areas in which consensus has been reached regarding the legislation. In fact, it is clear that nearly every aspect of the *constitutio* has been divisive, eliciting a variety of scholarly reactions and creating a long and convoluted historiography in which even the fundamental significance of the edict remains disputed.<sup>3</sup> It is the object of this thesis to consider Caracalla's rationale for introducing the legislation in AD 212. In the past, studies have been conducted that assess the *constitutio* against individual motivating factors, but this dissertation takes the unprecedented step of gathering the various potential prompts for the edict and combining them in one study. The purpose of this exercise is to offer a comprehensive assessment of the emperor's reasons for extending the franchise. By examining the numerous factors motivating Caracalla collectively, this thesis avoids affording an

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<sup>1</sup> The figure had surpassed ninety major publications by the time Sasse (1962) published his literature review on the edict.

<sup>2</sup> I was fortunate to be invited to speak at a symposium organised in November 2012 by the *Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos* in Lima, Peru. I am grateful to Héctor Maldonado (UNMSM) for the opportunity to participate and to collaborate with his colleagues and students.

<sup>3</sup> Tuori (2007) 42. For examples of a positive reading, in which the *constitutio* is seen as an enlightened and logical conclusion to centuries of expansion in the franchise, see Kemezis (2014) 30; Ando (2011) 19; Honoré (2004) 114-15. For a negative reading in which the legislation is branded an 'accident of history', see Garnsey (2004) 133, (1970) 270-80, and Sherwin-White (1973a) 281.

exaggerated importance to any one, individual element and, furthermore, provides an image of the *constitutio* that reflects the complex and precarious political reality facing the young emperor in 212. Indeed, one can only make sense of the *constitutio Antoniniana* in a properly embedded context.

It is first necessary to consider briefly the nature of pre-existing scholarship on Caracalla's edict. The divided nature of modern scholarly attitudes on the *constitutio* is driven to a large extent by a dearth of ancient material relating to the legislation. In fact, one of the few areas of agreement that can be found in connection with the Antonine Constitution is a shared disbelief regarding how little direct evidence survives which relates to it.<sup>4</sup> Apart from the famous Giessen papyrus, the only other contemporary references to the edict are brief mentions in Cassius Dio and the legal writings of Ulpian, now preserved in the *Digest* of Justinian.<sup>5</sup> Given this meagre selection, it is hardly surprising that scholars still regard the *constitutio* to be 'shrouded in mystery', possessing a suspiciously small historical echo.<sup>6</sup> While the lack of any sizeable corpus of evidence is an undeniable frustration, this should not lead us to the conclusion that the edict was somehow meaningless or insignificant: absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, after all.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, it is precisely the enigmatic nature of the *constitutio Antoniniana* which still draws academics to study the legislation.<sup>8</sup>

Research on Caracalla's edict can be roughly divided into three areas of primary focus: the study of the text surviving on the Giessen papyrus; the implications and historical consequences of the legislation in practice and, finally, the emperor's rationale and motivation for introducing the edict. Each of these elements contain different controversies that have provoked fierce debate among scholars. As I noted above, it is the question of why Caracalla decided to extend the franchise that will form

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<sup>4</sup> De Blois (2014) 1014; Hekster (2008) 45; Buraselis (2007) 1-3.

<sup>5</sup> *P. Giss.* 40 I; Dio 78.9.5; *Dig.* 1.5.17. The papyrus is housed in the Special Collections department of the Universitätsbibliothek Gießen, and will be referred to henceforth as either *Papyrus Gissensis*, the Giessen papyrus, or by its catalogue number, *P. Giss.* 40. All of the sources mentioned here, however, will be considered further in the contextualisation of the *constitutio* offered in the next chapter.

<sup>6</sup> Ando (2012) 52. Also see Buraselis (2007) 2-3.

<sup>7</sup> Hekster (2008) 55.

<sup>8</sup> De Blois (2014) 1014; Ando (2012) 93-99; Garnsey (2004) 135; Honoré (2004) 114-16.

the primary emphasis for this thesis, since the answer to this question is key to a greater appreciation of the *constitutio* in its own context. Despite this focus, however, it is essential to be aware of the different ways in which this important initiative has been approached in the past.

Given its significance as the only surviving copy of the edict's text, it is unsurprising that the majority of scholarly attention has been devoted to *Papyrus Gissensis* 40.<sup>9</sup> Historically, scholars of the Giessen text have been faced with the immediate problem of the artefact's highly fragmentary state. This has caused disagreement regarding how best to reconstruct the original script which, in turn, has resulted in subsequent attempts to assess the edict's significance becoming 'enmeshed in papyrological and epigraphic debates.'<sup>10</sup> Early attempts to restore the text have proven to be problematic, inasmuch as they often contain extensive, conjectural reconstructions which, while eloquent, are based on the survival of isolated characters and contain little acknowledgement of the precariousness of such restorations.<sup>11</sup>

Such a cavalier approach towards *P. Giss.* 40 was eventually challenged, particularly in the 1970s, but resulted in a strikingly negative assessment of the evidence. In fact, far from posing conjectural or hypothetical explanations, some began to voice doubt regarding how far the Giessen papyrus could even be associated with the *constitutio Antoniniana*.<sup>12</sup> This nihilistic trend is best seen in Wolff's assessment, which distanced the artefact from the study of the Antonine Constitution completely, paraphrased here by Millar: 'we cannot use *P. Giss.* 40, which cannot be proven to be or to refer to the *Constitutio*, or even to have come from Caracalla.'<sup>13</sup> Only in more recent years has a moderate position been achieved. While scholars remain divided over many points of detail concerning the edict, most now agree that the Giessen papyrus can be reconstructed to make reference to Caracalla's extension of *civitas*

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<sup>9</sup> Sasse (1962). For a detailed examination of the papyrus, with an accompanying apparatus, see Appendix I.

<sup>10</sup> Tuori (2007) 42.

<sup>11</sup> For selected examples, see Laqueur (1927) 15-20, and Heichelheim (1941) 10-22. For more detail on the nature of the grammatical and palaeographical problems found in these early works, see Lukaszewicz (1990a).

<sup>12</sup> Sherwin-White (1973a) 380-81.

<sup>13</sup> Millar (1979) 235; Wolff (1977) 193-209.

across the Roman empire, meaning that it is probable that the artefact contains a copy of at least part of the original Antonine Constitution.<sup>14</sup>

Alongside the myriad attempts to interpret *P. Giss. 40*, another aspect of the *constitutio Antoniniana* which has captivated scholars is the matter of the edict's implementation, the legal and social consequences of the legislation in the post-212 era.<sup>15</sup> This area of study has proven popular owing to both the greater availability of supporting evidence and the ability to identify developments in the fundamental concept of citizenship which have implications and effects that can be found throughout later European history, even until the modern day.<sup>16</sup> The currently prevailing opinion on the impact of the *constitutio* is the result of an evolutionary process. Early attempts to investigate the consequences of the Antonine Constitution were influenced by the notion of an orderly Roman *Rechtsstaat* being imposed across the empire in its entirety.<sup>17</sup> More recent assessments of the edict have questioned the extent to which such a system was likely in antiquity or, indeed, was even enforceable.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, it has become clear that while it is possible to hypothesise in broad strokes regarding the impact of the *constitutio Antoniniana* in the long term, the immediate consequences of the edict are more difficult to assess, the situation being more complex and nuanced than previously acknowledged.<sup>19</sup>

While the restoration of *P. Giss. 40* and the consequences of the Antonine Constitution form the focus of many studies, it is the question of Caracalla's motivation in promulgating his *constitutio* that is the most controversial aspect of modern scholarship on the legislation. Initial examination of recent historiography reveals that the first area of disagreement concerns whether or not the emperor actually

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<sup>14</sup> Kuhlmann (2012) 51-52, (1994) 215-56; Torrent (2011) 11-20; Rocco (2010) 131-35; Hekster (2008) 45; Oliver (1989) 500-5.

<sup>15</sup> Sherwin-White (1973a: 386) argued, for example, that the tangible effects of the *constitutio* were far more important than the detail of its terminology.

<sup>16</sup> This phenomenon is well seen, for example, among the various colloquia held during the anniversary year of the *constitutio* in 2012. For an example, see: *The Antonine Constitution after 1800 years: Citizenship and empire in Europe, AD 200-1900* [Rome, 20-22 September 2012].

<sup>17</sup> Tuori (2007) 39; Meyer (2004) 2-3.

<sup>18</sup> Garnsey (2004: 143), for example, correctly questions how many people would have been truly affected by the *constitutio*, and how many were permitted to 'slip through the net'.

<sup>19</sup> For a further consideration of the impact of the *constitutio*, in connection with the Giessen papyrus, see Chapter One.

had a clear-cut reason for introducing his edict at all. It has been argued, for example, that the *constitutio* was the result of nothing more than an unpredictable whim on Caracalla's part, an impulsive act that was poorly conceived: 'the edict of Caracalla came out of the blue. No one had anticipated it, least of all his provincial subjects. It was an act neither of necessity nor, if we follow Dio, of statesmanship.'<sup>20</sup> This dismissive analysis of the Antonine Constitution has been countered by others who view the legislation as the logical culmination of an evolutionary process in which *civitas* was gradually extended from the imperial heartland to the peripheries.<sup>21</sup> A key component of this argument is that the *constitutio* was an initiative which was completely germane to the opening of the third century, fitting the zeitgeist of an age in which imperial power resided with the emperor himself, rather than the city of Rome.<sup>22</sup> Far from being introduced spontaneously, then, it has been argued that Caracalla's edict was an end point to a procedure which had been underway prior even to the foundation of the Principate.

Both of these approaches are flawed, to an extent. On one hand, the notion that the *constitutio* was the result of little more than a passing whim is an unusually absolute position which not only ignores other contextual factors that might have prompted the emperor, but also allows the notion of Caracalla's volatile temperament (itself the result of a hostile source tradition) to dominate the question.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, however, while it is evident that the franchise was gradually expanding into the provinces as the imperial period progressed, the conclusion that Caracalla was merely adding a final flourish to a pre-existing process does not reflect the reality that citizens still represented a distinct minority of the empire's population in AD 212.<sup>24</sup> It is clear that the Antonine Constitution was neither a foregone conclusion, nor the mere result

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<sup>20</sup> Garnsey (2004) 137. For more on the notion of Caracallan impulsiveness, see Garnsey (2004) 134-35.

<sup>21</sup> Nicolet (1980) 17. For more on the gradual expansion of the franchise, see Sherwin-White (1973a), whose magisterial work on Roman citizenship still remains relevant.

<sup>22</sup> Honoré (2004) 114-15.

<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that Garnsey is not the only scholar who has allowed the notion of Caracalla's volatile temper to bear heavily on this question. Even more positive assessments of the Antonine Constitution have remarked that it is either uncharacteristic of such an emperor as Caracalla, or the result of a ruler obsessed with achieving greatness. For examples of this phenomenon, see Kemezis (2014) 30; García (2009) 100-2; Honoré (2002) 85; Sherwin-White (1973a) 287.

<sup>24</sup> Garnsey (2004) 135.

of youthful impetuosity. The reality is ultimately more complex and potentially dependent on a multitude of contextual factors.

Further attempts to explain the introduction of the *constitutio Antoniniana* have been made by scholars who have sought to analyse the edict through the lens of individual subjects. This trend can be seen most visibly in earlier studies, in which the veracity of Dio's fiscal explanation for the legislation has been assessed.<sup>25</sup> Scholars examining the potentially economic explanation for the Antonine Constitution are not alone in attempting to attribute a single motivating factor to the legislation, however, with others drawing attention to the potential links between the edict and Caracalla's hero-worship of Alexander the Great or, alternatively, his militaristic ambitions.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, this methodology remains problematic. The risk inherent with this approach is that it could very easily result in an exaggerated importance on the individual element being assessed which, in turn, could lead to an unrepresentative view of the legislation that is largely detached from other contextual factors.

The situation has improved in more recent years, as scholars acknowledge that it is unlikely that Caracalla was moved to promulgate the Antonine Constitution on the basis of a single issue. Indeed, there were a variety of major and minor pressures and inspirations which motivated the emperor to legislate and, moreover, none of these need necessarily be mutually exclusive.<sup>27</sup> The most comprehensive recent study in this regard is that of Buraselis, who sought to interpret the *constitutio* within the wider political philosophy of the Severan era.<sup>28</sup> In fact, his work remains authoritative in many ways, providing a new base from which to approach Caracalla's edict, finally detached from the inflammatory rhetoric of Cassius Dio.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Dio (78.9.5) claimed that the edict was the result of Caracalla's desire to reap a vastly increased tax yield, a claim that will be considered in greater detail in Chapter Four. For early examples of scholars accepting Dio's authority, see Jones (1974) 194; Gilliam (1952) 405; Bell (1947) 17-23; Sherman (1928) 33-47. Also see Ando (2000: 395, n.275) for a fierce criticism of past scholars' willingness to accept Dio's testimony on the basis of his being a contemporary source alone.

<sup>26</sup> For more on the potential link with Alexander the Great, see Chapter Two. For the military explanation of the Antonine Constitution, discussed in Chapter Five, see Rocco (2010) 131-55.

<sup>27</sup> Hekster (2008) 50.

<sup>28</sup> Buraselis (2007).

<sup>29</sup> Buraselis (2007) 14-87. I will consider Buraselis' conclusions on the religious and economic rationales for the edict in the third and fourth chapters of this thesis, respectively.

While scholarship on the *constitutio Antoniniana* has become increasingly nuanced and sophisticated, there remain fundamental problems that restrict the extent to which we can achieve a properly holistic impression of the edict and the circumstances surrounding its introduction. The myriad studies regarding the Giessen papyrus are invaluable to any modern analysis of the edict, but the nature of the reconstruction required means that the historical role and importance of the *constitutio* is often lost among the artefact's linguistic controversies.<sup>30</sup> Attempts to view the legacy of Caracalla's edict in later history can provide a number of interesting observations regarding how the *constitutio* eventually functioned and set a process in motion which would have lasting implications across Western Europe, in particular. The obvious problem with these studies, however, is that the *constitutio* itself rarely forms the primary focus of the study, meaning that little can be discovered regarding its importance to its own era. Finally, the attempts to interpret the Antonine Constitution through individual lenses are often as problematic as they can be illuminating. In addition to the problem of inflating the importance of the individual factor being studied, they inevitably remove the *constitutio* from its wider context, forcing an artificial comparison between factors that cannot realistically be extricated from the wider historical milieu.

To date, there has never been an attempt to consider the various possible motivations for the legislation together in one study, and yet it is only when the edict is analysed within a fully embedded context that the relationship between the different motivations and pressures bearing on Caracalla in AD 212 can be seen properly. This thesis attempts, then, to build upon the existing scholarship relating to the Antonine Constitution, and to add a new layer of interpretation to the discussion. It represents the first study of its kind, the fundamental purpose of which is to bring together the major elements that potentially served to prompt the emperor to introduce his edict. Throughout the course of this investigation, I will offer a more grounded and cohesive image of the *constitutio*, demonstrating that it was an important political initiative,

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<sup>30</sup> Sherwin-White (1973a: 381) complained that the fierce debate regarding the papyrus has added 'singularly little' to historical knowledge.

combining practical and propagandistic values at a crucial point in Caracalla's fledgling sole reign.

It is necessary at the outset to consider the extent to which it is correct to label the Antonine Constitution as a vehicle of imperial propaganda. This function of the *constitutio Antoniniana* will be a feature repeatedly considered throughout this study, particularly in discussion relating to the emperor's exploitation of the Alexander mythos, and the role of the edict in legitimising his position as the sole ruler of the empire, following the murder of Geta. The connection of the label of 'propaganda' to ancient evidence, particularly media released by the imperial household, has proven contentious, though. Historically, the objection to any use of 'propaganda' is based upon the absence of an equivalent term in Latin, and the view that the term has absorbed inappropriate undertones which are specifically associated with the Fascist and National Socialist regimes of the 1930s and 1940s. Burnett, for example, when addressing the debate in connection to imperial coinage, has claimed that for the label of propaganda to become acceptable, it must first be stripped of two elements, namely the idea of deliberate falsehood and a systematic orchestration of public opinion.<sup>31</sup> Sensitivity regarding the use of this term is not unique to Burnett, and has resulted in others offering alternative descriptions of the process, preferring, for example, to discuss imperial coinage in terminology connected to modern brand marketing.<sup>32</sup>

This is a problem which is more apparent than real. It is self-evident that the precise nature and expression of propagandistic programmes would differ between the ancient and modern eras, but this does not necessarily preclude Roman imperial initiatives from containing a propagandistic significance. Furthermore, the fact that the Romans lacked a comparable term for the phenomenon hardly confirms that the process itself was non-existent.<sup>33</sup> In fact, the value of the *constitutio Antoniniana* in promoting both Caracalla's personal *pietas* and an official narrative of the violence which surrounded Geta's assassination can be seen to fit even the most contentious definition of propaganda, in that it represents a clear example of an emperor attempting

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<sup>31</sup> Burnett (1987) 66.

<sup>32</sup> Hekster (2003) 25.

<sup>33</sup> Hannestad (1984) 9.

to engineer a positive response to his regime among the populace and impart a moralising quality to the death of the younger Augustus.<sup>34</sup> While it is true that a direct comparison between the Roman Empire and the totalitarian powers of the modern era is inappropriate, we must be careful not to sanitise the imperial regime and deny its autocratic and dictatorial character, of which state propaganda is an obvious element. In this study, then, the term ‘propaganda’ is taken to mean a deliberate initiative undertaken by the imperial household, designed to orchestrate public opinion, and to achieve a definite political objective.

The nature of this investigation means that it is necessary to approach the Antonine Constitution from a number of angles. As a consequence, the various chapters of this thesis will be devoted to the different potential motivations affecting Caracalla, demonstrating the complexity in attributing factors to his decision to extend the franchise. The first chapter will present a contextualisation of the *constitutio Antoniniana*. The surviving evidence for the edict will be considered, particularly the Giessen papyrus. Owing to the controversy surrounding the artefact, I have compiled my own edition of the text, formed by comparing and contrasting previous attempts to restore the fragmentary document. The result of this is an edition which, while heavily embedded within pre-existing textual scholarship, is not overly reliant on any one previous reconstruction.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the content of *P. Giss. 40* will be analysed in an attempt to conclude whether Caracalla, rather than his jurists, should be regarded as the architect of the legislation.

Building upon the issues outlined in Chapter One, the following four chapters will address the elements which could have motivated the emperor to introduce the legislation. The second chapter will consider to what extent the emperor’s admiration for Alexander the Great might have prompted him to introduce the *constitutio*. I will examine whether Caracalla’s imitation of Alexander was really an unusual phenomenon, since it is clear that he was not the only emperor to invoke the legacy of the conqueror. This will set any notion of Caracalla’s hero worship against the wider

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<sup>34</sup> See Chapter Three for more on this simultaneous self-promotion and denigration of a political enemy.

<sup>35</sup> For a detailed commentary in which I explain the choices and selections that I have made, see Appendix I.

political application of the Alexander mythos during the Principate. Rather than seeking to forge a link between Caracalla and the historical Alexander, this discussion will also focus on the extent to which the emperor was inspired by the literary presentation of Alexander the Great in later literary works, such as that of Plutarch, and will show that the Caracalla's 'Alexander-mania' formed one facet of a change in the emperor's self-representation occurring from 212 onwards.

Moving forward from this ideological rationale, other motives for the edict will be considered in the third chapter. I will examine the credibility of the religious basis for the legislation, since this was actively promoted by Caracalla himself in the opening lines of the *constitutio* preserved on the Giessen papyrus, itself mirroring a similar drive to promote the emperor as pious and favoured by the gods found in other media, such as numismatic iconography.<sup>36</sup> I will, furthermore, set this against the general Roman drive for religious consensus between the emperors and their populace, placing the religious dimension of the edict into a wider context.<sup>37</sup>

The importance of the *constitutio Antoniniana* to the political situation facing Caracalla in AD 212 will also be examined in the third chapter. The events surrounding the rise of the Severan dynasty to power had resulted in a process of social levelling between the equestrian and senatorial orders, in terms of their relationship with the imperial household. The levelling tendency apparent within the Antonine Constitution will be discussed against this backdrop, as well as the internecine violence which heralded the shift from a shared principate between the sons of Septimius Severus to Caracalla as the only Augustus by the end of 211. The evidence suggests that the emperor was mindful of his position in the opening half of 212, taking a variety of actions to consolidate his position and legitimise it, effectively redefining the Severan dynasty around his persona alone. With this in mind, I will consider the *constitutio* as an act of political expediency on Caracalla's part, a powerful tool in binding his populace to him, at the moment when his principate seemed at its most vulnerable.

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<sup>36</sup> Buraselis (2007) 36-47.

<sup>37</sup> Ando (2000) 73-205.

The following two chapters will develop the hypothesis that practical motives also underlie the Antonine Constitution. The economic application of the edict will be analysed in Chapter Four. This is a problematic issue since, on the one hand, it is the only rationale offered for the legislation by a contemporary source but, on the other hand, the claim derives from Cassius Dio and must, therefore, be treated with careful scrutiny. I will argue that if the *constitutio* is set against the wider economic context of Caracalla's reign, then it becomes possible to identify a fiscal rationale for the legislation. This hypothesis will be supported with a close reading of the Giessen papyrus, demonstrating that the portion of text formerly thought to refer to the *dediticii* makes greater sense if restored to make reference to assorted privileges being denied by the emperor at the same time as the franchise was extended. The fifth chapter forms a continuation of the economic conclusion outlined in the preceding section. One of the problems in accepting that Caracalla was engaged in a large scale programme to augment the imperial coffers is that there is little sign that the empire was in the dire financial straits that it would later suffer during the military crisis of the third century. If a fiscal motivation for the *constitutio* is accepted, then the question of its ultimate purpose must also be addressed.

I will argue that the answer here lies largely in the emperor's military reform and expenditure, particularly in the prelude to his Parthian expedition. Moreover, it will be shown that the immediate effects of the Antonine Constitution also lend credence to the theory that Caracalla intended to increase the pool of available manpower in order to support his legionary levies. The combination of these factors with the economic dimension will serve to ground the edict in the immediate context of Caracalla's reign and, furthermore, will offer a more rational analysis of the fiscal dimension of the *constitutio*, separate from Dio's inflammatory rhetoric.

The final chapter of this study shifts the focus from the preceding sections, attempting to identify a link between the Antonine Constitution and another controversial episode from the reign of Caracalla, the emperor's visit to the city of Alexandria in AD 215-16, an event which was to result in bloodshed on a shocking scale. Although it is now impossible to identify conclusively the events which

provoked the final, fatal acts of violence within the city, I will argue that a potential explanation for the tense atmosphere in Alexandria at the time of Caracalla's visit can be derived from the *constitutio Antoniniana*. Using papyrological evidence, I will demonstrate that the fiscal implications of the edict probably exacerbated and perpetuated the perennial problem of *anachoresis*, in which individuals fled from their homes in avoidance of taxation and liturgical duties.<sup>38</sup> The evidence here serves a dual purpose. In one respect, it confirms that the *constitutio* had a fiscal effect in real terms. In another way, though, it shows that the Antonine Constitution can also be employed to shed light on one of the more troublesome moments of Caracalla's principate, a factor which further emphasises the importance of the legislation to the period in which it was promulgated.

The paucity of the ancient evidence means that, in many ways, the *constitutio Antoniniana* remains an enigmatic document. Nevertheless, despite its many controversies, it is now possible to assess the legislation from a number of perspectives and to consider the emperor's intentions in promulgating it. To understand the purpose of the edict and make sense of Caracalla's motivation for its introduction, however, it is crucial that the Antonine Constitution is considered within a properly embedded context. Through this approach, the *constitutio* can be identified as a multi-faceted initiative, addressing the emperor's military and economic concerns, in addition to functioning as a powerful example of Caracallan propaganda, in which an official narrative of the emperor's conflict with Geta was broadcast, and Caracalla's own position legitimised.

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<sup>38</sup> Kelly (2011) 204-8.

## **CHAPTER I**

### *Contextualising the *constitutio Antoniniana**

The Antonine Constitution, in many ways, represents a turning point in imperial history. Promulgated by Caracalla in AD 212, the introduction of the edict was a defining moment in the life of the young emperor. By means of this legislation, he had granted the rights of Roman citizenship to nearly all free inhabitants of his empire, a move which ostensibly revolutionised the constitutional complexion of the Roman state, with *civitas* forming the norm, rather than the preserve of an exclusive minority.<sup>39</sup> It is well established that the edict's introduction formed a major step towards political homogenisation within the empire, and resulted in an increasing sense of *Romanitas* among formerly peregrine or barbarian communities that should not be underestimated in the increasingly turbulent context of the later Roman Empire.<sup>40</sup> The situation is made more complex, however, when the paucity of the evidence relating directly to the *constitutio* is taken into consideration. The striking dearth of extant sources referring to Caracalla's edict suggests that it was not considered by ancient authors to represent the ideological watershed that some modern readers are tempted to see.<sup>41</sup> In fact, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the sheer lack of ancient source material relating to the Antonine Constitution has been largely responsible for its persistent controversy within the scholarship of the past century.<sup>42</sup>

In the introduction to this study, I emphasised how vital it is that the *constitutio Antoniniana* is viewed within its own milieu if the legislation and Caracalla's reasoning for it are to be better understood. This chapter will therefore offer a contextualisation of the edict, comprising of two parts. First, the references to the *constitutio* found among the literary sources and their individual limitations will be considered. I will then move the focus to the Giessen papyrus since, in addition to representing the most comprehensive extant source recording the Antonine

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<sup>39</sup> Buraselis (2013) 1747-48; Garnsey (2004) 135.

<sup>40</sup> Mathisen (2006) 1015-18; Sherwin-White (1973a) 282-83. Also see Buraselis (2013) 1748; Hekster (2008) 45.

<sup>41</sup> Ando (2012) 77.

<sup>42</sup> Buraselis (2007) 2.

Constitution, it raises a number of issues which must be highlighted before the analysis of the various potential motivations underlying the edict can begin.<sup>43</sup>

### **The *constitutio* in the Literary Sources**

The *constitutio Antoniniana* appears infrequently in the literary sources. In fact, the majority of extant references to the edict can only be found in sources written long after its introduction, in the fourth and fifth centuries. These allusions are all relatively brief, and some display a level of confusion regarding the provenance of the legislation. The edict is mentioned in passing, for example, in the biography of Septimius Severus in the *Historia Augusta*, in which the author simply states that the *constitutio* was introduced and that universal enfranchisement was the result.<sup>44</sup> A similarly concise description of the edict can be found in the writing of Sidonius Apollinaris, in which the author declared that only slaves and barbarians did not possess the rights of *civitas*.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, given the amount of time that had elapsed between the introduction of the *constitutio* and the authors' writing, as well as their different purposes, it is understandable that we find the Antonine Constitution referred to in such a superficial way.

More surprising, however, is the level of confusion apparent among other sources of the same period regarding the provenance of the legislation. Aurelius Victor mistakenly credits Marcus Aurelius with the initiative while, in the Justinianic *Novellae*, the *constitutio* is erroneously attributed to Antoninus Pius.<sup>46</sup> On the one hand, this might seem a reasonable mistake to make, owing to the similarity in nomenclature between the emperors.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, however, the level of uncertainty regarding the provenance of such a supposedly well-known edict raises a question regarding the source tradition relating to it. While it is tempting to interpret the paltry number of extant ancient writers who refer to the *constitutio* as the result of a high attrition rate among the ancient sources, the fundamental misunderstanding

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<sup>43</sup> Also see Appendix I.

<sup>44</sup> HA *Sev.* 1.1-2.

<sup>45</sup> Sid. Apol. *Ep.* 6.2.

<sup>46</sup> Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 16.12; *Novellae* 78.5.

<sup>47</sup> For a breakdown of Caracalla's titlature, see Kienast (2011) 162-64.

concerning the source of the legislation makes it more likely that there were simply few authors who devoted attention to the legislation following its introduction.

The apparent lack of literary interest in the Antonine Constitution ultimately raises the question of how revolutionary in character the edict actually was. Did the *constitutio* represent a fundamental constitutional change, or was it merely extending a status marker that carried less relevance than it once had? The relative value of the franchise and its importance compared to other societal distinctions, such as the divide between the *honestiores* and *humiliores*, has been a persistent feature of debate regarding the edict's wider significance.<sup>48</sup> The reason underlying the dearth of literary evidence following the promulgation of the *constitutio* remains one of the most puzzling aspects of the document's history, with potential repercussions regarding how the ancients perceived its consequences in effect. Caution is needed, however, not to dismiss the edict's importance on the basis of this point alone.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, we must also acknowledge that it is unfair to assume that Caracalla would have contemplated all of the edict's consequences prior to its introduction.<sup>50</sup> Owing to the focus of this study on the emperor's rationale underlying the promulgation of the *constitutio*, however, any additional investigation of this literary silence is currently beyond the scope of this study.

If the subsequent literary record for the Antonine Constitution is problematic, the contemporary evidence is arguably more so. In fact, apart from the Giessen papyrus, the only surviving literary source from the period itself which make reference to the edict being introduced is that of the senator and historian Cassius Dio.<sup>51</sup> On first examination, he would appear ideally suited to offer an explanation of the *constitutio Antoniniana*, given his close association with the imperial court during the majority of the Severan era.<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately, the senator's description of the *constitutio* is a brief

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<sup>48</sup> Garnsey (2004) 134-40, 155 and (1970) 266; Honoré (2004) 114-15; Hope (2000) 133-50; Nicolet (1980) 20-21. For more on the *honestiores-humiliores* divide, see Rilinger (1984).

<sup>49</sup> Hekster (2008) 55.

<sup>50</sup> Ando (2012) 56-57; Honoré (2002) 85.

<sup>51</sup> De Blois (2014) 1014. Even Herodian, whose similarly contemporary history recounts the Severan era, omits any mention of the legislation.

<sup>52</sup> Davenport (2012: 797) claims that Dio was 'well placed to record the vicissitudes of political life.' For more on the senator's work, see Kemezis (2014) 90-149. Dio himself provides evidence concerning

one. The only mention of the legislation in the extant *Roman History* is included in a more general critique of Caracalla's fiscal policies and imperial expenditure. Dio claims that the emperor engaged in an astonishing level of imperial spending and, consequently, required a similarly extraordinary tax yield to support it, an obligation which prompted the decision to extend the franchise:

Οὗ ἕνεκα καὶ Ῥωμαίους πάντας τοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ αὐτοῦ, λόγῳ μὲν τιμῶν, ἔργῳ δὲ ὅπως πλείω αὐτῷ καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τοιούτου προσίη διὰ τὸ τοὺς ξένους τὰ πολλὰ αὐτῶν μὴ συντελεῖν, ἀπέδειξεν.

This was the reason why he made everyone in his realm Romans, he was ostensibly honouring them, but his real purpose was to increase his revenues by this means, since peregrines were not required to pay the majority of these taxes.<sup>53</sup>

The brevity of the account is the least controversial aspect of Dio's work, though. This section of the *Roman History* is troublesome owing to the poor state of its survival, being largely dependent on an eleventh century epitome by Xiphilinus, who is thought to provide 'not so much a précis of Dio as a rather erratic selection from his material.'<sup>54</sup> The main problem surrounding the senator's account of the Antonine Constitution, however, relates to his open loathing of Caracalla. Dio makes several withering criticisms of the emperor, characterising him as one of the worst individuals to hold imperial power.<sup>55</sup> This unrelenting denigration has led Millar to describe the senator writing with an 'unabashed hatred' towards his *bête-noir*.<sup>56</sup>

Dio's unapologetic denigration of Caracalla therefore results in an obvious question surrounding the reliability of his account of the latter's reign, including his assessment of the *constitutio Antoniniana*. How far can Dio's testimony regarding the

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his career. He describes, for example, his writing of treatise on Septimius Severus' dreams and the portents which presaged Severan victory in the civil wars of AD 193-97 (73.23.1-3); he describes his time as a *comes* attached to the Caracallan court (78.17.3) and, later, the circumstances of his consulship under Alexander Severus (80.5.1-3).

<sup>53</sup> Dio 78.9.5.

<sup>54</sup> Millar (1964) 2. Also see Davenport (2012) 796, who has argued that, despite the obvious issues that this problem raises, we can be relatively confident that the surviving portions of text presented are Dio's words, rather than those of Xiphilinus.

<sup>55</sup> For examples, see Dio 78.6.1a; 78.7-8; 79.9.3.

<sup>56</sup> Millar (1964) 150.

legislation be trusted? In his analysis of the senator's description of the edict and its motivation, Ando complained that 'Dio's authority as a contemporary witness has blinded many to the extreme idiocy of his argument'.<sup>57</sup> In fact, Dio's hatred of Caracalla has led to his fiscal explanation being dismissed or diminished in modern scholarship, considered a motive of secondary importance at best.<sup>58</sup> This is an unfairly absolute position, though.

That the *Roman History* is affected by Dio's anti-Caracallan predisposition is often patently obvious. The fact that he is an unsympathetic source for the regime does not mean, however, that his claims are entirely without basis or merit. In fact, just as Ando is correct that we cannot permit Dio's position as an eyewitness to mean that we accept his claims uncritically, the hostility of his account should not blind us to the value which often underlies the author's testimony. Rather than dismissing the senator carelessly, Dio's account must be set against the wider context of the time, and will thus be considered more thoroughly later in this study.<sup>59</sup>

### **The *constitutio* and the Role of the Jurists**

Dio represents the only surviving contemporary literary account of the Antonine Constitution, but his is not the only contemporaneous reference to the legislation. Indeed, another mention of the edict, albeit a brief one, can be found in the legal writing of the jurist Ulpian, whose work was later compiled within the Justinianic *Digest*.<sup>60</sup> His allusion to the *constitutio* is predictably concise, given the juristic medium, and simply states that by virtue of Caracalla's constitution, all persons living within the Roman empire were given the rights of citizenship.<sup>61</sup> This extract is supported to an extent by a sentence preserved from the work of Modestinus, another contemporary, who claimed that Rome represented a common *patria* for everyone.<sup>62</sup> As De Blois has remarked, though, this sentence is preserved in isolation and is

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<sup>57</sup> Ando (2000) 375 n.275.

<sup>58</sup> Buraselis (2007) 1-3; Williams (1979) 72.

<sup>59</sup> For a more detailed consideration of Dio's account and the potentially economic basis to the *constitutio*, see Chapter Four.

<sup>60</sup> De Blois (2014) 1014.

<sup>61</sup> *Dig.* 1.5.17: *In orbe romano qui sunt ex constitutione imperatori Antonini cives Romani effecti sunt.*

<sup>62</sup> *Dig.* 50.1.33.

therefore indeterminate in nature.<sup>63</sup> While the extant evidence for the *constitutio Antoniniana* offered by the jurists is sparse, it nevertheless alludes to the involvement of these intellectuals within the imperial regime of the period.

The Severan era in general is regarded as something of a golden age for jurists.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, during the period between the death of Commodus and the accession of Maximinus Thrax, judicially trained civil servants reached an unprecedented degree of prominence within the imperial regime, a number even rising to the praetorian prefecture.<sup>65</sup> Of these individuals, Ulpian has received some of the highest plaudits among scholars, hailed as a leading intellectual and ‘the most influential writer of the time’ by Honoré, for example.<sup>66</sup> Much has been written regarding Ulpian’s legal philosophy, particularly his apparent desire to set Roman law into a wider conceptual frame, ‘demonstrating how the principles and enactments of Roman law can be justified on universal, not just parochial considerations of utility and equity.’<sup>67</sup> In fact, this has been taken even further by Honoré, who sees in Ulpian a pioneer of human rights who expounded Roman law ‘as a law based on the view that all people are born free and equal, and that all possess dignity.’<sup>68</sup> The result of this has been a suggestion that Ulpian himself may have been instrumental in the promulgation of the *constitutio*, maybe even suggesting its creation in the first instance, though this hypothesis remains conjectural.<sup>69</sup>

While the precise relationship between Ulpian and the introduction of the Antonine Constitution is difficult to identify, the wider role of the jurists in the process must be considered nevertheless, since the legislation was introduced during the heyday of this legal intelligentsia.<sup>70</sup> At the heart of the matter here is a question regarding the fundamental authorship of the *constitutio*: that is to say to what extent

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<sup>63</sup> De Blois (2014) 1014.

<sup>64</sup> Potter (2014) 157-61; Hekster (2008) 46; Trapp (2007) 481-82

<sup>65</sup> Du Plessis (2010) 43-44; De Blois (2001) 136. For information on a number of the jurists, see Kalb (1975). For more on the praetorian prefects, see Howe (1966).

<sup>66</sup> Honoré (2002) 1.

<sup>67</sup> Trapp (2007) 482.

<sup>68</sup> Honoré (2002) 80-81.

<sup>69</sup> Honoré (2002) 85; Birley (1988) 190.

<sup>70</sup> Hekster (2008) 46; Trapp (2007) 481.

the edict should be viewed as a product of juristic influence, rather than the creation of the emperor himself. This is an important element to the legislation, since any conclusions drawn here have an inevitable bearing on how we interpret the nature of the *constitutio* and its underlying motivations.

The question of the emperor's role in formulating legal materials remains complex. It is clear that, despite their theoretical freedom to legislate and dispense justice as they pleased, the emperors were at least expected to defer to the advice and guidance of legal experts: they were entitled to make law, but the extent to which they commonly did so remains a matter of debate.<sup>71</sup> Given this traditional reliance on judicially trained civil servants throughout the Principate, then, the assumption that Ulpian and others were the true architects of the *constitutio Antoniniana* is a logical one, since it would seem inconceivable that the emperor would not seek their counsel during the zenith of the jurists' influence within the imperial regime.

This interpretation of the *constitutio* effectively distances the figure of Caracalla from the edict and makes any attempt to investigate the rationale for its introduction more difficult as a consequence. Other factors must be considered, though. Just as it is unlikely that the imperial household would not have sought advice from the top ranking jurists, it is similarly implausible that the emperor himself would have had no input or, even if civil servants were responsible for officially drafting the document, that the jurists were working independently instead of following a well-known imperial directive.<sup>72</sup> In the case of Caracalla specifically, I would argue, moreover, that the extant evidence actually provides an image of the emperor as a more independently minded ruler than his predecessors in connection to the law, a feature which ultimately suggests that the decision to introduce the *constitutio Antoniniana*, and the responsibility for its fundamental content, lay with Caracalla personally.

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<sup>71</sup> Honoré (1994) 3, 29-30.

<sup>72</sup> This debate is prevalent in discussions regarding how far the emperor had a direct input in imperial media such as coinage, where Howgego (1995: 70-71) has argued that it is unthinkable that any civil servant would create or commission material that was not favourable or beneficial to the imperial household.

The image of Caracalla's approach to legal affairs varies, depending on the source which records it. In the literary sources, the emperor appears disinterested and quickly bored by matters of jurisprudence and legal procedure.<sup>73</sup> Dio is predictably hostile, complaining that the emperor rarely arbitrated in court and, furthermore, that he treated his council with contempt, often summoning them, only to have them wait for hours to see him.<sup>74</sup> Herodian is less vitriolic in his account, claiming that while Caracalla spent little time in court, his decisions were swiftly made and incisive.<sup>75</sup> Such depictions, however, appear to result more from the authors' hostility towards the emperor rather than forming a reflection of Caracallan disinterest in legal process. The contemptuous portrait of the emperor found in some of the ancient literature is in marked contrast to the more attentive impression which can be derived from epigraphic sources. Minutes from civil actions found at Dmeir, for example, portray Caracalla in a more positive light.<sup>76</sup> The emperor is depicted as a more attentive arbitrator, actively engaging with the participants in his role as the judge.<sup>77</sup> It is possible, then, to identify an image of Caracalla as an emperor took an active interest in judicial matters, even if his behaviour was arguably unorthodox, on occasion.

Another important aspect of Caracalla's relationship with Roman law is his proclivity to form decisions which deviated from pre-existing statute. In fact, the extant evidence suggests that, of all the third century emperors, Caracalla was the most likely to derogate from written law.<sup>78</sup> Honoré has identified a number of cases in which the emperor's rulings seem motivated more by personal opinion than legal precedent. There are rescripts, for example, which appear to show Caracalla giving excessive favour to soldiers.<sup>79</sup> In another case, the emperor excused an individual from responsibilities relating to tax collection, on the grounds that the claimant approached him personally, rather than any legal basis.<sup>80</sup> Finally, there is an example from the

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<sup>73</sup> Potter (2014) 161.

<sup>74</sup> Dio 78.17.3-4. Also see Honoré (1994) 25.

<sup>75</sup> Hdn 4.7.2.

<sup>76</sup> For more on the detail of the inscription, see Oliver (1974) 289-94.

<sup>77</sup> Connolly (2010) 110; Honoré (1994) 25; Williams (1979) 666; Crook (1955) 142-43. Williams (1974: 665) further suggested that Caracalla might have selected the counsel for both prosecution and defence in this case, finding their sophistic and rhetorical abilities entertaining.

<sup>78</sup> Honoré (1994) 26.

<sup>79</sup> *Dig.* 48.22.16; *CJ* 1.18.1; 5.16.2.

<sup>80</sup> *CJ* 5.41.1.1.

Justinianic *Codex* in which the emperor ruled explicitly contrary to legal advice in a case regarding inheritance.<sup>81</sup>

The surviving evidence thus provides an indication of Caracalla's independence in legal matters. In fact, even in the most hostile of sources, material can be found which proves valuable in analysing Caracalla's administration of Roman law. In the midst of Dio's attack on the emperor for his obsession with Alexander the Great, the senator claims that Caracalla became enraged with a lawyer prosecuting a trial against a defendant named Alexander, owing to the way in which the orator referred to 'the bloodthirsty Alexander, the god-detested Alexander'.<sup>82</sup> The emperor reprimanded the lawyer and threatened him with dismissal. It is clear that the purpose of this passage was to highlight Caracalla's hero-worship of the Alexander the Great, but Dio's account nonetheless provides another example of the emperor actively engaged in dispensing Roman law.

While it is possible that these cases reflect the influence of the jurist Arrius Menander, since Honoré has shown that many of the more unorthodox rulings can be identified to his tenure as secretary of the petitions, the fact that the emperor was evidently willing to rule outside of the legally accepted framework on multiple occasions suggests that he was prepared to ignore accepted statute or interpret it in an unconventional way in order to suit his own agenda.<sup>83</sup> With this in mind, although it is inconceivable that Caracalla would have promulgated the *constitutio Antoniniana* without consulting any legal counsel, the hypothesis that the legislation was his own creation (rather than that of the jurists) is convincing.

Positioning of the emperor, rather than his legal experts, behind the *constitutio Antoniniana* has an important implication for this study of the edict's rationale. On this basis, when the potential motives for the legislation are considered in this investigation, they will be viewed through the lens of the emperor's own concerns and desires, rather than through that of the jurists. Caracalla may not have formulated the

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<sup>81</sup> *CJ* 9.23.1.

<sup>82</sup> Dio 78.8.3.

<sup>83</sup> Honoré (1994) 25-26.

final draft of the edict alone, but it is probable that he constituted its driving force, and that it was therefore composed and structured to his personal preference.<sup>84</sup>

### **The *constitutio Antoniniana* and *P. Giss. 40***

Given the dearth of surviving evidence described above, *P. Giss. 40* is of inestimable importance to any study of the Antonine Constitution. Discovered in the opening years of the twentieth century, the Giessen papyrus represents the only surviving document thought to contain a copy of the original *constitutio*.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, despite its importance, *P. Giss. 40* is also a controversial source which, as noted in the introduction, has prompted a wealth of debate among modern scholars.<sup>86</sup> Much of the discussion surrounding the Giessen papyrus stems from the severely damaged and fragmentary state of the document in the area containing the text of the edict.

The surviving papyrus measures 27cm x 46cm, and contains the texts of at least three imperial proclamations deriving from the reign of Caracalla.<sup>87</sup> A cursory glance reveals that *P. Giss. 40* has suffered extensive wear and damage, most notably to the left-hand side of the document, which is unfortunately where the text of the *constitutio* is written. In fact, by comparing the left and (largely complete) right sides of the papyrus, it can be estimated that around one third of the upper left side of the document is missing. The damage in this area is compounded by a large vertical tear in the middle of the surviving papyrus which has obliterated yet more script.

The lower left-hand section of *P. Giss. 40* is in an even more damaged state. The large tear that has destroyed some of the upper left side extends further into the papyrus and has left only around thirty characters of text remaining. Smaller localised tears and holes in areas suggest that the papyrus has suffered worm-damage, while areas where the top-layer of the document is damaged (more visible on the right side

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<sup>84</sup> The question of how far the emperor's hand is visible in the surviving copy of the edict found on the Giessen papyrus will be considered below.

<sup>85</sup> For more information on its discovery and provenance, see Kuhlmann (1994) 1-2; Oliver (1989) 495; Meyer (1910) 25-33.

<sup>86</sup> For a brief consideration of the scholarly reactions to the papyrus, see the previous chapter.

<sup>87</sup> Heichelheim (1941) 10-22.

of the papyrus) are the result of damage sustained in the document's afterlife when the museum attempted to glaze it.<sup>88</sup> Finally, there are also a number of dark patches spread over the surface of the papyrus, especially in the upper-right quadrant. This is indicative of water damage sustained in February 1945, when the papyrus was being held in the safe of the Dresdner Bank: the latest tests on this mould, however, have proven that it has become inert, posing no further risk to the artefact.<sup>89</sup>

Despite this severe damage, however, the availability of high-resolution photographs of the papyrus from the *Giessener Papyri- und Ostraka-Datenbank* has facilitated a far more detailed analysis of the text than was ever possible in the past. The text of *P. Giss. 40* is presented in a legible, cursive script of Koine Greek. Meyer claimed that the text was of a 'careful, clerical' nature, while Kuhlmann has concluded that the papyrus is business-like in appearance and that the script is 'regular and aesthetic'.<sup>90</sup> The characters are clear and of a regular size, 0.3-0.4cm wide in the majority of cases, often using capitalised versions of characters and lunate sigmas (c).

In the course of the text, there are larger spaces between the different sections of the documents to allow ease of legibility.<sup>91</sup> This feature permits a more confident estimate regarding the number of missing letters in the various lacunae, while the stylistic features of the script allow the papyrus to be dated to the early third century, possibly even during Caracalla's reign itself.<sup>92</sup> Combining study of previous editions with my own examination of the artefact, then, I have restored the Giessen text in the following manner:<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Kuhlmann (1994) 1.

<sup>89</sup> I am grateful to Dr Olaf Schneider and the staff of the Universitätsbibliothek Gießen Special Collections department for their assistance in arranging a visit for me to view the papyrus and sharing their knowledge regarding the storage and recent history of the artefact. This has proven invaluable to my appreciation of the problems inherent when studying this document.

<sup>90</sup> Meyer (1910) 25; Kuhlmann (1994) 8-9.

<sup>91</sup> *P. Giss. 40* I, 1.7 for example. Also see Kuhlmann (1994) 216.

<sup>92</sup> Cavallo and Maehler (2008) 131-32; Kuhlmann (1994) 215-16.

<sup>93</sup> For a full commentary and *apparatus criticus* of this edition, see Appendix I.

- 1) [Αὐτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ Μάρκο[ς Α]ὐρή[λιος Σεουήρος Ἀ]ντωνῖνο[ς] Εὐσεβῆ]ς λέγει  
[πάντως εἰς τὸ θεῖον χρῆ] μᾶλλον ἀν[αφέρειν καὶ τὰ]ς αἰτίας κ[α]ὶ [λογι]σμοὺς  
[δικαίως δ' ἂν κἀγὼ τοῖς θεοῖς τ[οῖς] ἀθ[αν]άτοις εὐχαριστήσα[ι]μι ὅτι τῆς  
τοιαύτη[ς]  
[ἐπιβουλῆς γενομένης σῶ]ν ἐμὲ συν[ετ]ήρησαν τοιγαροῦν νομίζω [ο]ὔτω με–  
5) [γαλοπρεπῶς καὶ εὐσεβ]ῶς δύ[να]σθαι τῇ μεγαλειότητι αὐτῶν το ἱκανὸν ποι–  
[εῖν, εἰ τοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ ὁσ]άκις ἂν ὑ[πε]ισέλθ[ω]σιν εἰς τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἀν[θρ]ώπους  
[ὡς Ῥωμαίους εἰς τὰ ἱερὰ τῶν] θεῶν συνει[σ]ενέγκ[οιμι]. Δίδω[μ]ι τοί[ν]υν ἅπα–  
[σι τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Ῥωμαϊκ]ήν οἰκουμένην π[ο]λιτεῖ[α]ίαν Ῥωμ[αῖ]ων [μ]ένοντος  
[τοῦ δικαίου τῶν πολιτευμ]άτων χωρ[ίς] τῶν [ἀδδ]ειτικῶν Ὁ[φ]εῖλει [γ]ὰρ τὸ  
10) [πλῆθος οὐ μόνον τᾶλλα συνυπομέ]νειν πάντα ἀ[λλ]ὰ ἤδη κ[α]ὶ τῇ νίκη ἐνπειρι–  
[λῆφθαι. Τοῦτο δὲ τὸ διάτ]αγμα ἐ[ξ]απ[λ]ώσει [τὴν] μεγαλειότητα [το]ῦ Ῥωμ[αῖ]  
[ων δήμου συμβαίνει γὰρ τὴν αὐτῆ]ν περι τοῦς [ἄλλο]υς γεγενῆσθα[ι] ἥπερ δι[τ]α–  
[πρέπουσιν ἀνέκαθεν Ῥωμαῖοι τιμῆ κα]ταλειφ[θέντων μηδέν]ων τῶ[ν] ἐκάστης  
[χώρας ἐν οἰκουμένη ἀπολιτεύτων ἢ ἀτιμ]ήτω[ν Ἄπο δὲ τῶν] π[ρ]οσ[όδων τῶν  
νῦν]  
15) [ὑπερχουσῶν συντελούντων, ἅπερ ἐκελεύσθη] [παρὰ Ῥωμαίων ἀπὸ τοῦ κα  
ἔτους,]  
[ὡς δίκαιον ἐκ τῶν διαταγμάτων καὶ ἐπιστολ]ῶ[ν, ἃ ἐξεδόθη ὑφ' ἡμῶν τε]  
[καὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων προγόνων Προετέθη . . . . .]

The Emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Severus Antoninus Pius decrees: It is altogether necessary to attribute the causes and reasons [of recent events] to the divine. I, personally, would rightly thank the immortal gods, since although such a conspiracy [as that of Geta] has occurred, they have watched over me and protected me. I think that I am able, both magnificently and piously, to do something fitting to the gods' majesty, if I manage to bring [all] those in the empire, who constitute my people, to the temples of the gods as Romans. I therefore give everyone in the Roman world the Roman citizenship: preserving customary law, without additional privileges. It is necessary for the masses not only to share in our burden, but also to be included in victory. This decree will spread the magnificence of the Roman people. For it now happens that the same greatness has occurred for everyone, by the honour in which the Romans have been preeminent since time immemorial, with no-one from any country in the world being left stateless or without honour. Referring to the taxes that exist at present, all are due to pay those that have been imposed upon the Romans from the beginning of their twenty-first year [of age], as it is the law, according to the edicts and rescripts issued by us and our ancestors. Displayed publically...

Restoring the text of *P. Giss.* 40 represents only one part of the puzzle posed by the Antonine Constitution, though. The Giessen papyrus also raises a number of questions, the conclusions on which have an impact on our understanding of the edict. Similar to the controversies in the modern scholarly tradition, these points must be noted before any real consideration of Caracalla's motivation for the *constitutio* can begin.

The first of these concerns the precise authorship of the edict. I have argued above that the evidence supports the hypothesis that Caracalla was the guiding architect of the Antonine Constitution, but the issue of how far the emperor can be found in the extant text remains open. This is a matter which is confounded by ambiguity surrounding why the Giessen papyrus itself was compiled. In addition to the *constitutio*, Caracalla's recall of exiles and his later expulsion of ethnic Egyptians from Alexandria are also preserved on the papyrus.<sup>94</sup> It seems probable that the artefact is a copy of official legislation, possibly compiled in advance of a private suit, rather than for archival purposes.<sup>95</sup> To date, however, no one has been able to provide a persuasive explanation for this combination of edicts appearing on the same source.

Such a problem with the Giessen papyrus obviously gives rise to a concern regarding how far we can trust that the text preserved is a faithful copy of the official legislation, be that translated from the original Latin, or simply replicated from a pre-existing Greek copy in Egypt. A way of overcoming some of this doubt, to an extent, can be found in stylistic analysis. Identifying the 'hand' of the emperor in drafting legislation is a notoriously difficult task but, if restricted to general terms, then it is acceptable to suggest that 'the individual personalities of each emperor are revealed in some at least of their official pronouncements.'<sup>96</sup> In the case of the *constitutio Antoniniana*, attention has been devoted to elements of the language and tone employed by the author to argue that the text preserved on the Giessen papyrus is a record of Caracalla's wording.

In the *constitutio*, it is true that much of the language in the text emphasises the grandeur and universality of the edict being introduced, a feature which melds not only with other legal documents deriving from the same era, but also with the emperor's well-documented 'passion for vastness' in relation to his building projects and

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<sup>94</sup> Heichelheim (1941) 10-22.

<sup>95</sup> The script of the papyrus is regular, but does not exhibit the elongated chancery style of the same period. For more on this, see Cavallo and Maehler (2008) 123.

<sup>96</sup> Williams (1979) 67.

admiration towards Alexander the Great, for example.<sup>97</sup> While this alone does not necessarily preclude another individual composing the edict, further suggestion of Caracalla's involvement can be found if the general tone of the legislation is considered. Rather than a detailed juristic account defining the new edict and its fundamental consequences, as one might expect from a civil servant, the actual terms of the *constitutio* are mentioned only briefly, with more attention devoted to explaining the circumstances which prompted the creation of the edict and its underlying purpose. This feature has led Sherwin-White to declare the Giessen text a 'proclamation of policy', rather than a technical instruction, though how far this distinction can be thought to represent a genuine difference, at least in the eyes of the emperor, is debatable.<sup>98</sup>

However the Giessen papyrus is restored, the reasons offered for the edict in the text all arise from the emperor's personal experience and an unidentified threat from which the gods had preserved him.<sup>99</sup> From the combination of this focus on Caracalla's person, combined with the personal tone of the edict and the characteristic use of language emphasising the scale and majesty of his enactment, Williams has concluded that the Latin original of the *constitutio Antoniniana* was personally composed by the emperor on a rapid timescale, probably dictated for immediate publication.<sup>100</sup> While I would argue that this is an overstatement, once again caricaturing Caracalla as an impulsive and irrational ruler, the idea that the emperor took a personal interest in the text of his great edict remains persuasive.<sup>101</sup> Regardless, then, if the text found on the Giessen papyrus is a complete or abridged copy of the original legislation, the stylistic elements of the decree, paired with the other extant evidence relating to the emperor's administration of Roman law, noted above, suggest

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<sup>97</sup> Williams (1979) has identified a number of other edicts preserved on papyri which contain highly similar modes of expression. Also see Sherwin-White (1973a) 282-83.

<sup>98</sup> Williams (1979) 71-72; Sherwin-White (1973a) 283. For a commentary of *P. Giss.* 40 I, see Appendix I.

<sup>99</sup> Williams (1979) 71. The nature of the difficulty which Caracalla claimed the gods had preserved him from will be discussed below.

<sup>100</sup> Williams (1979) 72, 88.

<sup>101</sup> Williams (1979: 72) has suggested, similar to Garnsey (2004: 134-35), that the *constitutio* should be regarded more as a whim of the emperor than a carefully planned policy decision.

that Caracalla himself was the ultimate author of the Antonine Constitution and did not, in this case, defer completely to his jurist counsellors.

If the personal focus of the *constitutio* is one of its defining features, it also raises one of its most significant uncertainties, namely concerning the nature of the events that the emperor was responding to in enacting his reform. In the opening lines of *P. Giss.* 40, the emperor claimed that ‘it is altogether necessary to attribute the causes and reasons [of recent events] to the divine.’<sup>102</sup> The events referred to here are never made explicit, though. In fact, Caracalla’s explanation of the events is equally enigmatic, with the emperor claiming divine protection from an unnamed danger. The immediate question which must be considered, then, is what was Caracalla claiming that the gods had saved him from?

In typically frustrating fashion, the crucial section of the Giessen papyrus detailing the threat is lost.<sup>103</sup> In response, there have been two restorations of the text offered by scholars. One, proposed by Bickermann, refers to a general misfortune (συνφορᾶ) befalling the emperor.<sup>104</sup> The more widely accepted reconstruction of the lacuna, however, is the more pointed ἐπιβουλή, which has a clear inference of a conspiracy and clandestine activity being raised against the emperor.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, the lack of detail in the *constitutio* itself regarding the events prompting it has led to a number of alternative explanations of the events which motivated Caracalla to advertise his legislation as a grand act of thanksgiving to the gods. It has been suggested, for example, that the emperor made reference to an occasion during which he escaped death or injury during his travels and campaigns: either his near-death in a battle with the Alamanni or his surviving a shipwreck crossing the Hellespont.<sup>106</sup> Neither of these explanations are particularly convincing, however, owing to their impact on the dating of the edict’s introduction. The battle in question took place in

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<sup>102</sup> *P. Giss.* 40 I, ll. 2-3.

<sup>103</sup> *P. Giss.* 40 I, l. 4.

<sup>104</sup> Bickermann (1926).

<sup>105</sup> See Appendix I.

<sup>106</sup> Millar (1962) 124-31; Letta (1994) 188-90. For an account of the battle in question, see Dio 78.13.6. For more on the alleged shipwreck, which appears to have been exaggerated by the author of the *Historia Augusta*, see Dio 78.16.7; HA *Car.* 5.8.

AD 213, while the emperor's seaborne difficulties took place the year after, in the context of his entering Asia Minor on his imperial tour. These simply cannot be the events referred to in the course of the *constitutio Antoniniana*, since, as Barnes has shown, there is evidence demonstrating that the edict had already spread to Lydia by March 213, suggesting that the legislation must have been introduced in the middle of 212 at the latest.<sup>107</sup> With the date of the edict's introduction effectively irrefutable, there remains only one viable explanation for the 'conspiracy' referred to in the course of the edict preserved on the Giessen papyrus, the murder of Geta at the close of AD 211.

From 209 to 211, Caracalla shared the mantle of imperial power with both his father, Septimius Severus, and his younger brother. The rivalry between the sons of Severus was notorious, however, and only intensified as time drew on.<sup>108</sup> This fraught arrangement was not to endure for long after the death of the dynasty's patriarch, with the conflict between the two surviving emperors adopting an increasingly violent nature as both men vied for control.<sup>109</sup> Despite the efforts of some within the imperial court to calm the situation, the conflict between the emperors further intensified until Geta was finally assassinated at the close of the year, either by Caracalla himself, or by soldiers under his instruction.<sup>110</sup> With Severus and Geta dead, AD 212 thus began with Caracalla alone holding the reins of imperial power, the first time that one individual had occupied the position since the principate of Antoninus Pius.

In the aftermath of Geta's assassination, Caracalla moved swiftly to accuse his dead brother of acting treacherously against him, claiming that he was the intended target of a palace coup. It is noteworthy that, in the course of Dio's account of the night of the murder, the author also employed *ἐπιβουλή* in reference to the alleged actions of Geta:

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<sup>107</sup> Barnes (2012) 51-52. For a more detailed analysis of this issue, see Hermann (1972) 519-30.

<sup>108</sup> There are a number of references to the enmity in our main sources for the period. For an overview of this phenomenon in the literature, see Weisser (2011).

<sup>109</sup> Dio 78.2.1-2; Hdn 4.1.5.

<sup>110</sup> For more on Julia Domna's role as a peacekeeper, in particular, see Levick (2007) 88-89; Imrie (2014) 312-14. For the murder of Geta, see Dio 78.2.2-4; Hdn 4.4.2-4.

ὁ δ' Ἀντωνῖνος καίπερ ἐσπέσας οὔσης τὰ στρατόπεδα κατέλαβε, διὰ πάσης τῆς ὁδοῦ κεκραγὼς ὡς ἐπιβεβουλευμένος καὶ κινδυνεύων.

Antoninus, although it was evening, took possession of the legions, after crying out the whole way, as if he had been the object of a plot and his life were in danger.<sup>111</sup>

While we must exercise caution to prevent Dio's prose from influencing our reconstruction of *P. Giss.* 40 excessively, it is tempting to imagine that the senator was using language reminiscent of that employed by the emperor when constructing his account. The function and importance of the *constitutio Antoniniana* to Caracalla's regime in AD 212 will be considered in detail later in this thesis, but it remains worth reiterating here that the text of the edict preserved on the Giessen papyrus only really makes sense in connection with the fraternal discord between Caracalla and Geta rather than any other potential misfortune suffered by the emperor.<sup>112</sup>

In addition to the debate regarding the nature of the threat overcome by Caracalla, two other major questions are raised by the *constitutio* as preserved in the Giessen papyrus, both of which derive from the actual gift of *civitas* proclaimed by the emperor between the seventh and ninth lines of the text. The first concerns the impact of the legislation on the legal complexion of the empire. In the course of the *constitutio* text in *P. Giss.* 40, Caracalla declared that his edict extended the franchise to every person living in the Roman realm.<sup>113</sup> Did the Antonine Constitution really herald a significant change in the practical relationship between the Roman state and its subjects, though?

In former years, there was a sense that the introduction of Caracalla's edict resulted in an absolute imposition of the Roman *ius civile* across the empire, leading to a rapid equalisation between Greek East and Latin West. This is an attitude exemplified by Sohm, for example, who argued that the *constitutio* resulted in (and was ultimately designed to facilitate) the arrangement of 'one emperor, one state, one

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<sup>111</sup> Dio 78.3.1.

<sup>112</sup> For a consideration on the political cachet of the Antonine Constitution, see Chapter Three.

<sup>113</sup> *P. Giss.* 40 I, ll. 7-8: Δίδωμι τοῖσιν ἅπασιν τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν οἰκουμένην.

law'.<sup>114</sup> The fact remains, however, that this hypothesis is based on an erroneously unitary model of Roman imperial administration, in which the *ius civile* was applied uniformly across the provinces, for which there is no supporting evidence.<sup>115</sup>

It is apparent that there has been a disconnect in the past between the consideration of the theoretical implications of the *constitutio*, and the practicalities of its implementation. It is fair to conclude, for example, that the introduction of a common legal system would hypothetically result in the simplification and rationalisation of imperial bureaucracy, in which lawyers would no longer be required to navigate 'the differentiations between citizens and many categories of provincial noncitizens that before 212 CE had made lawsuits, inheritances, property transfers, and contracts a nightmare.'<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless, the extant evidence also clearly shows that the imperial regime continued to recognise the *ius gentium* in the period following AD 212. Caracalla himself declared his respect for customary law; further recognition of its continued relevance can also be found in the legal texts of Ulpian and Modestinus.<sup>117</sup> There is also evidence of emperors beyond the Severan period acknowledging the existence of customary law, such as Diocletian, who appears, in fact, to have legislated to weaken it in relation to the Roman system.<sup>118</sup>

This ambiguity is in contrast to the more obvious process of transformation that has been identified in social terms, particularly in relation to individual self-representation. It is clear, for example, that a vast number of people adopted the imperial name *Aurelius* as their *nomen gentile*, enthusiastically embracing their new citizen identity and following the tradition of including the name of the individual

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<sup>114</sup> Sohm (1911) 130: *Ein Kaiser, ein Reich, ein Recht*. Also see Hekster (2008) 47; Honoré (2004) 113.

<sup>115</sup> Ando (2012) 85-99, (2011) 28; Tuori (2007) 39.

<sup>116</sup> Mathisen (2006) 1015. See also Honoré (2002) 84-86; Millar (1977) 481. This notion would appear to be strengthened by the writing of Menander Rhetor (*Treatise* I.3.363, ll. 7-14), in which the author claimed that it was impossible to praise cities on the basis of their law, in epideictic literature, since they had all become subject to the Roman framework. Both the later date of his work and his rhetorical objective should be borne in mind, though.

<sup>117</sup> *P. Giss.* 40 I, ll. 8-9; *Dig.* 1.3.33; 1.3.40. See also Hekster (2008) 52.

<sup>118</sup> For more information on the later emperors' responses to customary law, see Amelotti (1995) 211-15; Rees (2007) 105-24.

responsible for one's enfranchisement with their own.<sup>119</sup> A similar change can be observed in other media, such as sculptural and numismatic evidence.<sup>120</sup> It becomes apparent, then, that the Antonine Constitution can be recognised to have had a lasting effect on many of the empire's inhabitants, but that these phenomena can only be identified through a variety of both direct and indirect sources and across a long chronological period.<sup>121</sup>

Part of the problem in assessing the legal consequences of the Antonine Constitution is that Roman law itself was a fluid entity, presenting a 'moving target' in which doctrine and procedure underwent continual revision and change, a problem compounded by the dearth of contemporary evidence for the edict, mentioned above.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, it is clear that it took time for the *constitutio* to be disseminated across the empire, let alone implemented in any meaningful way.<sup>123</sup> With this in mind, the scholarly emphasis on the long term effects of the legislation into late antiquity and beyond, identified in the introduction to this study, is understandable.<sup>124</sup> Further study of the short-term consequences of the *constitutio* is an area in which further research is warranted, but is largely beyond the scope of this thesis.<sup>125</sup>

The most controversial debate surrounding the Giessen papyrus, and one which does have a direct impact on any consideration of Caracalla's motivation for promulgating the edict, concerns a lacuna in the ninth line of the text. After announcing his extension of the franchise, the emperor made two qualifications to the award. The first of these stated that, while the rights of *civitas* had been bestowed, systems of

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<sup>119</sup> Ando (2012) 57; Hekster (2008) 50; Buraselis (2007) 94-120. This is most easily observed in military epigraphy, with the Dura rosters and the register of praetorians both displaying a rapid increase in *Aurelii*. For more on this, see *P. Dura* 98; *CIL* VI 1058 and 2799; Hekster (2008) 50.

<sup>120</sup> The appearance of togate provincial portraits suggests an increasing sense of *Romanitas* even at the peripheries of the empire. See Hekster (2008) 51, 146-47; Simon (1995) 249-50. For more on the numismatic evidence, which includes the famous tri-lingual Tyrian coin, dating to reign of Gordian III, see Howgego (2007) 14.

<sup>121</sup> Hekster (2008) 55.

<sup>122</sup> Ando (2011) 19.

<sup>123</sup> Barnes (2012) 52; Mathisen (2006) 1016; Gilliam (1965) 86-92.

<sup>124</sup> Ando (2012) 93-97; Buraselis (2007) 120-57; Tuori (2007) 43.

<sup>125</sup> Some of the immediate implications of the legislation will be examined in the case study of Roman Alexandria presented in Chapter Six.

customary law would remain in force.<sup>126</sup> The second of these appears to form an exclusionary clause in the legislation, indicated by the prepositional phrase of *χωρίς* accompanied by a genitive.<sup>127</sup> Unfortunately, the genitive in question survives only partially, obfuscated by a hole in the papyrus. The surviving portion, [...]δεικτικῶν, has prompted two alternative reconstructions.

In the *editio princeps* of the papyrus, Meyer restored this word as the Hellenised version of the Latin *dediticii*, referring to a population group who were subject to Roman authority following an act of official surrender.<sup>128</sup> Such a reconstruction would mean that the emperor had decided that his legislation should not extend to every free person, in reality, and that the *dediticii* were denied the social promotion afforded to the rest of the populace. This was the generally accepted reconstruction for decades, prompting scholars to debate the extent to which the *dediticii* were excluded from Caracalla's comprehensive extension of *civitas*.<sup>129</sup> The fact remains, however, that the transliteration represents a hapax legomenon and has never been an entirely accepted hypothesis. Sasse, for example, acknowledged the controversy accompanying the *dediticii* by his decision to avoid any discussion of the subject in his monograph on the *constitutio*.<sup>130</sup> The linguistic difficulties that the *dediticii* present have resulted in confusion, leading to an increasing sense that the reconstruction is ultimately unlikely.<sup>131</sup>

The current consensus, with which this thesis concurs, has been spearheaded by Kuhlmann, who suggests that the Giessen papyrus makes more sense if interpreted as denying the newly enfranchised any additional honours previously associated with

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<sup>126</sup> *P. Giss.* 40 I, ll. 8-9: μένοντος τοῦ δικαίου τῶν πολιτευμάτων. The similarity of this construction to the Latin legal formula *salvo iure gentis* will be considered in the fourth chapter.

<sup>127</sup> *P. Giss.* 40 I, l. 9.

<sup>128</sup> Meyer (1910). For an ancient legal definition of this group, however, which could also potentially refer to freedmen convicted of crimes during their enslavement, see Gaius, *Inst.* 1.14. The *dediticii* are considered in more detail in Chapter Four.

<sup>129</sup> Buraselis (2007) 6-7; Tuori (2007) 42; Zingale (1999) 81; Lukaszewicz (1990a) 97-99; Wolff (1977) 210-38; Sherwin-White (1973a) 382-83, (1973b) 95-97; Oliver (1955) 279-97; Benario (1954) 188-96; Bell (1947) 17-18; Jones (1936) 228-31.

<sup>130</sup> Sasse (1958) 17. See also Tuori (2007) 42.

<sup>131</sup> Kuhlmann (2012) 48-49; Lukaszewicz (1990a) 97-99. It should be noted, however, that there remain a small number who continue to argue that the text of the Giessen papyrus makes reference to the *dediticii*. For examples, see Torrent (2012) 141-52; Rocco (2010) 135-35; Hekster (2008) 47.

the bestowal of *civitas*. In this version, the problematic lacuna is restored as a transliteration of the Latin *additicia*, an adjectival noun referring to general privileges.<sup>132</sup> The implications of this alternative reconstruction will be considered in connection with the emperor's fiscal and economic agenda, discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis, but it is important to recognise that any conclusions drawn regarding this troublesome passage have a direct impact upon our collective understanding of the effects and consequences of the edict as a whole.

In the absence of further evidence to support the Giessen papyrus and other scanty mentions of the legislation, the *constitutio Antoniniana* will remain a mysterious and divisive edict in many ways. While not all of the myriad questions surrounding the edict and its evidence can be answered, we are in a position now to investigate the purpose of the legislation, its function within the Caracallan Empire, and the factors motivating its introduction. I have argued that, while it is difficult to identify the extent to which the emperor personally composed the proclamation, the surviving evidence suggests that Caracalla possessed an independent mind in connection with Roman statute and its application, and so undoubtedly took a leading role in the drafting of the Antonine Constitution.

The evidence supports the hypothesis that the legislation was promulgated following the assassination of Geta, with the text of the edict making reference to the violence and presenting the *constitutio* as an act of religious thanksgiving for divine intervention. It was introduced at a critical point in the reign of Caracalla, a factor which must always be borne in mind when assessing its purpose. In 212, he faced the prospect of ruling alone for the first time in his life. The Antonine Constitution can thus be seen as a reflection of both his short term concerns, regarding his dynastic legitimacy, and his medium to long term military aspirations to expand the empire. The various ways in which these elements are manifest in the *constitutio* will now be considered.

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<sup>132</sup> Kuhlmann (2012) 48-50, (1994) 236-37; Oliver (1989) 504. For a more detailed explanation of why the *additicia* hypothesis represents a better explanation of the lacuna, see Chapter Four and Appendix I.

## **CHAPTER II**

### *The constitutio Antoniniana as an Act of Alexander imitatio*

When Caracalla was assassinated in AD 217, he was in the process of leading a Roman army on campaign against the Parthian Empire.<sup>133</sup> Dio recounts that war had been declared following the Parthian king's refusal to allow Caracalla to marry his daughter, though the author regarded the proposal as a ruse on the part of the emperor to swiftly annex his enemy's territory.<sup>134</sup> Regardless of the historicity of the alleged events that prefigured the campaign, one constant feature of this episode is that the ill-fated offensive has been interpreted as a final attempt by Caracalla to mimic his lifelong idol, Alexander the Great.<sup>135</sup> Even a cursory glance at the ancient literature shows that Caracalla was believed to have harboured a veritable mania for anything relating to the Macedonian king.<sup>136</sup> This is an image that has endured into the modern era, with Birley, for example, classing the emperor's interest as a pathological obsession, while Baharal has declared that 'no one questions the fact that Caracalla modelled his day-to-day conduct and actions on those of Alexander'.<sup>137</sup> More recently, however, it has been claimed that there was more to the emperor's admiration of the conqueror than superficial affectations, and that he actually fostered a public connection with Alexander for political effect.<sup>138</sup>

This chapter will consider the extent to which the *constitutio Antoniniana* functioned as an ideological grant promoting an association between Caracalla and Alexander the Great, and whether the edict should be viewed as a politically astute initiative that exploited Alexandrian rhetoric and imagery, or rather as a simple act of *imitatio*. I will begin by examining the text of the Giessen papyrus and setting it against literary evidence for the king's attitude towards his imperial subjects, noting the argument advanced by Baharal that the *constitutio* was inspired by an Alexandrian attempt to achieve universal harmony amongst his peoples.<sup>139</sup> This is a difficult

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<sup>133</sup> Cowan (2002) 154-55.

<sup>134</sup> Dio 79.1.1. Also see Hdn 4.10.1-2.

<sup>135</sup> Sheldon (2010) 171.

<sup>136</sup> For a summary of his obsession, see Dio 78.7.1.

<sup>137</sup> Birley (1988) 194; Baharal (2003) 27.

<sup>138</sup> Buraselis (2007) 33; Rowan (2012) 152.

<sup>139</sup> Baharal (1996) 70.

hypothesis to assess, owing to the problem of establishing the intentions of Alexander himself from the surviving authors. By examining the text of *Papyrus Giessensis* in conjunction with other literary sources, then, I will argue that while there is a link to be made between Caracalla and Alexander through the Antonine Constitution, the relationship is not as pronounced as some might suggest. In fact, I will show that it is impossible to link the historical Alexander with the *constitutio*. If the scope and terminology of the Giessen text are examined closely, however, it does become possible to identify a potentially Alexandrian inspiration among the words of Caracalla's edict.

It will be argued that the emperor's tone and expression in the *constitutio* was inspired by the romanticised, legendary image of the king relayed through later writers, such as Plutarch, with whose work it seems clear that the emperor came into contact. The chapter will conclude by considering to what extent this phenomenon was the result of Caracalla's well-attested hero worship of Alexander, or was a connection that was deliberately engineered for political effect. In this question, we are plagued by the often dubious reliability of the evidence relating to Caracalla offered by the main literary sources but, if the text of the Antonine Constitution is combined with other bodies of literary and material evidence, then it becomes possible to see that Alexander imagery formed one facet of a wider revolution in Caracalla's imperial self-image that occurred from the outset of his sole principate.

### **The Alexandrian Influence behind the *constitutio Antoniniana***

The theory that Caracalla was attempting to forge 'universal harmony' by extending the franchise to all corners of the empire seems to have some basis if the text of the Giessen papyrus is studied closely.<sup>140</sup> In addition to the fundamental act of inducting nearly every free person to the rights of *civitas*, the emperor's statements following the announcement of the grant appear to promote social inclusion at all levels of society: 'it is necessary for the masses not only to share in our burden, but also to be included in victory.'<sup>141</sup> On initial examination, this rhetoric would appear to

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<sup>140</sup> Baharal (1996) 70.

<sup>141</sup> *P. Giss.* 40 I, ll. 9-11: Ὀφείλει γὰρ τὸ πλῆθος οὐ μόνον τᾶλλα συνυπομένειν πάντα ἀλλὰ ἤδη καὶ τῇ νίκη ἐνπεριεληφθαι.

bear a degree of similarity to the banquet held by Alexander at Opis, in which he espoused a similar sentiment:

Then Alexander, interrupting him, said: "But all of you without exception I consider my kinsmen, and so from this time I shall call you."<sup>142</sup>

This has led, in the past, to a discussion of Alexander's desire for a brotherhood of man, in which the king would unite all of the races of mankind into a single empire, whose inhabitants would be partners, rather than simply subject peoples.<sup>143</sup> It is clear that this is where Baharal gleans her evidence for Caracalla's later plan to achieve a single, united world empire. There are fundamental problems in reaching such a conclusion, though. Much of the concept of Alexander's brotherhood of man derives from the work of one scholar, and his interpretation of the events at Opis. Tarn considered the banquet scene to represent the conclusion of a peace following the *de facto* mutiny of Alexander's Macedonian troops, claiming that Alexander shared wine with everybody from his *krater* in a symbolic gesture showing his commitment to universal harmony.<sup>144</sup> The problem with this hypothesis is that even a cursory examination of the *Anabasis* shows that Tarn has misread the content of the episode entirely.<sup>145</sup> In fact, there is no real evidence that Alexander ever desired a brotherhood of man, leading to Tarn's hypothesis being discredited completely.<sup>146</sup> This does not mean, however, that it is impossible to observe an Alexandrian inspiration within the text of the *constitutio* in another way. Rather than trying to identify a link between Caracalla and the historical Alexander, it is more profitable to examine the literary presentation of the king. If we analyse the tone of the Antonine Constitution further, I would argue that the evidence supports the hypothesis that Caracalla was influenced by the heroic image of Alexander presented by later authors, particularly Plutarch.

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<sup>142</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 7.11 (tr. Chinnock).

<sup>143</sup> Tarn (1948); Badian (1958); Brunt (1965); Bosworth (1980).

<sup>144</sup> Tarn (1948) 400, 440.

<sup>145</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 7.6-8. If Arrian's text is examined, it quickly becomes clear that the author was depicting Alexander responding specifically to jealousy among his Macedonian soldiers and officers, who were concerned that their king honoured Persian and other non-Hellenic peoples excessively.

<sup>146</sup> Bosworth (1980) 1-21; Brunt (1965) 203-15; Badian (1958) 428-29. Badian (1958: 432) has been the most ardent critic of Tarn, accusing him of: 'mistranslation in the crucial passage, misdirection in its setting, free imaginative interpretation where its restrictions and precision are irksome, and vague use of words charged with emotion.'

Of particular interest here is a section of Plutarch's *De Fortuna Alexandri* located in the course of the *Moralia*. In this text, the author contemplates what might have been realised if Alexander had lived for longer and been able to accomplish his imperial ambitions. Rather than an empire unified on the basis of a homogenous race or culture, there is a clear inference that the Plutarchan Alexander would have achieved unity through the imposition of a common system of law and justice:

ἀλλ' ἐνὸς ὑπήκοα λόγου τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς καὶ μιᾶς πολιτείας, ἓνα δῆμον ἀνθρώπους ἅπαντας ἀποφῆναι βουλόμενος, οὕτως ἑαυτὸν ἐσχημάτιζεν: εἰ δὲ μὴ ταχέως ὁ δεῦρο καταπέμψας τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρου ψυχὴν ἀνεκαλέσατο δαίμων, εἷς: ἂν νόμος ἅπαντας ἀνθρώπους διφκεῖτο καὶ πρὸς ἓν δίκαιον ὡς πρὸς κοινὸν ἐπέβλεπον φῶς. νῦν δὲ τῆς γῆς ἀνήλιον μέρος ἔμεινεν, ὅσον Ἀλέξανδρον οὐκ εἶδεν.

But Alexander desired to render all upon earth subject to one law of reason and one form of government and to reveal all men as one people, and to this purpose he made himself conform. But if the deity that sent down Alexander's soul into this world of ours had not recalled him quickly, one law would govern all mankind, and they all would look toward one rule of justice as though toward a common source of light. But as it is, that part of the world which has not looked upon Alexander has remained without sunlight.<sup>147</sup>

Unlike the problematic notion of an appeal to universal harmony, the concept of an empire united by its legal system can clearly be recognised in the text of the Antonine Constitution. While the guarantee, preserved in the Giessen text, that customary law was to be respected might appear contrary to this notion, the very inclusion of the clause in the text only draws attention to the fact that local systems were, in reality, being superseded by the Roman one, as Ando notes: 'it is important to recognize that the Antonine Constitution had foreclosed the very means for validating local practice... For the extension of Roman citizenship – and the eradication of alien communities as autonomous political entities – had necessarily also invalidated local codes of law.'<sup>148</sup> The assimilation and homogenisation of the empire's myriad population groups is further emphasised towards the end of the

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<sup>147</sup> Plut. *Moralia* 330d-e (tr. Babbitt).

<sup>148</sup> Ando (2012) 98 *passim*. Also see Ando (2011) 19-27. For the section of the *constitutio* addressing customary law, see *P. Giss.* 40 I, ll. 8-9.

Giessen text, where Caracalla declared that by the terms of his edict, no one would be left without state and everyone would share in the glory of Rome:

Τοῦτο δὲ τὸ διάταγμα ἐξαπλώσει τὴν μεγαλειότητα τοῦ Ῥωμαίων δήμου συμβαίνει γὰρ τὴν αὐτὴν περὶ τοῦς ἄλλους γεγενῆσθαι ἥπερ διαπρέπουσιν ἀνέκαθεν Ῥωμαῖοι τιμῇ καταλειφθέντων μηδέων τῶν ἐκάστης χώρας ἐν οἰκουμένη ἀπολιτεῦτων ἢ ἀτιμῆτων.

This decree will spread the magnificence of the Roman people. For it now happens that the same greatness has occurred for everyone, by the honour in which the Romans have been preeminent since time immemorial, with no-one from any country in the world being left stateless or without honour.<sup>149</sup>

If the legal dimension of the *constitutio Antoniniana* is compared to the unrealised promise of Alexander presented by Plutarch, an association between the two leaders can be drawn. When seeking to gauge the influence of Alexander the Great on the terms of the edict, then, I would argue that it is necessary to concentrate on the literary, rather than historical Alexander. Indeed, this emphasis has already been made in the past, with Brunt arguing that the idealised king presented in such works presented an inspiration to Roman leaders who were themselves eager to construct an expansive and enduring empire:

Neither Alexander nor anyone else realized the objective [of a completely unified empire spanning east and west], and it may be doubted if in his own mind it was so clearly defined as in Plutarch's ideal description. But his work tended in this direction and helped to inspire not only perhaps Stoic philosophers but the Romans, who were also to transcend national differences and to conceive that Italy had been marked out to unite scattered empires.<sup>150</sup>

We know that legendary figures such as Alexander the Great probably featured prominently in the education of elite young Romans, in the form of historical exempla in the study of both history and rhetoric.<sup>151</sup> There is further evidence to support the hypothesis that the idealised image of Rome representing a common fatherland for the empire and beyond had infiltrated into the elite mind-set, with Pliny the Elder claiming

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<sup>149</sup> *P. Giss.* 40 I, ll. 11-14.

<sup>150</sup> Brunt (1965) 215.

<sup>151</sup> Bonner (1977) 67-75. Also see Baharal (2003) 31.

that Italy was the ‘fatherland for all the nations of the world.’<sup>152</sup> Given this cultural and educational context, I would argue that it is to be expected that the *Augusti*, including Caracalla, would be familiar with the example of Alexander’s kingdom presented by later authors, and that it is plausible that this influenced their perception of the Empire and, indeed, how they then interpreted and presented their own imperial power through official documents, such as the *constitutio Antoniniana*.

Returning to Caracalla, then, we are faced with the question of why the emperor chose to employ rhetoric reminiscent of Alexander the Great in the course of the Antonine Constitution. I would argue that there are two potential explanations. The first is based upon the overwhelming volume of ancient evidence which suggests that the emperor was an obsessive admirer of Alexander, and that he was therefore simply inspired to emulate the grandeur that he associated with the king. The alternative explanation depicts Caracalla in a more rational light. Far from mimicking Alexander to indulge in an irrational fantasy, I would argue that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the emperor opted to promote an association with the conqueror in particular ways for political gain, but that this process was only one facet of a wider shift in his self-representation that was to occur from the outset of AD 212 onwards.

### **The Prominence of Alexander Iconography in Caracalla’s Principate**

When describing Caracalla’s adoration for Alexander the Great, the author of the *Historia Augusta* claimed that the emperor rarely ceased referring to his idol, and suggested that Caracalla might have felt an irrational compulsion to behave like the king.<sup>153</sup> While these accusations might seem innocuous, they are nonetheless indicative of a significant problem we face when attempting to assess the extent to which the emperor was inspired by the legend of Alexander. Even a cursory glance at our main literary sources for the period reveals that they are littered with a variety of unusual anecdotes regarding the ways in which Caracalla is alleged to have exhibited his admiration for the king. These range from the relatively innocent, if eccentric, such

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<sup>152</sup> Plin. *HN*. 3.39: *una cunctarum gentium in toto pro orbe patria*.

<sup>153</sup> HA *Car.* 2.1-2.

as dressing in the Macedonian style, through to the more serious accusation that the emperor believed himself to be Alexander reborn.<sup>154</sup>

An obvious problem encountered when considering these myriad allegations, however, is that they derive from an overwhelmingly hostile literary tradition, in which the authors, particularly Dio, were eager to denigrate the emperor. This can be seen, for example, in the author's claim that Caracalla was obsessed with acquiring and using items believed to have once belonged to the king.<sup>155</sup> Dio's image of the emperor is immediately reminiscent of Caligula's alleged proclivity for wearing a breastplate that he had previously removed from the tomb of the king, a comparison that can only have reflected badly on Caracalla.<sup>156</sup> The result of this is that it becomes difficult to separate the genuine examples of Alexander *imitatio* performed by the emperor from the hyperbolic or even fictitious creations of the ancient authors. This becomes even



Fig. 1: 'Caracalla as Sol', North Carolina Museum of Art (Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of Art).

more problematic when it is noted that the literary image of Caracalla obsessing over the king is not supported by evidence produced through official media of the period.

For an emperor so apparently obsessed with Alexander the Great, there is a surprising dearth of Alexandrian iconography to be found in Caracalla's sculpture, inscriptions and coinage. Baharal has conducted a study of imperial portraiture and concluded that, far from any notion that the emperor sought to forge an artistic assimilation between himself and his idol, there is actually a significant degree of divergence in Caracallan sculpture from anything that could be considered Alexandrian.<sup>157</sup>

The emperor's portraits are not executed in an

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<sup>154</sup> For the example of Caracalla adopting Macedonian dress, see Hdn 4.8.2. For the idea that Caracalla claimed to be the reincarnation of the king, see Dio 78.7.2.

<sup>155</sup> Dio 78.7.1.

<sup>156</sup> Suet. *Cal.* 52. Also see Spencer (2002) 93.

<sup>157</sup> Baharal (1996) 73-76.

idealised, Hellenistic style; they often depict considerable detail of his facial features, for example, including his famed furrowed brow.<sup>158</sup> The gaze of the statuary, furthermore, fails to conform to the Alexandrian style, exhibiting a downward glance towards the viewer, rather than the gaze into infinity. Even the emperor's hairstyle is different, Caracalla's close-cut military hairstyle presenting a stark contrast to the flowing, leonine hair of his idol. In fact, only one statue has ever been found which might depict Caracalla with Alexandrian features (see Fig. 1), although the identification of the figure remains in doubt.<sup>159</sup>

Similarly problematic is the fact that there is a notable absence of any reference to Caracalla as Alexander found in the epigraphic sources. This can hardly be blamed upon a lack of sufficient source material since the early third century AD has been shown to represent a peak in the Roman epigraphic habit for the imperial period.<sup>160</sup> This suggests that, rather than associating himself with Alexander through this medium, the emperor focused more on promoting traditional themes and virtues.<sup>161</sup> The numismatic corpus provides equally little evidence of Caracalla exploiting the memory of Alexander the Great for propagandistic effect. While there is a small selection of coin types which initially appear to refer to Alexander, each of these specimens can be questioned or explained in alternative terms, upon closer examination. It is tempting, for example, to connect appearances of Hercules on coinage of the period with the emperor's fascination, since Alexander was reputed to have been able to trace his ancestry back to the demigod.<sup>162</sup> Reverse iconography depicting Hercules can be found among the variety of deities struck on Caracallan coinage during the 212-17 period.<sup>163</sup> The precise purpose of this imagery, however, is far less distinct. Hercules was commonly revered throughout the imperial period, proving particularly popular with Commodus, for example.<sup>164</sup> He was also closely

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<sup>158</sup> Hannestad (1984) 284. Also see Jucker (1981) 667-725. For the allegation of Caracalla's increasing severity, ostensibly in imitation of Alexander, see HA *Car.* 2.1.

<sup>159</sup> This is now thought more likely to represent one of the *Dioscuri*. For more on this debate and modern identification, see Hijmans (1994) 165-74.

<sup>160</sup> Bodel (2001) 6-15.

<sup>161</sup> Caracalla's promotion of *indulgentia*, for example, will be considered in Chapter Three.

<sup>162</sup> Diod. Sic. 17.1.5; Plut. *Alex.* 2.1-2.

<sup>163</sup> For example, *RIC* 192. The wider implications of Caracalla's religiously themed coinage will be considered in the next chapter.

<sup>164</sup> Dio 77.7.2. See also Beard *et al.* (1998) 90.

associated with the Severan dynasty as a whole, owing to his role as the patron deity to the family's *patria* of Lepcis Magna.<sup>165</sup> Indeed, Hercules played an important iconographic role in Severus' propaganda during the civil war period and its immediate aftermath.<sup>166</sup>

There is, in fact, only one coin type that has been linked to Caracalla's reign which makes a direct reference to Alexander the Great and that cannot be interpreted in a more general manner. The coin is a small golden type, referred to simply as one of Caracalla's bracteates by Mattingly.<sup>167</sup> It has been attributed to Caracalla's period of sole rule, but this link is highly tenuous and the reason for its original attribution remains unclear. The coin depicts a right facing bust of Alexander in a typical style, with flowing hair and wearing a diadem. There is no accompanying legend, however, to further explain the nature or purpose of this type. I would argue that the absence of such crucial supporting data, paired with the enormous stylistic difference between the depiction of Alexander's coin portrait with that of the emperor, whose obverse busts follow the more severe style of portraiture observed in his statuary, means that the coin simply cannot be dated with any confidence or even associated with Caracalla with any degree of certainty.<sup>168</sup>

### **The Political Significance of Alexander Iconography**

With this absence of imperial evidence to suggest that Caracalla publically linked himself with Alexander the Great, we might be forgiven for assuming that the obsession alleged of the emperor by our ancient authors is the result of literary hyperbole at best, complete fiction at worst. Despite the disappointing lack of evidence

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<sup>165</sup> Beard *et al.* (1998) 255. Severus honoured Hercules, for example, by constructing him a temple on the Quirinal hill in Rome; see Dio 77.16.3, who claims that the building was dedicated to Hercules and another deity associated with both Alexander and Lepcis Magna, Bacchus/Dionysus. For more on the links between these gods and the Severi, see Lichtenberger (2011) 42-43, and Baharal (1996) 78.

<sup>166</sup> The demigod was frequently paired with Liber Pater as a symbolic statement of Severus' pacification of both east and west. This theme was made even stronger by further associating the deities with Caracalla and Geta, particularly around the time of the Secular Games in AD 204. For more on this, see Manders (2012) 233-35; Rowan (2012) 41-48, 110.

<sup>167</sup> *BMCRE* V 202.

<sup>168</sup> Baharal (1996: 79) has suggested that Caracalla might have distributed this coin type throughout the eastern provinces prior to his advance, doing so to establish how popularity. This theory is unpersuasive, however, given the likely negligible impact that a small series of high value coins could have had on the provincial population. For more on this, see Noreña (2011) 196-97.

for Caracalla's Alexander-mania through official media, though, there are other phenomena which suggest that the emperor's fascination was a public one and did contain a political dimension. In fact, I would argue that evidence found dating to after Caracalla's assassination proves that the emperor's association with Alexander the Great was an important aspect of Caracallan self-representation and, furthermore, carried a political significance.

During the 220s AD, there was an increase in Macedonian coinage bearing Alexandrian motifs; there is furthermore an increase in epigraphic attestations to games being held in the hero's honour, the *Alexandreia*, although it seems clear that the games themselves probably started under Caracalla himself.<sup>169</sup> Dahmen has attributed this upsurge in Alexander iconography to the reign of Elagabalus, under whom the images begin to appear on Macedonian *koina*.<sup>170</sup> Given the lengths that the Severan faction went to, to ensure that Elagabalus was accepted as the legitimate heir to Caracalla during the war against Macrinus, it is logical to conclude that this promotion of Alexandrian themes was chosen owing to its well-known link to Caracalla.<sup>171</sup> The political element to this process of *veneratio* was even more assertive under the final Severan emperor, whose imperial name was chosen to evoke a link to Caracalla via the Macedonian.<sup>172</sup> Under Alexander Severus, further games were held in the name of Alexander the Great.<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, in the young emperor's commemorative series of coinage, Caracalla was assigned the epithet *magnus*.<sup>174</sup> The repetition of Alexandrian iconography during a time at which the emperor's legitimacy was most uncertain (both Elagabalus and Alexander Severus rose to power through the murder of their predecessor) suggests not only the inherent potency of Alexander the Great's legacy as a propagandistic image, but also that it was widely associated with the sole reign of Caracalla.

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<sup>169</sup> Dahmen (2007) 32-33.

<sup>170</sup> Dahmen (2007) 33.

<sup>171</sup> Hdn 5.3.10; Icks (2011) 10-18; Arrizabalaga y Prado (2010) 202-6.

<sup>172</sup> Icks (2011) 37, 107.

<sup>173</sup> Rowan (2012) 154.

<sup>174</sup> *RIC* 717-20.

Similar to the later numismatic evidence, there are clear examples of coins bearing Alexandrian iconography among the civic coinage struck by eastern cities during the reign of Caracalla. Specimens from a number of cities in the provinces have been identified: Alexandria at the Issus; Gerasa; Caesarea in Cappadocia and Heliopolis in Syria, to give some examples.<sup>175</sup> The exact purpose of this output has been debated, with Dahmen asserting that the coins represent an attempt by the communities in question to stress their fidelity to the emperor, while Noreña has argued that they form evidence of the cities attempting to secure imperial patronage or, alternatively, expressing their thanks for it.<sup>176</sup> Whatever the rationale for the provincial coinage, and there is no reason why it cannot be a synthesis of the aforementioned ideas, the fact remains that this iconography would only have made an impact with the emperor if it made reference to a theme that contained a contemporary relevance.<sup>177</sup>



Fig. 2: Caracalla, AE *Koinon*, Philippopolis, c.AD 211-17 (*GIC* III 1474).<sup>178</sup>

<sup>175</sup> Dahmen (2007) 22, 29, 34.

<sup>176</sup> Dahmen (2007) 5; Noreña (2011) 270-71.

<sup>177</sup> The Aboukir Medallions form a very striking example of this, with portraits of both Caracalla and Alexander featuring in the series. Rowan (2012: 154) has suggested that they were, in effect, interchangeable. For more on the medallions and the question of their dating in the early third century, see Dahmen (2008) 493-546. Dahmen claims that the artefacts might date from the period following Caracalla's death but, even if this is the case, they are still useful in demonstrating the persistence of the link between the two rulers even after the emperor's assassination in AD 217.

<sup>178</sup> ANT KM AYP ΣΕΥ ΑΝΤΩΝΕΙΝΟΣ, draped and laureate bust right / ΚΟΙΝΟΝ ΘΡΑΚΩΝ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΙΑ ΕΝ ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΠΟΛΙ, Hygieia left, feeding a snake and Aesculapius right with caduceus, Telesphorus in centre. ΠΥΘΙΑ in central field. 37.03g. Image courtesy of Gorny und Mosch, Giessener Münzhandlung GmbH: Auction 215, Lot 954, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2013.

A good example of an attempt by a provincial community to simultaneously impress Caracalla and also exploit Alexander iconography for the city's own benefit can be found in the case of Philippopolis in Thrace. Amongst the wider numismatic output for this city, there are coins struck in commemoration of the Pythian Games held there during Caracalla's sole reign.<sup>179</sup> As Rowan has noted, there are two factors that are particularly significant in analysing this coinage. Firstly, Philippopolis could only have staged the games on the permission of the emperor himself, meaning that the city either petitioned Caracalla or received them as an imperial benefaction.<sup>180</sup> Secondly, the games were traditionally named after the emperor or deity responsible for the grant to hold them.<sup>181</sup> Since Alexander was not a name that featured in Caracalla's imperial nomenclature, this ultimately raises the question of what the inhabitants of Philippopolis were trying to achieve by labelling their Pythian Games as *Alexandreia*. Rowan argues that it is unclear whether the city was directly honouring the emperor, the king or a 'happy confusion' of the pair.<sup>182</sup> While she is correct that the lack of any definitive information regarding the content of the games prevents an absolute conclusion from being drawn, I would argue that this phenomenon fits easily into the wider trend of cities reflecting the emperor's public association of Alexander the Great.

With this evidence in mind, we must move away from the superficial connections between Caracalla and Alexander and consider how the emperor might have exploited an association with the king for political gain. As I noted at the outset of this chapter, this has become the accepted hypothesis regarding the relationship between the two men, with Buraselis arguing that Caracalla's identification with Alexander represents 'nothing less than the assumption of a wholly political ideology.'<sup>183</sup> While the connection need not be quite as absolute as Buraselis claims, it is important to note that there is substantial evidence to suggest that Caracalla's

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<sup>179</sup> For an example, see Fig. 2, above.

<sup>180</sup> Rowan (2012) 154.

<sup>181</sup> Rowan (2012) 156.

<sup>182</sup> Rowan (2012) 157.

<sup>183</sup> Buraselis (2007) 33. Also see Rowan (2012: 152), who claims that Caracalla 'cultivated an alignment' with the king.

exploitation of the king's mythos was not without precedent. In fact, association with Alexander appears to have been an accepted practice for Roman emperors.

From Augustus through to Julian, a variety of Roman rulers attempted to promote a connection between themselves and Alexander, showing themselves eager to replicate his considerable military success.<sup>184</sup> If viewed within the wider context of the Principate, then, it is evident that much of the alleged *veneratio* and *imitatio* alleged of Caracalla was far from exceptional. A number of emperors visited the tomb of Alexander and honoured his corpse.<sup>185</sup> Augustus was said to have sealed his official communications with a stamp bearing a bust of Alexander.<sup>186</sup> Trajan made reference to the luck of Alexander in being able to explore India during his own war against Parthia. According to Dio, the emperor then falsely claimed that he had, in fact, exceeded Alexander's empire in his campaign of expansion.<sup>187</sup> Even Caracalla's alleged levying of a military unit inspired by Alexander has a Neronian precedent.<sup>188</sup> The trend of imperial identification with the Macedonian appears most commonly in connection with the eastern empire, or in the context of war with Parthia (or later Sassanid Persia).<sup>189</sup> This is certainly the case with Caracalla's advance, since it appears that the route of his travel throughout the eastern empire and eventual offensive against

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<sup>184</sup> Spencer (2002) 41. The act of engaging with, or even appropriating, the image of Alexander became a powerful tool of kingship from almost immediately after the monarch's death in 323 BC. Many Hellenistic rulers, including the *diadochoi* themselves, sought to associate themselves with Alexander or even to assume facets of his identity in an attempt to strengthen and legitimise their positions of power within the network of successor kingdoms. The relationship between Alexander and the Roman audience in the context of the late Republic was understandably more problematic, given the Macedonian's absolute monarchy, with sources such as Livy using the character of the king as a vehicle for a discussion on the nature of the newly founded Principate. For more on the Hellenistic exploitation of Alexander's likeness, see Stewart (1993). For more on the relationship between republican Rome and the conqueror, see Livy 9.18.1-7; Spencer (2002) 39-82.

<sup>185</sup> Spencer (2002) 41; Athanassiadi (1992) 193-94.

<sup>186</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 50.1

<sup>187</sup> For more on the luck of Alexander, see Dio 68.29.1. For Trajan's imperial expansion, see Dio 68.29.2. The emperor is also placed by Dio (68.30.1) in Babylon during this period, stemming from a desire by Trajan to sacrifice at the deathbed of the king.

<sup>188</sup> For Caracalla's phalanx named in honour of Alexander, see Dio 78.7.1-2. For more on Nero's military homage to the king, see Suet. *Nero.* 19.

<sup>189</sup> Athanassiadi (1992: 193) claims that 'any expansion eastwards in which political motives were mingled with civilising pretensions was bound to be conceived in terms of the heroic exploits of Alexander the Great, whose life-story had already passed into the realm of folklore.'

Parthia were modelled extensively on that taken by Alexander, even including a visit to Ilium.<sup>190</sup>

Based on the evidence, then, I would argue that, in addition to reflecting the idealised image of Alexander found in the ancient literature, Caracalla's use of imagery associating him with Alexander was part of a generally accepted *topos* inferring military strength and *virtus*, with a particular emphasis on being the champion of the east. A final observation must be made, however, in reference to Caracalla's own relationship with the king and his legacy. The Alexander legend played a prominent role in the civil war between Septimius Severus and Pescennius Niger, with the pretender to the throne accepting the epithet of a 'new Alexander' from his supporters in the eastern provinces.<sup>191</sup> In the aftermath of the Wars of Succession, Septimius Severus visited Alexandria with his family as part of their imperial tour.<sup>192</sup> During his time in the city, the emperor took the unusual move of closing the tomb of Alexander and removing some of its contents, so that 'no one in future should either view Alexander's body or read what was written in the above mentioned books [tomes reputedly containing secret lore].'<sup>193</sup> Severus had appreciated the propagandistic value that the legend of Alexander could generate. By closing the tomb and preventing any access, the emperor must have hoped to reduce the opportunity for any others to claim that they were the successors to the king's legacy in a similar fashion to Pescennius Niger.<sup>194</sup> In Caracalla's youth, then, even before he rose to share the mantle of power with his father, he would have been able to witness to the significant political power connected to the mythos surrounding Alexander.

In summary, then, even accounting for the hostile literary source tradition criticising the emperor, it is clear that the imagery and legacy of Alexander the Great had a considerable bearing on elements of Caracalla's life and rule. I have argued that it would be incorrect to accept that this was a simple case of obsessive hero worship,

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<sup>190</sup> For studies devoted to Caracalla's circuitous route of travel and its similarity to that taken by his idol, see Boteva (1999) 181-88; Johnston (1983) 58-76, and Levick (1969) 426-46.

<sup>191</sup> Dio 75.6.2a; Buraselis (2007) 28; Birley (1988) 135-36.

<sup>192</sup> Dio 76.18; Birley (1988) 136.

<sup>193</sup> Dio 76.13.2: ἵνα μηδεὶς ἔτι μήτε τὸ τούτου σῶμα ἴδῃ μήτε τὰ ἐν ἐκείνοις γεγραμμένα ἀναλέξηται.

<sup>194</sup> Buraselis (2007) 29.

however, and that the evidence suggests that emperor was acting within a pre-established tradition of *Augusti* invoking the memory of the conqueror for their own political agenda, specifically promoting military virtue and success. It is within this context of imperial propaganda that we must interpret the Antonine Constitution. I have shown that while the tone and rhetoric of the edict cannot be linked conclusively to the historical Alexander, since the source tradition is too unreliable, it is possible to identify a similarity between the text and the idealised version of the king presented in Plutarch's *De Fortuna Alexandri*. The extent to which Caracalla would have drawn such a distinction, however, is debatable. That Caracalla was potentially emulating Alexander the Great through his expression in the Antonine Constitution seems plausible. There is no suggestion, however, that this was the primary intention of the emperor in introducing the edict. In fact, if other evidence for Caracalla's reign is considered, it is patently evident that his use of Alexander iconography formed only one facet of a wider propagandistic revolution, in which Caracalla sought to redefine the character of the Severan dynasty, following the murder of his brother Geta. It is necessary, then, to move beyond the emperor's exploitation of Alexandrian imagery and to focus on the wider context of Caracalla's sole rule. By examining the different ways in which Caracalla sought to consolidate his position as emperor, I will show in the next chapter how the Antonine Constitution was of critical importance to the emperor's new regime.

### CHAPTER III

#### *The Political Expediency of the *constitutio Antoniniana**

The transition from a principate shared between the sons of Severus in early AD 211 to the sole rule of Caracalla by the close of the same year, had been marked by some of the worst internecine violence to be witnessed within the imperial household since the Julio-Claudian period. Our main literary sources for the period, Dio and Herodian, differ in points of detail regarding the ways in which the rivalry between Caracalla and Geta was made manifest, but they agree that the final clash between the *Augusti* was brutal, the younger brother stabbed to death while clinging to his mother.<sup>195</sup> While the enmity between both men appears to have been public knowledge, the death of Geta represented a watershed moment in the history of the Empire, nonetheless; emperors had been murdered in the past, but never before had their assassin been someone who already possessed a share of the imperial throne.<sup>196</sup> After eliminating his co-emperor in such an open and ferocious manner, the extant evidence suggests that Caracalla felt vulnerable and was concerned about the public perception regarding the legitimacy of his principate.<sup>197</sup> Indeed, given Severus' nearly continual promotion of his sons as a guarantee of imperial harmony and continuity, Caracalla's position at the outset of AD 212 must have seemed increasingly precarious.<sup>198</sup>

It has been suggested that, from the moment of Geta's death, Caracalla was compelled to offer a public re-evaluation of recent events, including the assassination of his brother.<sup>199</sup> It has already been noted that the emperor made reference to the murder of Geta in the course of the Antonine Constitution, and so it is imperative that the edict is considered as a component part of this wider process. In this chapter, then, I will assess the political significance of the *constitutio Antoniniana* in consolidating Caracalla's position as the sole emperor at a time when his rule seemed fragile. The

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<sup>195</sup> Dio 78.2.3; Hdn 4.1.3.

<sup>196</sup> Dio (78.1.4) comments, for example, that everyone feared that something terrible was bound to happen, owing to the diametrically opposed personalities of the brothers.

<sup>197</sup> The large donatives paid to the soldiery, for example, in the aftermath of Geta's murder are considered in Chapter Five.

<sup>198</sup> Rowan (2012) 93.

<sup>199</sup> Kemezis (2014) 31-32.

chapter will begin with a consideration of the *aequitas* promoted in the Giessen text, noting that, while scholars such as Mennen and Honoré are partially correct to view the legislation in the context of a wider social change, the social levelling embodied in the edict also contains a more immediate political application when set against the background of a strained relationship between the imperial household and senatorial elite.<sup>200</sup>

Following this, I will then outline how the Antonine Constitution can be seen to promote and consolidate the Caracallan regime in three distinct ways. Firstly, the religious ideology present in the text will be examined, since this served the dual purpose of promoting an image of personal piety on the part of the emperor, while also allowing him to control the narrative of the events surrounding Geta's demise. Secondly, Caracalla's promotion of his own imperial *indulgentia* will be discussed. The general importance of the virtue to the *Augusti* will be observed briefly, since the promotion of generosity was far from unique to Caracalla, before the value of such a display in the context of AD 212 is noted. Finally, the extent to which the *constitutio* can be deemed a social contract between the emperor and his citizens will be considered. I will argue that if the legislation is examined through the lens of the patron-client relationship, a theory that Caracalla was attempting to forge a personal tie of loyalty between himself and the new *cives* becomes persuasive. The combination of factors offered in this chapter ultimately supports the hypothesis that the *constitutio Antoniniana* was a key element of Caracallan propaganda in the aftermath of Geta's assassination, in which the emperor endeavoured to redefine the character of the Severan dynasty.

### **The *constitutio Antoniniana* and the Promotion of *Aequitas***

The jurist Paul, a contemporary of the Severi, recorded the general principle that 'in all matters, especially the law, equity (*aequitas*) must be considered.'<sup>201</sup> The drive for equity appears to have been an ideological concern which occupied the earlier Severan emperors. Both Septimius Severus and Caracalla can be observed arbitrating

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<sup>200</sup> Mennen (2011) 22-23; Honoré (2004) 114.

<sup>201</sup> *Dig.* 50.17.90: *in omnibus quidem, maxime tamen in iurem aequitas spectanda est* (emphasis added).

cases, for example, and emphasising how their perception of *aequitas* had moved them to reach their final conclusions and judgments.<sup>202</sup> It is tempting to view this phenomenon in the context of a changing philosophy of imperial government, in which there was a growing belief that the Principate should be concerned with the benefit of its people, rather than the personal gain of the emperors themselves. This attitude is found in a selection of documents from the period, including the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, and in the decree of Alexander Severus cancelling the demands of the *aurum coronarium*.<sup>203</sup> On first examination, the *constitutio Antoniniana* can be interpreted as a significant piece of legislation in this vein. Indeed, if the Giessen text is examined, there would appear to be hints that Caracalla adhered to this ideology, prompting him to enact a benevolent and inclusive initiative:

Ὅφείλει γὰρ τὸ πλῆθος οὐ μόνον τᾶλλα συνυπομένειν πάντα ἀλλὰ ἤδη καὶ τῇ νίκῃ ἐνπεριελήφθαι. Τοῦτο δὲ τὸ διάτ]αγμα ἐξαπλώσει τὴν μεγαλειότητα τοῦ Ῥωμαίων δήμου συμβαίνει γὰρ τὴν αὐτὴν περὶ τοῦς ἄλλους γεγενῆσθαι ἥπερ διάπρέπουσιν ἀνέκαθεν Ῥωμαῖοι τιμῇ καταλειφθέντων μηδένων τῶν ἐκάστης χώρας ἐν οἰκουμένη ἀπολιτεῦτων ἢ ἀτιμῆτων.

It is necessary for the masses not only to share in our burden, but also to be included in victory. This decree will spread the magnificence of the Roman people. For it now happens that the same greatness has transpired for everyone, by the honour in which the Romans have been preeminent since time immemorial, with no-one from any country in the world being left stateless or without honour.<sup>204</sup>

By advancing nearly every free person in his empire to the rights of *civitas*, Caracalla thus assured that they would have enjoyed legal parity, to the extent that they all had access to the Roman legal system.<sup>205</sup> In this context, Buraselis has argued that the Antonine Constitution should be viewed as a step in a larger process of legal and social levelling occurring during the imperial period, one in which provincial subjects

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<sup>202</sup> For an example of this under Septimius Severus, see *Dig.* 36(34).1.76.1. For an example from the reign of Caracalla, see *CJ* 2.1.4. It should be noted, however, that this was not a guarantee of complete legal equality (social distinctions were maintained, for example), but rather an assurance of equitable treatment in the spirit of the written law. For more on this, see Buraselis (2007) 60-65.

<sup>203</sup> *M. Aur. Meditations* 1.14; *Oliver* 275 (= *P. Fay.* 20). For more detail on Alexander Severus' decree, see *Oliver* (1978) 474-85; Buraselis (2007) 22-23.

<sup>204</sup> *P. Giss.* 40 I, ll. 9-14.

<sup>205</sup> As noted in Chapter One, however, other social distinctions, such as the divide between the *honestiores* and *humiliores* remained. For more, see *Rilinger* (1988) 13-33; *Garnsey* (1970) 261-80.

were viewed as active participants in the empire, rather than simply tributaries for the Italian heartland.<sup>206</sup> I would argue, however, that this is too simplistic an impression of the phenomenon, and that other factors must also be taken into consideration. Firstly, the process of social levelling was, to an extent, the natural result of a development in which there was a general shift in power from the imperial centre to the provinces.<sup>207</sup> At its most basic, this can be seen in the gradual extension of *civitas* and other lesser rights that occurred in the pre-212 era.<sup>208</sup> This development can also be observed in the increasing prominence awarded to individuals of equestrian status over those of the *ordo senatorius*. It is difficult to identify a ‘full-scope’ rise in the *ordo equester*, since it was far from a homogenous group, but a number of individual advances can nevertheless be identified in relation to provincial governorships, the military and the imperial bureaucracy.<sup>209</sup>

The Severan period forms a high watermark in relation to this process, with a high number of equestrians serving across the civil service and the military, not to mention the rise of the jurists that were to flourish until the military crisis of the third century.<sup>210</sup> As above, this can be explained by a natural shift in the priorities of government. With an expanding bureaucracy and an increasing dependence on the army, it is natural that the Roman state would rely upon, and promote, capable equestrians rather than selecting officials from the traditional elite only.<sup>211</sup> Another factor that must be considered, however, is the political friction between the senatorial order and the Severan emperors. It is clear from our literary sources, for example, that Septimius Severus was not the senate’s preferred choice to succeed Didius Julianus. Dio alleged that the senators harboured secret hopes against Severus in the war against Clodius Albinus, while Herodian claimed that some actively encouraged and

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<sup>206</sup> Buraselis (2007) 12, 86.

<sup>207</sup> Mennen (2011) 40.

<sup>208</sup> For more on the extension of the franchise in the period before AD 212, see Sherwin-White (1973a).

<sup>209</sup> Mennen (2011) 135.

<sup>210</sup> Mennen (2011) 151-56; Buraselis (2007) 55-57. For more on the rise of the jurists, see Chapter One. This trend can be seen most markedly in connection with the army. Mennen (2011: 193-240) has shown that, while Septimius Severus maintained a senatorial presence in his officer corps, this diminished rapidly under Caracalla and had all but disappeared by the reign of Gallienus.

<sup>211</sup> Mennen (2011) 44.

supported the governor of Britannia to march on Rome while the Severan armies were engaged against Pescennius Niger:

πολλούς τε, μάλιστα τοὺς ἐξέχοντας τῆς συγκλήτου βουλῆς, ἰδίᾳ καὶ κρύβδην ἐπιστέλλοντας αὐτῷ, ἕς τε τὴν Ῥώμην ἐλθεῖν πειθόντας ἀπόντος καὶ ἀσχολουμένου τοῦ Σεβήρου. ἠροῦντο γὰρ οἱ εὐπατρίδαι ἐκεῖνον μᾶλλον ἄρχοντα, ἅτε ἐκ προγόνων εὖ γεγονότα καὶ χρηστὸν τὸ ἦθος εἶναι λεγόμενον.

Many people, particularly the more distinguished senators, were sending personal, private letters urging him to come to Rome while Severus was occupied in the East. The nobles preferred to have him as emperor because he traced his noble birth back to a long line of ancestors and was said to be good natured.<sup>212</sup>

The resulting acrimony resulted in the emperor punishing a number of senators for their actions during the war and, I would argue, leads to another possible interpretation of the levelling tendency that accelerated throughout the same period.<sup>213</sup> While the drive for *aequitas* does seem to have had a philosophical basis during the Antonine and Severan periods, it can also be argued that Severus facilitated or exploited this process in order to stabilise his dynasty's grip on power.<sup>214</sup> The same theory can also be applied to the sole reign of Caracalla since, according to Dio and Herodian, the emperor's relationship with the senate was far from cordial.<sup>215</sup> This conclusion has serious implications for the way in which we perceive the purpose of the *constitutio Antoniniana*, specifically that it was a politicised initiative designed to garner a large support base for the emperor at a time when he was mistrustful of many among the senatorial elite.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Hdn 3.5.2 (tr. Whittaker). For Dio's claims, see 76.4.2.

<sup>213</sup> Dio 76.8.4; Hdn 3.8.2-7. For more on the question of senators supporting Albinus and the atmosphere of tension in Rome following the Severan victory, see Daguet-Gagey (2006) 76.

<sup>214</sup> Mennen (2011) 136-38.

<sup>215</sup> Dio (78.4.1-6.1) describes Caracalla engaging in a purge of illustrious men, while Herodian (4.5.7) claimed that he instilled fear among the senators in an angry speech, following the murder of Geta. While we should exercise caution in accepting Dio's testimony as representative of the entire senatorial order, it remains clear that Caracalla was not a popular ruler among the senate. For more on Dio's perspective, see Davenport (2012).

<sup>216</sup> In the aftermath of Caracalla's speech to the senate, Herodian (4.5.7) claimed that the emperor made a point of fixing his gaze upon known associates of Geta among the assembled body. That the emperor might still have questioned many senators' loyalty in the opening months of 212 is plausible. For a suggestion that some among the senate had already agitated against Caracalla, in the attempted coup d'état that was result in the execution of Plautianus, see Bingham and Imrie (2015) 76-91.

## **Re-writing the Narrative: Caracallan Self-Representation**

The situation facing Caracalla at the opening of AD 212 was arguably even more complicated than the perilous combination of political and military obstacles that Septimius Severus had to overcome to secure his grip on imperial power. As noted above, Caracalla's sole principate was founded on the unprecedented act of one incumbent emperor murdering another. It has been argued that this outbreak of violence at the end of 211 was a fatally destructive act, effectively ending any hope for the continued survival of the dynasty: 'by killing his brother and his own wife, who had left him no heirs, Caracalla had personally ruined the Severan dynasty.'<sup>217</sup> Mennen has argued that the emperor found himself in a situation in which he was compelled to do 'everything in his power to forget the dynasty', and create a new imperial image that was, in effect, anti-dynastic.<sup>218</sup> This is an overly simplistic assessment of Caracalla's principate, however, that misinterprets the extant evidence.

Given the act of fratricide that heralded Caracalla's sole principate and the subsequent murders of individuals connected to the dynasty, such as Plautilla, it would clearly have been impossible for the emperor to adopt or continue the pre-existing familial propaganda emphasised through official media by his father.<sup>219</sup> These themes would have drawn too much attention to the memory of Geta, a factor which might have undermined his own legitimacy as emperor, especially if the ancient writers are correct that Caracalla only won the support of groups like the Alban legion through large donatives.<sup>220</sup> This does not equate, however, to a denial of the Severan dynasty

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<sup>217</sup> Mennen (2006) 260. Caracalla's estranged wife, Plautilla, is included among a list of notable individuals murdered on Caracalla's order in the period directly following Geta's assassination; see Dio 78.1.1.

<sup>218</sup> Mennen (2006) 260.

<sup>219</sup> In the aftermath of the Wars of Succession, Severus' propaganda focused on the strength and unity of the wider Severan family. Themes such as *Felicitas Saeculi* were stressed on coins with accompanying imagery of Julia Domna and both Caracalla and Geta. See *BMCRE* V 225 for one such example. Furthermore, Severan unity was promoted through larger structures such as the *Septizodium*, and by the central roles played by each of the family members in state occasions such as the *Ludi Saeculares*. For more detail on this, see Gorrie (2004) 61-72; (2001) 653-70.

<sup>220</sup> Dio (78.3.1-2) wrote that Caracalla silenced the soldiery by promising great things. Herodian (4.4.8) alleged that the soldiers knew the facts of Geta's murder, but hailed Caracalla as sole emperor nonetheless, after being promised vast sums. The most intriguing account of this moment, however, comes from the *Historia Augusta*. In this source, the author claimed that the legion at Alba initially refused Caracalla entrance to their camp, declaring that they had sworn allegiance to both the sons of Severus. Like the other accounts, the emperor secured their loyalty, though only after promising them large sums of money. For more detail, see HA *Car.* 2.7-8; HA *Geta.* 6.1-2.

at large, since Geta was never the individual from whom Caracalla derived his dynastic legitimacy. As the eldest son of Septimius Severus and Julia Domna, Caracalla had been a Severan emperor since AD 198, and remained so in 212, regardless of his struggle with his younger brother. While it is true that Geta's demise and the lack of an obvious heir made the question of the eventual succession acute, as the only surviving male descendent of Severus, Caracalla *was* the Severan dynasty.<sup>221</sup> I would argue that it was never Caracalla's intention to renounce his connection to the dynasty.<sup>222</sup> Instead, I would concur with Kemezis that the emperor was compelled to present a re-envisioned account of recent history: 'Instead of two brothers peacefully continuing a dynasty stretching back to Nerva and forward to the infinite future, there was a story of crisis and triumph, in which the true emperor is preserved by the gods from the forces of evil represented by his brother.'<sup>223</sup> It is into this propagandistic revolution that the Antonine Constitution fits, signifying a redefinition of the relationship between the emperor and his subjects.

Before considering the role of the legislation in this process, however, is it worth noting briefly the other ways in which Caracalla reinvented the Severan dynasty in the aftermath of Geta's demise. The first of these is the act of *damnatio memoriae* ordered by the emperor on his dead brother.<sup>224</sup> Dio claimed that Caracalla's wrath was so extreme that he even ordered the defacement of any foundation stones which had supported Geta's statues, further commanding that any coinage bearing his image was to be melted down.<sup>225</sup> The author also alleged that the emperor engaged in 'unholy rites' by ordering offerings to be made to the *manes* of his brother, thereby condemning him to the underworld for eternity and preventing him from being deified.<sup>226</sup> Even accounting for the hyperbolic nature of Dio's text in criticising Caracalla, the surviving

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<sup>221</sup> Levick (2007) 92.

<sup>222</sup> If it were Caracalla's intention to distance himself from the Severi, as Mennen has claimed, then it is odd that the emperor opted to retain elements of obvious continuity, such as his Antonine nomenclature, for example. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Caracalla maintained a close association with his mother from the period of Geta's murder to his own demise. For more detail on the relationship between Caracalla and Julia Domna, see Levick (2007) 90-93; Saavedra-Guerrero (2007) 120-31.

<sup>223</sup> Kemezis (2014) 32.

<sup>224</sup> In the aftermath of the murder, Caracalla had Geta declared a public enemy, see Hdn 4.8; HA *Car.* 1.1; Eutrop. 8.19.

<sup>225</sup> Dio 78.12.6.

<sup>226</sup> Dio 78.12.6.

material evidence suggests that the *damnatio* was carried out with an unparalleled intensity. Getan statuary was destroyed, defaced or removed from public view and placed in warehouses, presumably to be re-carved and recycled.<sup>227</sup> The number of surviving inscriptions which make reference to Geta is also understandably miniscule. Of the 174 extant inscriptions on which his name appears, only 37 have survived intact.<sup>228</sup> This remarkable rate of attrition is testament to the thorough nature of the process, leading Murphy to comment that ‘in few cases has an order to efface a man’s name from the monuments been so effectively carried out’.<sup>229</sup> Not even coinage appears to have escaped Caracalla’s wrath. The survival of Getan coins demonstrates that the melting of coinage ordered by Caracalla was only partially successful, but a high number of numismatic remains found across the empire do display evidence of defacement and vandalism.<sup>230</sup> Whether this act was the result of a desire to cleanse the empire publically of the evil that Geta had come to represent or, rather, a simple reflection of Caracalla’s utter hatred of his dead brother, the evidence suggests that the process was considered by the emperor to be an important element in consolidating his rule in the opening months of 212.

In addition to the destruction of Geta’s legacy, Caracalla’s own self-image underwent considerable change. One of the most visible elements of this phenomenon is the change in the emperor’s official portraiture. While images of Caracalla produced during his adolescence are marked by an Antonine influence, the result of Septimius Severus’ attempts to forge a connection between the dynasty and his own, Caracallan portraiture from 212 onwards is characterised by a cropped, militaristic hairstyle and furrowed brow line.<sup>231</sup> Rather than simply accepting the spurious claim offered by the

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<sup>227</sup> Varner (2004) 170-73, 256. Only one full length statue thought to represent Geta survives intact, now in the *Villa del Poggio Imperiale*. Even this has sustained a considerable degree of damage to the facial area.

<sup>228</sup> Varner (2004) 182.

<sup>229</sup> Murphy (1945) 105. For more recent works on the *damnatio* and its unusual intensity, see Krüpe (2011) and De Jong (2007) 95-111.

<sup>230</sup> There are a number of examples from cities such as Ephesus, Pergamum and Stratonikeia where either Getan portraiture or titles (sometimes a combination of both) have been scraped or erased from the flan, the spaces subsequently countermarked in some cases. For more detail on this numismatic phenomenon, see Varner (2004) 171-72.

<sup>231</sup> Mennen (2006) 257-58. Dio (76.7.4) remarked that Severus styled himself as the son of Marcus Aurelius and the brother of Commodus. This is an element of Dio’s text that can be also observed in the epigraphic record, with Severus tracing his self-styled family line back to the emperor Nerva. For an example of this, see *CIL* VI 954, and Hekster (2012) 243-46.

ancient writers that the emperor's visage changed and became more severe as his character grew more savage – since it seems a ridiculous assumption that an emperor would knowingly promote a public image of cruelty in his statuary – it has been proposed that Caracalla might have been attempting to tap into another artistic tradition.<sup>232</sup> Leander Touati has identified that it is possible to compare the later Caracallan portraiture with military figures found on the Great Trajanic Frieze which display similarly tense and stark expressions in many cases. Far from savagery, Leander Touati has argued that these portraits (and the Caracallan style, by extension) are probably an attempt to convey the concept of *virtus* through the portrait medium.<sup>233</sup> Considering Caracalla's popularity with the army, it is understandable that he would seek to emphasise such a quality about his imperial character.<sup>234</sup> In a similar vein, Zanker has suggested that the furrowed brow, intimidating on first sight, might be explained by the emperor emphasising a personal quality of stoicism.<sup>235</sup>

How, then, does the Antonine Constitution fit into this programme of reinvention? As I stated at the opening of this chapter, I would argue that, if the text of the *constitutio* is examined closely, it is possible to identify three ways in which the edict functioned as a powerful vehicle of imperial propaganda, in which Caracalla's version of his struggle with Geta is defined. Firstly, he emphasised his personal religious devotion and piety, publicising the idea of divine providence supporting his reign and promoting an image of the emperor and populace striving together for religious *consensus*.<sup>236</sup> Secondly, he sought to depict himself as the most generous *princeps* to date in an attempt to distance himself further from the image of a fratricide. Thirdly, Caracalla attempted to secure his sole position of imperial power by creating a global patron-client relationship between him and his populace, an initiative which also served to prompt a reconsideration of Roman identity.<sup>237</sup> It is noteworthy, then, that, if the text of the *constitutio* is considered, all of these key elements become

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<sup>232</sup> For the ancient accounts of Caracalla's allegedly savage nature, see Dio 78.6.1a, 78.10.2; Hdn 4.3.3-4; HA *Car.* 2.1-3, 9.3, 11.5.

<sup>233</sup> Leander Touati (1991) 117-31.

<sup>234</sup> This can also be observed in the emperor's attempts to draw parallels between himself and Alexander the Great. For more on this phenomenon, see Chapter Two.

<sup>235</sup> Zanker (1996) 93-97, 267.

<sup>236</sup> Ando (2000) 131-76, 336-405.

<sup>237</sup> Kemezis (2014) 32.

visible. In essence, the edict allowed Caracalla to promote each of his three propagandistic strands simultaneously and on a massive scale. This chapter will now examine the three different aspects of the *constitutio*: the edict as a religious offering, as an example of imperial *indulgentia* and, finally, the way in which the *constitutio* can be interpreted as a social contract forming a patron-client bond between emperor and subjects.

### **The *constitutio Antoniniana* as a Religious Offering**

The emperors of the Severan dynasty are renowned for their individual piety, on the whole. Caracalla himself was often linked with the god Sarapis, for example, while the fondness of Elagabalus for eastern deities and cult is infamous.<sup>238</sup> The opening lines of the *constitutio Antoniniana* and the tone found throughout the edict reveal that Caracalla was eager to publicise his legislation as a religious act. In the section of the text prefiguring the actual grant of *civitas*, the emperor outlined both the context of the *constitutio* and the motivation underlying it. He claimed that the edict represented an act of thanksgiving to the gods, a way in which the emperor thought he could display his gratitude to them for what he refers to as divine protection against a secretive conspiracy – implying that Geta had been preparing to murder him.<sup>239</sup> He continued by declaring that an appropriate way to thank the gods was to bring more of his people into their temples as fully enfranchised Romans. Indeed the text of the edict reads:

Αὐτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ Μάρκος Αὐρήλιος Σεουήρος Ἀντωνῖνος Εὐσεβῆς λέγει πάντως εἰς τὸ θεῖον χρή μᾶλλον ἀναφέρειν καὶ τὰς αἰτίας καὶ λογισμοὺς δικαίως δ' ἂν κἀγὼ τοῖς θεοῖς τοῖς ἀθανάτοις εὐχαριστήσαιμι ὅτι τῆς τοιαύτης ἐπιβουλῆς γενομένης σῶον ἐμὲ συνετήρησαν τοιγαροῦν νομίζω οὕτω μεγαλοπρεπῶς καὶ εὐσεβῶς δύνασθαι τῇ μεγαλειότητι αὐτῶν το ἱκανὸν ποιεῖν, εἰ τοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ ὁσάκις ἐὰν ὑπείσελθωσιν εἰς τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὡς Ῥωμαίους εἰς τὰ ἱερὰ τῶν θεῶν συνεισενέγκοιμι.

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<sup>238</sup> For an example of Caracalla being referred to as *philosarapis*, see *IGRR* I 1063. On the religious practice of Elagabalus, see Arrizabalaga y Prado (2010) 165-82.

<sup>239</sup> Herodian (4.5.3-4) claimed that, in the course of his speech to the senate following Geta's murder, the emperor revealed a Getan plot to poison Caracalla which had been foiled.

The Emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Severus Antoninus Pius decrees: It is altogether necessary to attribute the causes and reasons [of recent events] to the divine. I, personally, would rightly thank the immortal gods, since although such a conspiracy [as that of Geta] has occurred, they have watched over me and protected me. I think that I am able, both magnificently and piously, to do something fitting to the gods' majesty, if I manage to bring [all] those in the empire, who constitute my people, to the temples of the gods as Romans.<sup>240</sup>

It seems incontrovertible, then, that the primary public motivation for the Antonine Constitution was a religiously inspired one. We should note, however, that the 212 edict was not the only way in which Caracalla can be observed engaging in religious devotion. In fact, the emperor seems to have been eager to associate himself with a number of gods throughout his sole reign. This aspect of Caracalla's rule from 212-17 will be considered with specific attention to his imperial coinage, since there is a wealth of iconographic evidence to be found in the numismatic corpus. It is likely, furthermore, that the emperor was concerned with the matter of *consensus* in state religion as described by Ando.<sup>241</sup> The evidence suggests that there is more to Caracalla's concept and presentation of religious belief than simply devotion, and that these elements of the emperor's reign, including the tone of the *constitutio*, are better explained as part of the wider process of his refashioning the Severan dynasty and focusing it around himself from the outset of AD 212.

A cursory examination of the numismatic evidence for Caracalla's reign reveals the importance of the Roman religious pantheon to the period of his sole rule. In her analysis of Caracalla's imperial coinage for 212-17, Manders has shown that themes promoting 'divine association', that is to say any themes connecting the emperor with the gods/divine or presenting him as *sacerdos*, form the largest iconographic group, some 66.9% of all imperial coin types struck.<sup>242</sup> On one level, these coins might be seen as an extension of the religious thanksgiving that Caracalla proclaimed in the text of the *constitutio*. This hypothesis is supported when it is noted that *providentia* is a prominent theme in the imperial output of this period, usually

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<sup>240</sup> *P. Giss.* 40 I, ll. 1-7.

<sup>241</sup> Ando (2000) 73-276. The issue of *consensus* will be considered later in this chapter.

<sup>242</sup> Manders (2012) 232. Similarly, Rowan (2012: 112) has used hoard evidence to conclude that depictions of gods represented 59% of the total found.

carrying the legend PROVIDENTIAE DEORVM and depicting a personification of Providentia.<sup>243</sup> Indeed, these coin types further support the theory that Caracalla publically promoted the notion that he had been saved from his brother's machinations and thus that his sole rule was divinely sanctioned.

More generally, it has been noted that, in the 212-17 period, Caracalla's numismatic iconography is dominated by a 'striking collection' of gods, including Apollo, Diana, Isis, Pluto, Sarapis, Venus and Vesta.<sup>244</sup> The number of healing deities included in his imperial and provincial coinage, such as Apollo, Aesculapius and Sarapis, has led to questions regarding how far we should accept Dio's statement that the emperor was ill of mind and body.<sup>245</sup> Considering the prominence of religious iconography during this period, it is unsurprising that there have been attempts in the past to identify a reference to the *constitutio Antoniniana* within this body of evidence. Euzennat has attempted to link the edict with Caracalla's probable visit to the oracle of Apollo at Claros, for example.<sup>246</sup> As Rowan has rightly argued, however, there is no evidence to support such a connection in the text of the edict; if the oracle of Apollo at Claros was a major influence on Caracalla and the *constitutio*, then we would expect there to be at least a passing mention of it in the body of the text.<sup>247</sup> Furthermore, this hypothesis would rest on the *constitutio* being passed during Caracalla's Germanic campaigns, a factor which does not fit with the 212 dating of the edict.<sup>248</sup>

Another theory connects the *constitutio* with Pluto coin types struck during Caracalla's sole reign. This hypothesis has more traction since it is noteworthy that Pluto reverses were extraordinary for this period and only appear on coins during

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<sup>243</sup> RIC 227; 309a-b; 511a-d; 514; 519; 535; 527a-b; 575a-576. Also see Manders (2012) 241, who lists these examples in connection with Caracalla's coin types promoting 'divine association'. For more on the attributes of Providentia, a virtue associated with the wellbeing of the populace but also, importantly, forming a guarantor of smooth imperial succession, see Noreña (2011) 92-99.

<sup>244</sup> For more detail, with examples of each of these types, see Manders (2012) 233-35.

<sup>245</sup> Dio 78.15.3. While it is impossible to disprove that Caracalla suffered from a number of ailments, I would argue that Rowan (2012: 113-31) is correct to suggest that there may be a more mundane reason behind the appearance of these deities, in that the emperor might simply have chosen to honour the local cults of the cities that he visited. Indeed, Pergamum was renowned for its *Asclepieion*, and Claros and Grannus are thought to have had healing sanctuaries to Apollo, to give two examples.

<sup>246</sup> Euzennat (1976) 68.

<sup>247</sup> Rowan (2012) 127.

<sup>248</sup> Barnes (2012) 51-52.

Caracalla's sole reign.<sup>249</sup> Manders has suggested that the sudden appearance of this deity on Roman coins from 212 might therefore make reference to the *constitutio*, using the agricultural element of the deity to promote a positive consequence of the edict in the form of an increased corn dole from Egypt resulting from the increased tax yield from the province.<sup>250</sup> She has argued that this connection seems more likely when it is also noted that Sarapis also appeared in his own right as a deity on Roman coinage from 212.<sup>251</sup> While this combination of evidence appears circumstantially persuasive, the fact remains that this would represent an incredibly subtle iconographic allusion to the edict, dependent on the intended audience understanding a new coin type (which contained no specific reference to the *constitutio*) and a rather precise connection to the Egyptian corn supply. Even if we accept that coin types were generally intelligible among ancient consumers, this hypothesis seems unconvincing.<sup>252</sup>

Rather than attempting to identify vague references among the specifics of Caracalla's considerable religious output, Ando has argued that the *constitutio* fits better into a wider social and religious system in which the *consensus* of the populace was crucial.<sup>253</sup> He argues that the Romans understood that divine favour was primarily achieved by the 'universal piety' of the populace, noting that when referring to religious matters, certain sources appear to adopt quasi-medical terminology 'to express the "infection" of the Roman body politic by some foreign "poison".'<sup>254</sup> It is in this context, then, that Ando believes the *constitutio* should be interpreted, as an attempt to achieve a powerful *consensus universorum* and secure the lasting favour of the gods:

Wishing to lead the people of the empire in a unanimous display of consensual piety, and believing that the *populus* of the empire was most properly constituted by its citizen body, Caracalla granted citizenship to all its residents. In other words, the *consensus* of the empire's population would speak more loudly if all were citizens.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Manders (2012) 239.

<sup>250</sup> Manders (2012) 239.

<sup>251</sup> Manders (2012) 239; also see L'Orange (1947) 82.

<sup>252</sup> For more on coin targeting and the question of audience comprehension, see Howgego (1995) 70-76.

<sup>253</sup> Ando (2000) 277-405.

<sup>254</sup> Ando (2000) 392. For ancient examples, see Cic. *Har. Resp.* 9.19, and Tert. *Apol.* 25.2.

<sup>255</sup> Ando (2000) 395. Also see Ando (2012) 52-57.

This explanation seems to be the strongest in relation to the religious aims of Caracalla in promulgating the *constitutio Antoniniana*, but more needs to be said here. The emperor's attempt to achieve a nearly universal *consensus* across the empire can be seen to form a component part of the Caracallan worldview promoted following the murder of Geta, a more dangerous one in which the emperor was challenged to triumph over adversity with divine assistance; the participation of his new citizens in securing heavenly favour was therefore essential.<sup>256</sup> By invoking the gods, and referring to his survival and continued prosperity as a matter of divine providence, Caracalla had utilised the Antonine Constitution and associated media to provide himself with a solid ideological foundation on which to legitimise his position.

It is important to note, however, that this was not the only way in which Caracalla characterised the transition from the shared principate to his sole rule. Returning to the emperor's numismatic output from 212 to 217, another feature that becomes apparent is the revolution in the different virtues that were emphasised in this period compared to that which preceded it. It is hardly surprising to discover that there is a decline in coin types promoting traditionally dynastic themes, 'golden age' types or that of *aeternitas*, for example.<sup>257</sup> Of the types that fill this iconographic vacuum, the appearance of *securitas* and *libertas* are of particular note. Manders has depicted the emergence of the former as the successor to the *aeternitas* type, since the coins in question proclaim *securitas perpetua*.<sup>258</sup> Even more illuminating is the sudden, and short-lived, appearance of *libertas* in the coinage of 213. It is not difficult to envisage this iconography being struck in reference to the murder of Geta, though I would argue that the time delay between the murder and the circulation of this type makes it more likely that these coins were struck in support of the *constitutio Antoniniana*, in which Caracalla made reference to a conspiracy against him.<sup>259</sup> In either case, the appearance

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<sup>256</sup> Kemezis (2014) 32.

<sup>257</sup> Manders (2012) 247. The primary *aeternitas* type struck during the period 198-210 was that of *Concordia aeterna*, which would clearly be of limited value to Caracalla in the context of Geta's murder. For more on this, see Manders (2012) 248.

<sup>258</sup> Manders (2012) 248. For examples of these coins, see *RIC* 309a; 536a-b, and 573 a-b. There are further examples which can only be dated 210-13 but, given this context, it seems more likely that they also derive from the beginning of 212 onwards. See *RIC* 229a-b; 512a-d; 515 and 520.

<sup>259</sup> Manders (2012) 245.

of *libertas* in this period following Geta's demise might serve to depict the youngest son of Severus as a tyrannical conspirator against a legitimate emperor. With this in mind, it would seem that Rowan is correct to identify a new 'ideology of power' being emphasised in the opening period of Caracalla's sole rule, a phenomenon which itself fits well with the idea that the emperor offered a re-envisioned version of recent history to consolidate his position.<sup>260</sup>

### **Caracalla as the *indulgentissimus princeps***

Another important component of this iconographic revolution is the emperor's continued emphasis of his personal generosity (*indulgentia*). The promotion of *indulgentia* as an imperial quality was not unique to Caracalla. In fact, it appeared at many different points during the Principate, especially from the reign of Trajan onwards, forming one marker of a 'good emperor' and containing a paternalistic quality which reflected the *princeps* protecting and looking after his people.<sup>261</sup> The virtue appears during the reign of Septimius Severus, struck on precious and base metal coinage, primarily with reference to the generosity shown by the emperor towards Carthage and Italy.<sup>262</sup> With the change from shared rule to Caracalla's sole reign, we can observe a significant increase in the number of coins struck bearing a representation of *indulgentia*. If coin types depicting personified virtues are examined in more detail, it becomes clear that Caracalla struck more than double the number of *indulgentia* types than his closest predecessor, devoting close to thirty percent of all such coins to the deity.<sup>263</sup> Schmidt-Dick also noted this thematic concentration under Caracalla, identifying 214 varieties of *denarii* bearing the legend INDVLG

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<sup>260</sup> Rowan (2012) 111.

<sup>261</sup> Buraselis (2007) 79-80, see also Noreña (2011) 276.

<sup>262</sup> Severus struck large numbers of coins bearing the reverse legend INDVLGENTIA AVGG IN CARTH, dating to AD 203-204, following his visit to Carthage. From hoard analysis, Rowan has estimated that this type alone represented about three percent of Severus' total output, while the deity, in general, represented just under 15% of the total Severan 'virtue types'. For more detail, see Rowan (2012) 78; Noreña (2011) 279-80. Whilst the precise indulgence being referred to in these coins remains a mystery, it has been suggested that it could either have been in response to a remission of tax, or a distribution of olive oil. For the fiscal hypothesis, see Babelon (1903) 157-74. Whilst the fiscal hypothesis is logical in the context of Severus visiting Carthage in person, the theory of an oil dole is equally likely, especially when it is noted that there was a similar *indulgentia* type issued in connection with Italy. For more on this, see Pera (1979) 103-26. See also Rowan (2012) 79.

<sup>263</sup> Noreña (2011: 279-80) has shown that the only emperors to come close to the Caracallan *indulgentia* output were Septimius Severus, with fifteen percent of all virtue types, and Hadrian, with less than five percent.

FECVNDAE, with another 300 carrying the more general INDVLGENTIAE AVG.<sup>264</sup> An examination of the later Severan emperors' coinage reveals that, while they contain a number of references to similar virtues, such as *liberalitas*, the number of *indulgentia* reverses is so meagre as to be arguably insignificant.<sup>265</sup> This suggests, rather than forming a natural evolution in numismatic iconography prompted by a general increase in the importance of *indulgentia* to the Roman state, that the virtue of generosity was a singularly important one to Caracalla's image of his new principate.

A similar trend can also be found in the epigraphic corpus. In addition to an increase in the official use of the virtue through the numismatic medium, the period 212-217 also represents a high-point for unofficial and dedicatory inscriptions associating *indulgentia* with Caracalla personally, referring to the emperor as *indulgentissimus*.<sup>266</sup> In this matter, I concur with Noreña that the upsurge in inscriptions of this nature being produced is probably reflective of a public which is knowledgeable of, and sensitive to, the Caracallan regime's official iconographic emphases.<sup>267</sup> These inscriptions can be found in areas across the empire, both in Rome and in the provinces.<sup>268</sup> In further support that this was an important ideological link between the emperor and the virtue, it should be noted that references to Caracalla's *indulgentia* were made even in inscriptions not directly dedicated to him. Julia Domna

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<sup>264</sup> Schmidt-Dick (2002) 61-62. These types are in addition to the Carthage type described above which appears on Caracallan coinage, on *RIC* 130-31, for example. These latter coins, however, can arguably be attributed to the influence of Severus in ensuring that both the *Augusti* promoted the generosity displayed towards Carthage.

<sup>265</sup> *Indulgentia* does not feature at all during the reign of Elagabalus, while only five types are attributed to Alexander Severus: *RIC* 1, 2, 381, 382 and 557. Four of these five specimens are dated to AD 221, meaning that they were struck before Alexander Severus even ascended to the imperial throne. The final example, *RIC* 557, is undated. On the reverse, *Spes* (the virtue was often associated *Spes* and *Clementia* in the numismatic medium) is depicted walking left, holding a flower and raising her skirt. I would suggest that this example was either struck around the same time as the other *indulgentia* types or at the very outset of his reign, with the mint of Rome merely continuing themes struck for him as Caesar before they had received any new directive from the new emperor. For more on the association between *Spes* and *Indulgentia*, see Buraselis (2007) 81.

<sup>266</sup> Noreña (2011) 277-79.

<sup>267</sup> Noreña (2011) 282. A retrospective knowledge of the importance of *indulgentia* can be observed again under Caracalla's successors. The virtue appears in epigraphic evidence inscribed during the reigns of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus. For inscriptions under Elagabalus, see *CIL* III 6900, VI 1082, VIII 10304 and 10308; for those under Alexander Severus, see *CIL* III 8359 and VIII 8781. Similar to the numismatic material, however, these inscriptions would appear to fit better with later attempts to forge a link between these emperors and Caracalla, similar to the way in which they do so with Alexander the Great iconography. For more detail, see Buraselis (2007) 82-83.

<sup>268</sup> For examples in Rome, see *CIL* VI 1065-67; for Cosa, see *CIL* XI 2633; for Narbonese Gaul, see *CIL* XII 1851; for North Africa, see *CIL* VIII 7000, 7094-98, 21828, and *IRT* 429.

was hailed as the ‘mother of the most generous emperor’ in an inscription from Germania Superior, for example.<sup>269</sup>

It is worth stressing here that, similar to the numismatic evidence, this explosion in *indulgentia* iconography between 212 and 217 is unlikely to have been the result of a natural increase in the deity’s status, or simple coincidence.<sup>270</sup> It is far more likely that this virtue was of considerable importance to Caracalla in relation to the image that he wanted to construct of his sole principate.<sup>271</sup> With this in mind, it is furthermore important to note that on numerous inscriptions where the emperor is hailed as *indulgentissimus*, the epithet often appears on reworked sections of stone which had borne the name and titulature of Geta, prior to *damnatio memoriae* being carried out.<sup>272</sup> The localised nature of this evidence (these inscriptions all derive from Numidia and North Africa) means that it might be a coincidence of the surviving evidence. It is interesting to note, nonetheless, that in a variety of cases, the emperor’s *indulgentia* actively overwrites the memory of his murdered brother and thus contributes to the process of *damnatio* employed by Caracalla in the wider process of refashioning his principate.<sup>273</sup>

How can this important theme, then, be linked to the *constitutio Antoniniana*? The role of the edict as an example of imperial *indulgentia* is not so much in the precise wording of its text, as was the case regarding its religious significance, rather in its scale and effects. As the imperial period progressed, there does appear to have been an increasing link between imperial *indulgentia* and the bestowal of Roman citizenship. In his letter to Trajan requesting *civitas* for Harpocras, for example, Pliny the Younger claimed that he could not properly reward his medical therapist without the emperor’s generosity.<sup>274</sup> The underlying association here between *indulgentia* and citizenship is

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<sup>269</sup> *CIL* XIII 6531: *matri indulgentissimi principis Marci Aureli Antonini Pii Augusti*.

<sup>270</sup> Buraselis (2007) 85-86.

<sup>271</sup> Perhaps the most intriguing appearance of *indulgentia* can be found in Numidia, where the deity is honoured directly after the Capitoline triad in an inscription. See *CIL* VIII 2194. For more on this, see also Noreña (2011: 278), who declares the positioning of *indulgentia* to represent a decidedly ‘odd addition to the Capitoline triad.’

<sup>272</sup> For examples, see *CIL* VIII 6307; 6944; 6969; 6998 and 7000.

<sup>273</sup> Buraselis (2007) 87.

<sup>274</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 10.5.1: *cuius sollicitudini et studio tuae tantum indulgentiae beneficio referre gratiam parem possum*.

arguably more significant than the act itself in the Trajanic case. The fact that there was such a connection between enfranchisement and *indulgentia* has led Noreña to argue that promoting *indulgentia* would have been the logical choice for Caracalla when publicising the edict of 212: ‘The frequent association of this term ... with imperial grants of citizenship in particular suggests that *indulgentia* would have been the most appropriate imperial virtue through which to communicate and publicise the grant of universal citizenship.’<sup>275</sup>

In effect, even if the *constitutio* was not wholly motivated by a sense of euergetic generosity on the part of Caracalla, the emperor emphasised the image of his personal generosity and publically associated it with his act of mass enfranchisement.<sup>276</sup> The extensive promotion of the emperor’s *indulgentia* served as an indirect or symbolic reference to the edict, a ‘systematic effort by the regime to communicate the emperor’s spectacular generosity in granting citizenship to all free inhabitants of the empire – an effort, that is, to attach a specific meaning to the edict that announced this extraordinary decision, and then to disseminate that meaning as broadly as possible.’<sup>277</sup> We must exercise caution, however, not to view the Antonine Constitution solely in terms only of publicising a religious or euergetic agenda on the part of the emperor. I would argue that the connection forged between Caracalla and his citizens through the *constitutio Antoniniana* was, in fact, something altogether more binding.

### **The *constitutio Antoniniana* as a Social Contract**

The literary evidence for the aftermath of Geta’s murder suggests that support for Caracalla’s new regime was polarised between the army, who had been won over by the promise of massive donatives, and the more hesitant senate.<sup>278</sup> It is against this backdrop that we must view the emperor’s attempt to engage with the wider populace through the Antonine Constitution. It has been argued recently that the edict functioned, at least partly, as a redefinition of Roman identity, inasmuch as the vast

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<sup>275</sup> Noreña (2011) 282 *passim*.

<sup>276</sup> Noreña (2011) 280.

<sup>277</sup> Noreña (2011) 280.

<sup>278</sup> Dio 78.3.1-6.1; Hdn 4.4.3-6.5.

majority of the populace would owe their franchise to the emperor and would therefore play a tacit role in accepting the version of events offered by Caracalla, namely that the legislation was a response to the treachery of Geta.<sup>279</sup> While I concur that the *constitutio* did, in one sense, compel the populace to become active participants in the emperor's revised history, I also consider it plausible that Caracalla was determined to secure a more tangible form of loyalty from the citizenry by extending the franchise. With this in mind, I would argue that it is appropriate to view the Antonine Constitution as an act of patronage on an imperial scale, a piece of legislation designed to establish a personal link and relationship between the emperor and every one of his new citizens.

The system of patronage found during the Principate remained relatively unchanged from that of the Republic, with three fundamental elements: that there must be a reciprocal exchange of goods or services, there must be some degree of personal contact to distinguish the arrangement from a standard business contract, and the parties in the relationship must be of different social backgrounds.<sup>280</sup> One obvious change, however, was the role of the emperor as a patron. The *princeps* was seen as 'the supreme benefactor, whose gifts were intended as a display of regal splendour and generosity, and also as a 'super patron' whose subjects lived under his protection and looked to him for benefactions.'<sup>281</sup> Under the Principate, therefore, the role of the emperor in bestowing civic patronage became increasingly important.<sup>282</sup>

In this context, the gift of citizenship was a special grant inasmuch as it bestowed honour upon both parties in the arrangement, the patron as much as the newly enfranchised protégé. A mass act of enfranchisement and social promotion such as the *constitutio Antoniniana* might, then, be said to form a logical endpoint in this area of imperial benefaction. On initial examination, this association might appear

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<sup>279</sup> Kemezis (2014) 32.

<sup>280</sup> Saller (1982) 1.

<sup>281</sup> Lomas and Cornell (2003) 7. Also see: Saller (1982) 3; Veyne (1990) 102-3, 377-8.

<sup>282</sup> Coleman (2003) 61-88. It has been suggested that the reason that provincial cities struck numismatic iconography that would resonate with the *princeps* was in the hope of receiving imperial benefaction: Noreña (2011) 270-71. For more information on civic patronage under the Severans, see Gorrie (2004) 61-72.

irreconcilable with Saller's specification that the relation between the patron and client ought to be a personal one, that is to say based upon 'particularistic rather than universalistic criteria', but it is important to remember that while the *constitutio* might form the end of an evolutionary process in patronage, as with the gradual expansion of the franchise, it was nevertheless a revolutionary action.<sup>283</sup> It cannot be expected, therefore, that the Antonine Constitution would conform to all of the strictest of modern parameters of imperial benefaction. In fact, I would argue that it is wholly appropriate to discuss the edict in terms relevant to Roman patronage and thus to view the *constitutio* as an example of an imperial *beneficium*, a term which Seneca defined as a grant which someone gives when there is no legal compulsion for them to do so.<sup>284</sup> The bestowal of a *beneficium* might be considered as an example of Caracalla's *indulgentia*, but it must be noted that, in the context of patronage, it can also be viewed as part of a reciprocal exchange relationship, or an arrangement in which there was at least an expectation of some reciprocity.<sup>285</sup>

If the edict is studied closely, I would argue that there are two potential ways in which Caracalla expected some form of return benefit to be derived from the citizen body. The first of these appears to be a very practical one concerning tax revenue. Although severely damaged, the final lines of the Giessen text can be restored to make reference to tax obligations on the part of the newly enfranchised:

Ἐπο δὲ τῶν προσόδων τῶν νῦν ὑπερχουσῶν συντελούντων, ἅπερ ἐκελεύσθη παρὰ Ῥωμαίων ἀπὸ τοῦ κα ἔτους, ὡς δίκαιον ἐκ τῶν διαταγμάτων καὶ ἐπιστολῶν, ἃ ἐξεδόθη ὑφ' ἡμῶν τε καὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων προγόνων Προετέθη...

Referring to the taxes that exist at present, all are due to pay those that have been imposed upon the Romans from the beginning of their twenty-first year [of age], as it is the law, according to the edicts and rescripts issued by us and our ancestors. Displayed publically...<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> For the notion of the particularistic nature of patronage based upon a pre-existing personal connection, see Saller (1982) 1, 32-33.

<sup>284</sup> Sen. *De. Ben.* 3.19.1: *beneficium enim id est quod quis dedit, cum illi liceret et non dare.*

<sup>285</sup> Saller (1982) 19-20.

<sup>286</sup> *P. Giss.* 40 I, ll. 14-17. For more on the difficult nature of the Giessen text, see Chapter One and Appendix I. The fiscal importance of the *constitutio* will be considered further in Chapter Four.

Examination of the *constitutio Antoniniana* can thus reveal at least one way in which Caracalla expected his great *beneficium* to be repaid. In return for being inducted into the citizen body, the emperor ordered that the newly enfranchised would be immediately liable to pay the taxes traditionally levied against the citizenry.<sup>287</sup> The question of finances aside, however, I would argue that there was an even more fundamental expectation that accompanied the extension of *civitas*, one of personal loyalty and support. From the time of the late Republic and throughout the Principate, *beneficia* appear to have carried an expectation of goodwill towards the patron, an obligation which carried no legal compulsion but was nevertheless treated seriously.<sup>288</sup> For example, Velleius Paterculus recorded that during the civil war between Antony and Octavian, Asinius Pollio refused to join the latter's cause on the basis that he had previously been the recipient of *beneficia* from Antony.<sup>289</sup> Later, in the opening lines of the *Histories*, Tacitus emphasised his ability to write objectively regarding Galba, Otho and Vitellius because he had received neither *beneficia* nor *iniuria* from them.<sup>290</sup> Admittedly these examples are focused on favours and contracts between members of the elite classes but if the basic premise is accepted that the emperor was looked to by his subjects as a supreme patron and that 'Emperor and subject alike believed that imperial *beneficium*, like any other, created a debt which could be repaid in gratitude and in more concrete forms', then the importance of the *constitutio Antoniniana* to Caracalla's consolidation of power in the aftermath of Geta's murder adopts an even greater significance.<sup>291</sup> By extending the franchise in the first half of AD 212, the emperor initiated a personal tie of loyalty between himself and millions of subjects at the very moment when his rule must have seemed at its most precarious.

In summary then, Caracalla's position as sole ruler was potentially compromised at the outset of AD 212, owing to his act of fratricide and the subsequent *damnatio memoriae* of a reputedly popular figure from within the imperial household. The *constitutio Antoniniana* therefore represented a perfect way in which to secure the

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<sup>287</sup> This is a factor which lends some credence to the argument of an economic rationale underlying the edict, a claim made by Cassius Dio (78.9.5). This will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

<sup>288</sup> Saller (1982) 19.

<sup>289</sup> Vell. Pater. 2.86.3.

<sup>290</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 1.1. Also see: Saller (1982) 70.

<sup>291</sup> Saller (1982) 69.

favour of a vast number of individuals across the entire empire. The grant of citizenship should not be seen as a superficial attempt by the emperor to divert attention away from his dead brother, but rather as something more binding. Caracalla attempted to secure the favour and loyalty of his hitherto peregrine subjects through a reciprocal contract in which, in return for taxation and goodwill, the emperor guaranteed them access to the framework of the Roman legal system. With his pre-existing popularity with the military and this new unspoken debt of gratitude among the majority of his people, Caracalla's position would have been strengthened and his uneasy relations with the *ordo senatorius* would have presented less of an obstacle to his sole reign than might otherwise be the case.

This chapter has shown how the *constitutio Antoniniana* worked as a powerful tool of propaganda through which Caracalla was able to stabilise his position following the murder of Geta by entirely re-envisaging the Severan dynasty around his own person and, furthermore, presenting an official version of the events which led to the act of fratricide. In this sense, the Antonine Constitution can be observed to function on simultaneously ideological and practical levels, carrying religious significance but designed to address a political requirement. One area that is yet to be explored in this thesis, however, relates to the only surviving explanation of the legislation in the ancient literary evidence. In the next chapter, then, I will examine the claim by Dio that the *constitutio* was triggered by Caracallan avarice, and that the franchise was extended solely to expand the emperor's tax base in an attempt to seize every coin he could from his populace, in order to fund his favourites within the imperial court and army.

## CHAPTER IV

### *The Economic Purpose of the constitutio Antoniniana*

The evidence presented so far clearly supports the hypothesis that Caracalla's rationale for introducing the Antonine Constitution was the result of combination of both ideological and practical considerations, none of which need be mutually exclusive. What links each of these is that they can be viewed as part of a deliberate agenda of propaganda designed to promote and legitimise Caracalla's position as the sole emperor in AD 212. There is, however, a further potential rationale that must be considered, namely the fiscal explanation of the edict offered by Cassius Dio. In the midst of criticising Caracalla's economic schemes, the senator remarked that the *constitutio* was a false honour, actually impoverishing the populace in an attempt to fund extravagant spending upon imperial favourites and the soldiery:

Οὗ ἕνεκα καὶ Ῥωμαίους πάντας τοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ αὐτοῦ, λόγῳ μὲν τιμῶν, ἔργῳ δὲ ὅπως πλείω αὐτῷ καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τοιοῦτου προσίη διὰ τὸ τοὺς ξένους τὰ πολλὰ αὐτῶν μὴ συντελεῖν, ἀπέδειξεν.

This was the reason why he made everyone in his realm Romans, he was ostensibly honouring them, but his real purpose was to increase his revenues by this means, since peregrines were not required to pay the majority of these taxes.<sup>292</sup>

As I noted in the first chapter, Dio's financial explanation of the *constitutio Antoniniana* is the only rationale for the legislation offered by any of the contemporary sources.<sup>293</sup> Despite such explicit testimony from a figure within the imperial court, however, the senator's description of the edict has been largely rejected. Some remain convinced that fiscal concerns played a secondary or negligible role in moving the emperor to extend the franchise, and that Dio's account reflects the author's hatred of Caracalla more than the economic reality.<sup>294</sup> Nevertheless, to dismiss the rationale offered by Dio on the basis of his animosity is to ignore other extant evidence relating to the Caracallan economy that we possess. In fact, if Dio's account of the *constitutio Antoniniana* is set against a wider economic context, then it becomes possible to argue

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<sup>292</sup> Dio 78.9.5.

<sup>293</sup> See pgs. 15-17.

<sup>294</sup> Buraselis (2007) 8; Ando (2000) 395, n.275.

that, while the senator's rhetoric is clearly designed to denigrate the character of Caracalla, he was at least partly correct to conclude that the emperor was driven to introduce his legislation to augment the level of capital available to the *fiscus*.

In this chapter, then, I will assess the fiscal account offered by Dio against a wider economic backdrop, combining the testimony of the literary sources with numismatic evidence relating to the quality of Caracallan coinage, and papyrological sources regarding the imposition of the tax on inheritances (*vicesima hereditatum*), one of the levies which Dio alleged was doubled by Caracalla, early in his sole reign. By examining this collection of sources, it is possible to observe that the emperor was, in fact, engaged in a process of manipulating the Roman monetary economy, and that he was concerned with rapidly increasing the physical stock of coinage across the empire. Given this environment, I will argue that it is appropriate to discuss the Antonine Constitution as form of monetary stimulus, though the rationale for such an initiative will also need to be considered further.

In approaching the *constitutio* from this economic perspective, we should be aware of the difficulties in studying ancient economic history, and must be careful not to present an image of the Roman economy under Caracalla that is devoid of context. This is especially important given the hostile nature of the surviving literary record of the period, in which our sources are consistent in accusing the emperor of excessive spending and financial profligacy.<sup>295</sup> Similar to Roman law, the economy of the Principate presents us with a fluid entity, one that fluctuated as it developed. Before examining the situation under Caracalla specifically, then, it is necessary to consider briefly the development of the Roman economy from the early imperial period onwards. By setting Caracalla's edict and other actions against the longer term economic picture, we are able to assess the emperor's purpose (and that of the *constitutio*, by implication) more objectively.

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<sup>295</sup> The image of the Caracallan economy is considered in more detail, later in this chapter.

## **Early Imperial Economic Activity**

Far from the apparently desperate financial situation facing Caracalla's regime, the first century of the Empire is characterised by a number of elements which infer that there was both stability and growth.<sup>296</sup> This appears to have been caused to a large extent by a contemporaneous growth in population, a development which created increased demand across the market.<sup>297</sup> Such exigency is also shown by the nature of slave prices, indicating a high demand for servile labour.<sup>298</sup> In addition, silver production appears to have peaked in the first century AD, at one stage rivalling production levels only later achieved in medieval Europe.<sup>299</sup> Furthermore, in the area of seaborne commerce, high numbers of shipwrecks dating to this period suggest an increased level of trade across the Mediterranean basin.<sup>300</sup>

Finally, whilst the early economy was most likely a subsistence one, the evidence suggests that the inhabitants of Italy enjoyed a higher standard of living during this period than in previous decades.<sup>301</sup> This has been hypothesised partly from a sharp increase in the incidence of animal bone finds across settlement sites both in Italy and in the provinces, as well as human osteological remains suggesting an

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<sup>296</sup> Morley (2007) 589; Scheidel (2007a) 322-46.

<sup>297</sup> The study of Roman demography is troublesome, owing to a severe lack of dependable evidence on the subject. Information derived from census records is problematic, since the data suggests a meteoric population rise – from the last Republican census recording around 400,000 citizens, to the first imperial censuses recording in excess of four million enfranchised individuals. For a comparative analysis of this data, see Turchin and Scheidel (2009) 17276. Indeed, this disparity has prompted an enduring debate regarding the nature of the individuals recorded in each census and the resulting population estimates. For more information on this, see Scheidel (2008a) 17-70; Lo Cascio (1994) 23-40, and the following edited volumes: Bowman and Wilson (2011); Scheidel (2001).

<sup>298</sup> Scheidel (2008b) 105-26; Jongman (2007a) 601.

<sup>299</sup> Kehoe (2007) 547.

<sup>300</sup> De Callatay (2005) 361-72; Parker (1992); Hopkins (1980) 105-6, fig. 1. The precision of these findings has been challenged more recently by Scheidel (2012a) 277-78, and by Wilson (2009) 213-49, who suggest that there was stagnation in such trade under the Early Empire, rather than a peak. I would argue, however, that the period still represents a high-point, since the sheer quantity of dated shipwrecks found in the Mediterranean in the 150 year period from the end of the Republic through the early imperial era still far outnumbers those from any other time under Roman rule.

<sup>301</sup> Although Hopkins (1980: 104) has suggested that the monetary economy formed only a thin 'vener of sophistication, spread over the subsistence economy by the liens of taxes, trade and rent', he also noted the importance of the coinage in circulation, especially after emperors engaged in an increasing level of debasement (a trend that will be discussed in relation to Caracalla, below). The notion that Rome's economy was a subsistence one for long periods has been challenged recently, for example by Jongman (2007b) 183-99. Despite this, however, the idea of a *longue durée* persists. For a more general, comparative discussion of living standards during the early imperial period, see Scheidel (2010) 425-62.

increased level of physiological health.<sup>302</sup> The nature of the evidence means that it is only possible to theorise in fairly broad strokes, but the combination of these different sources does provide at least a general impression of economic development in the early imperial period.

The relative growth and productivity of the early Empire obviously presents a contrast to the reign of Caracalla, in which our authors complain about the exhaustion of the treasury, but it is clear that such a period of expansion could not be maintained indefinitely. In fact, if we continue this examination from this early period into that of the High Empire, there are undeniable symptoms of economic downturn and, as the Antonine era progressed, potentially even crisis. It is therefore imperative that the period from the arrival of the Flavians to the ascendancy of the Severans is considered, since it provides important contextual information in explaining and better understanding the later actions undertaken by Septimius Severus and Caracalla.

### **Decline and Crisis in the High Empire**

Despite the carnage wrought by the Year of the Four Emperors, through a combination of booty seized in the conflict, victory in the Jewish War and increased taxation, the beginning of the Flavian dynasty was marked by large-scale building projects spearheaded by Vespasian.<sup>303</sup> Such increased public spending was to continue under Domitian, who raised the army wage in addition to funding his own building projects.<sup>304</sup> The Domitianic initiatives, however, appear to have been far from popular

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<sup>302</sup> Scheidel (2008a) 37-40. For more on animal bone finds, see Jongman (2007a) 613-14; Kron (2002) 53-73; King (1999) 168-202). Also see MacKinnon (2004). For a more detailed discussion of human remains, see Kron (2005) 68-83. It must be noted, though, that this increase is a strictly relative one, and that osteological analysis also shows that the overall health of many living in the Roman empire was poor. We must, furthermore, be careful to distinguish between physiological health and life expectancy from the question of a quality of life. For more on the general trends, see Scheidel (2012a) 274, 279-81; Walker *et al.* (2009) 109-25.

<sup>303</sup> For more on Vespasian's building projects, see Suet. *Vesp.* 8.5-9.1, 17-19. Also see, Frederick (2002) 199-227. Duncan-Jones (1994: 12) has suggested that the cost of these projects might have been offset by a reduction in the costs surrounding the Flavian court, as opposed to the lavish Neronian one. For more on the Neronian court, see Mordine (2013) 102-17.

<sup>304</sup> Dio 67.3.5; Duncan-Jones (1994) 12, 33-37. For more on the Domitianic building programme, see Darwall-Smith (1996) 101-239.

among the propertied classes.<sup>305</sup> In contrast to Domitian's alleged profligacy, the reign of Trajan stands out in this period as one in which the evidence suggests a genuine degree of economic vitality, in the form of building projects (his forum, for example), and the expansion of the *alimenta*.<sup>306</sup> Similar to the case of Vespasian, the influx of war spoils and booty from Trajan's Dacian campaign must also be factored into the equation.<sup>307</sup>

It was during the reign of Hadrian, however, that signs of economic downturn began to appear in earnest. That the imperial economy was in a relatively precarious state by the middle of the second century AD is attested by evidence suggesting that the emperor was compelled to legislate in order to prevent economic instability in the provinces and to preserve liquidity. This can be observed, for example, in Hadrian's *lex Hadriana de rudibus agris*, designed to encourage agricultural expansion, particularly in North Africa.<sup>308</sup> The best known of these initiatives, however, is his moratorium on taxation in Egypt in AD 136.<sup>309</sup> While on one level this might appear to represent a great act of benevolence, the fact that it was prompted by the populace's inability to pay the annual levy remains irrefutable.<sup>310</sup> Moratoria were not an uncommon recourse in response to fiscal instability, but this ultimately suggests that Hadrian was required to forego the tax yield of the empire's most productive province in order to prevent its economic collapse during his reign.<sup>311</sup>

Despite these measures, however, the numismatic evidence suggests that Hadrian's reign was more damaging than profitable. It is under his immediate successor, Antoninus Pius, that the first significant deterioration in silver coinage (the

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<sup>305</sup> The building programme is described by Dio (67.4.5-6) and also by Suetonius (*Dom.* 12.1), who criticised the emperor for resorting to 'every type of robbery' in his attempt to raise capital: *nihil pensi habuit quin praedaretur omni modo*.

<sup>306</sup> The *alimenta* is mentioned both by Dio (68.5.4) and the author of the HA (*Hadr.* 7.8). For more on the scheme, thought to have been originally instituted under Nerva, see Carlsen (1999) 273-88; Woolf (1990) 197-228; Garnsey (1968) 367-81; Duncan-Jones (1964) 123-46.

<sup>307</sup> For an account of Trajan's campaigns, see Dio 68.8.1-14.5 (Dacia) and 68.17.1-33.3 (eastern provinces).

<sup>308</sup> *CIL* VIII 25943. Also see De Vos (2013) 146-50; Kehoe (2006) 58-61.

<sup>309</sup> *P. Cairo* 49359 and 49360; *P. Oslo* 78. For a detailed commentary of these papyri, see Oliver (1989) 220-26.

<sup>310</sup> Bowman and Wilson (2009b) 20.

<sup>311</sup> Hitchner (2009) 285-86, 286 n.7. Caracalla is also known to have similarly absolved the province of Mauretania Tingitana from taxation in AD 216, a measure considered later in this chapter.

primary trading coin of the empire) occurs, dropping from a 90.5% median fineness at the end of Hadrian's reign to 86.5% by the end of Pius'.<sup>312</sup> Although it is unlikely that this degradation prompted any fiduciary change in real terms, the fact remains that this process can hardly be interpreted as a sign of a vibrant economy.<sup>313</sup> The situation was undoubtedly exacerbated by the considerable expenditure devoted to Hadrian's imperial tour, not to mention the traditional gifts distributed upon the emperor's accession. Dio, for example, claimed that he bestowed favour on nearly every city that he visited, devoting specific attention to the largesse and corn dole awarded to Athens.<sup>314</sup> Similar acts of Hadrianic euergetism can be found throughout the emperor's biography in the *Historia Augusta*, though with little accompanying detail.<sup>315</sup>

While it is likely that the literary sources exaggerated his generosity, other extant evidence suggests that Hadrian did, in fact, dramatically increase imperial public spending, with the level of *congiaria* nearly doubling from the level observed under Trajan.<sup>316</sup> This increase in public benefaction might seem relatively inconsequential against the wider backdrop of the High Empire, but it is important to consider that, in addition to the difficulties noted above, Hadrian faced a significantly different situation from predecessors such as Vespasian or Trajan, inasmuch as he could not rely on imperial revenues being augmented through a process of expansion. As a consequence, even a reduced level of public spending would likely have represented a considerable drain on the imperial coffers, let alone the increased expenditure associated with Hadrian's reign.<sup>317</sup> This trend, though considerably earlier

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<sup>312</sup> Duncan-Jones (1994) 231, Tables 15.7-8.

<sup>313</sup> For a larger analysis of silver coinage during this period, see Walker (1977). It should be noted, however, that Walker's figures are based upon a non-destructive analysis of the numismatic material and, therefore, might contain a margin of error of around ten percent, see Gitler and Ponting (2007) 377. It is worth noting that the later, and more significant, debasement undertaken by Septimius Severus does not appear to have upset the fiduciary relationship between coin types (see below). It is therefore unlikely that the initiative undertaken by Pius had such an effect.

<sup>314</sup> Dio 69.5.3; 69.16.2.

<sup>315</sup> The author mentions the gifts to Athens (*Hadr.* 13.6), but goes on to specify further awards to Campania (9.6), Gaul (10.1), Spain (12.3) and North Africa (13.4).

<sup>316</sup> Duncan-Jones (1994) 13, 41 (Table 3.6) has collated papyrological evidence attesting to such an increase. For an example of such a beneficence, see *IGRR IV* 1431.

<sup>317</sup> Duncan-Jones (1994) 14. The abandonment of Trajan's eastern conquests may have resulted in some form of a saving in relation to military expenditure, but the damaging nature of the Bar Kokhba revolt must have represented a significant drain on any favourable financial position that the emperor would have enjoyed at the beginning of his reign. In support of this position, evidence from the HA suggests that Antoninus Pius shied away from grand expeditions owing to their financially burdensome nature

than Caracalla's reign, remains noteworthy. While the general image of the High Empire period is one of expansion, stability and prosperity, the evidence demonstrates that the economy remained potentially volatile, with problems appearing even at the zenith of the Principate.

Another factor which must be considered before assessing the Severan economy and the role of the *constitutio* therein is the severe decline observed during the Antonine era. The accession of Marcus Aurelius was a costly affair, with Dio claiming that the new emperor distributed gifts of 20,000 *sestertii* per person to the soldiery and men of the praetorian guard.<sup>318</sup> His extended Germanic campaigns also served to deplete the imperial treasury.<sup>319</sup> In addition, there is a suggestion that further economic damage may have been wrought by flooding of the Tiber occurring in AD 162, disrupting agricultural production and infrastructure in the fertile Italian peninsula.<sup>320</sup> More significant still was the Antonine Plague which, according to extant contemporary sources, caused utter devastation to the imperial state.<sup>321</sup> It is important to include the Antonine Plague in any consideration of the economic recession of this period, since the sudden reduction in the population caused by the disease would have

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(*Pius*. 7.11). While evidence from the HA is far from ideal, it makes sense that in the aftermath of the events in Judaea, and Hadrian's costly imperial tour, that Pius would be reluctant to engage further in such expenditure.

<sup>318</sup> Dio 78.8.4. The author of the HA is contradictory in his assessment of Marcus, noting the donative (*Marc.* 7.9), only to claim later that the emperor was exceedingly careful in every public expenditure (*Marc.* 11.1). On one hand, the level of this donative might have been simply exaggerated. On the other hand, however, the high figure could be explained by the fact that Marcus ascended to the throne in a joint principate with Lucius Verus in AD 161. An interesting possibility is that a high level of donative was required by Marcus since he was not, in fact, the praetorians' primary choice of *princeps*, and that, in addition to sharing rule with their favoured Verus, Marcus was obliged to pay more to assure the guard's loyalty than had previously been required. I am grateful to Christopher Bowling for sharing his thoughts and observations on the accession of Marcus and Verus with me. For more on the donative to the praetorians, see Bingham (2013) 41-42, n.219-220.

<sup>319</sup> Rostovtzeff (1957: 414) traditionally associated the beginning of a Roman economic decline with the campaigns of Marcus. More recently, De Blois (2002: 92-94) has associated the Marcomannic campaigns with a rise in plundering and banditry in the northern provinces, a phenomenon which ultimately caused civilian flight from the affected areas and further economic turmoil as a consequence of the resulting agricultural disruption. For more on this, see Whittaker (2002) 204-34; Witschel (1999) 178-210, and Erdkamp (1998) 240.

<sup>320</sup> For an account of the floods, see HA *Marc.* 8.4-5.

<sup>321</sup> Ael. Ar. *Or.* 48.38-44; Galen 19.17-18 (Kühn) recorded the flight of the emperors from Aquileia when the disease struck the Roman forces stationed there. For later sources on the pestilence, see Amm. Marc. 23.6.24; Eutrop. 8.12.2; Jerome 206 (Helm); Lucian, *Alex.* 36 and Oros. 7.15.5-7, 27.7. The outbreak of the plague is given a predictably fanciful treatment by the author of the HA, who claimed that the disease was released from a mysterious golden casket by Roman forces in the east, and thus unleashed on the entire world, see HA *Ver.* 8.1-2.

had a lasting effect on basic levels of economic activity such as production and revenue sourced through taxation. In order to assess its economic impact, however, it is first necessary to consider how severe the pestilence actually was.

The scale of the epidemic is still a matter of debate.<sup>322</sup> It was previously believed, for example, that the disease represented a watershed moment in Roman history.<sup>323</sup> More recently, however, there have been attempts to offer a more conservative image of the epidemic.<sup>324</sup> Among these extreme positions, it is most likely that Littman and Littman are correct in their assessment of a mortality rate between seven and ten percent.<sup>325</sup> This figure rests more comfortably with the sense of localised devastation observed in the non-literary evidence, noted below, while not inferring the cataclysmic scenario envisaged by earlier scholars.

The economic implications of this epidemic might initially seem difficult to identify, but if extant evidence from Roman Egypt is considered, then the disease can be shown to cause severe disruption to agricultural production and tax collection by causing a significant population decline in areas.<sup>326</sup> Papyrological evidence suggests that there was a severe population contraction when the plague was virulent. In some areas, a decline of between thirty and ninety percent can be observed.<sup>327</sup> It is possible that this shift was the result of *anachoresis*, but the numbers involved make it more

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<sup>322</sup> Gilliam (1961) 247.

<sup>323</sup> Niebuhr (1849: 251) claimed, for example, that the empire never truly recovered from its effects, while Seeck (1910: 398-405) argued that the plague claimed over fifty percent of the total population, prompting the settlement of Germans within imperial borders and fundamentally changing the ethnic makeup of the empire.

<sup>324</sup> Bruun (2007: 201-17), for example, has sought to sever any perceived connection between the disease and the crisis of the third century, let alone the downfall of the western empire. Gilliam (1961: 225-51), moreover, has claimed that the plague cannot have claimed more than two percent of the empire's population, though his assessment appears to be based more on responding to the hyperbolic literature than on other datasets. For more on this argument and criticism of Gilliam's minuscule estimate, see Scheidel (2010a) 20-23; Jongman (2007b) 195.

<sup>325</sup> Littman and Littman (1973) 252-55.

<sup>326</sup> Given the unique position of Egypt within the imperial state, we must exercise caution before assuming that certain trends would have been replicated across the empire, but it has already been established that the phenomenon of population contraction can be observed in other provinces at around the same time. For more on this, see Jongman (2007b).

<sup>327</sup> Population drops of 33-47% are recorded in areas of the Fayum, see *P. Mich.* 223-25 and *P. Ryl.* 594 for examples. Similarly, *P. Thoumis* I. 104.10-18 record that taxes for the village of Kerbenouphis had been struck off by the local *komogrammateus* owing to the number of tax-paying men that had perished from the plague. Duncan-Jones (1996: 121, Table 1) has also shown that the Delta region experienced a population decrease of up to 93% in some villages as the plague took hold.

likely that the plague was to blame for the rapid decline.<sup>328</sup> In addition to the drop in population, it should also be noted that the production of Egyptian tetradrachms collapsed around AD 171 and did not recover for nearly six years.<sup>329</sup> Again, while it is possible that this interruption was the result of other, more mundane factors, it is striking that the most significant disruption to the minting process in around two generations occurred precisely at the time when plague was prevalent across the empire. The economic damage wrought by the epidemic was not a fleeting phenomenon. In fact, some communities were still struggling to honour quotas for taxation in kind as long as twenty years after the outbreak.<sup>330</sup> In order to assess the fiscal explanation for the Antonine Constitution, then, it is necessary to acknowledge that, rather than simple profligacy on the part of Caracalla, there were a number of factors, like the plague, that played a role in negatively shaping the Roman economy before the Severans had even seized power.

### **A Severan Recovery?**

The image of the economy in the immediate prelude to Caracalla's sole reign is one of contradictory evidence. On the one hand, Commodus' reign and the consequent civil wars following the death of Pertinax had been economically ruinous. Dio alleged that there was scarcely a million *sestertii* in the imperial coffers by the end of AD 192.<sup>331</sup> While he was careful to state that Severus never murdered individuals for their estates, Dio also claimed that the emperor was required to raise money from

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<sup>328</sup> Referring to a process of flight or retreat, equivalent to the Latin *recessus*, the term *anachoresis* is often used in connection to individuals illegally fleeing from their homes and towns an attempt to avoid taxation or liturgical duties. This phenomenon will be considered in more detail in Chapter Six. Also see Kelly (2011) 204-8. For more role of the plague in this population decline, see Scheidel (2010a) 15; Duncan-Jones (1996) 121. In support of this hypothesis, similar evidence of death and population decline can be observed in other regions. In Dacia, for example, an inscription records the dissolution of a funerary club which may have been compromised by members fleeing from the spread of the disease, see *ILS* 7215a. Papyrological evidence shows that Athens was affected by the pestilence, to the extent that the emperor was required to extend the eligibility criteria for membership of the Council of the Areopagus to maintain consistent numbers, see *Oliver* 84, pp. 366-88. Further, more general disruption can be identified if the number of military diplomas and local government papyri issued in Egypt are compared for the plague period to the years on either side of the outbreak, see Duncan-Jones (1996) 124-25, Figs. 6 and 7.

<sup>329</sup> Duncan-Jones (1996) 124-25, Figs. 6 and 7.

<sup>330</sup> *P. Oxy.* LXV 4527; Van Minnen (2001) 175-77, *contra* Bagnall (2000) 288-92.

<sup>331</sup> Dio 74.5.4. While this precise figure is likely an exaggeration, the unpopular policy of economic austerity pursued by Pertinax's short-lived regime supports the notion that the state's position was hardly a favourable one.

every avenue in order to meet his financial obligations.<sup>332</sup> This literary image is supported by evidence suggesting that the imperial currency was manipulated during the reign of Severus, the *denarius* being restored to its traditional weight, but with its silver content being simultaneously reduced by around one third.<sup>333</sup> Indeed, the depreciation of the primary trading token of the empire can hardly be seen as anything other than a symptom of stress.<sup>334</sup>

On the other hand, however, there is also evidence to contradict the hypothesis of further economic downturn under Caracalla's immediate predecessor. The early Severan period represents a high watermark in relation to public building projects in Rome and across the empire, for example. These ranged from the restoration of buildings destroyed by the fire of 191, such as the temples of Peace and Vesta, through to the construction of new edifices such as the camp of the *equites singulares Augusti*, the Arch of Severus and the *Septizodium*.<sup>335</sup> Arguably the best known result of this programme was actually completed between 211-17, although probably commenced under Severus: the Baths of Caracalla (*Thermae Antoninianae*). This imposing structure was designed on an epic scale and carried a similarly massive construction cost. It is difficult to establish an exact figure for this building, but DeLaine has sought to offer a general impression through extrapolating a figure using the later *Edict on Maximum Prices* introduced by Diocletian in AD 301. DeLaine has estimated that the bath complex would have cost around 12 million *kastrenses modii* (KM), equating to a monetary figure in excess of 1.2 billion *denarii*.<sup>336</sup> Even accounting for inflation between the Severan period and the beginning of the fourth century, the Baths of Caracalla would certainly have cost hundreds of millions of *denarii* – an astronomical

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<sup>332</sup> Dio 77.16.2. It was also into this context that Dio (77.10.1-7) described the campaign of robberies committed by Bulla Felix. While the character of Bulla is probably apocryphal, it is likely that the senator had constructed a literary archetype in response to a wider problem of banditry at the time, further suggesting economic instability and lack of imperial control. For more on this, see Fuhrmann (2012) 134-35; Reiss (2001) 170; Grünwald (1999) 157-95, and Shaw (1984) 43-52.

<sup>333</sup> Duncan-Jones (1994) 227, Table 15.6. Also see Bowman *et al.* (2005) 332-33.

<sup>334</sup> Greene (1986) 60-61. Also see Gitler and Ponting (2007) 375-97, who claim that this debasement represents a key step in pushing the Roman economy towards the monetary chaos observed in the course of the later third century AD.

<sup>335</sup> Dio 77.16.1-4; Lusnia (2014) 117-54, and (2004) 517-44; Gorrie (2002) 461-81; DeLaine (1997) 197.

<sup>336</sup> DeLaine (1997) 207-20. The KM are a grain standard, employed here owing to the relative stability in the cost of wheat and labour during the tumultuous third century.

figure. The scale of this building alone, let alone the other construction and restoration projects, hardly creates the image of an emperor suffering from a lack of funds, or an empire gripped by economic desperation.

The emperor's manipulation of the currency is also open to interpretation. Severus was the first Roman ruler to raise the army wage since Domitian.<sup>337</sup> It is interesting to note, then, that a change in the nature of Roman silver coinage has also been recently identified to this period. In her analysis of numismatic find sites in the north-western provinces of the empire, Kemmers has shown that there is a significant rise in coin finds across sites of all natures, though predominantly in military ones. She has argued that this increase ultimately supports the hypothesis that Severus' army pay rise required a vast amount of new coinage to be produced.<sup>338</sup> Whilst debasement can never be interpreted as a financially positive economic initiative, the connection here between the process and the Roman army does not suggest a generalised economic decline. Rather, the monetary economy would not have been prepared for such a marked increase in demand for physical coinage and, as a consequence, the act of debasement is better interpreted as a measure dedicated to addressing an immediate problem of liquidity, rather than more general economic instability.

Further complicating the image of the pre-Caracallan economy is the impression of the sheer wealth left behind by Severus. Indeed, all of our main literary sources for the period claim that the emperor was able to leave the imperial treasury with a fortune far greater than any other, though it is impossible to test the veracity of such a claim.<sup>339</sup> It is worth remembering, however, that, unlike his immediate predecessors, Severus was able to capture considerable sums through expropriations from his political rivals, as well as his lucrative campaign against Parthia.<sup>340</sup> It seems clear that the image of the Roman economy on the eve of Caracalla's sole reign is more complex than might initially be assumed. Even during the relative stability of the High

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<sup>337</sup> For a detailed breakdown of Severus' military reforms, see Smith (1972) 481-500.

<sup>338</sup> Kemmers (2009) 143-58.

<sup>339</sup> Dio 77.16.4; Hdn 3.15.3; HA *Sev.* 12.3.

<sup>340</sup> For an account of the expropriations against Albinus' supporters, see Dio 76.8.3-9.1. For more on the Parthian campaign, see Dio 75.9.4; Hdn 3.9.9-11. I am grateful to Dr Charmaine Gorrie for her assistance and advice on this subject.

Empire, the economy was affected by a variety of factors which represented a significant drain on the imperial treasury. The decades prior to Caracalla's accession were characterised by warfare and disease, and yet the emperor's own father appears to have stalled terminal decline, albeit temporarily. The quality and fineness of imperial silver coinage was significantly inferior compared to earlier periods, but it seems unlikely that this is indicative of any major financial or economic problem. Rather than basing an economic explanation of the *constitutio Antoniniana* on the emperor's temperament and cronyism, as Dio does, we must view the initiatives introduced under Caracalla, including the edict, as a continuation of a longer process.

### **The Economy under Caracalla**

Dio claimed that Caracalla was responsible for raising a number of taxes. Among the levies described by Dio were doubling of tax on the emancipation of slaves and an increase in inheritance duties from five to ten percent.<sup>341</sup> He explained that Caracalla changed the law regarding legacies and had abolished rights of succession, with their accompanying tax exemption, for close relatives of the deceased.<sup>342</sup> Most galling to the senator, however, was the emperor's repeated demands for the *aurum coronarium*, Dio accusing Caracalla of inventing a number of military victories in order to levy the charge.<sup>343</sup> Even accounting for a degree of hyperbole in Dio's testimony, since increased taxation would never be popular with any echelon of society let alone the *ordo senatorius*, it seems that the imperial government was engaged in a process of trying to augment levels of capital from the outset of Caracalla's sole reign.<sup>344</sup>

Dio also accused Caracalla of debasing precious metal coinage in circulation within the empire, alleging that the emperor bought peace with tribes on the frontiers using high quality gold coinage, while circulating devalued currency among his actual

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<sup>341</sup> Dio 78.9.4.

<sup>342</sup> Dio 78.9.4-5.

<sup>343</sup> Dio 79.92-3. For more on the history of the *aurum coronarium*, originally a levy in connection with triumphs or anniversaries during the Principate, see Klauser 1944 (1948) 129-53.

<sup>344</sup> Marasco (1994: 508-11) has argued that Caracalla's exploitation of the *aurum coronarium* was one of his most damaging policies, with regards to the propertied class.

citizenry.<sup>345</sup> While it is tempting to dismiss Dio's account here as little more than speculative melodrama, numismatic data suggests that Caracalla was, in fact, manipulating imperial coinage at the time. Three general trends can be observed: a decline in the fineness of silver coinage, a reduction in the weight of coin output (resulting in a higher number of coins struck per pound of metal) and, finally, a fiduciary pricing of coin types over their intrinsic value. If this data is considered, I would argue that Dio was correct to identify a process of numismatic debasement, even if he does so in a facetious and factually inaccurate manner. The evidence suggests that the emperor was anxious to rapidly increase the number of coins in circulation across the empire, even if this meant devaluing his precious metal coinage to achieve the goal.<sup>346</sup> Metallurgical analysis of *denarii* from Augustus to Alexander Severus clearly demonstrates that the Severan period formed a nadir in relation to the overall fineness of Roman silver coinage.<sup>347</sup>

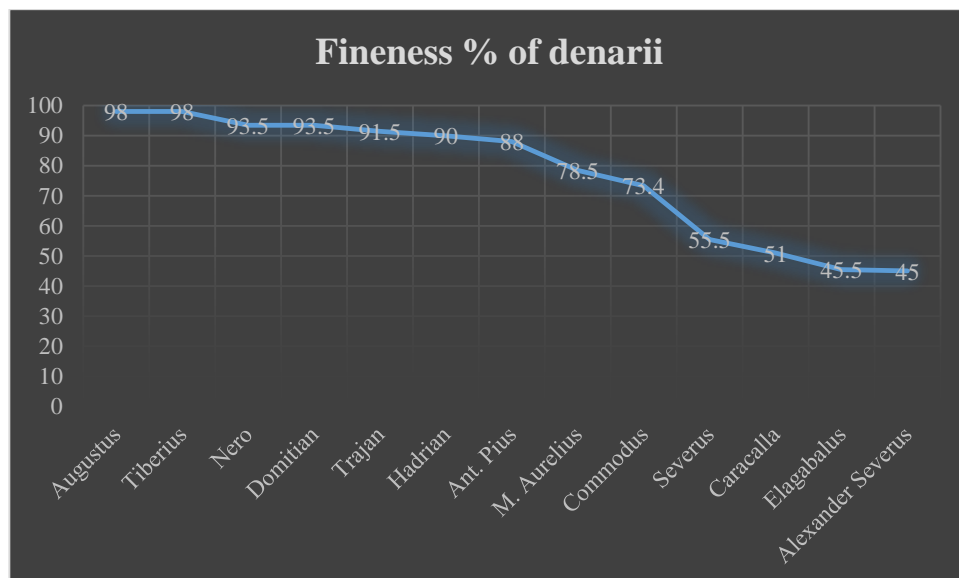


Fig. 3: Graph illustrating the decline in median fineness of *denarii*.<sup>348</sup>

<sup>345</sup> Dio 78.14.4.

<sup>346</sup> Langenegger (2010) 171-76.

<sup>347</sup> Duncan-Jones (1994) 225, 232, Tables 15.5 and 15.9. Under Augustus, the median silver fineness of *denarii* was 98% but, by Caracalla's reign, that figure had dropped to 50.5%. For more on the fluctuation in quality of silver coinage for the later period, from Severus to Aemilianus, see Langenegger (2010) 179-81.

<sup>348</sup> Data based on analysis from Duncan-Jones (1994) 225.

Diminution in precious metal fineness was accompanied by a simultaneous reduction in the weight of both gold and silver coinage. The target weight of *aurei* under Caracalla appears to have been c. 6.46 grams, equating to fifty coins per pound of gold. The target weight of *denarii*, by contrast, was c. 3.23 grams, resulting in an average of 192 coins per pound of silver.<sup>349</sup> This represents an increase of over twenty coins per pound from coins of the same denomination struck under Septimius Severus, and nearly forty more than even the disastrous closing period of Commodus' reign, AD 187-92.<sup>350</sup>

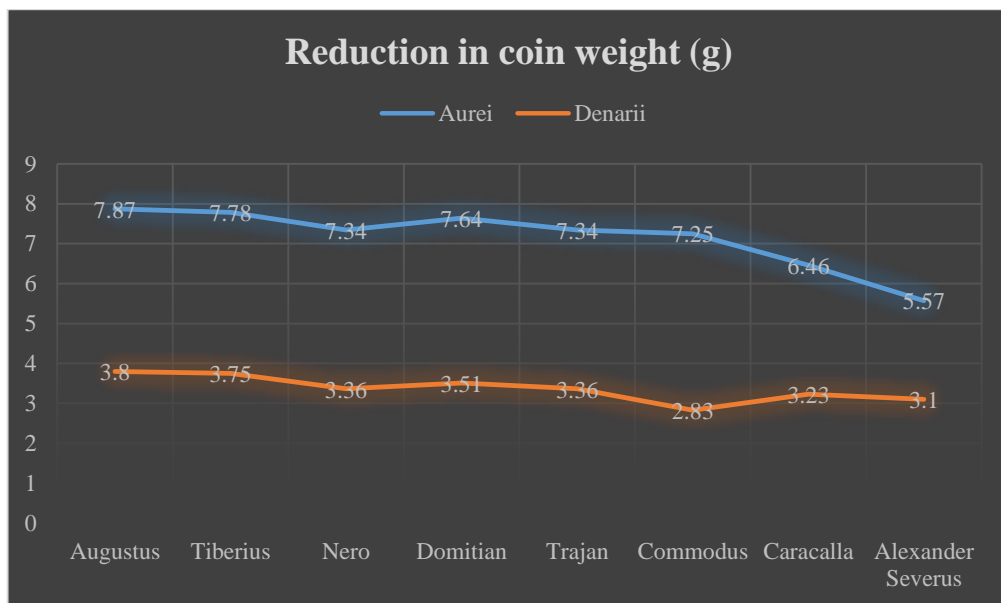


Fig. 4: Graph illustrating fluctuation in the weight of *aurei* and *denarii*.<sup>351</sup>

Caracalla's most famous numismatic innovation, however, was the introduction of the *antoninianus* coin type in AD 215. Characterised by a radiate obverse bust of the emperor, the circulation of this denomination is widely regarded to have been a terrible economic move on Caracalla's part.<sup>352</sup> The primary problem with

<sup>349</sup> Duncan-Jones (1994) 217, 225, Tables 15.3 and 15.5.

<sup>350</sup> Although it should be noted that the weight of Commodian coinage was slightly lower than Severan issues. See Fig. 4, below.

<sup>351</sup> Data adapted from Duncan-Jones (1994) 215, 225.

<sup>352</sup> Sutherland (1974: 218) considers its circulation to be 'the first great overt act of depreciation in the currency of the Roman empire.' Similarly Greene (1986: 61) claimed that the new coin only worsened a deepening economic crisis, while Harl (1996: 128) argued that its introduction was a disastrous policy which undermined the system of price and exchange across the empire, and that Elagabalus' decision to scrap it was wholly correct. Also see Gitler and Ponting (2007) 375-76.

this coin type is the relationship between its precious metal content and the face value at which it was tarified. While metallurgical analysis confirms that they contained a silver content roughly equivalent to 1.5 *denarii*, there is no explicit evidence for the fiduciary value placed upon *antoniniani* by the emperor.<sup>353</sup> If, for example, the coin was valued at 1.25 *denarii*, this would represent a positive revaluation of the silver currency, though such a hypothesis contrasts with Caracalla's wider policy of debasement, rendering it ultimately unpersuasive.<sup>354</sup> It is more likely that the *antoninianus* was tarified at two *denarii*.



Fig. 5: Caracalla, AR *Antoninianus*. Rome, AD 215 (RIC 273b).<sup>355</sup>

This hypothesis is further supported by the coins' obverse iconography. The radiate crown depicted on the emperor's bust is a feature usually associated with the *dupondius*, tarified at double the face value of an *as*, even if not containing double the weight of orichalcum.<sup>356</sup> The creation of an underweighted double-*denarius* represents a significant change to the Roman monetary economy of the period, devaluing the regular *denarius* by twenty-five percent.<sup>357</sup> It must be stressed, however, that even this

<sup>353</sup> Depeyrot and Hollard (1987) 57-85.

<sup>354</sup> Lo Cascio (1984) 133-201.

<sup>355</sup> ANTONINVS PIVS AVG GERM, radiate and cuirassed bust right / PM TR P XVIII COS IIII PP, lion, radiate, advancing left. 4.56g, 25mm. Image courtesy of Roma Numismatics Ltd.

<sup>356</sup> Duncan-Jones (1994) 138, 222 n.39. Also see *BMCRE* V, p. xviii. For an example of this type, see Fig. 5.

<sup>357</sup> Greene (1986) 60-61; Bowman *et al.* (2005) 339-40.

seemingly destructive initiative did not destabilise the economy until the later crisis of the third century.<sup>358</sup>

### **The Economic Function of the *constitutio Antoniniana***

Given the context of rising taxes and monetary debasement, I would argue that it is appropriate to consider further Dio's testimony regarding the nature of the Antonine Constitution. As I noted earlier, Dio's hostility towards Caracalla is well-known, and there can be little question that the author perceived the introduction of the *constitutio* as another opportunity to criticise the emperor, but this does not mean that we ought to dismiss the senator's account entirely.<sup>359</sup> Rather than focusing solely on the credibility of Dio as a source, however, it is necessary to return to the Giessen papyrus and to consider the legislation itself. Indeed, if the text of *P. Giss.* 40 is examined closely, it can be shown that the evidence supports the hypothesis that economic factors did play a role in motivating Caracalla to introduce his edict.

Examination of the Giessen text reveals that there are two areas where possible allusions to edict's economic purpose can be identified. The first is based upon a reconstruction of the severely damaged final lines of the decree. Of the many attempts to study and restore the *constitutio*, only Heichelheim has offered any substantial edition of these lines.<sup>360</sup>

Ἄπο δὲ τῶν] π[ρ]οσ[όδων τῶν νῦν] | [ὑπερχουσῶν συντελούντων, ἅπερ ἐκελεύσθη [παρὰ Ῥωμαίων ἀπὸ τοῦ κα ἔτους,] | [ὡς δίκαιον ἐκ τῶν διαταγμάτων καὶ ἐπιστολῶν, ἃ ἐξεδόθη ὑφ' ἡμῶν τε] | [καὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων προγόνων Προετέθη . . . . .]

Referring to the taxes that exist at present, all are due to pay those that have been imposed upon the Romans from the beginning of their twenty-first year [of age], as it is the law, according to the edicts and rescripts issued by us and our ancestors. Displayed publically...<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Langenegger (2010) 176-81. During the reign of Elagabalus, production of *antoniniani* was halted, and only resumed in AD 238, under Balbinus and Pupienus. The denomination was further debased by Gordian III, a process which contributed to a destabilisation of the currency and monetary economy at large.

<sup>359</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>360</sup> For an apparatus and commentary of the text, see Appendix I.

<sup>361</sup> *P. Giss.* 40 I, ll. 14-17. Originally, Heichelheim was unable to conclude how the mention of a 'twenty first year' fit into the text, but this is easily overcome if the use of the genitive is in reference to the

When restored in this manner, these lines form an explicit directive that all of the newly enfranchised Romans were immediately liable to pay all taxes levied against the citizen body.<sup>362</sup> If it is accepted that the final detail of the *constitutio* text was to remind new *cives* of the fiscal obligations accompanying their new status, this would certainly lend credence to Dio's claim that Caracalla's primary intention in promulgating the Antonine Constitution was to raise capital through direct taxation. The heavily damaged nature of the papyrus means, however, that the reconstruction offered by Heichelheim is ultimately conjectural, and hence cannot be accepted in isolation as a confirmation of a Caracallan fiscal motive underlying the edict. This is not the only potential reference to fiscal matters in the course of *P. Giss.* 40, though.

The second area in which it is possible to identify an economic rationale is better preserved but even more controversial, since it surrounds the ninth line of the text, in which the terms of the *constitutio* were outlined. As noted in Chapter One, this section proves problematic owing to a lacuna in the papyrus obscuring a key word in the construction.<sup>363</sup>

Δίδω[μ]ι τοί[ν]υν ἅπα– | [σι τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Ῥωμαϊκ]ῆν οἰκουμένην π[ολειτ]εῖαν  
Ῥωμ[αί]ων [μ]ένοντος | [τοῦ δικαίου τῶν πολιτευμ]άτων χωρ[ις] τῶν  
[...]ειτικίων.

I therefore give everyone in the Roman world the Roman citizenship:  
respecting customary law, except/without ...<sup>364</sup>

Traditionally, the exclusionary clause contained in the ninth line was thought to make reference to the *dediticii*, with the lacuna being restored to read as δεδειτκίων.<sup>365</sup> With this reconstruction, the edict is thus assumed to make reference to one of two potential groups. The first were freedmen found guilty of crimes during

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citizens' age of eligibility, an issue separate from the question of one's age of majority in Roman Egypt. For more on the age of majority, see Hagedorn (1996) 224-26; Lewis (1979) 117-20.

<sup>362</sup> Heichelheim (1941) 12.

<sup>363</sup> See pgs. 31-33.

<sup>364</sup> *P. Giss.* 40 I, ll. 7-9.

<sup>365</sup> Meyer (1920); Bickermann (1926), Schönbauer (1931) 277-335; Stroux (1933) 272-95; Wilhelm (1934) 178-80; Heichelheim (1941) 10-22. An alternative spelling of δεδειτκίων was proposed later, see Weissert (1963) 239-50. For a recent defence of the restoration, see Rocco (2010) 131-32.

their servitude, with the result that they could never attain the rights of the franchise, despite their free status.<sup>366</sup> Alternatively, the term could be used in reference to newly conquered barbarians who, following their surrender (*deditio*), experienced a period of complete subjugation to Rome before being slowly inducted into the empire and being able to attain greater status. In either case, if the restoration of δεδειτικίων was correct, the clause was designed to prevent at least one socially undesirable group from enjoying the emperor's otherwise universal grant.<sup>367</sup>

The *dediticii* hypothesis is far from assured, however, despite such historical support. In fact, the restoration has been completely rejected in the most recent studies of the text.<sup>368</sup> Analysis of the Giessen papyrus has shown that the inclusion of *dediticii* is syntactically and semantically problematic and awkward.<sup>369</sup> Furthermore, the clause has always been historically challenging, owing to the fact that none of the other sources who mention the *constitutio* in the course of their works, such as Dio or Ulpian, ever refer to any exceptions to the wide-reaching nature of Caracalla's edict.<sup>370</sup> Such an omission is troubling. It would seem uncharacteristically careless of a jurist of Ulpian's character, an individual hailed by Honoré as one of the most influential writers of the Severan age, to neglect such a crucial detail in the course of his legal texts.<sup>371</sup> Indeed, whilst it is possible that Ulpian's original text was adapted and altered in the course of inclusion in the *Digest*, this argument does not explain the silence of other sources, contemporary or secondary, on the matter. This has led to further scepticism regarding any connection between the *constitutio* and the *dediticii*.<sup>372</sup>

Owing to the well-established process of assimilating communities into the empire by this point in imperial history, I would argue that the number of *dediticii* living in Caracalla's realm must have represented a statistically insignificant portion

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<sup>366</sup> Gaius, *Inst.* 1.13-15.

<sup>367</sup> Lukaszewicz (1990a) 93-101; Rocco (2010) 145-55.

<sup>368</sup> Kuhlmann (2012) 47, (1994) 236. Kuhlmann's own opinion regarding the lacuna will be considered later in this chapter.

<sup>369</sup> Kuhlmann (1994) 236.

<sup>370</sup> Dio 77.9.5-6; *Dig.* 1.5.17.

<sup>371</sup> Honoré (2002) 1.

<sup>372</sup> Benario (1954) 188.

of the empire's total population.<sup>373</sup> Furthermore, if Gaius was correct that the *dediticii* were a class of people who had lost all political identity and could never hope of attaining the rights of Roman citizenship under any circumstance, then there would have been no need to stipulate or emphasise their ineligibility.<sup>374</sup> It is logical to conclude that if the *dediticii* were indeed social pariahs, then their exclusion from the terms of the *constitutio* would be automatically assumed and entirely non-negotiable. In fact, there would have been as little requirement to specify their ineligibility as there would have been for slaves. This conclusion renders any attempt to restore the lacuna in *P. Giss.* 40 to read as δεδειτυκίων completely untenable.

How, then, ought we reconstruct the controversial gap in the Giessen text? The publication of materials relating to the Antonine *tabula Banasitana* has fundamentally altered the nature of this debate. The *tabula* is a record of a grant of citizenship being bestowed to a member of the Mauretanian provincial elite, Julianus, and his descendants, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus.<sup>375</sup> Whilst much of the grant is predictably formulaic, a pair of caveats at the end of the document forms the primary point of interest. Following the notice that citizenship was to be conferred upon Julianus and his family, the emperors declared that the grant was to be bestowed *salvo iure gentis* and *sine diminutione tributorum et vectigalium populi et fisci*.<sup>376</sup> The first of these clauses was designed to ensure that the newly enfranchised individual could continue to function in the midst of a largely peregrine population, by clarifying that the grant of Roman *civitas* did not exclude the recipient from access to their customary legal framework, an arrangement which also protected any claim of the parent community over the services of the new citizen.<sup>377</sup> The second clause served to clarify the fiscal responsibilities inherent on the individual in question. Unlike the citizens of the earliest years of the Principate who enjoyed the fiscal *immunitas rerum*

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<sup>373</sup> Sherwin-White (1973a: 272) refers to the process of including communities into the Roman body politic as taking on an increasingly mechanical character even by the end of the Flavian period.

<sup>374</sup> Gaius, *Inst.* 1.13-15. Also see Buraselis (2007) 7.

<sup>375</sup> *IAM* 2.1, 94 = *AE* 1961, 142. For an annotated edition of the *tabula*, see Oliver (1972) 336-40. For a brief discussion of how the grant fits into the general evolutionary process of the franchise, Chapter One.

<sup>376</sup> *IAM* 2.1, 94, ll. 11-12; 37-38. The *salvo iure gentis* clause features both in reference to Julianus himself and his descendants, whilst the *sine* clause is presented in connection with the extension of the franchise to his descendants later in the same text.

<sup>377</sup> Kuhlmann (1994) 231-32; Oliver (1989) 504.

*omnium*, the newly enfranchised would be liable to pay Roman taxation in addition to pre-existing local levies.<sup>378</sup>

A similarity between the grammatical structure of the Latin *tabula* and the Greek edict on *P. Giss.* 40 was noted by Sasse, who observed that the papyrus appears to contain a comparably formulaic grammatical construction, despite the difference in language. In fact, the μένοντος participle is a relatively common one, in connection with Greek legal texts, and Sasse has identified forty seven other cases in which the construction is identical to the Giessen papyrus, employing a participle of μένειν followed by a genitive absolute.<sup>379</sup> In the past, this led Sherwin-White to conclude that the *dediticii* were therefore not excluded from the franchise itself, but rather some other, unspoken subsidiary grant.<sup>380</sup> This position is tenuous, however, both on linguistic grounds and for the reasons outlined above regarding the fundamental fragility of any connection between the *dediticii* and the *constitutio Antoniniana*.<sup>381</sup> An alternative has to be found which is reminiscent of the *tabula Banasitana*, as per Sasse's observations, but which also contains no reference to the erroneously included *dediticii*. With these considerations in mind, I would argue that it is preferable to restore the critical eighth and ninth lines of the *constitutio* text in the following manner: [μ]ένοντος [τοῦ δικαίου τῶν πολιτευμ]άτων χωρ[ις] τῶν [ἀδδ]ειτικών.<sup>382</sup> In this reconstruction, the Greek χωρίς is translated in its form meaning 'without' rather than the 'except' favoured when thought to make reference to the *dediticii*.<sup>383</sup> The adjectival noun ἀδδειτικών, transliterated from the Latin adjective *additicius* and meaning 'additional', is becoming increasingly favoured as a more realistic alternative to the *dediticii* hypothesis, one which fits more comfortably with the ancient literary sources who make no reference to a disbarred population group.<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> Sherwin-White (1973b) 86-98.

<sup>379</sup> Sasse (1958) 48-58.

<sup>380</sup> Sherwin-White (1973a) 381-83; (1973b) 95-97.

<sup>381</sup> Lukaszewicz (1990a) 98-99.

<sup>382</sup> *P. Giss.* 40 I, ll. 8-9.

<sup>383</sup> Indeed, the possibility that χωρίς might mean 'without' at this juncture has proven problematic to those desiring to maintain a link the *dediticii*, see Lukaszewicz (1990a) 99.

<sup>384</sup> Kuhlmann (2012) 48-50. It is true that the word is a *hapax legomenon*, but it must be remembered that δεδειτικών (or any variant thereof) is also unique. In this sense, the revised wording is no more difficult to accept than a reference to the *dediticii* and, more importantly, forms a better fit in relation to the formulaic nature of Greek legal texts noted by Sasse, see above, and with its Latin counterpart, the *tabula Banasitana*, see Oliver (1989) 504.

Rather than proclaiming a universal extension of the franchise, only then to specify the ineligibility of an insignificant population group, the μένοντος clause should be interpreted as a Greek equivalent to the formulaic Latin *salvo iure gentis*, safeguarding the pre-existing relationship between the recipient of the franchise and their parent community. It follows, then, that the χωρίς + genitive construction makes sense if interpreted as roughly equivalent to the Latin *sine* prepositional phrase found in the *tabula Banasitana*, making reference to privileges that the newly enfranchised might expect.<sup>385</sup> The controversial seventh to ninth lines of the *constitutio* should therefore be translated to read: ‘I therefore give everyone in the Roman world the Roman citizenship, respecting customary law, without additional privileges.’<sup>386</sup> This restoration and translation, whilst preferable to any mention of the *dediticii*, does not end the debate on how the wording of Caracalla’s edict should be understood, though. In his assessment of the Giessen text, Oliver concluded that the similarities between the *constitutio* and the *tabula Banasitana* were so pronounced that the two documents should be considered identical in terms of the conditions set upon the grants:

Since the reference to citizenship in both and even the order is the same, the conclusion is inescapable that the reservations with no intervening conjunction are identical, even if a short phrase, namely “without the *additicia*” replaces the “*sine diminutione tributorum et vectigalium populi Romani*” of the *Tabula Banasitana*.<sup>387</sup>

Such a conclusion would strongly suggest that Caracalla’s edict was promulgated with a clearly economic or financial motive in mind. More recently, however, this absolute connection between the two documents has been questioned. While he agrees that the reconstruction of *additicia* has some palaeographical basis, since it features in a similar fashion in Latin sources, Kuhlmann disagrees that the χωρίς τῶν ἀδδειτικίων clause represents a direct transliteration of *sine diminutione tributorum et vectigalium populi et fisci*, inasmuch as he doubts that it refers to fiscal

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<sup>385</sup> Wolff (1977) 99-102.

<sup>386</sup> *P. Giss.* 40 I, ll. 7-9.

<sup>387</sup> Oliver (1989) 504. The precise language of the exclusionary clause clearly does not meld flawlessly with the Latin of the *tabula Banasitana*. Oliver is content, however, that this is owing to the difficulties in replicating the precise Latin terminology in Greek, rather than any other issue.

immunity alone, preferring a more general reference to assorted privileges.<sup>388</sup> He questions how far the sentiment from the Latin construction can be inferred from one word alone, arguing that if Oliver was correct in his assumption regarding the focus of *additicia*, then it must represent a hitherto unrecognised Greek *terminus technicus*.<sup>389</sup> This clearly presents an issue since, in the event that *additicia* was a commonly used legal term, we would expect to find more examples of its usage.<sup>390</sup>

While Oliver has overstated the grammatical similarity between the *constitutio* and the *tabula*, this does not necessarily weaken the hypothesis that economic or financial concerns were high priorities for the emperor. In fact, I would argue that, among all of the innumerable benefits that the Giessen papyrus might theoretically make reference to in the controversial clause, the fiscal privileges were among the foremost concerns of both Caracalla and his newly enfranchised populace. To illustrate this, it is necessary to return to the account offered by Dio. Perhaps the question that should be asked is why Dio chose to criticise the emperor's edict on the basis of economy specifically. The author's account of Caracalla's reign is filled with a variety of personal attacks and insults on a number of subjects, from the emperor's adoration of Alexander the Great through to his fundamental personality and ethnicity.<sup>391</sup> Considering the visible thread of 'hatred and mockery' running through the senator's prose, it seems unlikely that Dio would have neglected any opportunity to demolish the character of his *bête-noir*.<sup>392</sup> As a member of the senatorial class, it would be arguably more logical for Dio to criticise Caracalla for diluting the prestige of the franchise, since this would form an obvious point of concern for a social group already in possession of the rights of Roman citizenship.<sup>393</sup> He does nothing of the sort, though.

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<sup>388</sup> Kuhlmann (1994) 237. For examples of the term in the Latin corpus which Kuhlmann identifies, see *Dig.* 50.16.98.1 and Tert. *Resurr.* 52.

<sup>389</sup> Kuhlmann (1994) 236-37.

<sup>390</sup> Kuhlmann (1994) 237.

<sup>391</sup> Dio 78.6.1a; Millar (1964) 150-51; Davenport (2012) 797-98.

<sup>392</sup> Millar (1964) 151. A similar idea was espoused by Benario (1954: 188), for example, who argued that the *dediticii* could not have been mentioned in the course of the *constitutio* since Dio did not mention them: 'if a significant portion of the population had been barred from the enjoyment of the emperor's gift, Dio would, in all likelihood, not have failed to mention it, since he was a bitter enemy of the ruler.' Whilst Benario overstates the case here and underestimates the level of self-interest ingrained in Dio's work, he is fundamentally correct to highlight the level of criticism levelled at the emperor by the author.

<sup>393</sup> Garnsey (1970) 270-71.

On the one hand, this omission could be the result of Xiphilinus' later epitomising of Dio's original work at this juncture.<sup>394</sup> On the other hand, however, it should be noted that despite Dio's obvious hatred of the emperor, the author's fierce criticism of Caracalla's financial drives does appear to contain an accurate knowledge of the initiatives, once the hostile rhetoric has been stripped away.<sup>395</sup> A similar logic can also be applied to the senator's relationship with the *constitutio Antoniniana*. It is entirely understandable that Dio would attempt to underplay the majesty of the edict promoted by Caracalla. It would be imprudent to assume, however, that Dio had simply fictionalised its fiscal implications rather than choosing to exploit a genuine facet of the *constitutio* in the course of condemning the emperor's unrestrained spending on his favourites.

With this in mind, I would argue that Dio did not fabricate economic concerns or otherwise simply settle on this criticism from among a variety of potential slights; his account is certainly not an exercise in 'extreme idiocy', as Ando would claim.<sup>396</sup> Instead, Dio must have considered the fiscal implications of the *constitutio* to be a factor that was public knowledge and, furthermore, an aspect that would have impacted upon many of his intended audience. Whilst there is little firm evidence to suggest that Dio's history was published in any meaningful way in antiquity, it is still possible to conclude that Dio believed that his attack of Caracalla's edict on economic grounds would have carried the most resonance with his readers (or his intended readership).<sup>397</sup>

### **The Role of the *vicesima hereditatum***

This leads us to another objection to the fiscal hypothesis that must be challenged. In an attempt to undermine Dio's credibility regarding the economic rationale for the edict, scholars have tried to argue that any desire on Caracalla's part to reap an increased tax yield must have been a secondary concern, at best. To substantiate this argument, they point out that the majority of the wealthiest inhabitants

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<sup>394</sup> Millar (1964: 155), for example, has concluded that Xiphilinus' work is 'exceptionally poor' in relation to Caracalla's principate.

<sup>395</sup> Millar (1964) 154-55.

<sup>396</sup> Ando (2000) 395, n. 275.

<sup>397</sup> For more on the composition of Dio's history, see Millar (1964) 28-72.

of the empire were most likely already citizens, and therefore subject to the emperor's taxes, meaning that the increased yield resulting from the expanded franchise cannot have been considerable.<sup>398</sup> This position, however, ignores other available financial evidence from the period which suggests that Caracalla was eager to exponentially increase his tax yield in a short period of time by raising money from estates across a variety of social strata. Returning to Dio's text once more, it was noted earlier in this chapter that one of the taxes that Dio explicitly mentions in connection with Caracalla's fiscal reform is that on inheritances and legacies, claiming that the emperor had doubled the rate from five to ten percent.<sup>399</sup> I argue that the evidence supports the theory that this taxation was levied on estates far smaller than was once thought. In fact, the connection between this citizen tax and the expansion of the franchise by Caracalla further substantiates Dio's fiscal explanation of the edict, demonstrating that the emperor was eager to raise capital from all corners of his realm, and shows that he did not focus merely on the social elite.

Introduced by Augustus in AD 6, the *vicesima hereditatum* was an inheritance duty levied upon estates over a certain value.<sup>400</sup> While there appears to be good evidence for the collection of this tax, the lack of precise information offered by ancient authors means that the exact level of exemption from this tax remains unknown. Evidence gleaned from Pliny the Younger suggests that the charge could be raised against estates of varying sizes.<sup>401</sup> The only other source to mention inheritance duty explicitly is Dio again, who claimed that only the smallest and most modest estates were exempt from the charge.<sup>402</sup> Neither Dio nor Pliny ever provide any numerical figures in support of their claims.

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<sup>398</sup> Buraselis (2007) 8-9; Sherwin-White (1973a) 281.

<sup>399</sup> Dio 78.9.4.

<sup>400</sup> Gilliam (1952) 397; Perez (2009) 211-13.

<sup>401</sup> Plin. *Pan.* 39.5-40.1. In this source, Pliny commends Trajan for his generosity in alleviating the terms of the levy from those of the Flavian period, in which very few estates seem to have been exempt. Whilst it is frustrating that Pliny gives no precise figures, despite serving as a *praefectus aerarii militaris* (magistrate in charge of the military treasury, into which the funds from the *vicesima* were channelled) it must be remembered that he was writing to glorify the emperor rather than offer a detailed account of the tax itself, see Gilliam (1952) 398. The significance of the connection between the *vicesima* and the military treasury will be considered in the next chapter.

<sup>402</sup> Dio 55.25.5.

Despite the hints offered by ancient authors, however, there has been a trend among modern scholars to accept an exemption level for the *vicesima* of estates valued at 100,000 *sestertii* and above, obviously leading to a perception that it was a tax only levied against the propertied classes and the wealthy.<sup>403</sup> It is difficult to establish from where this figure has actually derived, since its extrapolation seems to be founded less on examination of the extant evidence and more on baseless conjecture. I argue that it is the acceptance of this groundless figure that is clearly to blame for the outmoded scholarly consensus that a fiscal rationale could not have prompted the *constitutio Antoniniana*, since ‘the majority of the great fortunes of the empire were already in the fold’.<sup>404</sup> Such a speculative position regarding the terms of the *vicesima hereditatum* can, however, be easily dismantled by examining material evidence available in the form of papyri. Contrary to the notion that the *vicesima* was a tax on the propertied classes alone, papyrological evidence can be found which suggests that the threshold for exemption from the levy was far lower than previously believed, and thus impacted upon the majority of the empire’s enfranchised inhabitants.

Thought by some to form different parts of the same document, *P. Mich.* 435 and 440 are military texts which record a number of inheritances and payments to the *vicesima* made by soldiers of the legions *II Traiana* and *III Cyrenaica*.<sup>405</sup> The texts are poorly preserved and blighted by a number of lacunae, but it is still possible to identify that a number of troops of varying ranks seem to have paid their tax contributions on the same day.<sup>406</sup> It is the varying size of the legacies involved in these soldiers’ transactions which is particularly striking when assessing the potential fiscal reach of the *constitutio Antoniniana*. In the third entry contained on *P. Mich.* 435, the estate was calculated at *c.* 5360 *drachmae*, with the *vicesima* deducting 265 of that amount. Even more surprising is the partially damaged second entry on the same papyrus, which recorded the contribution to the *vicesima* at 95 *drachmae*, a figure which would

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<sup>403</sup> Gilliam (1952) 398-99. Also see Sherwin-White (1973a) 221-22; Cagnat (1882) 226, n. 4.

<sup>404</sup> Sherwin-White (1973a) 221-22.

<sup>405</sup> The papyri are thought to have derived from the legionary camp at Nicopolis. The appearance of these two legions together suggests a possible date range of the papyri of AD 109-19, see Gilliam (1952) 402; Arangio-Ruiz (1949) 257-59; Wallace (1938) 324.

<sup>406</sup> Three of the better preserved entries on *P. Mich.* 435 carry the date *IV Nonas Iulias*, as does the first readable entry on *P. Mich.* 440.

equate to an estate total of only around 1900 *drachmae*.<sup>407</sup> This is clearly far below the 100,000 *sestertii* figure so confidently mooted by scholars in the past. As Gilliam has observed, it would be patently ridiculous to assume that each of the soldiers stationed at Nicopolis could ever bequeath an estate approaching one hundred thousand *sestertii*, meaning that the previous assessment of the levy is incorrect and that a conclusion that the *vicesima* was collected from much smaller estates is incontrovertible.<sup>408</sup>

Sherwin-White's observation that the largest estates of the empire were probably all owned by individuals who had been enfranchised for some time by AD 212 is technically correct, but it assumes that Caracalla was only interested in harvesting tax income from the largest estates in the wealthiest echelons of Roman society and, furthermore, that these prosperous individuals alone would have provided sufficient capital to bankroll the imperial administration.<sup>409</sup> While there is no suggestion that the emperor was uninterested in the estates of the elite, the fact remains that the vast majority of the empire's inhabitants did not possess estates in excess of 100,000 *sestertii*. Even though the level of tax raised on an individual basis would undoubtedly be smaller, I see no reason to accept the claim of Buraselis that the cumulative taxation raised across the empire from smaller estates would have been insignificant or of little consequence.<sup>410</sup> In fact, if the number of eligible tax payers was vastly multiplied through legislation such as the *constitutio*, the resulting increase in tax yield must have been considerable, even accounting for inefficiencies within the physical process of tax collection.<sup>411</sup> Consequently, I would argue that this evidence, combined with that of Dio and the Giessen papyrus, ultimately supports the hypothesis that the *constitutio Antoniniana* had a fiscal purpose and that, among Caracalla's different motivations for the edict, an economic agenda was prominent. Despite the many scholarly attempts to claim otherwise, I would argue that Millar was correct to

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<sup>407</sup> Gilliam (1952) 403-4.

<sup>408</sup> Gilliam (1952) 404.

<sup>409</sup> Sherwin-White (1973a) 221-22.

<sup>410</sup> Buraselis (2007) 8-9. Whilst it is difficult to assess the urban population, Kron (2008: 97-110) has argued that the agricultural peasants were often more productive has been assumed. This notion ultimately supports a hypothesis that the state could profit from extending a tax to encompass smaller scale estates.

<sup>411</sup> For the complexity of tax collection, see Duncan-Jones (1994) 56-63.

observe that by expanding the franchise as Caracalla did, the emperor ‘will have included most people who were worth taxing’.<sup>412</sup>

### **The Purpose of Caracallan Fiscal Innovation**

While I have shown that the evidence supports the notion that the Antonine Constitution contained a significant fiscal dimension, the question of its purpose remains open. If the ancient authors are correct that Septimius Severus was able to leave the imperial coffers with higher revenues than had been observed under any of his predecessors, a logical conclusion would be that Caracalla must have engaged in an unprecedented level of spending to result in a situation where he was compelled to raise capital on the scale suggested by Dio. It has been shown above that Dio accused the emperor of flagrant favouritism and cronyism, but this seems an unconvincing explanation. Two factors warrant consideration. Firstly, Davenport has shown that Dio’s criticism probably results more from his own bitterness at not being one of the emperor’s favoured senators.<sup>413</sup> Secondly, even accounting for increases in *congiaria* and donatives to the military, these gifts would need to have been titanic in nature to exhaust the imperial finances and warrant such a far-reaching fiscal response. Furthermore, it should be remembered that financial profligacy is not a charge unique to Caracalla and is often a negative trait associated with allegedly bad rulers by hostile sources.<sup>414</sup>

An alternative explanation might be that, in recording the end of Severus’ reign, the ancient writers have presented an inaccurate or even false image regarding the level of wealth left behind by the dying emperor. Some evidence suggests that, rather than inheriting the empire in a healthy financial position, Caracalla was forced to respond to economic uncertainty during his period as sole ruler. An example of the emperor reacting to an economic depression can be observed in the epigraphic corpus, in which he publicised his imperial *indulgentia* towards the province of Mauretania Tingitana.

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<sup>412</sup> Millar (1964) 153.

<sup>413</sup> Davenport (2012) 797-803.

<sup>414</sup> Suetonius was particularly quick to level this type of accusation, for example. For instances of ‘bad’ emperors behaving in a financially extravagant manner, see his accounts of Caligula (*Cal.* 37), Nero (*Nero* 30-31) and Domitian (*Domit.* 12).

- 1) ] *Imp(erator) Caes(ar) divi Severi Pii Arab(ici) Adiab(enici) Parth(ici) Max(imi) Brit(annici) Max(imi) filius divi M(arci) Antonini Germ(anici) Sarm(atici) nepos divi Antonini Pii pronepos*  
*[divi H]adria[ni divi Traiani Parth(ici) et di]v[i] Nervae adnepos*  
*Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Pius Aug(ustus) Part(hicus) Max(imus)*  
*Brit(annicus) Max(imus) Germ(anicus) Max(imus) Pont(ifex) Max(imus)*  
*Trib(uniciae) potestatis*
- 5) *XVIII Imp(erator) III co(n)s(ul) IIII p(ater) p(atriciae) proco(n)s(ul) dicit*  
*obsequium et fidem vestram remunerans omnia quaecumque sunt debita*  
*fis-*  
*calia frumentaria sive pecuniaria pendentium quoque causarum concedo*  
*vobis exceptis de quibus pronuntiatum est provocatione non secuta et hoc*  
*amplius eas quoq(ue) causas at beneficium meum profiteor ipse pertinere*  
*in qui-*
- 10) *bus appellationem interpositam probatum fuerit etiam si non sit admissa*  
*certum habens quod indulgentiam meam obsequio sitis remuneraturi cum*  
*vicor(um) et provinciarum bene de re p(ublica) merentium non tantum*  
*viris fortibus*  
*in omni ordine spectatissimis castrensium adque civilium officiorum ve-*  
*rum etiam silvis quoque ipsis caelestium fertilibus animalium meritum*
- 15) *aput me conlocaveritis hoc beneficio meo praesumo omnes de cetero an-*  
*nuas pensationes sive in frumento seu in pecunia eo promptius datu-*  
*ros quo me reputabitis non expectasse quin ultro offerrem neque petenti-*  
*bus vobis neque sperantibus nova remedia et magnificam indulgentiam*  
*curantibus L(ucio) Ant(onio) Sosibiano et Aulo Pompeio Cassiano*
- 20) *d(u)umviris*

Emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Pius Augustus, *Parthicus Maximus, Britannicus Maximus, Germanicus Maximus, pontifex maximus*, holder of the tribunician power for the nineteenth time, *imperator* for the third time, consul for the fourth time, *pater patriae*, proconsul; son of the divine Severus Pius *Arabicus, Adiabenicus, Parthicus Maximus, Britannicus Maximus*; grandson of the divine Marcus Antoninus *Germanicus, Sarmaticus*; great-grandson of the divine Antoninus Pius; great-great grandson of the divine Hadrian; great-great-great grandson of the divine Trajan *Parthicus*; and great-great-great-great grandson of the divine Nerva, proclaims: In rewarding your allegiance and loyalty, I remit any debts that you owe the *fiscus* in either grain or money, and also the claims in suits pending, except those where a judgment has been given and no appeal has been lodged. Furthermore, I proclaim that my generosity also extends to suits in which proof can be offered that an appeal has been lodged, even if it has not been yet granted, since I am confident that you will repay my indulgence with zeal when you have gained credit with me from this favour, not only by the service of the finest of brave men from the towns and countryside, who are highly regarded by all in civil and military positions, but also by contributing from your forests, which are known for their abundance of celestial beasts. As for the future, I expect that annual taxes in grain and money will be paid more promptly, when you remember that you never expected that I would voluntarily offer unprecedented relief and

unstinting indulgence without your request. This bronze was engraved under the order of the *duumviri* Lucius Antonius Sosibianus and Aulus Pompeius Cassianus.<sup>415</sup>

The inscription shows that the emperor released an order in AD 216 that remitted debt across the province, both in money and in kind. Caracalla's desire to promote himself as *indulgentissimus*, noted in the previous chapter, means that it should come as no surprise to find him stressing this quality by drawing attention to the 'great indulgence' (*magnificam indulgentiam*) that he had bestowed upon the Mauretanian populace.<sup>416</sup> What might seem unusual, in the context of Caracalla's sole rule, is that the emperor should excuse the province of its debts at precisely the same time as he increased taxation across the rest of his empire, according to Dio.

It is tempting to draw a comparison between this proclamation and the earlier moratorium issued by Hadrian in Egypt.<sup>417</sup> It might appear that the Caracallan document is, in real terms, nothing more than a temporary remission of taxes, a pragmatic response to economic stress in Mauretania and designed to allow the province time to recover whilst not destabilising the region at large.<sup>418</sup> Indeed, Buraselis is correct to observe that, in genuine cases of economic distress, the generosity of the *Augusti* could be even more useful than in times of prosperity, and the text of the inscription makes it clear that the emperor expected the province to pay their tax contributions promptly, after the duration of the remission had expired.<sup>419</sup> If interpreted in this manner, the Banasa tablet would appear to suggest that Caracalla faced the unenviable prospect of accepting a short term economic deficit in his tax yield in order to preserve the long term liquidity of the provinces, a conclusion that might lead one to consider that the *constitutio Antoniniana* was a reactive edict, designed to ensure some form of taxation reached the imperial coffers during an otherwise troubled time. This is not the entire picture, though.

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<sup>415</sup> *AE* 1946, 109. Translation adapted from Johnson *et al.* (2003).

<sup>416</sup> *AE* 1946, 109, l. 18.

<sup>417</sup> For consideration of the Hadrianic initiative, see above, pg. 77.

<sup>418</sup> Buraselis (2007) 67-68.

<sup>419</sup> Buraselis (2007) 69-70; *AE* 1946, 109, ll. 16-18.

Objections can be raised against the theory that economic depression was the primary motivation behind the promulgation of the *constitutio*. Firstly, it should be noted that economic difficulties such as those which prompted a provincial-scale remission were isolated in nature: there is no evidence to suggest that Caracalla was obliged to offer similar fiscal relief to any other provinces during his sole reign. This means that the Mauretanian case above ought to be viewed as unique during the 212-17 period. Secondly, the intensive building programme undertaken by Severus and Caracalla should be remembered since, even though we cannot infer a modern sense of economic rationality in the emperors, it is very unlikely that they would have engaged in construction upon such a large scale if the economy of the empire at large was in the doldrums; the inactivity of their predecessors Commodus, Pertinax and Didius Julianus only serves to strengthen this hypothesis.<sup>420</sup> While it remains possible that the ancient authors may have exaggerated the scale of the wealth left behind by Septimius Severus, it does not appear as if the empire was in economic decline or immediate peril during the sole reign of Caracalla. Another explanation is required, then, one which does not infer economic meltdown on an imperial scale, but which also required the emperor to mint an extraordinary number of new coins, to the extent that he debased the currency and introduced the over-valued *antoninianus* into circulation.

Returning to Caracalla's monetary reform of this period, the most striking feature of this phenomenon is the similarity that it bears to the currency manipulation carried out by Septimius Severus, noted above. In fact, given the period of shared rule between the men between 198 and 211, it is probably more appropriate to view the Caracallan programme as a direct continuation of that executed by his father, rather than an entirely separate initiative. This suggests that the problem remained one of liquidity, a trend which, as has already been shown, was prompted by a requirement to support a higher number of soldiers at an increased rate of pay. The extra demands placed upon the Mauretanians by Caracalla in the Banasa inscription thus merit additional attention. In the course of his proclamation, the emperor declared that he was certain that the province would repay his indulgence and generosity by furnishing

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<sup>420</sup> Gorrie (2002) 461-81.

him with men for both the Roman army and civil service, in addition to the enigmatic ‘celestial beasts’ (*caelestium animalium*).<sup>421</sup> While there is no suggestion that the Caracallan *tabula* of Banasa was specifically designed to guarantee manpower for the army and civilian administration, it is noteworthy that such a demand is issued in AD 216, in the period leading to Caracalla’s planned offensive against the Parthian Empire.

The similarity between Severan and Caracallan monetary reforms, combined with this appeal for manpower from the Mauretians in 216, suggests that there should be a connection made between the emperor’s fiscal and military reforms and, therefore, between the Antonine Constitution and Caracallan military policy, by implication. Such a hypothesis offers a rational explanation regarding Caracalla’s decision to debase the silver coinage while, at the same time, raising a number of taxes and exponentially expanding the number of Roman citizens in his empire. With this in mind, then, it is now necessary to assess exactly how far a link between the *constitutio Antoniniana* and the Roman army can be identified, and to what extent the edict was motivated by an imperial need to support the military apparatus.

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<sup>421</sup> *AE* 1946, 109, ll. 11-15. There has been much debate on the nature of the animals requested. For more on this, see Guey (1947) 248-73; (1948) 128-30; Picard (1948) 134-35.

## CHAPTER V

### *The Military Application of the constitutio Antoniniana*

Military expenditure was a pillar of Severan rule from the outset. Septimius Severus' bid for power had rested on the size and strength of the forces at his disposal and, as noted in the previous chapter, the evidence suggests that emperor was keen to reinforce this powerbase through a programme of reforms and an increase in basic pay. In fact, imperial spending on the army was perceived to be such a keystone to the dynasty's survival that Severus is reputed to have given his sons a final instruction as he lay on his deathbed: 'be harmonious, enrich the troops, and scorn all other men.'<sup>422</sup> This advice was taken seriously by Severus' eldest son, according to our main sources for the period. Herodian, for example, criticised Caracalla for allowing his soldiers free-rein in looting temples and treasuries, a move that effectively wiped out the mass of wealth accrued by Severus.<sup>423</sup> Similar claims can be found in the *Historia Augusta*, in which the author described Caracalla buying the support of the army through massive donatives.<sup>424</sup> Finally, Dio alleges that the emperor engaged in excessive spending on the military, going so far as to accuse Caracalla of seeking out war simply to maintain his soldiers' favour:

Οὗτος οὖν ὁ φιλαλεξανδρότατος Ἀντωνῖνος ἐς μὲν τοὺς στρατιώτας, οὓς πάνυ πολλοὺς ἀμφ' αὐτὸν εἶχε, προφάσεις ἐκ προφάσεων καὶ πολέμους ἐκ πολέμων σκηπτόμενος, φιλιαναλωτὴς ἦν.

Now this great admirer of Alexander, Antoninus, was fond of spending money upon the soldiers, great numbers of whom he kept in attendance upon him, offering excuse after excuse and one war after another.<sup>425</sup>

At the close of the previous chapter, I noted that there is some evidence to suggest that a link should be made between the economic and military reforms

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<sup>422</sup> Dio 77.15.2: ὁμονοεῖτε, **τοὺς στρατιώτας πλουτίζετε**, τῶν ἄλλων πάντων καταφρονεῖτε (emphasis added).

<sup>423</sup> Hdn 4.4.7-5.1.

<sup>424</sup> HA *Car.* 2.7-8. In this account, the author alleged that the emperor was required to offer considerable sums to the troops of the *legio II Parthica*, in particular, owing to the soldiers' initially displayed loyalty to the murdered Geta in the aftermath of the assassination. The author further claimed that the legionaries actually prevented Caracalla from entering their camp at Albanum until they had been won over by the promise of payment.

<sup>425</sup> Dio 78.9.1.

undertaken by Caracalla. If Dio's account on the matter is accepted, the connection would appear to be one of simple cronyism, in which the emperor lavished money on his troops in order to ensure their continued loyalty and support. While it is evident that the image of the soldier-emperor was a central facet of Caracalla's self-representation as an emperor, the notion that he sought to rapidly increase his tax revenue and coin stock for the sole reason of indulging his favourites is clearly the result of Dio's desire to depict Caracalla as a tyrant and is, therefore, unconvincing.<sup>426</sup>

I would argue that, similar to engaging with Dio's assessment of the fiscal significance underlying the Antonine Constitution, it is necessary to look beyond the inflammatory rhetoric employed by the senator, and investigate whether the military application of Caracalla's edict contained another purpose that is not elucidated by any of our hostile extant sources. In recent years, an attempt has been made to examine the military significance of the *constitutio*, in which Rocco placed martial concerns at the heart of the emperor's decision to extend the franchise, arguing that the edict was designed to address a perennial shortage of legionary recruits across the empire.<sup>427</sup> While his argument is problematic in areas, approaching the legislation solely through the lens of the military and, furthermore, accepting the indefensible inclusion of the *dediticii* in *P. Giss.* 40, it highlights an important potential facet of the *constitutio Antoniniana*, nonetheless. This chapter will therefore build on the research undertaken by Rocco in assessing the military application of Caracalla's edict.

As with the investigation of the economic importance of the *constitutio*, it is important to recognise that the military application of the edict was not a reaction to an unexpected or sudden turn of events. In fact, it can be argued that Caracalla was responding to a trend of inadequate recruitment that had been a problem for the imperial administration from the early years of the Principate. At the outset of this chapter, then, I will consider the factors that resulted in a low level of legionary volunteers, specifically the restrictive nature of selection criteria for service, combined with the socially and financially unappealing nature of service in the legions compared

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<sup>426</sup> For more on Caracalla's self-representation, see Chapter Three.

<sup>427</sup> Rocco (2010) 131-55.

to other branches of auxiliary forces. By setting Caracalla's reign against this wider context, I will demonstrate that the Antonine Constitution addressed the emperor's military agenda in two distinct ways. In one respect, it overcame one of the most significant obstacles to recruiting men for the legions, namely that they had to be fully enfranchised. Moreover, the fiscal consequences of the *constitutio Antoniniana* also ensured that there was increased revenue for the military treasury, meaning that Caracalla could reform the army pay scale in a similar fashion to his father and also plan expenditure on offensives the northern and eastern frontiers.

### **Obstacles to Legionary Recruitment**

The Roman army was a vast organisation. Although forming less than one percent of the empire's population, it has been calculated that around 400,000 men were serving within its ranks by the reign of Severus and, by AD 215, that the organisation cost the Roman state *c.* 1130-1190 million *sestertii*, a financial drain representing around three quarters of the imperial government's total annual expenditure.<sup>428</sup> Despite its prominence, however, it appears that there were simply too few men enrolling in the legions by the time of Caracalla's principate. Assessing the number of recruits needed by the army on an annual basis is a challenging exercise. Scholars have been conservative in the past, with Le Bohec, for example, claiming that manpower levels could have been maintained with an intake of around 18,000 men.<sup>429</sup> Haynes was similarly cautious in his study of the *auxilia*, suggesting that auxiliary branches would only have needed around 10,500 men annually to maintain their levels at *c.* 215,000 during the first two centuries of the Principate.<sup>430</sup> While it is fair to conclude that the army would not have required hundreds of thousands of recruits to sustain an acceptable fighting strength, I would argue that the figures postulated by Le Bohec and Haynes are artificially low. The issue with these conservative estimates is that they are based upon absolutely consistent numbers of men enlisting and demobilising in every year, and thus do not reflect the realities of military service, such

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<sup>428</sup> Erdkamp (2002) 5-7.

<sup>429</sup> Le Bohec (2000) 71. Also see Forni (1953: 30), who arrives at a similarly low figure by calculating an annual requirement of only 240 men per legion (6000 in total), and estimating a similar number to fill the auxiliary levy.

<sup>430</sup> Haynes (2001) 62-63.

as operational losses.<sup>431</sup> Whatever the reality of this requirement, the literary evidence suggests that Roman government was often unable to fill the legions completely, even during the Julio-Claudian period. Tiberius, for example, is alleged by Tacitus to have complained about the shortage of men volunteering:

*Multitudinem veteranorum praetexebat imperator et dilectibus supplendos exercitus: nam voluntarium militem deesse, ac si suppeditet, non eadem virtute ac modestia agree, quia plerumque inopes ac vagi sponte militiam sumant.*

The emperor referred to the number of veterans [who had completed their term of service and were waiting to be finally discharged] and the need of fresh levies to maintain the strength of the armies. He said there was a shortage of volunteers and, even when they were forthcoming, they failed to display the same courage and discipline, since it was often the penniless and vagrant who enlisted willingly.<sup>432</sup>

It is of interest that Tacitus refers to the levies as *dilecti*, a description which, as Mann notes, is open to interpretation.<sup>433</sup> Surviving evidence suggests that *dilectus* was employed in reference to both voluntary enlistment and reassignment, as well as conscription. Tacitus offers two examples of willing enrolment, for example, using *dilectus* in connection with Vitellius' reassignment of legionary soldiers to urban and praetorian cohorts, and also in reference to the inhabitants of Rome begging the same emperor to be armed against the advancing armies of Vespasian.<sup>434</sup> On the contrary, however, Tacitus also employs the term when describing a levy conducted by means of conscription.<sup>435</sup> In fact, it seems that mandatory service was a key component of the *dilectus* during the imperial period. Further evidence to this effect can be found in legal writing, which suggests there was a traditional liability on the part of the citizen body to undertake military service.<sup>436</sup> This is a significant point, since it demonstrates that,

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<sup>431</sup> It is, however, admittedly impossible to recreate a truly reflective model but, in failing to offer even an estimate of such attrition, these figures remain improbably low.

<sup>432</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 4.4 (tr. adapted from Jackson).

<sup>433</sup> Mann (1983) 49-50.

<sup>434</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.93-94; 3.58. Also see Mann (1983) 49.

<sup>435</sup> In describing the prosecution of Paedius Blaesus and his subsequent expulsion from the senate, Tacitus notes that part of the alleged offence committed by the senator was to accept bribes in exchange for finding reasons to excuse men from service. In the passage, Blaesus is explicitly accused of interfering with the *dilectus* through bribery and corruption. See Tac. *Ann.* 14.18.1.

<sup>436</sup> *Dig.* 49.16.4.10. In the legal treatise *On Military Matters*, Arrius Menander noted the traditional punishments, including reduction to servitude and even execution, levelled at 'traitors to liberty' who were found to have avoided such service.

while the emperors appear to have been reluctant to introduce an extensive programme of conscription, the state was unable to meet the manpower requirement of the legions through voluntary enlistment alone, and was often required to resort to a compulsory draft.<sup>437</sup> In fact, the severity of this problem was so pronounced at times that a *dilectus* was required across a large geographical expanse, occurring, for example, in Africa and Asia, in addition to Italy and Narbonese Gaul, when raising men for the Illyrian legions created by Nero.<sup>438</sup> In times of military crisis, there is even evidence to suggest that the army resorted to enrolling individuals usually ineligible for legionary service, such as sailors or even freedmen, leading to a distinction being made between the traditionally levied *iustae legiones*, and those raised from men of other branches of service.<sup>439</sup>

The extant evidence relating to recruitment demonstrates that the legions were often understrength and depended on unorthodox or irregular sources of manpower to bolster their numbers.<sup>440</sup> Even at the height of imperial expansion under Trajan and Hadrian, the emperors were required to deploy vexillations from one legion to another, in order to address acute shortages.<sup>441</sup> Given the nearly continual warfare on the northern frontier during the Antonine period, paired with the civil wars following the death of Commodus, this phenomenon has significant implications for the military situation that Caracalla faced as the sole emperor in AD 212. As a ruler who presented himself as a soldier-emperor, it is unsurprising that Caracalla would devote substantial sums to the maintenance of his army. The almost perennial difficulty experienced by the *Augusti* in filling legionary levies, however, means that we must hesitate before accepting Dio's suggestion that the emperor's military spending was the result of simple favouritism. Instead, we are faced with the possibility that Caracalla's

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<sup>437</sup> Forni (1953) 19-20.

<sup>438</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 16.13.

<sup>439</sup> Forni (1953) 103. For examples of freedmen being enlisted during the early imperial period, see Dio 55.31.1-2; 56.23.1-3. Also see Forni (1953) 105-7, 115, and Mann (1983: 53) who discusses the composition of the *legio I Adiutrix* levied under Nero, which included a high number of men previously serving in the Roman navy. This practice is also seen around the same time, with Vitellius and Vespasian drafting men from the fleets to fight in their legions during the Year of the Four Emperors. For more on this, see Tac. *Hist.* 3.55. For epigraphic and papyrological evidence recording sailors or auxiliaries being employed to augment legionary strength, see *ILS* 9095; *P. Mich.* VII 432; *PSI* 1026.

<sup>440</sup> Veg. 1.2-7; Mann (1983) 50-55; Forni (1953) 103.

<sup>441</sup> Mann (1983) 55, Tables 1 and 25a. Also see Eck (1999) 76-89. For an example of one such vexillations being deployed during the Bar Kokhba revolt, see *CIL* VI 3505.

expenditure and reforms (including the *constitutio Antoniniana*) were designed to improve the state of the Roman army that he had inherited from his father.

It is first necessary to consider briefly the question of why the imperial state was unable to ensure a satisfactory level of manpower within the legions. While external conflict represents an obvious drain, the pattern of insufficient recruitment is more significant and appears to have been largely a problem of the government's own making. According to Vegetius, entrance criteria for legionary soldiers were severe.<sup>442</sup> The author claimed, for example, that there were a selection of moralistic standards required of legionaries, further arguing that a variety of professions, from fishermen to textile workers, should be disbarred from service.<sup>443</sup> This sanctimonious position was not unique to Vegetius, with similar prohibitions preserved in the *Digest* and the *Theodosian Code*.<sup>444</sup> These conditions appear to have been largely inflexible, even in the aftermath of military disaster, such as the catastrophic Roman defeat at Adrianople in AD 378.<sup>445</sup> In fact, the penalties for anyone caught enlisting under false pretence were draconian; Pliny the Younger even mentions capital punishment being employed in some cases.<sup>446</sup>

Even more basic requirements served to further reduce the pool of available manpower. There was a minimum height restriction, for example, with no one under 1.72 metres tall being classed as eligible for service.<sup>447</sup> Arguably the best known obstacle to prospective legionaries, however, was that every soldier had to be a fully enfranchised citizen.<sup>448</sup> This criterion has obvious implications for the available recruitment pool. Firstly, it reduced the potential number of recruits considerably since it has been established that *cives* represented a clear minority of the empire's

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<sup>442</sup> It should be noted that, although Vegetius was writing significantly after the High Empire period and the Severi, he borrowed heavily from a variety of earlier treatises on the military. He thus created a 'scissors and paste mosaic' of such writing and expanded sections to fit his own literary design. For more on this, see Milner (1993) xvi-xvii.

<sup>443</sup> Veg. 1.2-7.

<sup>444</sup> *Dig.* 49.16.2.1; 49.16.6; *CTh.* 7.13.8 (AD 380).

<sup>445</sup> Speidel (2012) 177-78.

<sup>446</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 10.29-30.

<sup>447</sup> Junkelmann (1986) 106-7. Also see Speidel (2012) 177-78; Rocco (2010) 139, and Forni (1953) 25-26.

<sup>448</sup> Forni (1953) 103.

population, even in the immediate prelude to the Antonine Constitution.<sup>449</sup> Furthermore, a reliance on the already enfranchised populace would have resulted in the burden of legionary service being unevenly distributed across the empire, with the more heavily Romanised provinces experiencing the brunt of the *dilectus*.<sup>450</sup>

Another factor in the military situation pre-212 is that the evidence suggests that the very prospect of legionary service became increasingly unpopular among the minority of individuals eligible to enlist therein. At the heart of the problem appears to have been the fact that the basic conditions of service were progressively more unpalatable to the citizen population: ‘service was long, pay became more and more insufficient, and the meagre grants made to veterans were no recompense for these sacrifices.’<sup>451</sup> The average length of legionary engagement was between twenty five and twenty six years.<sup>452</sup> While this was the same as the lesser branches of service, the duties appear to have been more arduous, and the meagre wages of little recompense.<sup>453</sup> Further to the practical considerations, it is also worth noting the social impact of legionary enlistment which, although arguably even more significant to the recruits (since the army wage was at least regular, if meagre), is more difficult to define. Recruits enlisting from the Romanised heartlands of the empire could be posted anywhere among the provinces, meaning that there was a significant chance that they would never see their families and relatives again. It is unsurprising, then, that individuals were prepared to bribe officials in order to escape the *dilectus*.

This problem was compounded by the fact that there were other routes to military careers also open to fully enfranchised citizens. They could apply to enlist, for example, within the urban cohorts of Rome, Lyons and Carthage. Unlike their legionary counterparts, the men of these formations enjoyed both shorter lengths of service and a better pay scale and grant structure for veterans.<sup>454</sup> In addition, service

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<sup>449</sup> Garnsey (2004) 135.

<sup>450</sup> Haynes (2001) 63.

<sup>451</sup> Mann (1983) 49.

<sup>452</sup> Aug. *Res gest.* 16; Dio 54.2.6, 55.23, 57.6.5; Tac. *Ann.* 1.17.2, also see Forni (1953) 142-44; Le Roux (1982) 263.

<sup>453</sup> For more on legionary pay and benefits, see Tac. *Ann.* 1.17, 78.2; Suet. *Nero.* 32.1. How legionary service differed from that of the *auxilia*, in particular, will be discussed below.

<sup>454</sup> Le Bohec (2000) 20-21, 100; Mann (1983) 49.

in the urban cohorts was usually restricted to the locale of the formation in question. As a result, this option proved a more popular choice for *cives*, particularly from the Italian peninsula, and the *urbaniciani* never encountered a shortage of volunteers from which to fill its ranks.<sup>455</sup> Service in the *auxilia* also presented a potentially more attractive alternative to the legions. In late antiquity, Vegetius noted that ever increasing numbers of men were enrolling within the *auxilia*, writing with some scorn that he believed those who enlisted in this fashion were actively seeking a softer and more comfortable alternative to service in the legions:

*Est et alia causa, cur adtenuatae sint legiones: magnus in illis labor est militandi, graviora arma, plura munera, severior disciplina. Quod vitantes plerique in auxiliis festinant militiae sacramenta praecipere, ubi et minor sudor et maturiora sunt praemia.*

There is also another reason why the legions have become diminished, the labour of serving in them is great, the arms heavier, the duties more frequent, the discipline more severe. To avoid this, many flock the *auxilia* to take their oaths of service, where the sweat is less and the rewards come sooner.<sup>456</sup>

Far from empty hyperbole on the part of Vegetius, the arduous nature of the *plura munera* found in the legions is also noted by Ammianus Marcellinus.<sup>457</sup> More compelling evidence for a shift in the backgrounds of auxiliary recruits can be found in the epigraphic corpus. In his study of epitaphs belonging to named infantrymen and cavalrymen of the *auxilia* found in the Rhine region, Kraft has shown a visible change in the nature of the troops from the time of the Julio-Claudians to the end of the second century, with high numbers of fully enfranchised citizens found in both the auxiliary cohorts and *alae*.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> Mann (1983) 49.

<sup>456</sup> Veg. 2.3 (tr. adapted from Milner). It has been suggested by some that Vegetius might have been referring to the later formation of the *auxilia palatina*, see Formisano and Petrocelli (2003) 131; Milner (1993) 33. It has been acknowledged by these same scholars, however, that Vegetius' source in this case was an older one, making reference to the traditional auxiliary organisation found under the Early-High Empire period.

<sup>457</sup> Amm. Marc. 18.2.6.

<sup>458</sup> Kraft (1951) 79-81, 140-99. The cavalry *alae* had their own physical entrance criteria, namely a minimum height requirement. Those ineligible for service in these squadrons could still join the *equites cohortis*, who do not appear to have been regarded differently from the *alae*, except in terms of their armament. For more on the distinction between the two formations, see Ureche (2009) 331.

	<i>Alae</i>		<i>Cohortes</i>	
	<i>Peregrini</i>	<i>Cives</i>	<i>Peregrini</i>	<i>Cives</i>
Julio-Claudian	48	7	44	0
Flavian-Trajan	32	19	27	17
Hadrian-c.AD 170	13	10	13	17
2nd-3rd Century	0	38	3	43

Fig. 6: Table illustrating the changing legal status among auxiliaries.<sup>459</sup>

Haynes has suggested that this trend might be explained by the growth in military families, with sons following their fathers into the ranks.<sup>460</sup> I would argue that it is equally possible that this data also reflects the natural expansion of the franchise observed during the Principate. Even with the potential impact of these two elements, the shift in the legal status of the soldiery from the start of the imperial era to the third century remains striking. In fact, this process appears to have prompted a change in the *auxilia* as a whole, with auxiliary and legionary units increasingly resembling one another in terms of basic equipment and tactical deployment.<sup>461</sup>

The relative appeal of joining a static auxiliary unit is understandable in that the recruit would be enlisting in a formation whose members were likely already known locally and, like the urban cohorts, the location in which the troops would pass their engagement would be predictable. Furthermore, the difference in the pay scale between the legionaries and auxiliaries, a source of academic contention for decades, is now thought to have been almost negligible, with soldiers in the auxiliary infantry earning 5/6 of the legionary wage.<sup>462</sup> It seems an insignificant difference considering the socially preferable terms of service demanded by the *auxilia*.<sup>463</sup> Indeed the differential must have seemed increasingly negligible during the second century, with

<sup>459</sup> Le Bohec (2000) 98, after Kraft (1951) 140-99. This pattern of increasing citizen enlistment is not unique to the Rhine, and can also be seen in other areas, such as the auxiliary cohorts of Dura Europos, for example. For more on this, see Gilliam (1965) 82-84.

<sup>460</sup> Haynes (2001) 67-68.

<sup>461</sup> Rocco (2010) 140; Strobel (2007) 267-78; Speidel (2009a) 283-304. For more on arms and general deployment, see Gasparino (2008).

<sup>462</sup> Speidel 1992 (2009) 349-80, particularly 370-78. Also see Jahn (1984) 53-74 and Speidel 2000 (2009) 407-37, *contra* Alston (1994) 113-23, who argued that there was, in fact, no real distinction at all between the pay scales of the *auxilia* and the legions. Auxiliary cavalymen similarly enjoyed a wage commensurate with their legionary counterparts. For more on this, see Speidel 1992 (2009) 357-58, (1994) 45, 56-59; Rocco (2010) 142-43.

<sup>463</sup> Le Bohec (2000) 25-29.

the legionary rate of pay set under Domitian remaining static in the face of increasing inflation.<sup>464</sup>

A final point worth noting here is Vegetius' observation that the rewards of service in the *auxilia* were more rapid and forthcoming than for those in legionary units.<sup>465</sup> Although legionaries could theoretically be advanced to the staff of provincial governors and even the emperor, it appears that the membership of the *singulares* was primarily composed of men from among the auxiliary cohorts and *alae*.<sup>466</sup> In a similar fashion to the praetorian guard, the soldiers of the *singulares* enjoyed a close proximity to the officials (including the emperor himself, in the case of the *equites singulares Augusti*) and were responsible for his safety; the importance of these units is clear.<sup>467</sup> Even more so than regular mounted divisions, the evidence suggests that the designation of *singularis* carried a level of social prestige simply unattainable in standard legionary service.<sup>468</sup> In fact, soldiers in the *singulares* could achieve promotion to the position of centurion or decurion after only three years of service, compared to around fifteen years for a legionary soldier that did not possess equestrian status.<sup>469</sup>

The evidence relating to military enlistment in the pre-212 era demonstrates that legionary service was an unpopular choice among the citizen body. The availability of more attractive alternatives means that the hypothesis that many would opt against becoming a *miles legionis* is persuasive. Indeed, this has led Rocco to the conclusion that there were 'recurring crises in the recruitment of native-born citizens joining the legions'.<sup>470</sup> While I would argue that he has overstated the problem, inasmuch as there is no evidence to suggest that the legions lost their fighting capacity completely, Rocco is correct to identify that the trend was both persistent and would

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<sup>464</sup> For more on the financial uncertainty of the second century, see pgs. 74-79.

<sup>465</sup> Veg. 2.3.

<sup>466</sup> Speidel (1978) 6-11, also see Speidel (1994) 61-78.

<sup>467</sup> Speidel (1994) 61-63, also see Bingham (2013) 40-41.

<sup>468</sup> Rocco (2010) 144; Speidel (1994) 63-64; Speidel (1978) 36. The pride which accompanied service in the *singulares* can be observed in the wealth of epigraphic evidence commissioned by these soldiers (or their families) upon which the designation appears. For selected examples, see *AE* 2003, 1221; *AE* 2004, 319; *CIL* III 1160; *CIL* III 3472, and *CIL* III 14693.

<sup>469</sup> Speidel (1978) 36; Forni (1953) 47-48.

<sup>470</sup> Rocco (2010) 144.

have been problematic for an emperor with any military ambitions like Caracalla. This is the context that must be borne in mind when evaluating the military significance of the *constitutio Antoniniana*.

### **The Reforms of Septimius Severus**

I argued in the previous chapter that in order to understand the actions of Caracalla better, it was necessary to consider those of his father. Similar to the impression of an economic recovery, the military situation appears to improve under Severus who, in addition to securing his dynasty's grip on power by armed force, was able to raise three new legions, the *I, II and III Parthicae*, and wage two extended campaigns, in Parthia and Britain, the former of which was such a success that Mesopotamia was added to the empire.<sup>471</sup> The reality behind these well-known victories, however, was that Severus was required to introduce a variety of reforms to the army, and to devote a vast amount of revenue to incentivising service in the legions and restoring an army that had been wracked by civil war.<sup>472</sup>

As I have already shown, there is evidence to suggest that the debasement of silver coinage that occurred under Severus should be associated with his augmentation of the army wage rather than an economic malaise.<sup>473</sup> As the first emperor to raise the soldiers' pay since Domitian, Severus increased the military wage by 100%.<sup>474</sup> The hostile nature of the ancient writers towards the army is well-known and, consequently, caution must be exercised when assessing the underlying rationale of the emperor's initiative. On the one hand, it seems unfair to swiftly condemn the policy as a reward for loyalty in the civil war, or as an obsequious bribe to ensure the army's support of the family's claim to power. On the other hand, it also seems unlikely that the pay increase was a wholly selfless or compensatory act, designed to correct a historical injustice regarding the stagnation of the legionary wage. In the context of an ongoing

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<sup>471</sup> For more on Severus' new legions, see Mann (1983) 63 and Balty (1988) 91-104. For accounts of Severus' military exploits, see Dio 75.9.4, 76.9-12; Hdn 3.9.1-12; HA *Sev.* 15.1-16.3.

<sup>472</sup> De Blois (2002) 95; Develin (1971) 687-95.

<sup>473</sup> See pgs. 79-82.

<sup>474</sup> Alston (1994) 115, has suggested that the wage reform only constituted a 50% pay rise, but the consensus supports the notion that Severus in fact doubled the Domitianic rate, see Speidel 1992 (2009) 349-50, 366-71; De Blois (2002) 95-96.

struggle to recruit legionary volunteers, it seems likely that the Severan pay increase should be interpreted as an incentive to make the prospect of legionary service more appealing than it had previously been. This hypothesis is strengthened by the marked increase in silver coinage dating to the period and onwards found in military sites identified by Kemmers.<sup>475</sup> As De Blois has noted, however, despite the large amount of capital seized in the aftermath of the Wars of Succession and Parthian campaign, the pay rise was not an initiative that the emperor could afford within the pre-existing monetary system: he lacked the plate but also, more importantly, the tax income to fund the wage increase without devaluing the denarius.<sup>476</sup> It is doubly noteworthy, then, that we can observe an intensification in the *annona militaris*, since such payment in kind represented a convenient way to both ensure that the soldiery was well provisioned without exacerbating the issue of liquidity facing the imperial government.<sup>477</sup>

The army was a key factor in assuring the success of Severan rule, during the Wars of Succession and beyond. It is therefore unsurprising that Septimius Severus engaged in a programme of reforms designed to ameliorate conditions of service and thereby encourage greater numbers to enlist from the outset of his reign. These initiatives do not represent a successful end in themselves, though, and should rather be considered the beginning of a process of strengthening the Severan military apparatus. This was a particularly important requirement for Caracalla during the period of his sole reign, considering the significance of militaristic imagery in the emperor's self-representation and the emphasis he placed on the army to the security of his rule in the aftermath of Geta's assassination.<sup>478</sup>

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<sup>475</sup> Kemmers (2009) 148-49, especially Fig. 1. From a survey of 3827 coins discovered as site finds in a military context, 93% of this figure is comprised of precious metal coinage. This has led the author to remark that it seems likely that Severus' wage reform probably altered the way in which the soldiery was paid, their salaries being distributed nearly exclusively in silver coinage.

<sup>476</sup> De Blois (2002) 95.

<sup>477</sup> For more on the *annona*, see Strobel (2007) 280; Lo Cascio (2005a) 153; Corbier (2005) 381; Speidel 1992 (2009); Develin (1971) 693-95.

<sup>478</sup> For more on Caracalla's actions following Geta's murder, see Chapter Three.

### **The Military Application of the *constitutio Antoniniana***

The evidence suggests, then, that Caracalla inherited a military apparatus that had been somewhat stabilised by his father, but was hardly a dynamic organisation. While the programme of reform undertaken by Severus was partly effective in improving legionary enlistment, its success was far from complete. Papyrological evidence confirms that Caracalla chose to raise the basic rate of pay for the legions by a further fifty percent beyond the level set by his predecessor.<sup>479</sup> Owing to the rapid nature of the army wage increase, one-hundred and fifty percent in less than twenty years, it is unsurprising that we find Dio depicting Caracalla as ruler obsessed with lavishing gifts on the military, alleging that the emperor declared that the continued security of Severan rule depended on the army, and that he intended to enrich the soldiery at the expense of all others: ‘Nobody in the world should have money but me; and I want to bestow it upon the soldiers.’<sup>480</sup> It should also be noted, however, that there is evidence to suggest that the emperor was not alone in perceiving the army to be a crucial element in ensuring the continued survival of the imperial state. Ironically, some of the best material on this subject can be found in the midst of Dio’s highly critical work.

Set in the context of the end of the Republic, Dio constructs a lengthy debate between Maecenas and Agrippa, ostensibly to inform Octavian regarding the mode of government that Rome should adopt.<sup>481</sup> Rather than a faithful, or even simply hypothetical, rendition of a historical discussion between Agrippa and Maecenas, the debate is thought to outline many of the author’s own political views and attitudes, carefully positioned in the Augustan period to avoid making overt comments regarding his own political milieu.<sup>482</sup> In the course of the dialogue, Dio emphasises the

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<sup>479</sup> Speidel 1992 (2009) 367-68. Speidel has employed papyrological evidence to demonstrate that, during the Severan period and its aftermath, pay rises took place under Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Maximinus Thrax. For selected examples, see *ChLA* 446, 495, and *P. Panop.* 292. If the pay records for this period are analysed and divided into individual soldiers’ wages, it can be shown that Severus raised the Domitianic rate by one-hundred percent, Caracalla raised the Severan rate by fifty percent, with Maximinus Thrax later doubling the Caracallan rate during his short reign.

<sup>480</sup> Dio 78.10.4: οὐδένα ἀνθρώπων πλὴν ἐμοῦ ἀργύριον ἔχειν δεῖ, ἵνα αὐτὸ τοῖς στρατιώταις χαρίζωμαι. In this same passage, Dio claimed that Julia Domna reproached her son for such extravagant spending, to which Caracalla replied by inferring that the dynasty would never run short of money when the army was loyal to it.

<sup>481</sup> Dio 52.1-41.

<sup>482</sup> Adler (2012) 477-520; Hose (2007) 461-67.

importance of the army to the survival of the Roman state and the need for money to keep the soldiery in place:

Πόθεν οὖν χρήματα καὶ ἐς τούτους καὶ ἐς τὰ ἄλλα τὰ ἀναγκαίως ἀναλωθησόμενα ἔσται; ἐγὼ καὶ τοῦτο διδάξω, μικρὸν ἐκεῖνο ὑπειπὼν, ὅτι κἂν δημοκρατηθῶμεν, πάντως που χρημάτων δεησόμεθα· οὐ γὰρ οἷόν τε οὔτ' ἄνευ στρατιωτῶν ἡμᾶς σώζεσθαι οὔτ' ἀμισθί τινος στρατεύεσθαι.

From where, then, is the money to be provided for these soldiers and for the other expenses that will be incurred by virtue of necessity? I will explain this point also, prefacing it with a brief reminder that even if we have democracy, we shall in any case need money, of course. For we cannot survive without the soldiers, and men will not serve as soldiers without payment.<sup>483</sup>

Two points should be noted here. The first relates to the assertion that the Empire could not survive without the army. While Dio also had the characters discuss potential reforms of the military, and despite his vehement dislike of the soldiery, the author conceded that they were nevertheless a necessity of the state.<sup>484</sup> The second point relates to the observation that the army would not be able to function without sufficient pay.<sup>485</sup> The concepts of the military apparatus, finances and state survival are inextricably linked.<sup>486</sup> While he was openly critical of Caracalla's spending on the army, even Dio reluctantly realised that a significant level of expenditure was necessary to ensure its loyalty, and to encourage men to enlist at all. Later in his work, Dio described a letter to the senate written by Macrinus, in which the usurper emperor bemoaned the predicament he faced of being unable to pay the troops the wages and donatives pledged to them by his predecessors, but realising that it was politically impossible to refuse the soldiery the sums that they expected.<sup>487</sup>

Dio's hostile account of Caracallan spending, then, masks the military reality that existed in AD 212. State expenditure on the army was regarded to form a necessary investment to maintain the security of the empire, and yet was becoming an

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<sup>483</sup> Dio 52.28.1 (tr. adapted from Cary).

<sup>484</sup> De Blois (2002) 91-92. For the section on the proposed restructuring of the army, see Dio 52.27.

<sup>485</sup> In fact, in the following section (52.29), Dio had Maecenas and Agrippa progress to discuss finances more generally.

<sup>486</sup> Hose (2007) 466.

<sup>487</sup> Dio 79.17-18.

increasingly severe drain on the economy. The troops' wages may have been improved, but the resulting shortage of coinage had prompted a process of currency debasement.<sup>488</sup> Moreover, the restrictive nature of the selection criteria based on the possession of the Roman franchise remained in effect, limiting the areas from which legionaries could be recruited. In this context, I would argue that the *constitutio Antoniniana* can be interpreted as an imperial response to the continuing dilemmas associated with the military apparatus. In fact, if the primary consequences of the edict are considered, it can be shown to address the problems outlined above in two distinct ways. Firstly, it circumnavigated the fundamental impediment to increasing the manpower pool from which to draw legionaries, namely that they had to be *cives* prior to their enlistment. While it is clear that a number of minor prerequisites for service still remained, the military application of the Antonine Constitution here seems an uncomplicated one; as Rocco concludes:

The *constitutio Antoniniana* eliminated, *de facto*, with one single sweep, whatever legal obstacles (except the requirement of *ingenuitas*) that could jeopardize legionary service and practically abolished the need to recur to expedients such as the *ad hoc* concession of citizenship to *peregrine* every time that there was a scarcity of recruits.<sup>489</sup>

While it is true that the process of conceding citizenship on an individual basis cannot have been an overly arduous process, since no emperor prior to Caracalla seems to have been motivated to reform the system, the value of the *constitutio* in achieving greater efficiency, as well as exponentially increasing the available number of potential recruits, is irrefutable. The social aspect of this legislation must also be considered at this juncture. Another valuable dimension to the *constitutio* here is that, in expanding the franchise across the entire empire, the Roman state would not be reliant on the heartland provinces for their levies.<sup>490</sup> Extant evidence relating to the *origo* of legionaries in the subsequent period suggests that the newly enfranchised population were not as sensitive to the perceived hardships of legionary service as communities that had enjoyed the rights of *civitas* for a considerable time, and were thus more

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<sup>488</sup> The debasement of coinage that occurred under Severus and Caracalla has been noted above in Chapter Four.

<sup>489</sup> Rocco (2010) 145.

<sup>490</sup> Rocco (2010) 144.

inclined to enlist in the legions rather than seeking alternatives or trying to evade conscription.<sup>491</sup> This phenomenon is supported, for example, in the marked increase of provincials from the Thracian and Pannonian areas found serving in the Danubian legions during the course of the third century.<sup>492</sup>

The other potential military application of the Antonine Constitution is linked to the fiscal significance of the edict considered in the previous chapter, in which I noted that the *vicesima hereditatum* was doubled from five to ten percent and, furthermore, that it was levied against estates of varying sizes, even very modest ones.<sup>493</sup> While a connection between this taxation and the army reforms of Caracalla might seem obscure initially, when the traditional purpose of the *vicesima* is taken into account, the significance of the levy to the emperor's military apparatus quickly becomes clear. Indeed, the evidence suggests that the tax on inheritances was originally designed to support the requirements of the military treasury, the *aerarium militare*.<sup>494</sup>

From the surviving literary record, it is clear that one of the key functions of this reserve was to fund the payment of discharge bonuses due to army veterans.<sup>495</sup> The extent to which the treasury was used to fund basic army pay, however, is a more controversial subject. I would argue that there is a difference here between modern assumptions regarding the purpose of the military treasury and what the ancient evidence actually suggests. It has been claimed, for example, that salaries were not paid from the assets of the *aerarium militare*, and that this treasury was only used to fund discharge bounties once the soldiers had completed their required period of service.<sup>496</sup> The ancient writers, however, are far more open in their description of the connection between the *vicesima*, the military treasury and the Roman army pay structure. Suetonius claimed that Augustus introduced the taxation so that he would

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<sup>491</sup> Rocco (2010) 145.

<sup>492</sup> Forni (1953) 187-212.

<sup>493</sup> See pgs. 94-97.

<sup>494</sup> Rocco (2010) 136; Corbier (1977) 197-234; De Martino (1975) 897.

<sup>495</sup> It is mentioned in connection with this purpose in a number of ancient sources, see Aug. *Res gest.* 17.2; Tac. *Ann.* 1.78.2; Suet. *Aug.* 49.4; Dio 55.25.2. For a modern association between the payment of bonuses and the *vicesima*, see Hassall (1987) 165-84.

<sup>496</sup> Corbier (1977) 198-99.

have ‘funds ready at all times without difficulty for maintaining the soldiers and paying the rewards due to them.’<sup>497</sup> Dio also recorded that the levy was brought forth in order to assure the maintenance of troops, as well as their bonuses.<sup>498</sup> Contrary to the modern notion that the *aerarium militare* was only utilised for discharge payments, the clear suggestion by both of these ancient writers is that the military treasury was also employed in the payment of the basic army *stipendia*.

This combination of evidence has significant implications when considering the factors that prompted the emperor to introduce the Antonine Constitution. In addition to overcoming the primary legal obstacle preventing greater recruitment into the legions, the military purpose of the edict also explains Caracalla’s apparent desire to vastly increase his taxation revenue, a phenomenon that, until now, has lacked an explanation beyond the hostile allegations of financial irresponsibility and favouritism espoused by Cassius Dio. The simultaneous increase in the number of citizen taxpayers and the doubling of a levy associated with the military treasury suggests that, in introducing the *constitutio Antoniniana*, Caracalla was not only encouraging greater recruitment into the legions, but was also legislating so that the government would have the necessary capital to maintain and pay the newly enlarged soldiery. In this sense, the *constitutio* represents an unexpectedly elegant solution to the military-economic dilemma that had become more apparent as the Empire progressed. It is the inextricably linked nature of the military and fiscal elements of Caracalla’s legislation that has led Rocco to the conclusion that the edict ‘probably disguised aims primarily connected to the needs of the empire’s defence system.’<sup>499</sup> While this position is generally correct, I would argue that even it understates the emperor’s intentions in passing the *constitutio*, since it largely neglects Caracalla’s evident military ambitions to extend the empire in the north and wage an offensive campaign against the Parthian Empire.<sup>500</sup>

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<sup>497</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 49.2: *Utque perpetuo ac sine difficultate sumptus ad tuendos eos prosequendosque suppeteret, aerarium militare cum vectigalibus novis constituit* (emphasis added).

<sup>498</sup> Dio 55.24.9.

<sup>499</sup> Rocco (2010) 135.

<sup>500</sup> A campaign that appears to have been inextricably linked to Caracalla’s self-association with Alexander the Great. For more on the emperor’s Alexander-mania, including its potential bearing on the Antonine Constitution, see Chapter Two.

In summary, then, if the martial concerns facing Caracalla in AD 212 are paired with the economic implications of the edict considered in the previous chapter, the hypothesis that reforming the pre-existing military apparatus was a motivating factor in the emperor's decision to promulgate the *constitutio* in AD 212 becomes convincing. As an emperor for whom identification and popularity with the army was a key foundation of his reign, it is entirely logical that Caracalla should continue the programme of reforms undertaken by his father and should attempt to address problems in the military apparatus that had become perennial by the time of his accession. There is no suggestion that the emperor was able to remedy completely the persistent issues facing the Roman army of the Principate. In fact, the eventual success or failure of Caracalla's initiative here is beyond the scope of this study and arguably beside the point. The evidence supports the hypothesis that the emperor had his military apparatus in mind when promulgating the *constitutio Antoniniana*.<sup>501</sup>

I have so far shown that Caracalla was prompted by a number of complex and interlocking influences when he introduced his edict in the first year of his sole reign. Far from any notion that it was the result of simple caprice on the part of the emperor, I have demonstrated that it is possible to identify both ideological and practical pressures that motivated him, ranging from a necessity to legitimise his position as sole emperor publically, following the murder of his younger brother, through to his desire to reform the army in order to bolster the legions and wage wars of expansion. It must still be remembered, however, that the *constitutio* remained a radical act, despite having a wholly rational basis. With this in mind, it is unsurprising that the promulgation and enforcement of the edict's terms were not achieved without problems. These can be seen particularly vividly in the case of Alexandria in Egypt, a city visited by Caracalla at the end of AD 215, an episode synonymous with Caracallan brutality in our main literary sources. The following chapter will consider the events of this controversial visit in detail and will demonstrate that it is possible to identify the effects of the emperor's *constitutio* in the atmosphere of tension and violence.

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<sup>501</sup> Rocco (2010) 136.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### *The constitutio Antoniniana and the Alexandrian Incident*

Following the promulgation of the *constitutio* in the latter half of AD 212, Caracalla left Rome, spurred, according to Herodian, by a guilty conscience arising from the murder of Geta and his followers as well as a number of other private citizens.<sup>502</sup> Like his predecessors, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus, Caracalla was to spend the majority of his sole principate in the provinces, either engaged in military operations or simply touring. After waging campaigns against the Alamanni and tribes on the Danube frontier, Caracalla travelled eastward through Thrace into Asia Minor, ostensibly following the route taken by Alexander the Great during his invasion of the Persian Empire.<sup>503</sup> The emperor's course of travel culminated in a visit to the city of Alexandria, the resting place of Caracalla's idol.<sup>504</sup> Rather than forming the pinnacle of the emperor's travels through the provinces of the eastern empire, though, the visit was to turn sour and eventually result in a slaughter beyond measure, according to the ancient sources.<sup>505</sup>

While many scholars have written about the violence, the actual events of Caracalla's visit to Alexandria and the subsequent carnage recorded in the surviving literature remain 'elusive'.<sup>506</sup> The precise details are so shrouded by uncertainty and controversy that, on one hand, Rodriguez has suggested that the fundamental veracity of a Caracallan attack and repression of the city may be questioned.<sup>507</sup> At the opposite extreme, Rostovtzeff claimed that the incident was a 'work of extermination' in which Caracalla 'treacherously and secretly killed off the young generation of Alexandrian citizens.'<sup>508</sup> The fundamental problem regarding this apparent atrocity is that the majority of the extant evidence for it derives from an overwhelmingly negative literary

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<sup>502</sup> Hdn 4.6.1-7.1.

<sup>503</sup> For a discussion of the emperor's route through Asia Minor and the problems with its reconstruction, see Johnston (1983) 58-76, *contra* Levick (1969) 426-57.

<sup>504</sup> For more on Caracalla's fascination with Alexander the Great, see Chapter Two.

<sup>505</sup> Dio 78.22.2-3; Hdn 4.9.8.

<sup>506</sup> Fuhrmann (2012) 159, n.44. For some of the more recent works on Caracalla's visit, see: Rowan (2012) 147-49; Rodriguez (2012) 229-72; Berenger-Badel (2005) 121-39; Favussi (1998) 251-56; Buraselis (1995) 166-88; Lukaszewicz (1990b) 129-32; Marasco (1988) 67-76. For more detail on the problems surrounding the episode, see Lukaszewicz (1993), particularly pp. 88-116.

<sup>507</sup> Rodriguez (2012) 229-30.

<sup>508</sup> Rostovtzeff (1957) 417.

tradition, characteristic of Caracalla's reign in general. This has been further compounded by the apparent readiness of modern writers to accept passively what is clearly an imperfect source tradition and to label the disorder a 'massacre', tacitly implying that an offensive action was ordered by the emperor and executed by his soldiery.<sup>509</sup> This acceptance of the status quo provided by hostile ancient sources seems indefensible since the very chronology of the events of AD 215-16 is in doubt. Although we are becoming better acquainted with the general circumstances of Caracalla's visit, the likely sequence of events and their root causes remain more of a mystery.<sup>510</sup>

I would argue that the so-called Alexandrian massacre narrative glosses over a far more complex and volatile social situation that may have been caused, at least partly, by the promulgation of the *constitutio Antoniniana*. Before any investigation to this effect can take place, however, the fundamental nature of the events and the basic chronology of Caracalla's imperial visit must first be analysed. This is necessary both to distance the disorder completely from the traditional narrative based on Caracalla's temperament and to offer a clearer view of the entire episode. Building on the recent work of scholars such as Rodriguez and Harker, this chapter will attempt to offer a new interpretation of Caracalla's visit to Alexandria. Not only were the actions undertaken by the emperor reactive rather than pre-meditated, the evidence suggests that, whilst the killings might seem excessive with hindsight, the emperor was mindful of, and acted in accordance with, Roman law. The Alexandrians, for their part, were not simply victims or passive participants either. It will be argued that they engaged in rioting which posed a severe problem for the Roman provincial administration.

Once the revised chronology has been outlined, some of the immediate consequences of the *constitutio* will be analysed in order to highlight the fundamental incompatibility of the edict with the rigid social and ethnic hierarchy present in Roman Egypt during the imperial period. It will be argued that the great levelling effect which lay at the centre of the *constitutio Antoniniana* served to fracture the pre-existing social

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<sup>509</sup> Harker (2008) 57, 131-33; Potter (2004) 143-44; Haas (1997) 13.

<sup>510</sup> Rodriguez (2012) 230; Whitehorne (1982) 132-35.

class structure and was not a popular initiative among the Alexandrian Greek population, whose privileged position within Egyptian society and exclusive access to the Roman franchise had been eradicated in one move by the emperor. It will further be argued that the non-elite classes would have suffered as a result of the fiscal demands inherent in the *constitutio*.

Finally, specific attention will be paid to the imperial letter, preserved in *P. Giss.* 40, in which Caracalla ordered the expulsion of nearly all ethnic Egyptians from Alexandria. The traditional association of this document with the final repression of the city recorded in Dio is incorrect, based upon a flawed reading of the text contained in *P. Giss.* 40, III. Instead, it is possible to interpret this legislation in a similar fashion to other imperial orders issued during the course of the Principate, which demanded that individuals registered to different *nomes* within the Egyptian *chora* should return to their *idia*. This analysis offers a further link between the bloodshed observed in the early half of AD 216 and the *constitutio Antoniniana*, suggesting that Caracalla attempted to combat tax evasion among the rural peasantry and sought to enforce the fiscal terms of his edict during the course of his visit to Alexandria.

### **The Massacre Narrative in the Literary Sources**

As with numerous other episodes from the history of the Severan period, much of the modern understanding of the events of Caracalla's visit to Alexandria derives from the works of Cassius Dio, Herodian and the *Historia Augusta*. While all of the sources in question allege that the emperor ordered his troops to engage in a mass killing of the Alexandrian populace, they are all detached from the actual events, chronologically and geographically, and contain as many contradictions as similarities in the course of their descriptions of the violence and bloodshed.<sup>511</sup> The fullest ancient account of Caracalla's visit can be found in the work of Dio, who prefaces his version of events by stating that, despite Caracalla's professed admiration for the place, the emperor 'all but completely annihilated the entire population of Alexander's city.'<sup>512</sup> In this account, even before his arrival in Alexandria, Caracalla had been made aware

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<sup>511</sup> Rodriguez (2012) 238.

<sup>512</sup> Dio 78.22.1: τοὺς ἐκείνου πολίτας μικροῦ δεῖν πάντα ἄρδην ἀπώλεσεν.

by an unidentified party that many among the Alexandrian populace commonly ridiculed him and publically implicated him in the murder of Geta. As a result, by the time of Caracalla's arrival, Dio claimed that the emperor was merely feigning a desire to see and meet the city's inhabitants, in reality seething, and only temporarily concealing his murderous wrath.

Ὁ δὲ Ἀντωνῖνος, καίτοι τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον ὑπεραγαπᾶν φάσκων, τοὺς ἐκείνου πολίτας μικροῦ δεῖν πάντας ἄρδην ἀπώλεσεν. ἀκούων γὰρ ὅτι διαβάλλοιτο καὶ σκώποιτο παρ' αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τε τοῖς ἄλλοις καὶ οὐχ ἥκιστα τῇ ἀδελφοκτονίᾳ, ὥρμησεν ἐπὶ τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν, ἐπικρυπτόμενος τὴν ὀργὴν καὶ ποθεῖν αὐτοὺς προσποιούμενος.

Now Antoninus, despite the great affection which he claimed to have for Alexander, all but completely destroyed the population of Alexander's city. After hearing that he was ill-spoken of and ridiculed by them for a variety of reasons, not least of which was the murder of his brother, he set out for Alexandria, concealing his wrath and pretending that he wanted to see them.<sup>513</sup>

Dio's account of the subsequent massacre can be divided into two stages.<sup>514</sup> The first concerns the emperor's dealings with a delegation sent to welcome him outside the city gates. Upon his arrival at Alexandria, Caracalla was greeted by some of the city's leading citizens, apparently in the form of a Dionysiac *thiasos*, carrying 'certain mystical and sacred symbols'.<sup>515</sup> As part of his deception, the emperor is said to have cordially received the men and feasted them, only to later turn on them and slaughter them all in his camp.<sup>516</sup>

The second stage of Dio's account begins immediately after the murder of the *protoi*, with Caracalla issuing an order for all inhabitants to remain indoors before sending his troops into Alexandria. Once inside the city walls, Caracalla is said to have engaged in a massacre of such magnitude that even he could not begin to quantify the figure of those killed.<sup>517</sup> Dio claimed that trenches were dug for mass graves, in order

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<sup>513</sup> Dio 78.22.1 (tr. adapted from Cary).

<sup>514</sup> Rodriguez (2012) 235; Boissevain (1901) 400-401.

<sup>515</sup> Dio 78.22.2: μεθ' ἱερῶν τινῶν ἀπορρήτων.

<sup>516</sup> Dio 78.22.2.

<sup>517</sup> Dio 78.22.2-3. During the majority of the slaughter, Caracalla himself was said by Dio (78.23.1-2) to have stayed within the temple of Sarapis. In a variant of Dio 78.23.2 (= *Exc. Val.* 392), Caracalla is accused of human sacrifice: Ὅτι τοὺς Ἀλεξάνδρεῖς ἀποσφάττων ὁ ἐπέστειλε τῇ γερουσίᾳ ὅτι ἠγνευσεν ἐν αὐταῖς ἐν αἷς τὰ τε βοσκήματα ἅμα τῷ θεῷ καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἑαυτῷ ἔθυσεν. For more on this

to obscure the precise number of victims.<sup>518</sup> In addition to the details of the bloodshed, Dio also gives the most thorough account of Caracalla's subsequent punishment and repression of the devastated city, recording that all foreigners, with the exception of merchants, were expelled from Alexandria and their property was seized by the state.<sup>519</sup> Other sanctions followed, namely the abolition of all public spectacles and messes (*syssitia*), and a further command that a cross-wall should be constructed in order to restrict the movements of the Alexandrian populace.<sup>520</sup> Dio's account of the violence concludes at this point, with the author claiming that Caracalla subsequently rewarded soldiers and praetorians for their participation in the engagement.<sup>521</sup>

Herodian's account of the Alexandrian incident, similar to that of Dio, is described as a pre-meditated attack on the city in revenge for a number of slurs made by the population against Caracalla and his mother, Julia Domna. Herodian claimed that, among the numerous slights directed at the imperial family, the Alexandrians referred to Julia as Jocasta.<sup>522</sup> This particular insult would have been cutting on two levels. Firstly, it cast Caracalla and Geta as Eteocles and Polynices, questioning Caracalla's very claim to power. In addition, there was also an inference of an incestuous relationship between mother and son. Whilst most likely groundless, this accusation is commonly mentioned in late antique sources, at different intervals throughout the *Historia Augusta*, for example.<sup>523</sup>

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controversial accusation, see Burns (1997) 6-17. Even if this is the correct wording of Dio and is free from any textual problems, it is more likely that this section is a rhetorical device, with the author employing  $\theta\upsilon\omega$  to form a negative contrast between the public piety shown by the emperor in sacrificing to Sarapis and the image of his forces engaging in significant violence and bloodshed across the city.

<sup>518</sup> Dio 78.23.1.

<sup>519</sup> Dio 78.23.2.

<sup>520</sup> Dio 78.23.2-3. It has been suggested by Buraselis (1995: 176-79) that the banning of the *syssitia* may have made reference to a number of guilds or *collegia* rather than public messes. Whilst this has been disputed by Favussi (1998: 251-56), I would argue that Buraselis is correct, in this case, since the term does seem to have been applied in reference to professional associations in antiquity. For an example, see *IGRR* I. 1122; Harker (2000) 152-53.

<sup>521</sup> Dio 78.24.1.

<sup>522</sup> Hdn 4.9.3.

<sup>523</sup> HA *Sev.* 21.7, *Car.* 10.1-4. The influence of the enigmatic *Kaisergeschichte* might explain the persistent repetition of this allegation, since it might represent a common source from which the later writers draw. For more detail, see Rohrbacher (2013) 149-52. It is interesting to note that Caracalla and Julia were not unique in being the subject of this type of jibe, a similar rumour being directed at Nero and Agrippina, for example. For more on this, see: Tac. *Ann.* 14.1-2; Whittaker (1969) 423, n.3.

Similar to Dio's version, the Herodianic account of the visit can be roughly divided into two phases. The first stage of Caracalla's visit recorded in Herodian appears to be wholly positive. After making public the excuse that his visit was simply to view the city founded by Alexander and to offer worship to Sarapis, the emperor appears to have been given a rapturous welcome to Alexandria on an unprecedented scale: Herodian mentions all manner of musical instruments being played, clouds of incense filling the air and the streets thronging with a number of grand processions to greet the emperor.<sup>524</sup> Contrary to Dio, though, there is no mention of any delegation of the local *protoi* assembling to meet Caracalla prior to his entrance.

The emperor is said to have maintained his cordiality throughout the Alexandrians' festivities until he noticed that the city was being crowded by a significant number of individuals from the surrounding countryside districts.<sup>525</sup> It was this realisation, according to Herodian, that consequently prompted Caracalla to order an assembly of young men on an unnamed piece of open ground, another aspect of the visit not mentioned by Dio.

συμπανηγυρίσας τοίνυν αὐτοῖς καὶ συνεορτάσας, ὡς εἶδε πᾶσαν τὴν πόλιν πλήθους μεγίστου πεπληρωμένην τῶν ἀπὸ πάσης περὶ αὐτὴν χώρας ἐκεῖ συνελθόντων, διὰ προγράμματος πᾶσαν τὴν νεολαίαν ἔς τι πεδῖον κελεύει συνελθεῖν, φήσας ἔς τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρου τιμὴν φάλαγγα βούλεσθαι συστήσασθαι, ὥσπερ Μακεδονικὴν καὶ Σπαρτιατικὴν, οὕτω καὶ τοῦ ἥρωος ἐπωνύμους.

So he celebrated the occasion with them and participated in their festivities but, when he saw that that whole city was heaving with a vast number of people as the result of an influx from all over the surrounding district, he issued an order that all the young men should assemble on an open piece of ground, claiming that he intended to enrol a phalanx in the honour of Alexander which would be called after the hero, just as he had given a name to the Macedonian and Spartan phalanx.<sup>526</sup>

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<sup>524</sup> Hdn 4.8.8.

<sup>525</sup> Hdn 4.9.4 (tr. adapted from Whittaker). This element of the account may be linked in some way to Caracalla's expulsion of *Aigyptioi* from Alexandria, see below.

<sup>526</sup> Hdn 4.9.4. It has been noted that this tradition appears to have been accepted and included in the brief account of Caracalla's reign found in the Suda (*s.v. Antoninus, emperor of Rome*), see Harker (2000) 150. For more on the question of location, see Whittaker (1969) 425, n.2.

After assembling these men under the pretence that he wished to raise another phalangite formation similar to those he had already levied earlier in his imperial tour, Caracalla is said to have left the area and given his troops an order to strike, killing the men where they stood and the various family members accompanying them while other soldiers dug mass grave pits nearby.<sup>527</sup> Unlike Dio, Herodian's account is noteworthy for its mention of a number of Roman casualties in the course of the desperate close-quarters combat.<sup>528</sup> With this picture of slaughter on a large scale, Herodian's version of the Alexandrian incident ends abruptly. The author concludes his description of the visit with a standard rhetorical device, conjuring an image of the waters of the Nile running red with blood, before simply stating that the emperor returned to Antioch before commencing his Parthian expedition.<sup>529</sup>

Even Herodian's often rhetorical account, however, offers more than the third ancient source: the biography of Caracalla contained in the *Historia Augusta*. The version of events offered by the fourth century biographer is positioned in the midst of the larger narrative of the emperor's Parthian war, but is furnished with no other details to explain why Caracalla decided to make the trip to Alexandria. The brief account only concerns the massacre itself. It does incorporate some of the elements included by Dio and Herodian, namely the assembly of the youths (although the author depicts Caracalla haranguing those present) and the emperor's declaration that he wanted to enrol all of those who were eligible for military service.<sup>530</sup> Unfortunately, however, these elements are extremely condensed, giving the impression that the violence was all that characterised the emperor's visit, rather than something which occurred only after Caracalla had spent some time in Alexandria. This aspect of the text can be

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<sup>527</sup> Hdn 4.9.7. While it would be tempting to attempt a direct linguistic comparison between this account and that of Dio, the two authors describe the events in different ways (Dio uses the accusative plural of τάφρος to describe the ditches, while Herodian employs the accusative plural of ὄρυγμα). Harker (2000: 150) has noted the similarity of this assembly scene and the earlier description of Severus' disarming of the praetorians (Hdn 2.13), in which the emperor walked among the assembled men, talking to them before ordering the punitive action.

<sup>528</sup> Herodian (4.9.6-8) devotes particular attention to describing some Alexandrians, still alive, clinging onto Roman soldiers as they were being thrown into the deep pits, dragging the troops to their deaths. This gruesome image certainly appears to be in keeping with the vivid dramatization of events characteristic of Herodian's literary style. For more detail, see Whittaker (1969) 332, n.1.

<sup>529</sup> Hdn 4.9.8. The author uses an almost identical mode of expression when describing the aftermath of the battle between Severan forces and those of Pescennius Niger at Issus (3.4.5).

<sup>530</sup> HA *Car.* 6.2-3.

interpreted as an attempt by the author to forge a parallel between Caracalla and Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (Physcon).<sup>531</sup> It is highly unlikely, however, that this parallel is an original one, drawn by the author of the *Historia Augusta*.<sup>532</sup> In general terms, then, it is clear that this source, like Herodian, offers insufficient evidence when attempting any analysis of the violence observed in Alexandria in AD 215/16.

While Dio's account represents the most detailed extant version of events for Caracalla's Alexandrian visit, it is not without its own significant difficulties. The same issues which prevent a general acceptance of Dio's account in other areas are immediately perceptible in connection with these events. The hand of Xiphilinus (among others), in epitomising Dio's narrative, is highly visible throughout the account of the Alexandrian incident, to the extent that Rodriguez has expressed frustration regarding how utterly reliant we are on the monk for any substantial information deriving from this later period of Caracalla's reign.<sup>533</sup> This has led to significant confusion and controversy regarding the reliability of Dio's narrative of the visit.<sup>534</sup>

One such controversy surrounds Dio's account of the imperial freedman, Theocritus, who is alleged to have provoked tension within Alexandria, prior to Caracalla's arrival. Dio claims that in the course of a mission to make preparations for

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<sup>531</sup> HA *Car.* 6.3. For more on Ptolemy, see: Polyb. 34.14.6; Strabo 17.1.12; Rodriguez (2012) 237; Green (1990) 538-40.

<sup>532</sup> Here I follow Harker (2000) 148-49, (2008) 74-79. The potential influence of local, Alexandrian sources upon the extant accounts will be discussed in the following section below.

<sup>533</sup> Rodriguez (2012) 235.

<sup>534</sup> The epitomising of Dio's work here has resulted in an internal confusion between different sections of Dio's work. A good example of this is the reference made to Caracalla as the 'Ausonian beast'. This nickname is noted at the end of Dio's account of the Alexandrian violence, as recorded by Xiphilinus, after the emperor had consulted with an oracle: Dio 78.23.4 (= Xiph. 337). Earlier in Dio's narrative, however, in a portion epitomised by Petrus Patricius, the same nickname is employed, in almost identical circumstances, only in reference to Pergamum: Dio 78.16.8 (= Petr. Patr. *Exc. Vat.* 147). It seems clear that this is the result of confusion among the Byzantine scholars rather than a genuine duplication of the oracular message. For more on Byzantine historiography, see Scott (2010) 251-62. In addition, Rodriguez (2012: 250-51) has noted the similarly problematic issue surrounding the absence of the slaughter of the youths from Dio's account. In analysing Dio's text, Bang (1906: 623-29) posited the theory that the author did make reference to the killings, only for it to be confused with Caracalla's earlier campaign against the Alamanni, see Dio 78.16.5. This hypothesis was questioned by Roos (1915: 195-202), who suggested that Herodian and the *Historia Augusta* author might have been inspired to write their accounts of Caracalla's Alexandrian massacre by Dio's account of the emperor's repression of the Alamanni. Owing to the evidence provided by the *Acta Heracliti* (see below), however, I would argue that it is Bang's hypothesis which is more likely, rather than that of Roos.

the imperial visit, Theocritus had many individuals put to death, including a procurator of the city (*epitropos*) named Flavius Titianus.<sup>535</sup> Lukaszewicz has argued that the controversy prompted by the freedman's actions had managed to sour the relationship between Caracalla and the Alexandrian elite, even prior to the emperor's entrance into the city, and has attempted to establish a link between this episode and the ill-fated embassy to Caracalla referred to in the *Acta Heracliti*.<sup>536</sup> This is an intriguing interpretation of the evidence, but it does not fit well with the accounts of Dio and Herodian, who were keen to stress the goodwill exhibited by the Alexandrians upon the arrival of Caracalla to the city.<sup>537</sup> In fact, the inclusion of Theocritus, at this juncture, makes more sense if viewed as another tool for Dio to criticise the emperor by association.<sup>538</sup>

The senator's ever-present loathing of the emperor is obvious throughout the passage. In fact, the negative depiction of Caracalla during the visit to Alexandria is the only element that bears consistent similarity to the versions offered by Herodian and the *Historia Augusta*, summarised by Rodriguez as 'crazed, bloodthirsty, and acting in a fit of rage verging on the irrational', a deranged image that would not be out of place in connection with other 'bad' emperors such as Nero or Caligula, for example.<sup>539</sup> It is exactly this polemical depiction of the *princeps*, approaching a caricature, which makes the accounts offered by Dio, Herodian and the *Historia Augusta* fundamentally difficult to accept. Furthermore, while these authors are

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<sup>535</sup> Dio 78.21.2-4. Although Thomas and Davies (1977: 61) have suggested that he may have been the *Idiologos*, the vague nature of the Greek term *epitropos* does not allow a confident conclusion regarding the precise office held by Titianus in Alexandria.

<sup>536</sup> The embassy is referred to as ἀπόρητον: *SB* VI 9123, ll. 30-31. A connection between this and Dio's account of the *protoi* is attractive, owing to the author's use of the same word, referring to the quasi-religious nature of the delegation, see Dio 78.22.2. On the other hand, the Greek at this juncture could mean that the embassy was not permitted by the emperor, or was otherwise unauthorised. Quite why this petition should be considered unspeakable or prohibited, though, remains unclear. It is possible that, if Dio is correct that the embassy was originally presented as a Dionysiac, religious group, that it was censured for attempting to petition the emperor about other, civic matters. In the *Digest* (50.7.16(15)), it is noted that 'someone who is undertaking an embassy cannot present a petition about other affairs of his without the permission of the emperor.' For more discussion regarding this embassy, see Lukaszewicz (1994a) 568; Rodriguez (2012) 239; Harker (2000) 148. Also see Lukaszewicz (1994b) 87-95.

<sup>537</sup> Dio 78.22.2; *Hdn* 4.8.8.

<sup>538</sup> Dio (78.21.2) makes much of Theocritus' lowly beginnings and his former profession as a dancer and theatrical performer.

<sup>539</sup> Rodriguez (2012) 237-38: 'fou, sanguinaire, agissant sur un coup de colère presque irrationnel'.

generally damning in their portrayal of Caracalla, there seems to be something else occurring in relation to the events of 215-16, namely that the major literary sources appear to have drawn upon local, Alexandrian writers for much of their detail regarding the emperor's visit to the city. I would argue that this factor is responsible for much of the negative depiction of Caracalla in connection with this episode.

### **The Impact of Local Source Tradition on the Narrative**

While it cannot be argued that the city was entirely peaceful upon the emperor's arrival in 215, it is possible that the warmth of Alexandria's welcome towards Caracalla was exaggerated to make the subsequent bloodshed seem all the more horrific.<sup>540</sup> With this in mind, it is also probable that much of the animosity supposedly felt by the Alexandrians towards Caracalla specifically was inserted into the different narratives of the imperial visit for dramatic effect. In the case of the literary evidence, it seems clear that the major sources for the violence have borrowed from a questionable chronology that was conflated and amended by local writers to forge historical comparisons that would blacken the image of Caracalla in the aftermath of fierce and bloody clashes between the local populace and Roman forces.<sup>541</sup> Furthermore, the influence of the local literary phenomenon known as the *Acta Alexandrinorum* must also be considered, not only because the genre was especially popular during the Severan period, in general, but also because one of the trial scenes included in this collection concerns M. Aurelius Septimius Heraclitus Leontius, the prefect of Egypt in late 215.

One example demonstrating the way in which local sources might have substantially impacted upon the major sources' coverage of Caracalla's visit to Alexandria can be observed in the emperor's alleged desire to form a phalanx recruited from the Alexandrian populace.<sup>542</sup> This is not the only phalangite formation which Caracalla is accused of levying; in the same passage of Herodian in which the Alexandrian unit is mentioned, the author claimed that similar formations had been

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<sup>540</sup> The extant evidence suggests that there was an outbreak of unrest either around the time of Caracalla's arrival or early in his visit, see below.

<sup>541</sup> Harker (2000) 148.

<sup>542</sup> Hdn 4.9.4.

raised in both Macedonia and Sparta. Neither Herodian nor the author of the *Historia Augusta* (who mentions Caracalla enrolling Alexandrians) give any further detail on the process. The leap, therefore, from the assembly ordered by Caracalla to select men for an Alexandrian phalanx, to the widespread massacre claimed of the emperor is ultimately an unsatisfying one in all of the sources that include it. With this in mind, it seems probable that there was, in fact, some degree of historicity to Caracalla's intended levy, but it is an event that has been deliberately confused with and connected to the massacre narrative in the Alexandrian source traditions by writers who were keen to blame the emperor for an unjust slaughter.<sup>543</sup>

Part of this wilful distortion and confusion of the events seems to have been prompted by a desire on the part of the Alexandrians to compare Caracalla to the unpopular historical figure of Ptolemy VIII (Physcon), a comparison made reference to in the course of the brief narrative offered in the *Historia Augusta*.<sup>544</sup> Harker has argued that the literary parallel was, in reality, drawn by Alexandrians themselves in response to the bloodshed of 215/16, rather than a connection made later by the author of the *Historia Augusta*.<sup>545</sup> This distinction is of considerable importance, since it ultimately suggests that all of the major, extant works on the violence may have been affected by local sources that were understandably anti-Caracallan in nature.

In a passage reminiscent of Caracalla's alleged extermination of the Alexandrian youth, for example, Valerius Maximus claimed that in the course of his earlier repression, Physcon had 'surrounded the gymnasium crowded with youths, killing all those inside, some with weapons, others with fire.'<sup>546</sup> Similarly, if Caracalla's repression of the *syssitia* recorded by Dio makes reference to professional associations rather than public messes, another parallel can be drawn with Ptolemy's measures against associations such as the *gymnasia* and the *politeumata*.<sup>547</sup> The comparison between the two rulers can be yet further emphasised, since Physcon is

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<sup>543</sup> Harker (2000) 154.

<sup>544</sup> HA *Car.* 6.3.

<sup>545</sup> Harker (2000) 103, 149.

<sup>546</sup> Val. Max. 9.2.5.

<sup>547</sup> *P. Tebt.* III.700. The king ordered the leaders of these associations to surrender their rights to selected properties on pain of death. Also see Harker (2000) 152-53.

claimed to have murdered a rival to the throne, an act that would allow an obvious parallel to be drawn with Caracalla's later assassination of Geta.<sup>548</sup>

This would not be the first time that the Alexandrian populace had forged such unfavourable historical comparisons between Roman emperors and past kings. In his description of Vespasian's relations with the city, for example, Suetonius claimed that the Alexandrians compared the emperor to the unpopular Ptolemy X, nicknamed Kybiosactes – 'salt-fish dealer' – on account of his avaricious nature when Vespasian raised a number of taxes in Egypt during his visit to the province.<sup>549</sup> Indeed, although they make no explicit references, the Graeco-Roman authors appear to have been quite familiar with Alexandrian attitudes towards the emperors and have depended on them, to an extent, owing to their own distance from the events. In basic terms, they have allowed this local tradition to influence their own accounts relating to the city, a factor which helps to explain the way in which the imperial visit of Caracalla is described in the major literary sources.

The influence of the *Acta Alexandrinorum* must also be considered here. Discovered at the end of the nineteenth century at Oxyrhynchus and in towns of the Fayum, the *Acta* papyri were primarily written from the latter half of the second century AD, reaching a peak in production in the Severan era, before declining sharply in the following years.<sup>550</sup> Despite the poor state of their preservation from antiquity (none of the *Acta* have survived in complete form), there are sufficient remains to reconstruct the structure of the works. The extant texts are written in the form of minutes from legal proceedings, examples of a quasi-Stoic literary *topos* summarised by Fuhrmann as a series of 'audacious denunciations of emperors by heroic men who would rather die than live dishonestly under tyranny.'<sup>551</sup>

In the *Acta*, Alexandrian characters are found depicted both among the prosecutors and in the role of the defendant; the trials usually result in more than one

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<sup>548</sup> The rival, in this case, was Physcon's own son, Ptolemy Memphites, see Val. Max 9.2.5.

<sup>549</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 19.2; Dio 66.8.2-9.2.

<sup>550</sup> Tcherikover and Fuks (1960) 55; Harker (2008) 139-41.

<sup>551</sup> Fuhrmann (2012) 140.

execution.<sup>552</sup> Owing to their inflammatory rhetoric, it is important to understand exactly what role these works played in Romano-Egyptian society during the Principate. Until recently, it was supposed that the *Acta* were evidence of a subversive, anti-Roman movement among the Hellenic population of Egypt.<sup>553</sup> A more likely theory, however, is simply that they were satirical pieces, designed to entertain and to depict Alexandria as a centre of culture and stoic honour.<sup>554</sup>

While the primary aim of the *Acta* was to glorify the city of Alexandria, it is important to remember that they are still an important part of the wider, local literary milieu, and are of value in analysing the interests and prejudices of the local citizenry. In the same way that the *Acta* are used as evidence of anti-Semitism, the fictionalising of certain specific cases might suggest the interest that the Alexandrian populace had for those trials in particular. On the other hand, however, caution is needed when analysing these texts, since the satirist's work can obviously produce a markedly different impression of events from a more mundane source.

This can be observed in the case of the *Acta Isidori*. Comparison of papyrological evidence following an embassy to Claudius, shortly after his accession, reveals two very different impressions of the emperor and the dialogue that took place. In the official letter from Claudius to the Alexandrians following the deputation, the tone of the emperor is even-handed. In response to the recent unrest between the Hellenic Alexandrians and the Jewish population, Claudius cautions both sides from engaging in further violence.<sup>555</sup> This bears no resemblance whatsoever to the apoplectic tyrant observed in the course of the *Acta*, in which Claudius insults the

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<sup>552</sup> One of the most famous examples of this is the group of papyri referred to as the *Acta Isidori*, in which the emperor Claudius ordered the execution of Alexandrian defendants after a farcical trial, in which the Alexandrians argued vociferously with the emperor in the role as judge, see *BGU* 511; *P. Cairo Inv.* 10448; *P. Lond. Inv.* 2785 and *P. Berol.* 8877.

<sup>553</sup> Musurillo (1954) 273-76. This is a flawed hypothesis. Firstly, similar to the sporadic anti-Semitism which characterises some of the *Acta*, anti-Roman sentiment is often only a minor feature among these works. Secondly, the notion of a Hellenic subversion and resistance to the Roman government would infer that the readership of this literature was restricted to a Greek audience; it is clear from evidence such as *P. Mich.* 4800 that ethnic Egyptians owned and consumed works from the *Acta* genre. For more on this, see Harker (2008) 117-19.

<sup>554</sup> Alexandrian characters in the *Acta* often make reference to the honour and nobility of their families and city, throughout, see Harker (2008) 91-97.

<sup>555</sup> *P. Lond.* 1912, ll. 73-108.

Alexandrian delegation by, among other things, labelling Isidorus the son of a dancer before eventually condemning him and Lampon to death.<sup>556</sup> In fact, a negative and tyrannical depiction of the emperors forms a typical element of the *Acta* dialogues.<sup>557</sup>

Owing to the fact that the *Acta Heracliti*, considered in more detail below, details a trial scene in the midst of Caracalla's visit to the city, the prominence of the *Acta* literature must be considered when examining the problematic source traditions underlying the Caracallan massacre narrative.<sup>558</sup> Although fragmentary, the fury of the emperor is evident, in a similar fashion to others portrayed in the course of the *Acta*. Indeed, this depiction of imperial anger may have partly fuelled the tyrannical image of Caracalla observed in the major contemporary sources who, it has been established, were reliant on second-hand information for much of their testimony regarding the events of 215-16.<sup>559</sup>

With these factors in mind, it would seem that Harker is correct in asserting that Caracalla's visit to Alexandria led to the creation of 'numerous, conflicting local traditions, traditions that became incorporated into the equally conflicting accounts of the mainstream ancient historians.'<sup>560</sup> From these divergent authors, it is difficult to form a coherent, let alone credible, narrative. Fortunately, however, the sources mentioned above are not the only ones to recount the emperor's actions in the city. By examining other evidence connected to the violence, it is possible to reconsider the very nature of the incident, reassessing Caracalla's actions in more general terms of an imperial response to rioting and widespread civil disobedience rather than a pre-meditated and merciless slaughter.<sup>561</sup>

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<sup>556</sup> *CPJ* II. 156a and 156d.

<sup>557</sup> Commodus, for example, is described as being tyrannical, dishonest and crude in comparison to Marcus Aurelius, see *CPJ* II 159b, ii. 7-13. Also see Tcherikover and Fuks (1960) 99-100. Even 'good' emperors, such as Trajan are subject to such criticism, the *optimus princeps* being accused of favouring the Alexandrian Jews at the expense of the Hellenic population, see *CPJ* II 157, ii. 27-35.

<sup>558</sup> *SB* VI 9213; *P. Bon.* 15. Also see Shelton (1980) 179-82.

<sup>559</sup> The interrogation of the prefect Heraclitus by Caracalla found in the *Acta* will be considered below.

<sup>560</sup> Harker (2000) 156.

<sup>561</sup> Fuhrmann (2012) 158-59.

## **Evidence for Civil Disobedience and Disorder**

Although a much later source, it is possible to identify another perspective on the violence of AD 215/16 in the work of Eusebius, whose writing undermines the image of Caracalla as a bloodthirsty mass-murderer.<sup>562</sup> In the course of relating key moments in the life of Origen (c.184-253), the ecclesiastical historian made reference to a ‘considerable war’ occurring in Alexandria, prompting the early church father to flee the city and head to Palestine.<sup>563</sup> While Eusebius’ pro-Christian perspective must be taken into account, in addition to his distance from the events, the historian’s choice of language during this passage is of interest.<sup>564</sup> Rather than criticising Caracalla or characterising the violence as a pre-meditated and barely provoked assault by the emperor, Eusebius instead refers to the unrest as a ‘war’ (*polemos*). Such a word choice might appear to be an idiosyncrasy, since the violence in Alexandria was neither the result of a civil war nor of any aggression from a foreign power, but this choice is arguably more important than it would initially seem. If other sources from the period are compared, it becomes clear that the Latin equivalent, *bellum*, was used by authors to describe significant clashes between riotous crowds and Roman soldiers.<sup>565</sup>

Eusebius was hardly a pro-Severan author or generally uncritical of the dynasty. At the beginning of the sixth book of his *Ecclesiastical History*, for example, he includes a critical account of the persecution of Christians undertaken by Septimius Severus at the opening of the third century. With this fact in mind, it is telling that Eusebius chose not to describe the unrest in Alexandria under Caracalla in similarly hostile terms. It could be argued that the use of *polemos* in reference to the violence of AD 215/16 was the result of a critical choice on the part of the author, referring to a particularly intense period in which there were running clashes between rioters and Roman troops, rather than simply a consequence of an overly hasty description of the events which prompted the flight of Origen from Egypt.

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<sup>562</sup> Rodriguez (2012) 238-39.

<sup>563</sup> Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 6.19.16: οὐ μικροῦ κατὰ τὴν πόλιν ἀναρριπισθέντος πολέμου.

<sup>564</sup> For more on Eusebius’ own context, see Irshai (2011) 25-38; Chesnut (1986) 1-31. It should be noted here that while Eusebius was himself far removed from the events of the early third century, it has been shown that portions of the *Ecclesiastical History* are based upon contemporary sources; he had access to the letters of Origen, for example. For further details, see Carriker (2003) 37-74.

<sup>565</sup> Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 35.6; HA *Marc.* 38.2-3; Kelly (2007) 171.

The idea that the supposed massacre ordered by Caracalla took place within the context of a wider civil revolt would also appear to be accepted by another later author, the Byzantine chronicler George Syncellus. In the course of his *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, Syncellus records Caracalla's visit to Alexandria. Similar to Eusebius, the violence is not characterised as a pre-meditated attack, but rather as a response to widespread civil unrest, labelled a *stasis* by the chronicler.<sup>566</sup> While it would be easy to dismiss these descriptions owing to the sheer amount of time that had elapsed between the Late Antique or Byzantine texts and those written closer to the events, it is important to note that it is unlikely that these later sources were entirely disconnected from the earlier literature. Even Dio's account of the violence may not have been quite as sweeping as the epitome offered by Xiphilinus suggests. If the versions of Xiphilinus and Patricius are compared, it becomes clear that Dio may have actually specified those whom Caracalla claimed to have killed in the course of his letter reporting the violence to the senate. It is well-known that in the Dio account epitomised by Xiphilinus, the emperor made no attempt to detail how many individuals had been slaughtered, since every one of them had deserved to suffer the same fate.<sup>567</sup> If the epitome offered by Petrus Patricius is consulted, however, there is one obvious difference in the account of Caracalla's report to the senators. In the latter version, the emperor shows a similar lack of sympathy for the number killed during the course of his action, but the author claims that it was not the population at large that were killed; rather a large number of contract-workers (*ergolaboi*) present in the city were put to death.<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>566</sup> Syncellus *C SHB* 19 (Niebuhr p.672): διὰ στάσιν δημοτικῆν. The similarity between Syncellus and Eusebius in this case could be explained, to some extent, by the fact that Syncellus appears to have consulted Eusebius' text for much of his own chronography. It should be noted, though, that while he utilises the same Graeco-Roman literary sources as Eusebius, Syncellus often engages with them in a more detailed and critical manner. Furthermore, he employs Jewish and early Christian writers in his corpus that are entirely absent from Eusebius' work. For more detail on the question of Syncellus' sources, see Adler and Tuffin (2002) lxi-lxix. With this in mind, Syncellus' description of the unrest in Alexandria, although far removed from the events, should be considered as a separate account rather than a mere copy of the text of Eusebius.

<sup>567</sup> Dio 78.22.3.

<sup>568</sup> Petr. Patr. *Exc. Vat.* 149. Also see Rodriguez (2012) 241-43; Harker (2000) 151-52.

The historicity of the supposed massacre found in the literary sources can be further questioned if other forms of evidence are consulted.<sup>569</sup> A dedicatory votive inscription was found at Alba, commissioned by an officer in the *legio II Parthica*, C. Cassius Severianus, upon his return to his garrison, and probably produced during the reign of Elagabalus.<sup>570</sup> Among the more formulaic portions of the dedication to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, the soldier thanks the *genius* of the emperor for their divine protection during his recent tour of duty.

- [Iovi] O[ptimo Maximo] (vel sim.)*  
*[Pr]o s[alute et reditu]*  
*Imp. Cae[s. [[M. Aureli Anto-]] ]*  
*[ [[nini Pii Felicis Aug.]] ]*  
 5) *[ [[et M. Aureli Alexandri]] ]*  
*nobilis[si]mi [Caesar.]*  
*C. Cassiu[s S]ever[ianus] (vel sim.)*  
*Praep[ositus] Militum [--]*  
*Leg[ionis] II Parthicae [[Antoninae]]*  
 10) *p[ro]p[ri]e f[elicitatis] f[idelis] aet[er]nae, eiusdemq[ue] [leg.]*  
*princeps et primuspil[us]*  
*et quod Alexandriae*  
*cum 7 (centurio) ageret in pericu-*  
*lis constitutus numi-*  
 15) *ne eius adiuvante libera-*  
*tus sit ex voto posuit.*<sup>571</sup>

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<sup>569</sup> One piece of evidence that must be dismissed from this discussion before an examination can begin is the numismatic evidence claimed by Burns (1997: 6-17) to form a Caracallan justification of the massacre (*RIC* 257a and 257b). Whilst the choice of a crocodile motif to represent Egypt had become unusual by the third century AD, it is unlikely that this coin makes subtle reference to the violence. The appearance of *TR P XVIII* in the reverse inscription means that the coin must have been struck during 215 rather than later. As a result, it is more likely that this coin type marked the emperor's arrival in the province, in a similar style to Hadrian's series of *adventus* coinage. For the dates of Caracalla's tribunician powers, see Kienast (2004) 163.

<sup>570</sup> *AE* 1993, 422. For more on the discovery and publication of the inscription, see Bruun (1995) 9-27; Tofini and Chiarucci (1994) 37-48.

<sup>571</sup> *AE* 1993, 422. This edition follows that of Bruun (1995: 26-27) in which the emperors whose names were inscribed before being subsequently erased were Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, *contra* Tofini and Chiarucci (1994: 37-48) who claimed that the inscription bore the names of Severus, Caracalla and Geta. The later dating seems the more likely owing to the fact that the restoration of three emperors' names and titulature here does not fit with the probable number of letter spaces in each lacuna and erased portion. The salutation of Elagabalus is made further likely by the appearance in the tenth line of the epithets *pia fidelis felix aeterna*, bestowed onto the Alban legion by the emperor from AD 220; for other examples of these epithets appearing in the epigraphic corpus, see *CIL* VI 3734, VI 31058, XIV 2257; Bruun (1995) 20.

To Jupiter Optimus Maximus, for the salvation and [safe] return of Emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus and Marcus Aurelius Alexander, the most noble Caesar. Gaius Cassius Severianus, commander of the soldiers and chief centurion of the dutiful, blessed and ever-loyal Legion II *Parthica Antoniniana*, who, when he was acting as a centurion in Alexandria and experienced danger, was delivered by the help of the emperor's *genius*, set this up in fulfilment of a vow.

Owing to the dating of the inscription between June 221 and March 222, it seems incontrovertible that the great danger being described by the centurion is in reference to the events of Caracalla's visit to the city in 215/16.<sup>572</sup> While the actual act of commissioning a *pro salute imperatoris* inscription is hardly noteworthy in itself, since the vast majority of them are brief and lack information other than the name and position of the dedicant, the level of detail present in this example is more striking. In addition to the thanks given to the gods for the health and safety of Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, Servianus chose to publically display his gratitude for divine protection against danger during his time as a centurion in the Alban legion, serving in Alexandria.<sup>573</sup> This can only suggest that Severianus perceived the events of 215-16 to be among the most significant engagements of his tour in the eastern provinces, including the war against Parthia and the civil conflict between Severan forces and those of Macrinus. Furthermore, the officer's impression of the violence would seem to fit with other papyrological evidence relating to the unrest, in which troop movements around the city are recorded.<sup>574</sup> The evidence provided from the Roman perspective, then, from individuals who were actively involved in the events which

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<sup>572</sup> Bruun (1995) 12-13; Rodriguez (2012) 245. The length of time between the events in Alexandria and the erection of the *pro salute* might prompt question regarding the delay in offering the fulfilment of a vow, but it seems incontrovertible that the *legio II Parthica* did not return to Rome until after the civil war between Macrinus and Elagabalus, and reached Albanum at the same time as Elagabalus' entrance to Rome in 219 at the very earliest, see Bruun (1995) 26. In support of this theory, is it important to note that the centurion from the *legio II Parthica* is not an isolated case; a soldier from the *cohors X praetoria* similarly erected a *pro salute* under Elagabalus and Severus Alexander around 220-21 after initially departing Rome in 214, see *CIL VI 323*, ll. 2-3: *pro salute dd(ominorum) nn(ostrorum) Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) M(arci) Aur(eli) Antonini P(ii) F(elicis) Aug(usti) et / M(arci) Aur(eli) Alexandri nobilissimi Caes(aris)*. It would appear, then, that Bruun (1995: 26) is correct to assert that this phenomenon is indicative of the units in question fulfilling their vows at their first convenience upon returning to Italy following service overseas.

<sup>573</sup> *AE 1993*, 422, ll. 12-14: *et quod Alexandriae cum (centurio) ageret in periculis*.

<sup>574</sup> *P. Brooklyn Museum 24*. In the course of this document, there are mentions of troops being killed or wounded in action, and a record of an order by the prefect, Heraclitus, to move men between different units in the city, possibly in response to the losses and subsequent manpower shortages. For more on this, see Thomas (1977) 50-61.

unfolded in Alexandria, suggests that the accepted massacre narrative is unreliable. Rather than the Roman forces descending upon Alexandria and slaughtering the defenceless population, as Rostovtzeff claimed, I would argue that Alexandrians were active participants in the confrontation; the clashes between them and the legionaries were fiercely fought by all, and resulted in a substantial loss of life on both sides.<sup>575</sup>

### **Evidence from the Downfall of Heraclitus**

It is into the context of a significant level of rioting and public disorder that two items of papyrological evidence can be set. Both of these texts support the hypothesis that there was an outbreak of violence either around the time of Caracalla's arrival in Alexandria or during the early period of his visit. Also referred to as the *Acta Heracliti*, *SB VI 9213* derives from the early half of the third century, and appears to make reference to Caracalla leading a *cognitio extra ordinem* in response to a recent riot observed in Alexandria. The papyrus originates from Hermopolis Magna and ostensibly records the minutes of a trial of the prefect of Egypt, M. Aurelius Septimius Heraclitus Leontius (referred to henceforth as Heraclitus), focusing on his poor management of the early outbreak of disorder.<sup>576</sup> Although the papyrus has suffered severe damage to both columns of text, it is still possible to identify mentions of a fire, of individuals sustaining injury, reports of temple robberies, and the destruction of a number of statues.<sup>577</sup> The role that slaves played in the disorder is also discussed in the course of the text.<sup>578</sup> The exchanges between the emperor and Heraclitus become more heated, likely culminating in the execution of the prefect.<sup>579</sup> Although the text is heavily damaged, it does suggest some form of quick-fire exchange between the men, Heraclitus compelled to respond to an aggressive interrogation by Caracalla:

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<sup>575</sup> Rostovtzeff (1957) 417.

<sup>576</sup> There is an emendation included in the margin of the *recto* of the papyrus, suggesting that the title ought to read Κ(αῖσαρ) πρὸς [Ἡρά]κλειτου, see Harker (2000) 101; Musurillo (1954) 79.

<sup>577</sup> *SB VI 9213*, col.i, ll. 5-8. For a transcription of the papyrus, see Benoit and Schwartz (1948) 18-20; see too Lukaszewicz (1990b) 129.

<sup>578</sup> Col. ii, ll. 1-10. Also see Harker (2000) 102.

<sup>579</sup> Col. i, ll. 9-18 (particularly ll. 9-11).

Ἀντωνῖνος Σεβαστὸς εἶπεν· ἐκέλευσας οὖν [. . . . .]. . . ναὶ ἢ οὐ; Ἡράκλει-  
 τος εἶπεν· οὐκ ἐκέλευσα ]ναὶ, ἀλλὰ μετε[ τ]οῖς ἐντοτέροις . .  
 Ἀντωνῖνος Σεβας]τὸς εἶπεν· ἀπεκ[ c. 10 Ἡράκλειτος ε]ἶπεν· οὐκ ε .

[Antoninus Augustus said:] ‘So you have ordered [...] to be [...?...]?’  
 Heracli[tus said: ‘I did not order...] to be [...?...], but [...?...]’

[Antoninus Augus]tus said: ‘You have killed(?) [...?...]’  
 [Heraclitus sa]id: ‘I did not [...?...]’<sup>580</sup>

Similarly, *P. Bon 15*, probably deriving from Alexandria, appears to record an imperial edict of Caracalla referring to the recent unrest.<sup>581</sup> The papyrus itself survives only as a narrow strip, preserving a fraction of the text of a central column of the edict.<sup>582</sup> Despite the extensive damage to the artefact, it is still possible to identify elements of the edict which seem to make reference to the violence in Alexandria during Caracalla’s visit. There are references to statues (εἰκό[να]ς; 1.4), the setting of a fire (πυρὶ κα[τέκα]υσαν: 1.10) and possibly a large number of outsiders being implicated (πάντων ξ[ένοι(?]): 1.6). All of these elements appear to have aroused fury in the emperor (ἀγανάκτω: 1.4).

These sources are not without their own controversy. *P. Bon 15*, for example, despite attempting to appear contemporary to Caracalla’s reign, was likely written in the period following his death, a factor which inevitably casts doubt on the likelihood of its forming a verbatim copy of an authentic Caracallan document.<sup>583</sup> The *Acta Heracliti* are even more controversial since, despite Musurillo’s fervent claim that the papyrus represents nothing more than ‘a copy of an official protocol’, it seems clear that there are demonstrable, thematic similarities between *SB VI 9213* and other texts comprising the *Acta Alexandrinorum*, leading Harker to the conclusion that the *Acta Heracliti* were, in significant part, a work of fiction and should be included as part of

<sup>580</sup> *SB VI 9213 I*, ll. 9-11, tr. adapted from Harker (2008) 77.

<sup>581</sup> Harker (2000: 103) has also noted that the possibility that it may also record some form of trial scene similar to *SB VI 9123*. There is a problem with this conclusion, though, since the opening lines of this document are not reminiscent of a trial scene. Instead, they are a formulaic presentation of Caracalla’s titles.

<sup>582</sup> Montevicchi (1953) 58-59, also see Rodriguez (2012) 243-44.

<sup>583</sup> The inclusion of the title *Adiabenicus Maximus* is problematic. It was never used during the emperor’s lifetime, but was employed in reference to him, posthumously, by Elagabalus, see Harker (2000) 104; Bureth (1964) 102-104.

the general *Acta* literature.<sup>584</sup> This conclusion evidently limits the extent to which the reader can accept the precise text extant in both of these items as evidence of the trial.

Despite this controversy, however, it would appear that the fundamental facts contained within these works are based upon historical events.<sup>585</sup> Of particular interest here is the brief tenure of Heraclitus in the role of Prefect of Egypt. The earliest surviving attestation of Heraclitus in office dates to around March 215.<sup>586</sup> By the end of the same year, however, it is clear from the papyrological record that Heraclitus had been removed from office. This appears to have been done in considerable haste, as his subordinate, Aurelius Antinous (formerly a *iuridicus*), was installed as acting prefect until a permanent replacement could be found in the form of L. Valerius Datus.<sup>587</sup> In the context of Caracalla's arrival in Alexandria at the end of 215 and the suggestion of rioting found in the papyri, it seems most likely that there was some manner of trial examining the prefect's response to the unrest and that he was removed from office, probably executed, as a direct result of the proceedings later dramatized by the author of the *Acta Heracliti*. In fact, this enquiry might have seen the emperor react to the prefect's ineptitude or inability to respond to the recent unrest by condemning Heraclitus for a dereliction of his duties and *imperium* under the terms of the *lex Iulia de maiestate*.<sup>588</sup> The evidence relating to the trial and dismissal of

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<sup>584</sup> Musurillo (1954) 232; Harker (2008) 77-79, (2000) 102-103. The *Acta Heracliti* seem to form a fairly standard text in this respect. The role of the prosecutor being occupied by Alexandrian characters is a common feature; the heated verbal exchanges between the participants in the trial is also typical (in *CPJ* 158a, for example in the *Acta Pauli et Antonini*); slaves and tradesmen agitating on behalf of their masters or patrons was a common feature especially among the *Acta* literature of the first century AD (see *P. Oxy* XXII 2339; *P. Mil. Vogl.* II 47, and *CPJ* II 158a and b for selected examples). Harker has even linked the centrality of Sarapis to this trial to the more generally aretological literature about the deity which features in other *Acta* literature, although this point is less explicit.

<sup>585</sup> Rodriguez (2012) 244. Rodriguez argues that the inclusion of this episode in the *Acta* suggests that the trial generated considerable level of local interest at the time. Whilst this is clearly not sufficient evidence to prove the historicity of the trial, other evidence can be employed to support the hypothesis that the fundamental events prompting the trial were genuine, see below.

<sup>586</sup> *BGU* 362, also see Harker (2000) 153; Brunt (1975) 147; Reinmuth (1967) 111.

<sup>587</sup> For an attestation of Antinous, see *P. Reinach* 49.6 (= *W. Chr.* 209), for that of Datus, see *BGU* 159; Reinmuth (1967) 111.

<sup>588</sup> There is a section of the *Digest* which outlines the conditions under which a Roman magistrate could technically fall foul of the law on treason, see *Dig.* 48.4.3 (Marcian). The law condemned any official 'who has abandoned his *imperium* or an army of the Roman people' (*quiue imperium exercitumue populi Romani deseruerit*). See also Rodriguez (2012) 255-56, 259-60; Fuhrmann (2012) 169-72.

Heraclitus as Prefect of Egypt at the close of AD 215 lends credence, then, to the hypothesis that, rather than Caracalla massacring the population without warning, there was a significant outbreak of civil violence during the course of the emperor's visit to Alexandria.

While the trial of Heraclitus begins to allow us to alter the overall image of the Alexandrian incident from a merciless slaughter to something more mundane, albeit still costly in lives, there is another issue which becomes immediately apparent upon closer examination. It has already been established that the violence prefiguring the downfall of the prefect has a *terminus ante quem* of the final month of AD 215. The massacre which Caracalla is alleged to have ordered and for which he is criticised in the ancient sources, however, appears not to have taken place before April 216. It is highly unlikely that the emperor arrived in Alexandria itself before December 215, since papyrological evidence confirms his presence at Pelusium as late as 25<sup>th</sup> November of that year.<sup>589</sup>

In addition to Caracalla's late arrival, it has also been suggested that the appellation of the emperor as *kosmokrator* and *philosarapis* found in a papyrus dating to 11<sup>th</sup> March 216 (*SB* I 4275) is an indication of a continuing goodwill between Caracalla and his subjects.<sup>590</sup> Rodriguez has argued that it is unlikely that such cordial epithets would have been employed in the aftermath of a massacre.<sup>591</sup> This is a tenuous case, since I would suggest that the local populace could have felt an added impetus to soothe the emperor's wrath with such platitudes, in the aftermath of the violence. On the other hand, however, it does seem likely that Caracalla remained in Alexandria to celebrate the Serapeia on 25<sup>th</sup> April.<sup>592</sup> The logical conclusion from this evidence is that the violence recorded as a massacre by Dio and others must have taken place in the final week of April 216, the emperor leaving the city swiftly after the bloodshed and his subsequent punishment of the populace.

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<sup>589</sup> *P. Oxy.* LI 3602, particularly l.9.

<sup>590</sup> Lukaszewicz (1989) 495-96.

<sup>591</sup> Rodriguez (2012) 231-32.

<sup>592</sup> *SEG* XVII 759.

The evidence suggests, then, that there has been a further compression of the events surrounding Caracalla's visit to Alexandria by the ancient writers. Rather than a single, pre-meditated slaughter, it is more likely that there were two outbreaks of violence during this short period and that Caracalla's time in the city can be divided into two distinct phases.<sup>593</sup> In the first phase, it appears that, although the emperor received a cordial welcome from the Alexandrian citizenry, the city was either already troubled by civil disorder or witnessed an outbreak of violence shortly after Caracalla's arrival, prompted by an unknown cause.<sup>594</sup> While this was eventually suppressed, it was significant enough to prompt an official enquiry and the execution of the prefect Heraclitus as a consequence. The second phase is characterised by a sudden flare of violence, possibly related to an attempt by Caracalla to levy troops from the populace. Whatever the precise cause of the unrest, this second outbreak of violence appears to have been more intense than the first, resulting in the emperor ordering his troops to engage and suppress the rioters, with the ensuing bloodshed prompting Caracalla to leave the city and return to Antioch prior to launching his Parthian offensive.

### **The Legality of Caracalla's Actions in Alexandria**

If a two-phase hypothesis in connection with the violence of 215-16 is accepted, the fundamental legality of the emperor's deeds in Alexandria can be re-examined.<sup>595</sup> Rather than Caracalla succumbing to a mindless rage, Rodriguez has argued that the actions undertaken by the emperor in response to the rioting were extreme, but were ultimately faithful to the pre-existing Roman legal code regarding civil disobedience.<sup>596</sup> On one hand, evidence from the literary sources suggests that imperial composure and clemency in response to rioting was a quality to be lauded. Constantius II, for example, was commended for his mercy towards the population of

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<sup>593</sup> Rodriguez (2012) 247-48. Indeed, it may well have been this two-stage unravelling of events which inspired Dio's division of his narrative into two sections.

<sup>594</sup> It has been alleged that during the course of his visit to Alexandria, the emperor consecrated the dagger used to murder Geta (Dio 78.23.3). Whilst it is tempting to identify a correlation here with the early violence, owing to the supposed levels of popularity enjoyed by Geta in the city, evidence for the act of consecration itself is scant. It is likely that there were pre-existing tensions within the city, momentarily distracted by the occasion of Caracalla's arrival, only to manifest itself once more shortly afterwards.

<sup>595</sup> What follows builds upon the recent research of Rodriguez (2012), who was kind enough to allow me access to an advance copy of his article.

<sup>596</sup> Rodriguez (2012) 254-62.

Edessa following an uprising.<sup>597</sup> Closer to the Severi, Dio made note of Hadrian's ability to quell a riot in Alexandria by virtue of a letter alone: 'so true is it that an emperor's word will have more force than arms.'<sup>598</sup> On the other hand, however, evidence preserved in the literary and legal sources also serves to demonstrate that Caracalla was not unique or atypical in responding to provincial unrest with violent suppression.

In AD 387, the emperor Theodosius I encountered a case of unrest in Antioch. Similar to the events of 215-16, statues of the emperor and the imperial family were destroyed in the course of the rioting.<sup>599</sup> The response to this unrest was swift and decisive, with the ringleaders of the rioting arrested and executed, and a number of public institutions banned by the emperor.<sup>600</sup> Whilst one might expect Libanius, as an Antiochene, to criticise the severity of Theodosius' repression, this is not the case. In fact, in his oration describing the unrest, the author is clear regarding the necessity for a robust display of power and authority in response to such public outrages.<sup>601</sup> The reason for Libanius' vocal support, however, might be that, in destroying images of the emperor and his family, the rioters of Antioch had opened themselves to a charge of treason, in which the law was clear regarding the defacement of imperial imagery: 'Persons are liable under the *lex Iulia* on treason who melt down statues or likenesses of the emperor which are already consecrated, or who commit anything of the same kind.'<sup>602</sup> As a result, it would be unthinkable for the emperor to respond in a moderate fashion.<sup>603</sup> Such a conclusion regarding the necessity of the emperor to act in a severe manner following the destruction of his imagery is important to remember when considering the Caracallan case, since the papyrological evidence has confirmed that statuary was destroyed during the unrest of 215-16.<sup>604</sup>

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<sup>597</sup> For the clemency of Constantius II, see Libanius *Or.* 19.48 and Rodriguez (2012) 258. Jones (2013: 864-65) has argued that the rioting took place in Emesa rather than Edessa, but the account of Constantius' mercy remains unchanged.

<sup>598</sup> Dio 69.8.1a; HA *Hadr.* 12.1.

<sup>599</sup> For the events of the Antiochene riot, see Libanius *Or.* 19-23; Browning (1952) 13-20; French (1998) 468-84. Also see Rodriguez (2012) 257-59.

<sup>600</sup> Libanius *Or.* 19.37; French (1998) 168-69.

<sup>601</sup> Libanius *Or.* 19.24, 19.31. Also see Rodriguez (2012) 258-59.

<sup>602</sup> *Dig.* 48.4.6, (tr. Watson).

<sup>603</sup> For more on treason, see MacMullen (1966); Rogers (1959) 90-94; Chilton (1955) 73-81.

<sup>604</sup> Rodriguez (2012: 254) has identified another possible parallel, originally suggested by Legras (2001: 777-86), concerning a group of armed youths rising in Libya in opposition to the unpopular Maximinus

Further examination of the legal evidence preserved in the *Digest* regarding punishments can also assist in influencing our perception of the Alexandrian incident. In the course of his *Judicial Examinations (deognitionibus)*, Callistratus referred specifically to the role of the youth in civil disorder, and outlined appropriate punishments for unrest exacerbated by them:

*Solent quidam, qui volgo se iuvenes appellant, in quibusdam civitatibus turbulentis se adclamationibus popularium accommodare. qui si amplius nihil admiserint nec ante sint a praeside admoniti, fustibus caesi dimittuntur aut etiam spectaculis eis interdicitur. quod si ita correcti in eisdem deprehendantur, exilio puniendi sunt, nonnumquam capite plectendi, scilicet cum saepius seditiose et turbulente se gesserint et aliquotiens adprehensi tractati clementius in eadem temeritate propositi perseveraverint.*

Certain persons, who commonly refer to themselves as ‘the youths’, in certain towns where there is unrest play to the gallery for the applause of the mob. If they do no more than this and have not been previously admonished by the governor, they are beaten with rods and dismissed, or also forbidden to attend public entertainments. But if after such correction they are caught doing the same again, they should be punished with exile; or sometimes capital punishment may be imposed, for example, when they too often have been guilty of seditious and riotous behaviour and after repeated arrests and over-lenient treatment persist in the same rash attitude.<sup>605</sup>

The key detail relates to the different types of punishment that were applicable to gatherings of youths in this context. Callistratus was clear that the punishment of a first offence could be moderate, while the penalty for any subsequent unrest, or for openly seditious activity, was to be far more severe. While this portion of the *Digest* explicitly singles out the *iuvenes*, the general approach to riotous behaviour displayed in this legal source arguably sheds light on Caracalla’s actions during the Alexandrian unrest. It has already been shown that, in the aftermath of the first outbreak of rioting,

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Thrax. A comparison between the events of 238 with the Alexandrian violence is attractive, owing to the specific mention of youths being involved and ultimately killed, but the former events are so closely tied to the accession of Gordian I, that a direct comparison is impossible. For ancient evidence of the Libyan mob, see Hdn 7.4.3-5.6; HA *The Three Gordians* 9.3.

<sup>605</sup> *Dig.* 48.19.28.3. (tr. Watson).

the emperor only punished those who he believed were negligent in allowing the unrest to spread, namely the Alexandrian notables and the prefect Heraclitus. There is no real attention paid to any punishment of the non-elite, but it would be unlikely that all of the rioters escaped at least some form of reprimand or corporal punishment.

The second outbreak of violence was evidently more intense. The involvement of substantial numbers among the youths can be deduced from the apparent compression of the events with Caracalla's assembly of the youth in some accounts.<sup>606</sup> Whether the emperor's actions were prompted by perceiving the unrest as a repeat offence, or simply because the rioting became an act of *lèse-majesté*, with the destruction of imperial statuary, Caracalla clearly felt able to exert a far greater force against the entire city than he had done previously. Considering the resulting bloodshed, it is easy to see why a negative local tradition formed around the emperor's reprisals, depicting them as an unwarranted massacre. The fact remains, however, that the extant evidence contradicts the notion of Caracalla engaging in cold-blooded murder of the Alexandrian population. If the laws regarding treason and the punishment of civil discord are considered, it is clear contend that Rodriguez is correct to argue for the legality of Caracalla's response to the Alexandrian violence. This is another aspect of the episode which further distances the emperor from the alleged massacre narrative.

### **Implications of the *constitutio Antoniniana* for Roman Alexandria**

With an alternative chronology established, it is now possible to analyse the Alexandrian incident in a new way, removed from the clichéd notion that the violence was prompted by nothing more than uncontrollable rage on the part of Caracalla. In order to evaluate the emperor's visit to Alexandria more effectively, it is necessary to find an explanation for the atmosphere of tension that appears to have been prevalent in the city during Caracalla's time there. Rather than a simple literary creation of the ancient writers, designed to prefigure the physical violence that was to follow, I will argue that it was Caracalla himself who was responsible for creating an atmosphere of discord in Alexandria, albeit inadvertently. This was not by virtue of his temper or the

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<sup>606</sup> Most notably by the author of the *Historia Augusta*, see HA *Car.* 6.2-3.

confrontational nature of his subordinates, if the anecdote regarding Theocritus' transgressions is believed, but rather by his promulgation of the *constitutio Antoniniana* around three years previously.<sup>607</sup>

In his assessment of the edict, Honoré stated that while he believed that the *constitutio* fitted the zeitgeist, it could not have been popular with 'those whose privileges were diluted as a result.'<sup>608</sup> Similarly, Garnsey referred to a general decline in the value of the franchise as a direct result of the edict.<sup>609</sup> It is my contention that this process of dilution was of critical importance to the emperor's relationship with the city, and that the situation in Alexandria around the time of Caracalla's arrival in late 215 ought to be viewed through the lens of a decline in the honours experienced by the previously privileged groups in the aftermath of the *constitutio*'s introduction in 212. Indeed it is this waning prestige that would have unfavourably predisposed the Alexandrian citizenry to the emperor, exacerbating pre-existing social tensions that had the potential to flare into physical violence and unrest, as they had done in the past.

From the beginning of Rome's occupation, Romano-Egyptian relations were complex and often volatile; Alexandria was regarded as a particularly unruly and volatile city by our main Graeco-Roman writers.<sup>610</sup> Roman annexation had simultaneously resulted in a transformation of the pre-existing provincial administration to suit Roman requirements on the one hand, and in an effective consolidation of the inflexible class structure which had characterised the preceding Ptolemaic regime on the other.<sup>611</sup> This rigid social stratification was most notably seen in the treatment of Alexandria. Even a cursory glance at the ancient evidence reveals that the city was regarded as possessing the highest and most privileged status of any community in Egypt. This prestige is immediately visible even in the way that

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<sup>607</sup> For the poor behaviour of Theocritus, see pgs 131-32.

<sup>608</sup> Honoré (2004) 114.

<sup>609</sup> Garnsey (1970) 270-71.

<sup>610</sup> For a selection of negative depictions of the Egyptians and Alexandrian population, see Dio Chr. 32.1; HA *Hadr.* 12.1; HA *Quad. Tyr.* 7.4, 8.5; Hdn 4.8.7; Juv. 15.1-2, 15.12-13; Tac. *Ann.* 1.11. See also Haas (1997) 10-11; Fuhrmann (2012) 159.

<sup>611</sup> Bowman and Rathbone (1992) 108; Lewis (1983) 19-28; Rowlandson (2010) 238-45.

Alexandria was referred to. Rather than being addressed as a city in the province of Egypt (*in Aegypto*), it is not uncommon to find Alexandria labelled *ad Aegyptum*, literally *by Egypt*.<sup>612</sup> This has led Rowlandson and Harker to conclude that the city was demarcated by an ‘ambivalent’ status within Roman Egypt, more reminiscent of an adjunct to the province rather than a constituent part.<sup>613</sup>

Mirroring the ambivalent status of Alexandria in relation to neighbouring communities, the inhabitants of the city also enjoyed an elevated level of social prestige. Until the second century, they were the only individuals considered by the Roman authorities for key offices within the provincial administration such as that of the *strategos* and the *basilikogrammateus*.<sup>614</sup> Alexandrians were also the only social group in Egypt to be afforded exemptions from the payment of the *laographia* (poll-tax) and other liturgical duties, a factor that distinguished them even from the other Hellenised elite communities of the *metropoleis* and the *chora*. This can be visibly observed in one of the papyri comprising the *Acta*, in which a Hellenic character refers to the ‘poll-tax payers’ in a derogatory fashion.<sup>615</sup> While this is undoubtedly exaggerated for dramatic effect, it is still possible to conclude that Alexandrian citizens did perceive a gulf in status between themselves and those ineligible for tax exemptions.

Arguably more important than their inclusion within the Roman governmental system or their tax breaks, however, is the fact that under the Roman administration, the concept of Alexandrian citizenship was maintained and reinforced.<sup>616</sup> What had previously been a marker of Alexandrian prestige under the Ptolemies had become the only route through which an inhabitant of Egypt might hope to achieve the full Roman franchise. The uncompromising nature of this system can be easily observed in the

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<sup>612</sup> For an example of this in the epigraphic corpus, see *AE* 1935, 157. For a general survey of the ways in which Alexandria is referred to, see Calderini (1935) 56-58.

<sup>613</sup> Rowlandson and Harker (2004) 82. Whilst there has been an attempt to demonstrate the importance of traditional Egyptian culture to the city during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, Alexandria’s privileged status when compared to the cities of the *chora* remains incontrovertible. For more on the role of Egyptian culture in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, see Savvopoulos (2011).

<sup>614</sup> Rowlandson (2010) 245. Also see Kelly (2011) xiv-xvi.

<sup>615</sup> *CPJ* II. 156c.

<sup>616</sup> Harker (2008) 5; Rowlandson and Harker (2004) 82.

letters of Pliny the Younger. In the course of a correspondence between Pliny and the emperor Trajan, the former is successful in a request to have his medical therapist awarded Roman *civitas* in return for effective treatment when Pliny was seriously ill.<sup>617</sup> The franchise was granted, but not without a problem, since Pliny admitted to Trajan that he had later discovered that Harpocras was not in possession of Alexandrian citizenship at the time of the bestowal of the Roman franchise.<sup>618</sup> As a result, Trajan was compelled to bestow Alexandrian citizenship upon Harpocras retrospectively, a move that he was vocally reluctant to do.

*Civitatem Alexandrinam secundum institutionem principum non temere dare proposui. Sed cum Arpocrati, iatraliptae tuo, iam civitatem Romanam impetraveris, huic quoque petitioni tuae negare non sustineo.*

Following the rule of my predecessors, I do not intend to grant Alexandrian citizenship except in special cases, but as you have already obtained Roman citizenship for your medical therapist Harpocras, I cannot refuse this further request.<sup>619</sup>

Aside from imperial reluctance to bestow citizenship on a wide scale, it is clear that the exclusivity of the Alexandrian franchise was guarded zealously during the imperial period before AD 212. Evidence from the *Gnomon of the Idios Logos* (§42) suggests that there was a system of penalties for those who illegitimately claimed Alexandrian status, a crime for which perpetrators could be fined one quarter of their total wealth.<sup>620</sup> While this can be interpreted as a general rule, not concerning any one area within the province specifically, other entries in the *Gnomon* suggest that the preservation of the Alexandrian franchise was a matter of considerable importance. Any Egyptian that falsely tried to register his son as an *ephebe* (a status which inferred eligibility for Alexandrian citizenship), for example, could be fined one sixth of their estate.<sup>621</sup>

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<sup>617</sup> Pliny *Ep.* 10.5-6.

<sup>618</sup> Pliny *Ep.* 10.6.1: *Sed cum annos eius et censum sicut praeceperas ederem, admonitus sum a peritioribus debuisse me ante ei Alexandrinam civitatem impetrare, deinde Romanam, quoniam esset Aegyptius.*

<sup>619</sup> Pliny *Ep.* 10.7, tr. Radice.

<sup>620</sup> For a survey of the different classes and penalties outlined in the *Gnomon*, see Sherman (1928) 37-40.

<sup>621</sup> *Gnomon* §44. Also see Rowlandson and Harker (2004) 83. Despite the severity of the law, there does seem to have been at least a minimal degree of flexibility, since there is another entry in the *Gnomon*

In addition to fines for the usurpation of social class, the *Gnomon* legislated strictly in relation to the law regarding marriage between persons of different status, particularly when individuals holding the Alexandrian franchise were involved. Marriage between freedmen of Alexandrian citizens and Egyptian women was forbidden, a prohibition which ultimately suggests that a similar law was in place regarding fully enfranchised Alexandrian men.<sup>622</sup> Alexandrian women, on the other hand, were permitted to marry Egyptian men (§38), but the children of the union, whilst able to inherit from both parents, would be considered Egyptian under the law rather than Alexandrian. Rowlandson and Harker have noted that whilst brother-sister marriage was prohibited to Romans in Egypt, it appears that it was freely practised by Alexandrian citizens; endogamy formed a guaranteed, if extreme, preservation of the relative social boundaries.<sup>623</sup> While the vast size and cosmopolitan composition of Alexandria meant that this rigid system of class delineation became increasingly difficult to police and enforce, this does not mean that the principle behind the class structure was any less important to the Alexandrian citizenry; the extant evidence suggests quite the opposite, and that Alexandria enjoyed a set of privileges to be 'jealously guarded against aspiring interlopers'.<sup>624</sup>

It is this sense of pride in their traditionally privileged position that is of importance to the way in which Caracalla's dealings with the Alexandrian populace are analysed. Alexandria's unparalleled position at the pinnacle of Egyptian society had already been somewhat diminished during the earlier visit of Caracalla, with Septimius Severus, in AD 200. Whilst the emperors passed legislation to the benefit of Alexandria and finally granted the city a *boulé*, the latter gift was bittersweet, since the emperors also simultaneously bestowed the honour onto all of the other

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(§46) in which Roman men or *astoi* (Alexandrian men) could be excused from liability, and their children able to follow their paternal status, if the men married Egyptian women in ignorance.

<sup>622</sup> *Gnomon* §49; Rowlandson and Harker (2004) 83-84.

<sup>623</sup> Rowlandson and Harker (2004) 83. In support of this claim, they offer papyrological evidence from *P. Oxy.* III, 477, in which an Alexandrian brother and sister applied to have their son registered as an ephebe.

<sup>624</sup> Rowlandson and Harker (2004) 81. The problem of the rural population flocking to Alexandria in avoidance of taxation will be discussed in the next section, below.

*metropoleis* in Egypt.<sup>625</sup> It is uncertain whether this policy was followed deliberately to reduce Alexandria's prestige within Egypt following the civil war with Pescennius Niger, in a similar fashion to the reduction of Antioch's status following the Wars of Succession, but it remains clear that, rather than a city above and separate from the *metropoleis*, Alexandria had become something more akin to *prima inter pares* even before the introduction of the *constitutio Antoniniana* in 212.<sup>626</sup>

In terms of Alexandria's standing, then, I would argue that the eventual promulgation of Caracalla's edict can only be regarded as the fatal next step in the city's gradual decline within the region. In his study on the relationship between the *constitutio* and the *Gnomon*, Sherman concluded that 'the first group of provisions in the Γνώμων to be eliminated by the universal grant of citizenship comprises the sections regarding the false usurpation of class.'<sup>627</sup> This point must be taken further, though. The extension of the franchise across the empire did not merely make this example of local law obsolete, it completely eradicated any necessity for it at all. No longer was Alexandria the gateway to Roman *civitas*, no longer was the Alexandrian franchise a mark of social prestige. Every free person in Egypt, whether Roman, Greek or Egyptian, now enjoyed the same basic status under Roman law.

Evidence for the immediate Alexandrian reaction to this legislation is non-existent, but if the fervent attempts to protect the prestige of the franchise mentioned above are any indication of their civic pride, then it is easy to imagine that the Alexandrian citizenry would have been dismayed at the elimination of their prized status with both Egyptians and the Alexandrian Jews being elevated to the same legal level as them.<sup>628</sup> This position has led some to hypothesise that the local elite of the

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<sup>625</sup> See Dio 51.17.3-4, who simply states that Severus was the first emperor to refuse the Alexandrians a civic senate. The council is thought to have been formally convened for the first time between May 200 and June 201, see *SB* V 7817.

<sup>626</sup> Harker (2008) 132; Bowman (1971) 15-19.

<sup>627</sup> Sherman (1928) 38.

<sup>628</sup> Harker (2008: 132-33) has posited the theory that the earlier Severan legislation (*Dig.* 50.2.3.3) allowing Jews to hold public office without any penalty for their *superstitio* might have resulted in a resurfacing of tensions between the Alexandrian and Jewish communities. This is difficult to identify in the ancient evidence, apart from the *Acta Alexandrinorum*, but it is not inconceivable. Furthermore, if this was indeed the case, then this pre-existing tension cannot have been soothed by the later grant of Roman citizenship.

city, feeling aggrieved at their loss of prestige, and perhaps even fearing a further drop in status in the event of Caracalla succeeding in his Parthian campaign, actually exerted influence in stirring sedition and unrest across the city. Marasco, for example, has linked this hypothesis to the murder of the notables found in Dio's account of the violence.<sup>629</sup> Benoit and Schwartz, however, envisage the local elite engaging in sedition, influencing the *ergolaboi* to riot for more general, but unspecified, economic and political reasons.<sup>630</sup>

Hypotheses implicating the Alexandrian notables as the architects of the rioting which Caracalla witnessed shortly after his arrival in the city might initially seem compelling since, of all the city's inhabitants, the elites were those who appear to have lost the most in terms of status and privileges as mentioned above. These theories are problematic, however, primarily owing to their reliance on the murder of the *protoi* (a move which would likely have set the surviving elite and the emperor on a direct collision course) taking place exactly as Dio described and, furthermore, on there being a solid link between the notables and the entrepreneurs/contract workers. The link between the Alexandrian elite and the *ergolaboi* is tenuous; it is difficult to conceive of a situation in which contract-workers of the entrepreneurial class could be persuaded to take part in a revolt conceived wholly by the social elite.<sup>631</sup>

I would argue that, rather than leading or orchestrating an insurrection, it seems more likely that while the elite might have felt aggrieved by the emperor, their primary concern was to avoid Roman intervention in their city, particularly military intervention. Such an anxiety was not uncommon in the eastern empire, where there appears to have been a desire to govern and address issues of public order without

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<sup>629</sup> Marasco (1994) 506; Dio 78.22.2.

<sup>630</sup> Benoit and Schwartz (1948) 30-31.

<sup>631</sup> Rodriguez (2012) 248-49, n.88. Buraselis (1995: 169-70, 182-83) has claimed that trade guilds such as weavers, for example, were coming under increasing pressure from the Roman government to meet production goals for the army in advance of Caracalla's Parthian campaign. Whilst earlier papyrological evidence suggests that such workers did struggle to meet the demands of the imperial state on occasion (see *BGU* VII 1564 and 1572, dating to AD 139 from Philadelphia), the connection between this pressure and the outbreak of intense violence still remains difficult to envisage. Regardless of the veracity of Buraselis' hypothesis, though, it should be noted that the non-elite echelons in Alexandria might have had their own motives for taking part in unrest, examined in the following section below.

interference from the imperial government.<sup>632</sup> The desire to maintain such control in the eastern provinces can be observed in the statement of Aelius Aristides that enfranchising the provincial elites would serve the Roman state best since ‘there is no need for garrisons to hold their citadels, but the men of the highest standing and influence in every city will guard their homelands for you’.<sup>633</sup> If taken at face value, this claim would appear ironic when it is remembered that Aristides himself hailed from Alexandria, one of the cities in the east that was actively garrisoned. If the statement is viewed, however, as a figurative one, then Kelly is correct to suggest that Aristides’ decision to offer such an obviously disingenuous image of provincial relations with the imperial government is indicative of the strength of feeling behind the local elites’ preference to deal as much as possible with their own issues of public order.<sup>634</sup> I would argue that a similar strength of feeling can be observed in the case of the Alexandrian *protoi*, specifically in their deputation to Caracalla upon his arrival in their city.

It is therefore possible to interpret the role of the notables in the violence of 215-16 in a different way. Rather than simply leaving the city to greet the emperor before being murdered, as in Dio’s account, or alternatively orchestrating a local insurrection among the *ergolaboi* during his time in the city, the embassy to Caracalla which was declared to have been condemned in the course of the *Acta Heracliti* can be better placed as an appeal to the emperor in the aftermath of the first outbreak of violence. Despite the failure of Heraclitus to suppress the unrest, the idea that the Alexandrian elite would have petitioned the emperor to allow them continued latitude in quelling local trouble is convincing. Owing precisely to the local notables’ traditional role in maintaining domestic order, however, it stands to reason that the emperor would have deemed them equally culpable for allowing the escalation of the recent rioting and would have been nearly impossible to persuade otherwise. I would argue that, rather than affording the local elite any further opportunity to maintain

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<sup>632</sup> A similar preference for local solutions to public order can be seen in the case of Judaea, where Josephus (*BJ* 2.490-98) reported that before sending in troops to quell disorder, the serving prefect Ti. Julius Alexander dispatched a delegation of local notables in an attempt to defuse the situation. For more on the role of the local elite in public order in the east, see Kelly (2007) 166-67.

<sup>633</sup> Ael. Arist. *Or.* 26.64.

<sup>634</sup> Kelly (2007) 167.

public order, Caracalla was unmoved by their plea and executed the *protoi* not out of some unquantifiable rage, but instead because he deemed them as responsible as Heraclitus for underestimating the scale of the disturbance and for failing to prevent violence and destruction of property from occurring.

### **Implications of the *constitutio Antoniniana* for the Non-Elite**

In addition to the diminishment in status felt by the social elite in Alexandria, the inevitable effects of the *constitutio* upon the non-elite strata of Romano-Egyptian society must also be taken into account. On initial examination, it might appear that the non-elite echelons of Romano-Egyptian society stood to gain much. Rather than forming a second class, inferior to the Hellenised populations of Alexandria and the other *metropoleis*, even Egyptians of the *chora* could now enjoy the legal benefits and protection of the Roman franchise.<sup>635</sup> This was a new status that many sought to publically accept through the adoption of the imperial name *Aurelius* into their new Romanised nomenclature.<sup>636</sup> The implications of Caracalla's edict were not, however, wholly positive for the non-elite population of Egypt, particularly on an economic level.

In Chapter Four, the fiscal-economic rationale fundamental to the *constitutio Antoniniana* was discussed, noting that, regardless of why the finances were needed, the emperor appears to have been keen to increase the capital at his disposal. With the gift of the franchise came the expectation that the new citizens would contribute to the series of taxes levied on the enfranchised population, including levies such as the *vicesima hereditatum*, for example. While taxation cannot have been popular in any province of the empire, there is evidence to suggest that the levying and collecting taxes in Roman Egypt, especially from the population of the *chora*, could be

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<sup>635</sup> It should be remembered, though, that this was not a complete parity, since social distinctions such as the *Honestiores-Humiliores* divide were always visible; see Rilinger (1988).

<sup>636</sup> Evidence for such a development occurring across the empire has been controversial in the past, with Mullen (2007: 47) highlighting that there is no evidence for *duo* or *tria nomina* being employed in the area around Bath in Roman Britain. New statistical analysis of papyrological evidence has shown, however, that the phenomenon was widely practiced in Roman Egypt, and that it can be dated with confidence to the aftermath of the *constitutio Antoniniana*, suggesting that *Aurelius* became a popular name there as a result of the universal enfranchisement. For more on this data and the analytical methodology employed, see Van Beek and Depauw (2013) 101-14, particularly p.110.

particularly traumatic. Philo, for example, complained of the violence perpetrated by tax collectors:

τοιγάρτοι πάντα φύρουσι καὶ συγγέουσιν ἀργυρολογοῦντες, ὡς μὴ μόνον ἐκ τῶν οὐσιῶν ἀναπράττειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκ τῶν σωμάτων, ὕβρεσιν, αἰκίας, πρὸς ἀποτομίαν κεκαιουργημέναις βασάνοις·

And therefore in carrying out their collection, they throw everything into disorder, applying their collections not only to the possessions of their victims but also their persons, with insults, violence, and forms of torture unprecedented in their savagery.<sup>637</sup>

In addition to the accounts of brutality and abuse on the part of tax collectors in Egypt recorded in the ancient literature and papyri, the strain of paying taxes and honouring liturgical duties in the imperial period appears to have led to another phenomenon in which debtors fled from their place of residence in an effort to avoid payment: *anachoresis*.<sup>638</sup> The practice is described by Philo as individuals retreating from their homes out of a fear of extreme punishments awaiting them on their failure to pay tax duties.<sup>639</sup> The phenomenon is not restricted to the writings of Philo, however, and is found in the papyrological record from the perspective of both the relatives (or nearest concerned party) of the fugitive and the magistrates reporting the absences to their superiors. *P. Oxy.* XXXIII 2669, for example, is a first century AD papyrus in which the two brothers report on the flight of an individual known only as Orsenouphis, son of Menches.<sup>640</sup> In the course of their correspondence with the village and district clerks, they claimed that, to the best of their knowledge, Orsenouphis had fled his place of residence and, although he had not joined the army, had left none of his property behind.<sup>641</sup>

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<sup>637</sup> Philo, *Spec. leg.* 2.94 (tr. adapted from Colson).

<sup>638</sup> From ἀναχώρησις, literally meaning flight or retreat. For more on the process of *anachoresis*, see Link (1993) 306-20.

<sup>639</sup> Philo, *Spec. leg.* 3.30. He devotes particular attention to the alleged cruelty of the tax collector and his use of torture to locate the fugitives but this is hardly surprising, given Philo's intention to group a disparate series of laws under the Ten Commandments. For more on Philo's methodology, see Royse (2009) 48-49.

<sup>640</sup> *P. Oxy.* XXXIII 2669, l.7.

<sup>641</sup> *P. Oxy.* XXXIII 2669, ll. 10-15: καὶ ὁμνύομεν [Τ]ιβέριον [Κ]λαύδιον καίσαρα σεβασ[τ]ὸν Γερμανικὸν αὐτοκράτορα ἀνακ[ε]χωρηκένας τὸν Ὀρσενουφιν κ[αὶ] μὴ ὑπάρχειν αὐτῷ πόρον.

The legal process surrounding the practice of *anachoresis* is complex and remains uncertain in areas. For example, it is unclear if there was a legal obligation for family members or neighbours to lodge a deposition with the local magistrates in the aftermath of an individual's flight.<sup>642</sup> In addition, it seems clear that the process of *anachoresis* was not simply the last resort of the rural populace in response to over-taxation, and that the prospect of fleeing one's contributions could be exploited by some for personal advantage. In fact, the threat of *anachoresis* could be a powerful weapon in the context of a private petition or lawsuit. This is seen, for example, in some petitions regarding cases of assault.<sup>643</sup> In these complaints, the warning regarding flight follows the request for assistance. The reason for this, as Kelly has outlined, for the complainant to emphasise the severity of their opponent's wrongdoing, by inferring that the public purse might suffer as a result of the injured party's inability to continue their work or agricultural production.<sup>644</sup> From this evidence, it is a logical conclusion that the petitioners clearly felt that the implications of *anachoresis* were serious enough that to threaten it in private lawsuits would prompt the arbitrator to rule in their favour.

On the other side, the practice of *anachoresis* also prompted problems for those responsible for collecting taxes. In the course of their reports, collectors noted the number of 'untraceable' tax delinquents (ἀπόρων ἀνευρέτων), and those simply classed as ἀναχωρήσι.<sup>645</sup> In extreme cases, this would prompt the local magistrates to petition the prefect to intervene and compel the *strategos* (the chief financial officer of the *nome*) to delay any action until the prefect had himself been given a chance to make a decision at the next assize.<sup>646</sup> While much of the papyrological evidence for

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<sup>642</sup> Such a process would seem to be in the best interests of the declarant, to avoid repeated actions by tax collectors to locate and seize the fugitive's estate, see Llewelyn (1998) 100-101. The case of Orsenouphis recorded in *P. Oxy.* XXXIII 2669 is not a unique case. *SB XIV* 11974, for example, records a father reporting the *anachoresis* of his own son, claiming that the latter had 'run off to foreign parts' (ἀνεχώρησεν εἰς τὴν ξένην). Clearly such a declaration would theoretically serve to protect the father's estate from being seized in payment of his son's debt. Also see *P. Oxy.* II 251-53 and *P. Mich.* X 580.

<sup>643</sup> *BL VII* 176; *P. Sakaon* 36, ll.31-32; *P. Sakaon* 37, ll. 15-16. Also see Kelly (2011) 158.

<sup>644</sup> Kelly (2011) 158. This claim is seen, for example, in *P. Athen.* 38 (dating to c. AD 141). In the course of this petition, the complainant claimed that only with assistance could he maintain his tax payments to the state (ἵνα δυνήθῃ τὰ ὀφειλόμενα εἰς τὸ δημόσι[ο]ν ἐκφόρια ἀποδοῦναι), see *P. Athen.* 38, ll. 11-13.

<sup>645</sup> For examples of the tax collectors noting absences, see *SB XIV* 12015 and *P. Ryl.* IV 595 (with an accompanying list of fugitives found in *P. Corn.* 24).

<sup>646</sup> *SB IV* 7462. Also see Llewelyn (1998) 99-100.

the practice of *anachoresis* derives from the first century AD, the problems underlying the phenomenon were clearly more persistent. The continued existence of issues relating to the levying of tax and the flight of individuals to avoid payment can be observed in the decrees of Severus and Caracalla made in the course of their visit to Alexandria in 199/200, comprising part of the Severan *apokrimata*. Similar to Hadrian's earlier moratorium on tax in Egypt to preserve long-term liquidity, Severus appears to have responded to the problems surrounding the levying and collection of tax in a moderate fashion. In response to a petition from an individual referred to as Ulpius Heraclanus, for example, the emperors reported that they had temporarily suspended the traditional penalties associated with tax payment in arrears:

Οὐλίῳ Ἡρακλάνῳ τῷ καὶ Καλλινείκῳ τὰς ἐπιβληθείσας Ἀλεξανδρεῦσι ἢ Αἰγυπτίοις ζημίας τῇ δωρεᾷ χρόνον προσαγα[γό]ντες ἀνήκαμεν.

To Ulpius Heraclanus, also called Kallinikos: We remitted the penalties which had been imposed upon Alexandrians or Egyptians but added a time limit to the benefaction.<sup>647</sup>

This measure was accompanied by other beneficial initiatives, such as the cancellation of old claims by the *fiscus*, and an amnesty for tax fugitives to return to their *idia*.<sup>648</sup> The determination of the Severi to encourage the return of tax fugitives to their *idia* can also be observed in a more aggressive decree, in which punishments were outlined for any individuals who offered shelter to tax evaders.<sup>649</sup> During the course of the imperial visit to Alexandria in 200, the Severan *Augusti* were passing legislation designed to improve the pre-existing system of taxation across the *chora*. This can be viewed as an attempt to offer a period of more lenient payment whilst

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<sup>647</sup> *P. Col.* VI 123, ll. 6-8. This is similar in tone to the earlier edict of the prefect M. Sempronius Liberalis, issued *c.* AD 154, who published an incentive for tax delinquents to return to their *idia* by guaranteeing that any property that had been previously sequestered following the discovery of *anachoresis* would be returned to its original owner without judicial enquiry, see *BGU* II 372: "Ἴνα δὲ τοῦτο προθυμότερον καὶ ἥδιον ποιήσωσιν, ἴστωσαν μὲν τὸν πόρον τὸν ἐκ ταύτης τῆς αἰτίας ἔτι κατεχόμενον ἀπολυθῆσεσθαι τῆς τοῦ μεγίστου Αὐτοκράτος εὐμενείας καὶ χρηστότητος ἐπιτρεπούσης καὶ μηδεμίαν πρὸς αὐτοὺς ζήτησιν ἔσεσθαι, ἀλλὰ μηδὲ πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους τοὺς ἐξ ἧς δῆποτε αἰτίας ὑπὸ τῶν στρατηγῶν προγραφέντας· For more on the edict of Sempronius Liberalis, see Cowey (1995) 195-99.

<sup>648</sup> For these measures and grants, see *SB* I 4284; IV 7366; *P. Mich.* IX 529; *P. Oxy.* XLVII 3364 and *P. Westminster Coll.* 3. For more on the Severan visit to Alexandria and the *apokrimata*, see Harker (2008) 131-33.

<sup>649</sup> *Oxyrhynchus B34/H5*, in the collection of the Egypt Exploration Society.

simultaneously trying to prevent individuals being compelled to undertake liturgical duties when it was clear that they could not realistically bear the associated costs.<sup>650</sup>

It is easy to see how the fiscal element of the *constitutio Antoniniana* might jar with this apparently fragile system. Contrary to the more moderate policies enacted by Severus and Caracalla in 200, the terms of Caracalla's edict stressed the fiscal responsibility inherent on every new citizen.<sup>651</sup> Evidence for the speed at which the terms of the *constitutio* were enforced is difficult to find, but if the rapid and vast increase in the number of *Aurelii* registered in Egypt is any marker of the edict's spread to the province, we can safely conclude that the legislation had reached Egypt reasonably swiftly after its original promulgation and that the provincial administration was effectively disseminating its content.

With the enforcement of Caracalla's edict taking place in the aftermath of AD 212, it is unsurprising to note that the process of *anachoresis* appears to continue unabated. During the period of Caracalla's sole reign, this is arguably best seen in the decree released by the prefect of Egypt in 216, L. Valerius Datus, ordering people once more to return to their individual *idia*.<sup>652</sup> While it would be an exaggeration of the available evidence to suggest that the *constitutio Antoniniana* was the sole factor in the continuing phenomenon of tax evasion, the fiscal demands expected of Caracalla's new citizens appear to have affected all but the smallest of private estates.<sup>653</sup>

I would argue that the *constitutio Antoniniana* can therefore be observed to intensify the fiscal pressures facing individuals of the Egyptian *chora* and even citizens of the *metropoleis*. Flight from one's *idia* to another region or city must have been an attractive alternative to paying the Roman and local systems of tax. Of the cities targeted by these fugitives, Alexandria appears to have been among the foremost.

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<sup>650</sup> Aside from addressing the problem of the physical payment of tax, Severus and Caracalla appear to have been concerned with the link between the potentially ruinous costs involved with undertaking liturgical duties and *anachoresis*, showing reluctance to press any villagers into the liturgies of the *metropoleis*, see *P. Oxy.* XLII 3019.

<sup>651</sup> For the importance of the fiscal importance to the terms of the *constitutio*, see Chapter Four. Of key importance is the clause in the edict resembling the Latin *sine diminutione tributorum et vectigalium*.

<sup>652</sup> See below, pgs. 173-75.

<sup>653</sup> For the far reaching nature of the *vicesima hereditatum*, for example, see above pgs. 97-99.

Papyrological evidence suggests that the provincial authorities did attempt to maintain a record of non-citizen residents but, again, the sheer size of Alexandria would have made this understandably difficult.<sup>654</sup> As a central trading hub and a city in which non-citizens commonly mixed with the local citizenry, traded and often stayed for periods of time, Alexandria was a perfect place to afford anonymity to any who might have sought to avoid the exactions of the *fiscus*.<sup>655</sup>

While Caracalla's *constitutio* can be observed to have been enthusiastically accepted by the inhabitants of rural Egypt, keen to exert their new citizenship and display their Roman nomenclature, it can also be shown to have aggravated a number of tensions within the province. On one level, the hitherto unparalleled elite of the Alexandrian citizenry would have observed their position and prestige being eroded, their city reduced to one of a number of important hubs in the eastern half of the empire. Conversely, the fiscal implications of the edict could not have been borne easily by the population of the *chora* and the *metropoleis*, for whom *anachoresis* was a commonly employed tactic to evade payment of taxation. In summary, then, the *constitutio* was clearly an edict planned on an imperial scale, but in the case of Egypt, this planning can be shown to have neglected the regional tensions and instabilities that it might intensify. It is into this context that we must consider an edict, apparently ordered by Caracalla, expelling significant numbers of people from the city. Discovered on the same papyrus as the text of the *constitutio* itself, the Caracallan expulsion order forms the third decree preserved on *P. Giss. 40* although, unlike the *constitutio* text, it is relatively well preserved.

### **Positioning the Expulsion Order**

The expulsion decree (sometimes referred to as an epistle) begins with the order that all Egyptians living in the city, especially those of the rural peasantry, should leave Alexandria.<sup>656</sup> It was argued in the past that this order should be viewed as an official copy of an epistle from Caracalla to the serving prefect, Aurelius Antinous.

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<sup>654</sup> *P. Oxy. XXXVI 2756*, for example, records a declaration from AD 78-79, in which it is clarified that an Oxyrhynchite weaver was still registered for taxation in Oxyrhynchus despite his temporary residence in Alexandria.

<sup>655</sup> Rowlandson and Harker (2004) 81-84.

<sup>656</sup> *P. Giss. 40, III, 1.17*: Αἰγύπτιοι πάντες, οἳ εἰσιν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ, καὶ μάλιστα ἄγροικοι.

Williams interprets the direct order to expel people as representing a second person command contained in the course of a correspondence between the emperor and prefect.<sup>657</sup> This hypothesis seems less likely, however, if the rest of the piece is taken into account, apparently forming an extract from a longer text and containing a level of detail that is far beyond what one might expect in a letter from the emperor to his incumbent magistrate. Regardless if this was originally a letter between Caracalla and Antinous, or a more general edict, this can at least be taken as evidence that the text was ultimately intended for publication.<sup>658</sup>

After opening his decree in such a general manner, Caracalla lists certain exceptions to the edict, exempting a number of occupations including pig-dealers and the river boatmen.<sup>659</sup> Following these exemptions, he declared that the others present in Alexandria contributed nothing to the functional life of the city and were, in fact, undermining it by disrupting good order.<sup>660</sup> After briefly qualifying that even these individuals were to be permitted to enter the city for the purposes of temporary business or for religious devotion and sacrifice, the emperor appears to suggest the way in which this order was to be enforced. The order ends by noting that it was possible to identify ineligible persons on the basis of appearance, dress and language.<sup>661</sup> Two primary issues must be addressed regarding the role of this order in the Alexandrian incident. Firstly, the question of how it fits into the chronology of the imperial visit and, secondly, the arguably more important issue of how much personal input Caracalla had in the extant version of the text.

Regarding its position in the chronology of Caracalla's time in Alexandria, the expulsion order is commonly associated with the account of the emperor's final punishment of the city in the aftermath of the fatal violence described by Dio, in which

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<sup>657</sup> Williams (1979) 81-82.

<sup>658</sup> Oliver (1989) 509-10.

<sup>659</sup> Heichelheim (1941: 21) suggested that certain trades may have been exempted from the expulsion since they were under government control at the time.

<sup>660</sup> *P. Giss.* 40, III, ll. 20-21: καὶ οὐχὶ χρήσει ταρασσουσι τὴν πόλιν. A comparison might be drawn here between the wording of the text and the account of Herodian (4.9.4) who claimed that the emperor became aware of a vast number of outsiders participating in the festivities of the Alexandrians. In the latter source, however, this account is conflated with the later assembly of the youths, a chronology that is difficult to accept, see below.

<sup>661</sup> *P. Giss.* 40, III, ll. 27-30. Also see Heichelheim (1941) 21.

the expulsion of foreigners took place against the backdrop of other punitive measures, such as the cessation of all public messes and the construction of cross-walls to restrict the movements of the local population.<sup>662</sup> Whilst the appearance of exemptions to the expulsion might seem to mirror Dio's claim that merchants were spared, the connection is nonetheless problematic. Firstly, the tone of the edict requires attention. The list of exceptions to the ejection order is far more detailed than the nebulous 'merchants', *emporoi*, described by Dio. Pork merchants are mentioned, as are river boatmen, reed gatherers (for the heating of the baths), and more short-term residents who came to Alexandria for religious reasons or simply as tourists. The city itself is still spoken of in very positive terms, with Caracalla referring to it as 'the most radiant city of the Alexandrians'<sup>663</sup> By removing those Egyptians who did not work in the aforementioned professions regardless of their contribution to civic life, Caracalla can be understood to have passed an edict to the advantage of the Alexandrian citizenry, who were well-known to have despised the 'poll-tax payers' as an inferior, uncultured group.<sup>664</sup> This form of legislation hardly seems congruent with the image of Caracalla enforcing a harsh, punitive action across the entirety of Alexandria after engaging in a bloody conflict to pacify the city.<sup>665</sup>

In addition to the relatively affable tone regarding Alexandria found in *P. Giss.* 40 III, the dating of this edict might also weaken its connection to the traditional massacre narrative. In the course of referring to Egyptians coming to Alexandria to undertake sacrifices, Caracalla refers to the city with the adverb ἐνθάδε, suggesting that the original edict was issued during the period of the emperor's visit to Alexandria.<sup>666</sup> This means that, if it was released in the aftermath of the violence preceding Caracalla's departure from the city, it would need to have been written in considerable haste. Whilst this factor in itself might not prompt any significant revision

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<sup>662</sup> Harker (2000) 154; Oliver (1989) 509; Dio 78.23.2-3.

<sup>663</sup> *P. Giss.* 40, III, ll.24-25: τὴν πόλιν τὴν Ἀλεξανδρέων τὴν λαμπροτάτην.

<sup>664</sup> The disdain felt for the ethnic Egyptians by the Alexandrians is clear in the comparison between the former and the Jews in the course of the *Acta Isidori*, see *CPJ* II. 156c, ii. 9, in which Isidorus asks 'are they not on a level with those who pay the poll-tax?' (οὐκ εἰσι ἴσοι τοῖς φόρον τελούσι;). Also see Tcherikover and Fuks (1960) 78-80; Lukaszewicz (1990b) 131.

<sup>665</sup> Even the way in which the unrest is referred to serves to weaken the connection with the violence prompting Caracalla's exit of the city. The term ταρασσουσι in the twenty-first line infers more of a disturbance than a large scale uprising, see Lukaszewicz (1990b) 131.

<sup>666</sup> *P. Giss.* 40, III, l. 26. Also see Lukaszewicz (1990b) 129-30.

of the basic chronology, further information can be gleaned from the papyrus which serves to distance his expulsion order from the climactic violence described in the ancient sources.

During the course of this text, Caracalla makes reference to the celebration of the Serapeia. The emperor states: ‘I understand that on the day of the Serapeia and on some other festivals, or even some other days, Egyptians are accustomed to bring bulls and other animals to sacrifice. They are not to be prohibited from doing this.’<sup>667</sup> It has already been noted, however, that Caracalla is thought to have been present at the celebration of the Serapeia on 25<sup>th</sup> April 216.<sup>668</sup> With this in mind, the very general terms employed by Caracalla and the use of *μανθάνω* would be an irregular way for the emperor to refer to the festival. By the time of his departure, Caracalla would already have attended the celebration in person and likely observed the Egyptian custom for himself. The tone of the edict, on the other hand, suggests that he was unfamiliar with the local practice. Rather than an oddly worded edict, hastily written at the end of April 216, it makes more sense to conclude that the expulsion order must have been issued earlier. If the reference to disruption made in the twentieth line of the text was linked to a specific outbreak of disorder among the Alexandrian populace, then it is far more likely that it made reference to the earlier unrest observed shortly after Caracalla’s arrival in the city: the violence that was to result in the removal of Heraclitus as the prefect.

The question of authorship must now be addressed. In the past, it has been argued that the tone of the source appears to betray a strong sense of personal emotion, concluding that the observations on how ethnic Egyptians could be identified were the result of a personal reflection on the part of Caracalla.<sup>669</sup> This argument was developed by Williams, who included the expulsion order in the course of his stylistic analysis of

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<sup>667</sup> *P. Giss.* 40, III, ll. 20-22: Σαραπείσις καὶ τισὶν ἑορτασίμοις ἡμέραις Αἰγυπτίους μανθάνω. Διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ εἰσι κωλυτέοι.

<sup>668</sup> Rodriguez (2012) 233-34.

<sup>669</sup> Oliver (1989) 510. Williams (1979: 81-86) also agreed that the distinction between the Alexandrian populace and the ethnic Egyptians was probably the result of a personal inspection of the city by the emperor.

Caracallan edicts and epistles.<sup>670</sup> He concluded that, owing to a number of different stylistic features common with other documents produced under the emperor, it was extremely likely that the author of the expulsion order was Caracalla himself, leaving a ‘clear mark of his own personality’ on the text.<sup>671</sup>

The stylistic elements that Williams alluded to in reference to the expulsion order are what he classes as ‘the use of “all”, the elaborate explanation, the repetitive and clumsy structure, and the evidence of autopsy and personal initiative’.<sup>672</sup> It is correct that the expulsion order appears to bear Caracalla’s penchant for stressing the universal scale of his initiatives. The opening line of the order contains a proclamation that every Egyptian in Alexandria was to be removed.<sup>673</sup> This is in keeping with other Caracallan documents, the recall of the exiles and the *constitutio* in particular, in which the universality of the edict is a crucial factor. The expulsion order is unusual, however, in that after the initial claim of universality, the author proceeds by specifying a number of groups and trades to be exempted from the process. This has prompted Williams to suggest that the emperor was forming the order before considering any comprehensive categories for exemption; he claims that the numerous small exemptions tempering the universal grandiosity of the edict, and the attempt to outline the principles behind the expulsion in the first place, are characterised by ‘syntactical incoherence’ and give the impression that Caracalla was ‘making it up as he went along’.<sup>674</sup>

While Williams is correct to point out that the expulsion order bears certain stylistic similarities to other imperial edicts released during the reign of Caracalla, his conclusions about this document are significantly flawed. To accept that the emperor constructed this document on an impulse and formally introduced it in a similar fashion assumes both that the air of spontaneity that is suggested in Caracallan documents is genuine rather than a construct designed to emphasise the majesty of his principate and, more importantly, that Caracalla wrote this edict alone and released it without

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<sup>670</sup> Williams (1979) 67-89, particularly pgs. 81-86.

<sup>671</sup> Williams (1979) 89.

<sup>672</sup> Williams (1979) 86.

<sup>673</sup> *P. Giss.* 40, III, 1.17: Αἰγύπτιοι πάντες.

<sup>674</sup> Williams (1979) 85.

consultation from any of his jurists and civil servants.<sup>675</sup> This also contrasts with the more measured tone often present in Caracallan edicts such as the *Tabula Banasitana* as well as the *constitutio Antoniniana* itself.<sup>676</sup>

Instead of concluding that the extant version of the expulsion order is written completely in the hand of the emperor, I would argue that, whilst Caracalla did release an order removing individuals from Alexandria, the edict preserved on the *Papyrus Gissensis* is the result of later adaptation and elaboration by the hand of a copyist.<sup>677</sup> The way in which the ethnic Egyptians are referred to in the course of the expulsion order is problematic owing to its contradictory nature. The most damning assessment of the Egyptians can be found at the end of the document when the author claims how easily these individuals can be identified among the masses in Alexandria:

Ἐπιγεινώσκεσθαι γὰρ εἰς τοὺς λινούφους οἱ ἀληθινοὶ Αἰγύπτιοι δύνανται εὐμαρῶς φωνὴν ἄλλων αὐτοὶ ἔχειν ὄψεις τε καὶ σχῆμα. Ἔτι τε καὶ ζωῆ δεικνύει ἐναντία ἤθη ἀπὸ ἀναστροφῆς πολιτικῆς εἶναι ἀγροίκους Αἰγυπτίους.

The true Egyptians can be easily recognised among the linen weavers by their accent, or by their foreign appearance and mode of dress. Furthermore, by their uncivilised manners, the way in which they live reveals them to be Egyptian peasants.<sup>678</sup>

What is immediately noticeable is that the tone of this order is one of condemnation and disdain, characterising rural Egyptian appearance and culture as inferior and uncivilised. This is an unusual level of contempt for the population of the *chora* for an official document. Whilst the Roman authorities did periodically expel numerous people from Alexandria, they made no distinction between individuals of either Egyptian or Hellenistic descent, and often took steps to allow outsiders and

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<sup>675</sup> This contradicts other evidence which suggests that the Severan period in general formed a high-point for court intellectuals and jurists in particular, making it likely that the influence of these men would affect the way documents such as this and even the *constitutio Antoniniana* itself were worded, see Buraselis (2007) 58-59.

<sup>676</sup> The value of the *Tabula Banasitana* in preserving the economic stability of Mauretania Tingitana was discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>677</sup> I follow the arguments outlined by Harker in this matter, see n. 682.

<sup>678</sup> *P. Giss.* 40, III, ll. 27-30.

foreigners to remain in the city, providing they could prove a legitimate reason for the stay.<sup>679</sup>

Far from the very official tone of the expulsion orders released by the prefects, the Caracallan edict preserved on the *Papyrus Gissensis* appears to have more in common with the sensationalist literature of the *Acta Alexandrinorum* than documents of the provincial administration.<sup>680</sup> It has also been noted that the author's view of the Egyptians in this order is a contradictory one. While the edict ends with a highly condemnatory tone, earlier in the document the author conceded that some among the Egyptians provided services of considerable importance to Alexandria and ought to be allowed to stay, along with any who frequent the city for religious rites.<sup>681</sup>

The author is eager to draw a clear distinction between those Egyptians that he considers beneficial to the Alexandria, and a mass of useless rural peasants who, he claims, add nothing to the life of the city, a factor that has led Harker to suggest that the extant order is the result of a later copyist rather than the original order of Caracalla.<sup>682</sup> If the unusual tone was not sufficient evidence for the influence of a later copyist on the Caracallan original, Harker has shown that the language and terminology at the beginning and the end of the edict bears an uncanny similarity, an element which could suggest that the edict has been adapted and that a second author was mimicking the style of the original.<sup>683</sup>

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<sup>679</sup> *Sel. Pap.* II 220 (= *P. Lond.* III 904), for example, is such an order from AD 104 released by the prefect Vibius Maximus. It ordered people to return to their own *nomes* and residences for a census, but finished by offering provision to those who wished to stay in Alexandria, provided they could explain why. This order, and those like it, appear to have been more concerned with issues relating to the census and the *fiscus* than the individuals' ethnic background. This distinction will be considered further, later in this chapter.

<sup>680</sup> Harker (2008) 57-58.

<sup>681</sup> Buraselis (1995: 170) has argued that there may have been multiple groups described as restless in the text, now lost.

<sup>682</sup> Harker (2008: 58) has argued that the tone of the expulsion order suggests that the author of this version was a socially aspiring Egyptian, eager to display their own immersion in Hellenic culture. Harker has argued that displaying access to elements of Hellenic culture such as the *acta* would have been an important factor in garnering local prestige and influence for such socially aspiring individuals of the *chora*, for more on this, see Harker (2008) 112-19.

<sup>683</sup> Harker (2008) 58. The edict begins by stating that all Egyptians were ordered to leave Alexandria, in particular peasants who had fled to Alexandria from other areas who could be easily recognised: εὐμαρῶς εὐρισκεσθαι δύνανται. This corresponds closely with the notion that Egyptian peasants could be identified easily owing to their dress and mannerisms: Ἐπιγινώσκεσθαι ... δύνανται εὐμαρῶς.

The potential influence of a second writer on the text of this order is of fundamental importance. Rather than an unusual outburst in which Caracalla was uncharacteristically snobbish regarding one group of his provincial subjects, from examination of the edict alone it is only possible to conclude that during the course of his visit to Alexandria, most likely after the first outbreak of civil unrest late in AD 215, the emperor released an order expelling large numbers of people from the city.<sup>684</sup> It is highly unlikely that Caracalla was the figure responsible for the precise content of the extant text, though, since the influence of a later copyist, keen to identify themselves as an upwardly mobile and useful member of Romano-Egyptian society, seems plausible. With Caracalla distanced from the more peculiar elements of the expulsion order, it is now possible to reinterpret why the emperor introduced such a directive. Rather than an attempt to rid Alexandria of Egyptians based solely on snobbery and prejudice regarding ethnicity, it is possible that the rationale behind this command was far more mundane, practical and, importantly, affected to some extent by the emperor attempting to enforce the terms of his recent *constitutio*.

### **A Connection between the Expulsion and the *constitutio Antoniniana***

The revision of the order's position within the wider chronology of Caracalla's imperial visit effectively destroys any possibility that it should be associated with the final sanctions imposed upon the city before the emperor's departure as described by Dio.<sup>685</sup> The question of why Caracalla ordered this expulsion at all, however, has still not been fully addressed. As noted above, the influence of a secondary writer upon the extant text means that we cannot assume that the emperor necessarily shared the sentiments publicised in the source. Despite Garnsey's idea that Caracalla was an impetuous ruler who passed legislation on a whim, it is impossible to accept that he ordered such a clearance of Alexandria without some rational prompt.<sup>686</sup> Even if the peculiarities of the extant text are accounted for, it is possible that Caracalla genuinely considered the rural inhabitants of Alexandria to be an overly numerous and disruptive

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<sup>684</sup> It should be noted that it does not necessarily need to have been released in the direct aftermath of the first outbreak of violence in the city. The order has been dated, for example, to March 216 in order to link it to an order by the prefect Valerius Datus, discussed below. See Lukaszewicz (1990b) 129-32.

<sup>685</sup> Dio 78.23.2-3.

<sup>686</sup> For the notion of Caracallan impetuosity, see Garnsey (2004) 137.

population group. This explanation would fit with the account of Herodian in which the emperor was depicted as being alarmed at observing the number of non-Alexandrians living within the city.<sup>687</sup> It should be noted, though, that the source tradition is questionable here, since Herodian is guilty of clumsily compressing this sentiment with the emperor's intention to levy a phalangite regiment from the city prior to his departure.<sup>688</sup>

If it is unlikely that Caracalla expelled large numbers of rural peasants from the city, on the basis of their ethnicity, it is necessary to divest the order of the inflammatory elements added by the Egyptian copyist, and to outline the fundamental aspects of the edict. In essence, the emperor appears to have ordered that any inhabitants of Alexandria who were not registered to the city were to leave and return to their homes. The directive itself was not absolute, with Caracalla exempting a number of occupations from the process in addition to making provisions for any who desired to enter the city for certain, primarily religious, reasons. Were it not for the tone of snobbery that permeates the text, and the erroneous connection of the edict with Caracalla's final, severe punishment of the city in the aftermath of the climactic violence, this order might not be seen as anything more than a routine piece of legislation in which the emperor attempted to control the populace of Alexandria and more general population movement.

Caracalla was not the only individual to eject inhabitants of the *chora* from Alexandria and direct them back to their original *nomes*. The expulsion of early 216 did not happen in a vacuum, and this attempt by the Roman authorities to control the population of Alexandria has clear precedent throughout the imperial period. If divested of the questionable ethnic slur, the directive ordered by Caracalla can be seen to bear considerable similarities to other evictions executed by the prefects of Egypt earlier in the Principate. Rather than punitive, these expulsion orders carried out under previous reigns were designed to address quantifiably practical concerns such as that of the census or matters surrounding tax collection. One example of this process which

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<sup>687</sup> Hdn 4.9.4.

<sup>688</sup> See pgs. 125-26.

melds nearly perfectly with Caracalla's expulsion directive can be found in the edict of the prefect Vibius Maximus, released in AD 104, in which the inhabitants of Egypt were ordered to return to their homes both to be registered for the customary census but also, interestingly, to attend to any agricultural work that was outstanding:

τῆς κατ' οἰκίαν ἀπογραφῆς ἐνεστῶ[σης] ἀναγκαῖόν [ἐστὶν πᾶσιν τοῖς καθ' ἡ[ντινα] δῆποτε αἰτ[ίαν ἀποδημοῦσιν ἀπὸ τῶν] νομῶν προσα[γγέλλε]σθαι ἐπα[νελ]θεῖν εἰς τὰ ἐαυ[τῶν ἐ]φέστια ἴν[α] καὶ τὴν συνήθη [οἰ]κονομίαν τῆ[ς ἀπο]γραφῆς πληρώσωσιν καὶ τῇ προσ[ηκού]σῃ αὐτοῖς γεωργίαι προσκατερήσω[σιν].

Since the census has commenced, it is necessary that all those who are absent from their *nomes* are summoned to return to their homes so that they can perform the business of registration and attend to the farming which concerns them.<sup>689</sup>

By wording the edict in this manner, it seems clear that Maximus had two clear goals: firstly to move the rural population quickly, in order to complete the census efficiently, and secondly to have the inhabitants of the *chora* apply themselves to farming and agricultural production. Far from being grounded in a question of ethnicity, the edict is arguably linked more with the process of *anachoresis*, the prefect keen to address both the downturn in agricultural production and payment of taxes that the large-scale flight of rural peasants to cities like Alexandria must have prompted.<sup>690</sup> Similar to Caracalla's later expulsion order, Maximus was explicit that the eviction was not a complete one, acknowledging that certain professions were important to the effective running of the city. As a consequence, the prefect offered any who had a legitimate reason to remain in the city the chance to register themselves:

εἰδὼς μέντοι ὅτι ἐνίων τῶν [ἀπὸ] τῆς χώρας ἢ πόλις ἡμῶν ἔχει χρε[ίαν] βούλομ[αι] πάντα[ς τ]οὺς εὐ[λ]ογον δο[κοῦν]τα[ς] ἔχειν τοῦ ἐνθάδε ἐπιμένειν [αἰ]τίαν ἀπογράφεσ[θ]αι παρὰ Βουλ. . . [ . . . ]

As I know that our city requires some of the people from the *chora*, I wish any who believes that they have a satisfactory reason for remaining here to register themselves before...<sup>691</sup>

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<sup>689</sup> *P. Lond.* III 904, ll. 20-27.

<sup>690</sup> For more on the connection between the census and the exaction of the *laographia*, see pg. 147.

<sup>691</sup> *P. Lond.* III 904, ll. 28-32.

In terms of the basic structure, then, the similarity between the Caracallan expulsion and the earlier directive of Vibius Maximus is striking.<sup>692</sup> Both authors sought to remove the vast majority of outsiders from Alexandria, though they were careful to recognise that some elements among the rural peasantry were important to the daily life of the city, Caracalla outlining specific exemptions, while Maximus offered a chance of securing an immunity from the eviction to any who applied with a legitimate reason.

Rather than Caracalla becoming anxious about Alexandria's population level on the grounds of race and ethnicity, it is far more likely that the emperor was concerned regarding the inevitable consequences that a sizeable outside population in Alexandria had on the rest of the province at large, both in terms of farming output and taxation. The concern of the early Severan emperors to address the issue of *anachoresis* and the negative fiscal conditions which resulted from it was already visible from the legislation introduced in the course of the Severan *apokrimata* of 200-201, in which the *Augusti* cancelled arrears and offered amnesties for tax fugitives to return to their places of registration.<sup>693</sup> I would argue that this policy was also deliberately moderate in order to avert any possible unrest arising from the return of population groups to their *nomes*.

In the aftermath of the *constitutio Antoniniana*, Caracalla must have been eager to ensure that the fiscal terms of his edict were being adhered to, particularly in a province as important to the empire as Egypt. This is not to assume that the sole purpose of Caracalla's visit to Egypt in 215-16 was to inspect how far his *constitutio* was being adhered to and enforce its terms but, given the significant fiscal element underlying the edict, it seems an uncontroversial conclusion that the emperor would have been unimpressed at the number of rural peasants evading taxes in the cosmopolitan hub of Alexandria.

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<sup>692</sup> Lukaszewicz (1990b) 131.

<sup>693</sup> See above, pgs. 160-61.

In support of the hypothesis that Caracalla's order was originally far more routine in nature than is often assumed, it is possible to link the emperor's eviction notice to a document released by the serving prefect, Valerius Datus, in the opening months of AD 216. In his attempt to establish a date for Caracalla's expulsion order of March 216, Lukaszewicz has sought to connect the decree with an edict introduced by Datus, ordering that individuals should return to their respective *idia*.<sup>694</sup> Owing to the apparently short time lapse between the orders of the emperor and the prefect, the edict released by Datus warrants further discussion.

Unfortunately, the original text of Datus' order is now lost. It is possible to identify that the prefect introduced such an order, though, owing to the survival of papyri which show people responding to the call to return to one's *idia*. One potential example of this papyrological reaction can be observed in the texts of *BGU* I 321 and 322, two papyri which record complaints regarding a case of theft from an individual named Aurelius Pakysis, a priest at Soknopaiou Nesos. The details of the theft of wheat are irrelevant, but Lukaszewicz has identified that this case might carry some significance owing to the complainant's account of his whereabouts.<sup>695</sup>

In the ninth and tenth line of *BGU* I 321, the priest claimed that the robbery was only very recently discovered by his relatives while he was away from his home.<sup>696</sup> The reason Pakysis gave for his absence was that he had been in Alexandria.<sup>697</sup> The date of the petitions recorded in *BGU* I 321 and 322 is 7<sup>th</sup> April 216. The close proximity between the date of these documents and the approximate dating of Datus' edict means that it is tempting to conclude that the priest was responding to an order to return home from Alexandria.<sup>698</sup> No mention of Datus' edict is made in the course of the extant texts, however, and so it might be the case, as Lukaszewicz himself concedes, that the priest was only temporarily in Alexandria to

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<sup>694</sup> Lukaszewicz (1990b) 129-32.

<sup>695</sup> Lukaszewicz (1990b) 132.

<sup>696</sup> *BGU* I 321, l. 9. The term employed is *πρόην*, i.e. 'lately'. Also see Lukaszewicz (1990b) 132; (1983) 117.

<sup>697</sup> *BGU* I 321, l. 10: *διὰ τὸ ἐμὲ ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ εἶναι*.

<sup>698</sup> Lukaszewicz (1990b) 132.

witness Caracalla's visit or to take part in the religious rites carried out during the course of the emperor's stay.<sup>699</sup>

The most compelling evidence for an order being released by Datus can be found in another of the Berlin papyri, *BGU I 159* (= *W. Chr.* 408). Dated to *11 Pauni* in the twenty-fourth year of Antoninus Caracalla, c. 5<sup>th</sup> June 216, this papyrus contains the text of a complaint and accusation of extortion directed at an *exegete* of an unknown *polis* named Aurelius Soterichus and his father; the complainant is recorded as being called Aurelius Pakysis.<sup>700</sup> Placing the details of the accusation to one side, the context of this petition is of the most interest. In the course of the text, Pakysis claimed that he had come back to his hometown following an order by Valerius Datus for people to return to their *idia*:

Οὐαλερίου Δάτου κελεύσ[αν]το[ς] ἅπαντας τοὺς ἐπὶ ξένης διατρείβοντας εἰς τὰς ἰδίας κατεισέρχεσθαι.

Since Valerius Datus had ordered that everyone who was wasting their time in foreign parts should return to their *idia*.<sup>701</sup>

The context given by Pakysis for his return home and his subsequent problems with the local *exegete* is explicit evidence that in the early months of 216, Valerius Datus issued a piece of legislation that commanded that everyone should return to their place of registration. It is further important to note that although the prefect's order might have been released in the course of a census year (215-16), this reintegration demand is quite distinct from the demands of the census, similar to the way in which the census and reintegration demands are presented as separate concerns in the course of the earlier edict issued by Vibius Maximus at the opening of the second century.<sup>702</sup>

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<sup>699</sup> Lukaszewicz (1990b) 132, also see Harker (2008) 57; (2000) 155.

<sup>700</sup> Not to be confused with the priest by the same name recorded in *BGU I 321* and *322*.

<sup>701</sup> *BGU I 159*, ll. 6-7.

<sup>702</sup> Llewelyn (1992: 117-18) has noted that although the census and reintegration demands were presented in the same document in the case of Vibius Maximus (*P. Lond.* III 904), this is not indicative of a habitual connection between the two types of *keleusis*. In support of this distinction, Llewelyn has observed that the edict released by Datus recorded in *BGU I 159* would likely have been released in around the tenth month of the census year, hardly making for a smooth connection between that and any order connected to the census.

How, then, does the edict of Datus link to the expulsion ordered by Caracalla preserved on the Giessen papyrus? If the papyrological evidence is taken into account, it is possible to conclude that Caracalla had a general statement drafted in which he criticised the high number of individuals residing in Alexandria when they were registered to other *nomes*. The disruption alluded to in the course of this text can be confidently associated with the civil unrest witnessed by the emperor in the closing weeks of 215. The precise nature of the original Caracallan text is unfortunately lost now, however, owing to the obvious influence of a later copyist and the apparently cursory manner in which the order is recorded on the *Papyrus Gissensis*.<sup>703</sup>

It is unfortunately impossible to conclude without any doubt whether the order of Caracalla was intended to form an independent *mandatum* or rather one element in a set of instructions to the new prefect which was later published or otherwise recorded. I would argue, however, the close temporal link between the two documents makes it likely that there would have been some connection between two such apparently similar orders and that the order of the prefect might form the result of a degree of prompting on the part of the emperor. If the documents are removed from the traditional demands of the census, then their focus appears to be a uniformly economic one, concerned with agricultural production and the payment of tax as in the case of the order released by Vibius Maximus in 104. This element would further explain the interest which Caracalla took in the matter during the course of his visit to Alexandria.

I have argued that the emperor was concerned with raising a significant level of capital for the imperial treasuries as swiftly as possible, and indeed this was one of the fundamental aspects underlying the promulgation of the *constitutio Antoniniana*. While there is no suggestion that the sole reason of Caracalla's visit to Alexandria was to ensure that the terms of his great edict were being adhered to, it is likely that the earlier promulgation of the edict had a significant bearing on the emperor and the way in which he responded to the disruption in the city. Upon arriving in Alexandria,

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<sup>703</sup> The text of the order simply begins with the adverb ἄλλο, inferring that it is an excerpt from a larger text, or that it omits the customary salutation lines from an epistle.

witnessing civil unrest and disruption and observing large numbers of individuals residing in the city whilst evading taxation in their own *nomes*, Caracalla could hardly have been convinced that the demands of the *fiscus* were being met. As a result, it is a logical conclusion that, in the aftermath of executing one prefect and installing another, the emperor was swift to instruct his subordinate to release a general reintegration order. Far from an unusual initiative, this a piece of legislation that has demonstrable precedent throughout the imperial period, when prefects of the province sought to control the movement of the populace and ensure compliance with tax collection.

### **The *constitutio Antoniniana* and Violence in Egypt, AD 216**

In summary, the traditionally accepted image of Caracalla's visit to Alexandria and the violence which was to characterise it are based upon both a hostile and problematic tradition, itself probably coloured to some extent by the negative local sources. The fundamental chronology of the events of 215-16 has been severely foreshortened, compressing a complex social situation and a gradual escalation in tensions into a clichéd and awkward urban legend centred on the alleged rage that Caracalla could not control in the face of slights and personal insults. If the accounts of the ancient authors are critically re-examined and analysed with other bodies of evidence, I would argue that it is possible to identify two distinct phases to the emperor's visit, inferring that Caracalla's actions against the Alexandrian populace, although extremely violent in the end, were primarily reactive and show little evidence of malice or pre-meditation. In the aftermath of disruption shortly after the emperor's arrival, instead of ordering a massacre, Caracalla is observed punishing those whom he held responsible for a slow and inefficient suppression of the unrest, namely the prefect Heraclitus and, potentially, a number of Alexandrian notables. There appears to have followed a time of relative peace and stability before something occurred at the end of April 216.

The precise nature of the catalyst remains a mystery but, regardless of the exact prompt, violence seems to have spread rapidly across Alexandria. The scale of the unrest was sufficient to prompt the emperor to order troops into the city. Contrary to the authors' eagerness to depict this episode as a massacre in which Roman legionaries

dug grave ditches pre-emptively, epigraphic evidence suggests that the second outbreak of unrest across the city was far more violent and involved close quarter fighting through the city streets. This point is of importance not only with regards to how we view Caracalla during this episode, but also the Alexandrians themselves. To accept the massacre narrative is to deny the local population any sense of agency in their actions during the events in question. The traditional narrative casts them as passive participants in the violence, helplessly defenceless against Caracallan aggression. This is an image of the Alexandrians which the ancient evidence, when read as a whole, simply does not support. From a combination of epigraphic, papyrological and literary sources, it is clear that a significant number of Alexandrians actively challenged Roman authority in the city and, furthermore, fought ferociously. Indeed, whether or not the punitive sanctions outlined by Dio were enforced following the suppression of this rioting, the violence appears to have prompted the emperor's departure from the city.

The events of Caracalla's visit to Alexandria did not happen in a vacuum. It is of crucial importance to note that the earlier promulgation of the *constitutio Antoniniana* contributed to a general atmosphere of dissatisfaction across both the elite and non-elite populations of Roman Egypt. The Alexandrian citizenry, until then the most socially prestigious group in the province, and arguably the region at large, witnessed their treasured franchise and status being eroded by the extension of Roman *civitas*, relegating them to *primi inter pares* in the region at best. While the non-elite appear to have been keen to exercise their newly acquired Roman status, adopting Roman nomenclature for example, the fiscal-economic implications of the *constitutio* cannot have been welcome. The perennial problem of *anachoresis* continued in the years after 212, and Alexandria remained an attractive haven for tax fugitives.

Tensions between the different social groups in Alexandria, paired with resentment of the imperial regime and an understandable reluctance on the part of tax evaders to return to their homes, resulted in a strained atmosphere with the potential for civil unrest. Into this atmosphere, Caracalla, perhaps not fully appreciating the severity of the situation, was keen to ensure that the demands of the *fiscus* were met

(an eagerness that is in keeping with the fiscal impetus underlying the promulgation of the *constitutio*). He did this by ordering that all inhabitants of the *chora* should leave the city and return to their places of registration. It seems unlikely that either the emperor or the new prefect Datus, who released his reintegration directive in spring 216, had any significant success in enforcing this order. Instead, the tensions within the city boiled over into violence, the assembly of men for an Alexandrian phalanx forming a potential flashpoint. In promulgating the *constitutio Antoniniana*, Caracalla was evidently attempting to legislate on an imperial scale. This approach, however, inevitably ignored the issues and problems that it might produce on a provincial and regional level. The result of this oversight in Egypt's case appears to have been the violence observed in the course of Caracalla's later visit to Alexandria.

## CONCLUSION

Caracalla took an unprecedented legal step in AD 212, by extending the rights of citizenship to all corners of his realm. In one move, the emperor altered the Roman Empire irrevocably, changing not only the mechanisms through which the majority of imperial subjects related to the state, but also the fundamental nature of Roman identity. It is no understatement that the ramifications of this single piece of legislation were immense. Yet, for all of its significance, the *constitutio Antoniniana* remains one of the most controversial documents to survive from antiquity. There is surprisingly little direct evidence for the legislation, and what does survive is characterised either by its fragmentary nature or the hostility of the source from which it derives.

There is no way that any one study could possibly address every aspect of the edict: its language, scope, legal and social implications and its rationale. This has prompted scholars to engage with the legislation in very particular ways, questioning the precise text of the Giessen papyrus, assessing potential motivating factors on an individual basis, or studying the longer term consequences of the edict in periods for which there is better evidence. All of these studies have been valuable, and have illuminated important aspects of the troublesome document, but they also present problems of their own, in turn. The difficulty with these individual approaches has been that they risk either implying an inflated sense of importance on the element in question or removing the document from its original environment. At its extreme, the *constitutio* is in danger of becoming abstract, and the connection to its own legal and cultural milieu being lost. The fundamental objective of this dissertation, then, in examining the rationale of the emperor in promulgating the Antonine Constitution, has been to return the focus to the third century AD.

This thesis has demonstrated that Caracalla's decision to extend the franchise was the result of a combination of factors motivating the emperor to legislate in 212, and that the edict consequently reflects his contemporary concerns and ambitions. I have argued that it is impossible to assess the rationale underlying the *constitutio Antoniniana* without considering the dynastic crisis that had been prompted by the murder of Geta. Caracalla's adolescence and early adult life had been defined, to a

large extent, by the fierce rivalry that he shared with his younger brother. While Dio is often a questionable source regarding the life of his *bête-noir*, his assessment that ‘anybody could see that something terrible was bound to result’ from the enmity seems all too plausible.<sup>704</sup> The shared principate between the brothers in 211 was a disaster, but Caracalla’s eventual success in eliminating Geta nevertheless left him in a delicate position.

Never before had an incumbent emperor been murdered by his colleague in office. If this were not enough to threaten Caracalla’s position, the act of fratricide also served to undermine the extensive programme of imperial propaganda engineered by his father, Septimius Severus, in which the brothers were repeatedly presented as a guarantee of imperial harmony and continuity following the bloody civil wars that had ensued from the assassinations of Commodus and Pertinax. The year 212 thus began with Caracalla facing the unenviable prospect of having to rule alone for the first time in his life, while being simultaneously compelled to consolidate and legitimise his precarious position publically. He attempted to achieve this by revolutionising the character of the Severan dynasty and offering an official version of the events that resulted in his murder of Geta. The familial imagery that had been the staple in Severus’ later political communication was discarded in favour of iconography that presented the surviving emperor as a protector of the state whose reign was divinely sanctioned. Where Geta had once served as a symbolic guarantor of concord, he now became emblematic of an evil that Caracalla was compelled to destroy and triumph over. By condemning his brother’s memory and reinventing his public image, the emperor had effectively re-written the history of the Severan dynasty and centred the regime around his persona alone.

It is within this context that the Antonine Constitution should be considered since, as I have shown, the edict can be seen to address Caracalla’s imperial anxieties in a number of ways. The opening lines of the *constitutio* make it unmistakably clear that the emperor intended the document to be viewed as an act of piety, a religious thanksgiving for the gods’ protection against a plot on his life, concocted by his

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<sup>704</sup> Dio 78.1.5.

brother. I have shown, furthermore, that this forms one facet of a wider religious programme, complemented by a staggering array of divinely inspired numismatic iconography throughout his sole reign. The act of enfranchisement itself can also be seen to carry a religious dimension, since the grant of *civitas* appears to have been partially prompted by a Caracallan desire to achieve an effective *consensus universorum*, through which the favour of the gods would be ensured in perpetuity.

Further examination of the Giessen text reveals that the emperor also attempted to engage with his wider populace in different ways. The rhetoric employed by the emperor throughout the Antonine Constitution lends credence to the theory that Caracalla fostered a connection between himself and Alexander the Great. The resulting reaction among population groups in the eastern empire, manifesting in festivals and coinage connecting the emperor to the king, suggests that he was successful in laying claim to Alexander's legacy and the imagery of military virtue that accompanied it. Evidence from the *constitutio*, however, demonstrates that the Alexander mythos formed only one facet of Caracalla's attempt to connect with his populace. While he also can be seen to depict his great edict as an extreme example of imperial *indulgentia*, this thesis has shown that the Antonine Constitution heralded an even more binding connection between the emperor and his new *cives*. I have argued that it is appropriate to view the edict as an act of patronage carried out on an unprecedented scale. It is clear that, while the expression of patronage had changed slightly from the Republic into the Principate, the same expectation of loyalty and goodwill accompanied the gift of *beneficia*. By giving nearly every free person in the empire the rights of *civitas*, Caracalla had affected them on an individual level and had forged a personal connection with them at the very moment when the legitimacy of his sole reign might have been questioned. In this context, the Antonine Constitution represents a powerful and elegant solution to the threat posed to Caracalla by dynastic instability and cool relations with the senatorial order in 212.

While this interpretation of the *constitutio Antoniniana* has shown how it functioned in the volatile political environment, following the murder of Geta, it has also been necessary to consider the only surviving contemporary account of the

legislation, which offers a very different image of its purpose. Cassius Dio's explanation of the edict, namely that it was introduced in order to reap a massive tax yield to fund the emperor's financial profligacy, has been largely dismissed by modern scholars, owing to the unmistakable hatred held by the author towards Caracalla. I have argued, however, that it is possible to identify a fiscal initiative to raise capital if the Giessen text is studied in conjunction with other extant media. Of crucial importance to this consideration is the way in which the fragmented Giessen papyrus is reconstructed. If the traditionally problematic reference to the *dediticii* being disbarred from the grant of *civitas* is rejected and replaced with an allusion to additional privileges (*additicia*) being forbidden alongside the rights of citizenship, it can be shown that Caracalla was eager to expand his available tax base.

The numismatic evidence for the period further supports this hypothesis. It confirms, for example, that the emperor engaged in a policy of currency debasement. It would be a mistake, however, to interpret this as the result of a systemic economic crisis, especially since the evidence reveals that the early Severan period represented a high watermark in terms of building activity, funded by the capital raised through war booty and expropriations acquired by Septimius Severus. Rather than economic instability, I have argued that it is more likely that Caracalla needed large quantities of physical coinage to fund his military reforms, as well as those undertaken by his father. Since both emperors introduced army pay rises within their programmes of reform, it is appropriate to interpret the fiscal element of the *constitutio Antoniniana* as a response to a short-term problem of liquidity rather than economic collapse. This is even more convincing when it is noted that a key recipient of the capital raised from this augmented tax yield was the military treasury.

In addition to improving the financial lot of the soldiery, the Antonine Constitution can be seen as a response to the perennial problem of insufficient numbers enrolling for legionary service. By turning nearly every free individual across his empire into citizens, Caracalla had overcome the primary obstacle facing emperors in filling the levies, namely that the soldiers of the legions had to be fully enfranchised upon their enlistment. If this consequence of the *constitutio* is combined with the

economic implications of the edict, it strongly suggests that the emperor was eager to reform his military apparatus radically, and that extending the franchise was considered the way to realise that ambition. This aspect of Caracalla's edict should come as little surprise, owing to his close identification with the soldiery and his imitation of Alexander the Great, not to mention his imperial ambitions against Parthia, but it is nevertheless a facet of the *constitutio* that, until recently, has been understudied.

The cumulative weight of the evidence marshalled here has revealed that the Antonine Constitution was designed to address a range of the emperor's most pressing short and medium term concerns, ensuring his political survival while allowing him to realise his military ambitions. The application of a nearly universal franchise was no easy task, though. Indeed, the implementation of Caracalla's edict was not without its problems. This is confirmed by the populace's response to Caracalla's visit to Alexandria, one of the most controversial episodes of his sole reign. The events of the emperor's time in the city have formed an important case study, in an attempt to identify some of the immediate repercussions of the *constitutio*. Owing to a contradictory and unreliable source tradition, it is little wonder that few attempts have been made to analyse the events and significance of the episode in any meaningful way. It is also clear that the tale of a Caracallan massacre offered by Dio, Herodian and the author of the *Historia Augusta* is based less on fact than on a hostile literary agenda, using the account of violence to vilify Caracalla. I have argued that, if these authors are studied in conjunction with papyrological and epigraphic evidence, a far more complex image of the unrest emerges, one in which the *constitutio Antoniniana* was a destabilising factor. For the Alexandrian elite, the enforcement of Caracalla's edict meant a dilution in their prized social prestige, eroding a status which had marked the citizenry as the foremost population of the Egyptian region. For the non-elite, whilst they could enjoy their new social and legal status, the fiscal implications of the legislation can only have exacerbated the financial problems facing inhabitants of the *chora*. The result of this increasing tension and resentment was ultimately the bloodbath referred to by the ancient writers.

The *constitutio Antoniniana* is one of the most studied documents pertaining to Roman imperial period, let alone the Severan dynasty. Much effort has been made to examine the value of the edict in the legal sphere, and to explore the legacy and long term effects of the document as the Principate progressed into the era of late antiquity. For too long, however, insufficient work has been done on the *constitutio* in its own historical milieu. And yet, it is only by studying the edict in a properly embedded context that we can ever come to a satisfactory understanding of Caracalla's decision to introduce this revolutionary legislation. I have presented a variety of often interdependent factors and pressures that either inspired the emperor or compelled him to act in AD 212. That the *constitutio* was grounded in the volatile political environment of the Severan dynasty and was designed to address the emperor's crisis of legitimacy is beyond question, but it also allowed him to pursue a longer term military-economic agenda. It is my hope that this contribution will prompt a more detailed discussion of Caracalla and his edict, removed from the stereotypical image of the 'bad emperor', but mindful of the fact that the Antonine Constitution was undeniably a product of its time.

## APPENDIX I

### *The constitutio Antoniniana: text, translation and commentary*

#### **Reconstruction of P. Giss. 40 I**

- 1) [Αὐτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ Μάρκο[ς Α]ὐρή[λιος Σεουήρος Ἀ]ντωνῖνο[ς] Ε[ὐσεβῆ]ς λέγει  
[πάντως εἰς τὸ θεῖον χρῆ] μᾶλλον ἀν[αφέρειν καὶ τὰς αἰτίας κ[α]ὶ [λογι]σμοῦς  
[δικαίως δ' ἂν κἀγὼ τοῖς θεοῖς τ[οῖς] ἀθ[αν]άτοις εὐχαριστήσα[ι]μι ὅτι τῆς τοιαύτη[ς]  
[ἐπιβουλῆς γενομένης σῶ]ν ἐμὲ συν[ε]τήρησαν τοιγαροῦν νομίζω [ο]ὔτω με –
- 5) [γαλοπρεπῶς καὶ εὐσεβ]ῶς δύ[να]σθαι τῇ μεγαλειότητι αὐτῶν το ἱκανὸν ποι –  
[εἶν, εἰ τοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ ὅσ]άκις ἐὰν ὑ[πε]ρίσθ[η]σιν εἰς τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἀν[θρ]ώπους  
[ὡς Ῥωμαίους εἰς τὰ ἱερὰ τῶν] θεῶν συνει[σ]ενέγκ[οιμι] Δίδω[μι] τοῖ[ν] ἅπα –  
[σι τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Ῥωμαϊκ]ῆν οἰκουμένην π[ολιτ]εῖαν Ῥωμ[αί]ων [μ]ένοντος  
[τοῦ δικαίου τῶν πολιτευμ]άτων χωρ[ίς] τῶν [ἀδδ]ειτικίων Ὁ[φ]εῖλει [γ]ὰρ τὸ  
10) [πλήθος οὐ μόνον τᾶλλα συνυπομέ]νειν πάντα ἀ[λλ]ὰ ἤδη κ[α]ὶ τῇ νίκη ἐνπεριεῖ –  
[λήφθαι Τοῦτο δὲ τὸ διάτ]αγμα ἐξ[α]π[λ]ώσει [τὴν] μεγαλειότητα [τοῦ] Ῥωμ[αί]ων  
[ὡν δήμου συμβαίνει γὰρ τὴν αὐτὴν] περι τοῦς [ἄλλο]υς γεγενησθ[α] ἤπερ δ[ι]α –  
[πρέπουσιν ἀνέκαθεν Ῥωμαῖοι τιμῆ κα]ταλειφ[θέντων μηδέν]ων τῶ[ν] ἐκάστης  
[χώρας ἐν οἰκουμένη ἀπολιτεύτων ἢ ἀτιμ]ήτων Ἐπο δὲ τῶν] π[ρ]οσ[ό]δων τῶν νῦν  
15) [ὑπερχουσῶν συντελούντων, ἅπερ ἐκελεύσ]θη [παρὰ Ῥωμαίων ἀπὸ τοῦ κα] ἔτους,<sup>705</sup>  
[ὡς δίκαιον ἐκ τῶν διαταγμάτων καὶ ἐπιστολ]ῶ[ν, ἃ ἐξεδόθη ὑφ' ἡμῶν τε]  
[καὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων προγόνων Προετέθη . . . . .]

1 W<sub>3</sub>K: Σ[εβαστὸς] λέγει MBSS<sub>2</sub>WHW<sub>2</sub>

2 WH: ἀν[αβαλόμενον τὰς αἰτίας] MS: ἀν[ τὰς αἰτίας] W<sub>3</sub>K: λ[ογι]σμοῦ[ς] S<sub>2</sub>WHW<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>K:  
λ[ιβ]έλλου[ς] MS

3 WH: [ζητεῖν, ὅπως ἂν τοῖς θεοῖς] MS: [τίνι ἂν τρόπῳ ἀξίως τοῖς θεοῖς] S<sub>2</sub>W<sub>2</sub>

4 S<sub>2</sub>WHW<sub>2</sub>: [συμφορᾶς γενομένης] B: [ἐπιβουλῆς ἄφνω γενομένης] W<sub>3</sub>

5 W<sub>2</sub>: [γάλλως καὶ φιλανθρώπ]ως S: [γαλομερῶς καὶ θεοπρεπ]ῶς WH: [γαλομερῶς ἂν καὶ εὐσεβ]ῶς W<sub>3</sub>

6 S: [εἰ τοσάκις μυρίους ὅσ]άκις S<sub>2</sub>WHW<sub>2</sub>: [εἰ τοὺς ξένους ὅσ]άκις M: [εἰ τοὺς βαρβάρους ὅσ]άκις B:  
[εἰ νῦν ἅπαντας, καὶ ὅσ]άκις W<sub>3</sub>

7 WH: [ἰσοτίμους εἰς τὰ ἱερὰ τῶ]ν θεῶν SW<sub>2</sub>: [εἰς τὰς θρησκείας τῶ]ν θεῶν M: [εἰς θρησκείας τῶν  
ἡμετέρων] θεῶν W<sub>3</sub>: τοῖ[ν] ἅπα- MBSS<sub>2</sub>WHW<sub>2</sub>: τοῖ[ς] σ[υνάπα]- W<sub>3</sub>K

8 H: [σιν ὅσοι ἐὰν ὧσι κατὰ τὴ]ν οἰκουμένην S<sub>2</sub>W<sub>2</sub>: [σιν ξένοις τοῖς κατὰ τὴ]ν οἰκουμένην M: [σιν  
ἐπηλύταις τοῖς κατὰ τὴ]ν οἰκουμένην B: [σιν τοῖς οὔσι κατὰ τὴ]ν οἰκουμένην S: [σιν τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν  
τὴ]ν οἰκουμένην W: [σιν ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ μου κατὰ τὴ]ν οἰκουμένην W<sub>3</sub>: [σιν κατὰ τὴ]ν οἰκουμένην K:  
π[ολιτ]εῖαν HW<sub>3</sub>K: π[ολιτ]εῖαν MBSS<sub>2</sub>WW<sub>2</sub>

9 W<sub>3</sub>K: [παντὸς γένους πολιτευμ]άτων M: [τῶ φίσκῳ τοῦ λόγου ἀπαραβ]άτως B: [πολιτικοῦ σφισιν  
ἀπαραβ]άτως S: [ξένου οὐδενὸς τῶν πολιτευμ]άτων S<sub>2</sub>: [οὐδενὸς ἐκτὸς τῶν πολιτευμ]άτων W: [δὲ  
ξένου οὐδενὸς τῶν ταγμ]άτων H: [οὐδενὸς τῶν πρὶν ἐλασσωμ]άτων W<sub>2</sub>: [ἀδδ]ειτικίων W<sub>3</sub>:  
[δδ]ειτικίων MBSS<sub>2</sub>WH: [δδ]ειτικίων W<sub>2</sub>: [ δειτικίων] K

10 WH: [οὐ μόνον συμπο]νεῖν S: [οὐ μόνον συνκινδυνε]ύειν S<sub>2</sub>

11 MSS<sub>2</sub>: [τοῦτο δὲ τὸ ἐμὸν διάτ]αγμα W: [τοῦτο δὲ τὸ ἐμαυτοῦ διάτ]αγμα H: ἐξ[α]π[λ]ώσει WH:  
ἐ[κδ]ελώσει S: ἐ[ξο]λώσει S<sub>2</sub>

12 WH: [κελεύω δὲ τὴν αὐτὴν χάρι]ν B: [ὡν δήμου διὰ τὸ τὴν αὐτὴν τάξι]ν S: [ὡν δήμου μετὰ τὸ τὴν  
ἴσην τιμῆ]ν S<sub>2</sub>

13 WH: [τὴν εὐγένειαν Ῥωμαῖοι] S<sub>2</sub>: *deest* MBSW<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>K

14 H: *deest* MBSS<sub>2</sub>WW<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>K

15 H: *deest* MBSS<sub>2</sub>WW<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>K

16 H: *deest* MBSS<sub>2</sub>WW<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>K

17 H: *deest* MBSS<sub>2</sub>WW<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>K

<sup>705</sup> The reconstruction of lines 15-17 relies heavily on the edition of Heichelheim (1941: 10-22).

Although his suggestions to fill the lacunae are undoubtedly eloquent, they are ultimately conjecture, included here in the interests of completeness.

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- K Kuhlmann, P. A. 1994: *Die Giessener Literarischen Papyri und die Caracalla-Erlasse*, Giessen.

### **Translation**

The Emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Severus Antoninus Pius decrees: It is altogether necessary to attribute the causes and reasons [of recent events] to the divine. I, personally, would rightly thank the immortal gods, since although such a conspiracy [as that of Geta] has occurred, they have watched over me and protected me. I think that I am able, both magnificently and piously, to do something fitting to the gods' majesty, if I manage to bring [all] those in the empire, who constitute my people, to the temples of the gods as Romans. I therefore give everyone in the Roman world the Roman citizenship: preserving customary law, without additional privileges. It is necessary for the masses not only to share in our burden, but also to be included in victory. This decree will spread the magnificence of the Roman people. For it now happens that the same greatness has occurred for everyone, by the honour in which the Romans have been preeminent since time immemorial, with no-one from any country in the world being left stateless or without honour. Referring to the taxes that exist at present, all are due to pay those that have been imposed upon the Romans from the beginning of their twenty-first year [of age], as it is the law, according to the edicts and rescripts issued by us and our ancestors. Displayed publically...

### **General observations and dating**

Even a cursory glance at the document reveals that *P. Giss. 40* has suffered extensive wear and damage, most notably on the left-hand side where the text of the *constitutio* is written. From comparison of the left and (largely complete) right sides of the papyrus, it can be estimated that around one third of the upper left side of the document is missing. The damage in this area is compounded by a large vertical tear in the middle of the surviving papyrus which has obliterated yet more script. The lower left-hand section of *P. Giss. 40* is in an even more damaged state. The large tear that has destroyed some of the upper left side extends further into the papyrus and has left only around thirty characters of text remaining. Smaller localised tears and holes in areas suggest that the papyrus has suffered worm-damage, while areas where the top-layer of the document is damaged (more visible on the right side of the papyrus) are

the result of damage sustained in the document's afterlife when the museum attempted to glaze it.<sup>706</sup>

The other visible form of damage on *P. Giss. 40* is in the form of dark patches spread over the surface of the papyrus, especially in the upper-right quadrant. This is indicative of water damage sustained in February 1945, when the papyrus was being held in the safe of the Dresdner Bank.<sup>707</sup> This has caused the felt back-layer, added to the artefact by the museum, to become fused to the papyrus. Considering the severely damaged nature of the Giessen papyrus, it is hardly surprising that much of the academic focus directed towards the document has concerned the necessary reconstruction of the Greek text.

Despite the severe damage to the artefact, however, the availability of high-resolution photographs of the papyrus from the *Giessener Papyri- und Ostraka-Datenbank* has facilitated a far more detailed analysis of the text than was ever possible in the past. The text of *P. Giss. 40* is presented in a legible, cursive script of Koine Greek. Meyer claimed that the text was of a 'careful, clerical' nature, while Kuhlmann has concluded that the papyrus is business-like in appearance and that the script is 'regular and aesthetic'.<sup>708</sup> The characters are clear and of a regular size, 0.3-0.4cm wide in the majority of cases, often using capitalised versions of characters and lunate sigmas (c). In the course of the text, there are larger spaces between the different sections of the documents to allow ease of legibility.<sup>709</sup> This feature permits a more confident estimate regarding the number of missing letters in the various lacunae. The script appears to be of a formal style found throughout the second and third centuries AD. It does not exhibit the elongated chancery stylisation of some official papyri of this period, particularly from the Alexandrian Chancery (*P. Berol. inv. 11532*, for example); the rather more rounded characters group this papyrus with those of a bureaucratic context, the attractive calligraphic script reminiscent of literary papyri.<sup>710</sup>

In spite of its aesthetic quality, there are minor irregularities.<sup>711</sup> There are numerous ligatures throughout the papyrus. The appearance of iota varies from a small compact line to a larger, sweeping version that impacts on the line of script below. Epsilons are written sometimes as tall, narrow characters with three short but equidistant bars, while in other places they are written with an extended central bar, joining to other letters. Omicron is presented in a very small form, often higher in the line than other letters, and the letter  $\pi$  is notable for being considerably wider than the majority of the other characters.<sup>712</sup>

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<sup>706</sup> Kuhlmann (1994) 1.

<sup>707</sup> Kuhlmann (1994) 2. I am grateful to Dr Olaf Schneider and the staff of the Universitätsbibliothek Gießen Special Collections department for their assistance in arranging a visit for me to view the papyrus and sharing their knowledge regarding the storage and recent history of the artefact. This has proven invaluable to my appreciation of the problems inherent when studying this document.

<sup>708</sup> Meyer (1910) 25; Kuhlmann (1994) 8-9.

<sup>709</sup> *P. Giss. 40*, I.7 for example. Also see Kuhlmann (1994) 216.

<sup>710</sup> Cavallo and Maehler (2008) 123.

<sup>711</sup> Kuhlmann (1994) 215.

<sup>712</sup> Kuhlmann (1994: 215-16) draws attention to these irregularities in more detail.

Some of the oddities, in particular that of the omicron being reduced in size, exhibit certain traits of the more simplistic style that was to evolve throughout the later third century and from the time of Diocletian into the ‘upright ogival majuscule’ style of writing that was common throughout late antiquity and the Byzantine era.<sup>713</sup> This apparent combination of stylistic features allows us to assign a time period for this artefact with more confidence. The style of writing, when combined with the subject matter of the text, means that a dating of the early third century AD is convincing.

### **Commentary**

Line 1: From the surviving script alone, it is relatively clear that this line is a formulaic list of imperial titles introducing the emperor making the decree. This edition has opted to restore the penultimate word in the line as Εὐσεβής rather than Σεβαστός. The damage to the papyrus around the initial letter of the word makes it difficult to decipher the character beyond all doubt. The shape does bear a close similarity to the larger scale lunate sigmas found throughout the text. Magnification of the high-resolution image of the papyrus, however, appears to reveal a trace of ink concurrent with the middle bar of a capitalised epsilon.<sup>714</sup>

Line 2: The beginning of this line has prompted a variety of different wordings, although the sentiment remains roughly the same. The attribution of certain events to divine powers by Caracalla is repeated from Stroux onwards. This edition supports the version offered by Wilhelm and later Heichelheim, a good compromise between the earlier version of Stroux and the later one of Weissert. Owing to the visibility of – σμούς at the end of the line, it is palaeographically impossible to accept the earlier versions of Meyer, Bickermann and Schönbauer. The suggestion of λογισμούς by Stroux is far more acceptable. This conjecture was supported by Schubart in addition to Wilhelm and Heichelheim, becoming the traditionally accepted reconstruction.<sup>715</sup> In this reconstruction, αἰτίας κ[α]ὶ [λογι]σμούς translates as the reasons and causes of recent events to which Caracalla was referring, thus making any attempt to restore λιβέλλους unwarranted.

Line 3: Similar to the second line, there is an underlying sentiment that is brought out in all of the reconstructions. The feeling of gratitude expressed by Caracalla is shown by the nearly complete survival of εὐχαριστήσαιμι (‘I would thank’). Owing to the generally literary feel of the text, the slightly more eloquent version offered by Wilhelm and Heichelheim is, again, perhaps the closest to the spirit of the original. The genitive τῆς τοιαύτη[ς] is part of a genitive absolute construction, which refers to an unspecified incident that had taken place in the recent past. This event is most probably a conspiracy (ἐπιβουλῆς γενομένης), mentioned in the following line.

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<sup>713</sup> Cavallo & Maehler (2008) 131-2.

<sup>714</sup> A search of the PHI Greek Inscription Database reveals that Εὐσεβής (= Pius) was a title used in relation to Caracalla, usually positioned before Σεβαστός whenever the two titles were used together: see *Apollonia Salbake* 4 (= Robert, *La Carie* II. no.149), *Magnesia* 297 (= *CIL* III 13689) and *Stratonikeia* 91 (= *IStratonikeia* 811) for three such uses of the title. Also see Bureth (1964) 102-4. Kuhlmann (1994: 222-3) has suggested that this usage of the title may explain why Caracallan documents are often confused with those of Antoninus Pius. This confusion can be found even in late antiquity, when the edict was erroneously attributed to Antoninus Pius in Justinian’s *Novellae* (78.5) and to Marcus Aurelius by Aurelius Victor (*Caes.* 16.12).

<sup>715</sup> Schubart, (1940) 31-38.

Line 4: Of all the editions cited above, Meyer is the only one not to stress the feeling of a struggle or misfortune that Caracalla has been saved from. This edition's text is based upon the versions offered by Schönbauer and Wilhelm, beginning with ἐπιβουλῆς. The alternative version offered by Heichelheim in which the upsilon is omitted is not incorrect, since both essentially infer an attempt made against Caracalla's life, but ἐπιβουλή conveys a more secretive and conspiratorial feeling that is better in keeping with Caracalla's reputed statements in the aftermath of Geta's murder. This version is closer to a passage in Dio where the author described Caracalla addressing the troops in an attempt to persuade them that he was, in fact, the victim of an attempted coup d'état.<sup>716</sup> While we must be careful not to allow Dio's text to influence our reconstruction excessively, it is tempting to imagine that he would have seen the original edict and allowed it to colour the language used in his later account of events.

Line 5: In his commentary, Oliver concluded that it was not possible to confidently discern the two adverbs employed on the papyrus to describe the emperor's great act of gratitude to the gods for saving him.<sup>717</sup> While this edition concurs with Weissert's use of the adverb εὐσεβῶς in the second position, I have opted to agree with Meyer and Stroux that the adverb μεγαλοπρεπῶς is more appropriate for the word at the beginning of the line. Both μεγαλομερής and μεγαλοπρεπής have been used to mean 'magnificence' but the latter appears to carry an added sense of an act befitting a great man, an added inference that may be attached to Caracalla's position as emperor.<sup>718</sup>

Line 6: This edition has opted not to accept the version preferred by Stroux, Wilhelm, Heichelheim and Weissert, since their reconstructions leave a vague impression of the people that the emperor intended to bring to the temples of the gods as Roman citizens (see line seven, below).<sup>719</sup> The version by Schönbauer, however, maintains the idea of the vast scale of Caracalla's plans while at the same time providing a more precise notion of their intended extent. Oliver has noted that the phrase ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ appearing in the line was again similarly used by Dio when describing the scale of the *constitutio*.<sup>720</sup>

Line 7: All of the reconstructions of this line bear connotations of masses being brought together in religious devotion, further describing Caracalla's debt of gratitude outlined in lines five and six. This edition favours the more pointed reconstruction of Wilhelm and Heichelheim, with its emphasis on the importance of bringing all those under the emperor's authority to the temples as Romans rather than merely assorted subject peoples.<sup>721</sup>

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<sup>716</sup> Dio (77.3.1) employs the middle voice perfect participle of ἐπιβουλεύω: ὁ δ' Ἀντωνῖνος καίπερ ἐσπέρας οὔσης τὰ στρατόπεδα κατέλαβε, διὰ πάσης τῆς ὁδοῦ κεκραγῶς ὡς ἐπιβεβουλευμένος καὶ κινδυνεύων (emphasis added).

<sup>717</sup> Oliver (1989) 503.

<sup>718</sup> For the adverbial use of μεγαλοπρεπής, see: Hdt. 6.128; Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.17.

<sup>719</sup> It is true that one might expect the decree to avoid specifics, owing to the intended impression of grandeur that surrounded it, but this reconstruction is still, perhaps, a little overly complicated.

<sup>720</sup> Dio 78.9.5; Oliver (1989) 503.

<sup>721</sup> This reconstruction fits well with Ando's claim that Caracalla sought *consensus* in religious worship. For more on the matter of *consensus*, see Chapter Three.

There is a minor disagreement regarding the nature of the final two words of the line, where Caracalla declares that the gift (that he has yet to disclose) will be given to all under his power. The traditionally accepted version only acknowledges one letter space in the lacuna near the end of the line, leaving a reconstruction τοί[ν]υν ἄπα | σιν. This has been challenged by both Wolff and Kuhlmann who have claimed that there is space for two letters in the lacuna, offering the alternative reconstruction τοί[ς σ]υνάπα | σιν. The space does appear to be large enough to fit two lunate sigmas, but it is also possible that the scribe simply left a slightly larger separation between the two words for ease of legibility.

This edition has therefore opted for the more traditional restoration of τοίνυν. The appearance of an inferential particle is the better semantic choice since it refers back to the events that prompted Caracalla's edict rather than leaving the great gift of citizenship entirely separate from its context. The causative link that τοίνυν creates between the two sentences at this juncture makes it the more naturally acceptable choice.

Line 8: It is in this line that the grant of Roman citizenship is outlined. The reconstruction of the lacuna in the middle of the extant script as π[ολιτ]είαν is nearly universally accepted in the different reconstructions of this line.<sup>722</sup> This is of crucial importance, as acceptance of this phrase equates to an agreement that this text is a record of the universal citizenship decree. This edition concurs with the restoration of Heichelheim who is consistent in his emphasis of the *Romanitas* of the grant.

It should be noted that in maintaining the potential *Romanitas* of the edict through the wording τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν οἰκουμένην, this text echoes the Latin description of the decree outlined by Ulpian, who may be safely assumed to have been familiar with the original.<sup>723</sup> The jurist was explicit that the edict affected those *in orbe Romano qui sunt*.<sup>724</sup> The reconstruction of the participle μένοντος at the end of the line is also universally accepted but will be discussed below in connection with line nine.

Line 9: The text of line nine outlines the nature and scale of Caracalla's mass enfranchisement. The majority of the controversy regarding this section of *P. Giss. 40* regards the prepositional phrase (χωρίς + genitive) contained at the end of the line, a small lacuna obscuring the pivotal word, currently reading only as [. . .]ειτικίων. In his original reconstruction of the text, Meyer concluded that this word ought to be restored as δεδιτικίων.<sup>725</sup> This is a Hellenised version of the Latin *dediticii*, a term used by Gaius to describe population groups subjugated by Rome via an official act of surrender (*deditio*).<sup>726</sup> Whilst the Greek spelling has been questioned, with δηδειτικίων

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<sup>722</sup> Oliver (1989) 504. Wolff has read the first letter of this word as a *mu*, consequently producing a different restoration. This would fit with his general thesis that *P. Giss. 40* does not contain the text of the *constitutio Antoniniana*.

<sup>723</sup> Honoré (2002) 24. Honoré claimed that Ulpian would have advocated the extension of citizenship affected by Caracalla.

<sup>724</sup> Dig. 1.5.17.

<sup>725</sup> Meyer (1910) 30-33.

<sup>726</sup> Gaius, *Inst.* 1.14. This group is sometimes referred to as the *peregrini dediticii* to distinguish them from a group of similar legal status found later, freedmen convicted of serious crimes during their

becoming the preferred option, this reconstruction represented the *communis opinio* for many years.<sup>727</sup>

Despite the traditional academic support for a reconstruction including mention of the *dediticii*, however, it was far from a perfect answer. If the reconstruction of δηδειτικίων was palaeographically correct, it might appear to mean that Caracalla's extension of the franchise was not universal. This immediately presents a dilemma, since the only extant contemporary source that actively described the scale of the *constitutio*, that of Ulpian, mentions no such exception or caveat to the edict.<sup>728</sup> It would seem careless of a jurist of Ulpian's character to omit such an important legal detail.<sup>729</sup>

The potential contradiction in the ancient evidence led some to question the nature of the exclusion inferred by the prepositional phrase χωρίς + genitive. One explanation offered in the past is that the text contained on *P. Giss.* 40 did not, in fact, make reference to the grant of *civitas* itself, but rather to some associated grant or supplement.<sup>730</sup> The problem with this, however, is that, without any clear analogies that can be drawn from other texts, such a hypothesis relies upon imagination and speculation.<sup>731</sup>

The inescapably conjectural nature of these analyses has led others to doubt the very existence of any mention of *dediticii* in connection with the *constitutio* text. Benario, for example, has voiced his scepticism, pointing to the silence of Dio on the subject: 'if a significant portion of the population had been barred from the enjoyment of the emperor's gift, Dio would, in all likelihood, not have failed to mention it, since he was a bitter enemy of the ruler.'<sup>732</sup> Whilst the 'unabashed hatred' of Dio for Caracalla is well-known, one must be careful not to exaggerate or assume the intentions of any ancient source.<sup>733</sup>

It is safer simply to observe that if, in the course of the *Institutes*, Gaius was correct that the *dediticii* were completely bereft of political identity and could never, under any condition, hope to attain the rights of Roman citizenship, then there must have been as little requirement to stipulate their exclusion from the terms of the *constitutio Antoniniana* as there would have been for the slave population. The idea that Caracalla's edict made specific mention of one population group, whose ineligibility would already likely have been automatically assumed, seems a rather

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time in slavery under the terms of the *lex Aelia Sentia* (see: Gaius, *Inst.*, 1.13). For more on these groups, see Rocco (2010) 134, n.16; Wirth (1997) 32-34.

<sup>727</sup> Weissert (1963) 239-50. This reconstruction has even been accepted in more recent years. For an example, see Rocco (2010) 134.

<sup>728</sup> *Dig.* 1.5.17, see above n.3. Similarly, there is no mention of any exceptions to Caracalla's edict in the course of Dio's hostile summary of the grant (Dio 78.9.5-6).

<sup>729</sup> Unless, of course, the compilers of the *Digest* later removed any mention of the *dediticii* instead.

<sup>730</sup> This hypothesis has been championed most famously by Sherwin-White (1973a: 380), but has also been taken up by Jones (1936: 223-235) and Préaux (1953: 218).

<sup>731</sup> Lukaszewicz (1990) 97-99. Also see Kuhlmann (2012) 49.

<sup>732</sup> Benario (1954) 188.

<sup>733</sup> For more on Dio's fierce hatred of Caracalla, see: Millar (1964) 150. For further discussion of Dio's assessment of the *constitutio*, see Chapter Four of this thesis.

tautological explanation of the status quo.<sup>734</sup> Moreover, the fact remains that the fundamental existence of δηδειτικίων in the ninth line of *P. Giss.* 40 is far from assured; the hapax legomenon forms a problematic and unsatisfying suggestion for the complement of χωρίς.<sup>735</sup> With this in mind, it is appropriate to seek an alternative explanation regarding this area of the text preserved on the Giessen papyrus.

The publication of materials relating to the Antonine document known as the *tabula Banasitana* has changed the nature of this debate and allows for an analysis of the *constitutio Antoniniana* removed from the difficulties presented by the *dediticii*.<sup>736</sup> The *tabula* is a bronze tablet containing three letters dating to the latter half of the second century AD, discovered near the ancient settlement of Banasa in Morocco in 1957.<sup>737</sup> The first document is a letter, dating to c. 168, which was addressed from the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus to the governor of Mauretania Tingitana and concerned the enfranchisement of a local notable known as Julian the Zegrensian (who had petitioned for a grant of citizenship despite not being the leader of his community) and his family. The second letter, dated early in 177 and from Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, was addressed to the provincial governor and concerned the citizenship of the family of the new chieftain of the Zegrensians, another Julian (who is sometimes assumed to be the son of the subject of the previous letter preserved in the inscription).<sup>738</sup> The final document in the tablet is an extract from a *commentarius*, which recorded the grant of *civitas* to the younger Julian, and would have made the conferral valid.

Of particular importance to any analysis of the *constitutio Antoniniana* is the way in which certain qualifications were placed upon the grant of *civitas* to the Mauretanian and his descendants in the course of the Antonine *tabula*. The grant of citizenship in this case was applied both *salvo iure gentis* and *sine diminutione tributorum et vectigalium populi et fisci*.<sup>739</sup> The first of these clauses states that the grant of *civitas Romanorum* would not exclude the recipient from the legal framework and obligations of their parent communities, thereby preserving customary law (*ius gentium*). The second of the clauses found in the *tabula* forms a clear statement that the newly enfranchised individual would not enjoy the fiscal immunity experienced by citizens under the early years of the Principate, and would be fully obligated to make tax payments.<sup>740</sup>

A similarity between the Latin of the *Tabula Banasitana* and the Greek of the *constitutio Antoniniana* texts can be identified when reconstructing the controversial eighth and ninth lines of Caracalla's edict. The modern consensus on this portion of the text is that the clause immediately following the grant of *civitas* in the papyrus ought to read: μένοντος τοῦ δικαίου τῶν πολιτευμάτων.<sup>741</sup> The underlying sentiment

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<sup>734</sup> Lukaszewicz (1990) 96-98.

<sup>735</sup> Lukaszewicz (1990) 95.

<sup>736</sup> For more on the *tabula* and its role in the expansion of the franchise, see Chapter One.

<sup>737</sup> *IAM* 2.1, 94 = *AE* 1961, 142. For an annotated edition of the *Tabula* of Banasa, see: Oliver (1972) 336-40.

<sup>738</sup> Oliver (1972) 338; Sherwin-White (1973b) 88.

<sup>739</sup> *IAM* 2.1, 94. 1.37.

<sup>740</sup> Sherwin-White (1973b) 86-98.

<sup>741</sup> Kuhlmann (2012) 47; see above for translation.

here, that even the mass enfranchisement of 212 honoured the existence of local custom, seems to form an easily identifiable Greek equivalent of *salvo iure gentis*.<sup>742</sup>

The existence of these Latin formulae tempering the grant of citizenship allows for another interpretation to be made of the problematic ninth line of *P. Giss. 40*. If the μένοντος clause bridging lines eight and nine of *P. Giss. 40* is agreed to form a Hellenised construction preserving the local *ius gentium*, then it is logical that the exclusionary clause which follows it should similarly mirror the Latin construction found in the Tabula Banasitana, which emphasised the newly enfranchised citizens' liability to pay taxes. In every edition of the *constitutio* text that includes mention of the *dediticii*, the Greek χωρίς is always translated meaning 'except'. An alternative translation for this term, however, would be 'without'.<sup>743</sup> This alternative translation would certainly seem to mirror the Antonine document, with χωρίς representing a Hellenised version of *sine*.

An objection to this translation of χωρίς, in connection to the *dediticii*, has been voiced by Lukaszewicz, since he believes that such a wording would infer a complete denial of the continued existence of the *dediticii* as a political class.<sup>744</sup> This problem can easily be overcome, though, by removing the *dediticii* from the equation altogether. In the years since the discovery of the *constitutio* text, there have been attempts made to reconstruct the text of the Giessen papyrus without making any reference to the *dediticii*.<sup>745</sup> Unfortunately, however, the majority of these attempts were made long before the discovery of the Antonine *tabula* and, as a result, are almost entirely conjectural, often plagued by their own grammatical and palaeographical problems.<sup>746</sup>

If χωρίς is understood to mean 'without' rather than 'except', an attempt can be made to assess whether the end of the ninth line of *P. Giss. 40* is equivalent to the Latin *sine diminutione tributorum et vectigalium populi et fisci* found in the Tabula Banasa.<sup>747</sup> Instead of δηδειτικίων, it has been suggested that the lacuna might be better reconstructed as ἀδδειτικίων.<sup>748</sup> Whilst admittedly a hapax legomenon in its own right, it is no more controversial than δηδειτικίων.

The adjectival noun, translating as 'additional', may be understood to make reference to the system of fiscal *immunitas* enjoyed historically by citizens under the earlier Principate. Kuhlmann disagrees that the χωρίς τῶν ἀδδειτικίων clause represents a direct transliteration of *sine diminutione tributorum et vectigalium populi*

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<sup>742</sup> Sasse (1958) 48-58, has shown that the genitive participle μένοντος, found in the eighth line of *P. Giss. 40*, is relatively common in Greek legal texts, and that in at least forty-seven cases, the construction is identical to that of the Giessen papyrus, with the participle employed in a genitive absolute construction. In this case, it can clearly be seen to mirror the Latin ablative absolute construction in the *salvo* clause of the Tabula Banasitana.

<sup>743</sup> Lukaszewicz (1990) 98.

<sup>744</sup> Lukaszewicz (1990) 98-99.

<sup>745</sup> Böhm (1963) 278-355; Heichelheim (1941) 10-22; Laqueur (1927) 15-28.

<sup>746</sup> For a detailed objection to some of the earlier attempts to remove the *dediticii* from the text of the edict, see Lukaszewicz (1990) 99.

<sup>747</sup> Wolff (1976) 99-102.

<sup>748</sup> Kuhlmann (2012) 48-50; Oliver (1989) 504.

*et fisci*, however, doubting that it makes specific reference to fiscal immunity alone.<sup>749</sup> He questions how far the sentiment from the Latin construction can be inferred from one word alone, arguing that if Oliver was correct in his assumption regarding the focus of *additicia*, then it must represent a hitherto unrecognised Greek *terminus technicus*.<sup>750</sup>

This conclusion would ultimately infer that the  $\chi\omega\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  clause found in the *constitutio* text was, in fact, a very general one designed to facilitate and overcome any short term problems that the Roman authorities might encounter in the aftermath of such a mass act of enfranchisement. While I agree with Kuhlmann that the precise text of the edict must be read in this general sense, it is also my contention that, among all of the innumerable benefits that the Giessen papyrus might theoretically make reference to in the controversial clause, the fiscal privileges were among the foremost concerns of both Caracalla and his newly enfranchised populace.<sup>751</sup> The sense of Caracalla's edict thus moves away from the idea of a grant in which a specific population group was forbidden access to the benefits of Roman *civitas*. Instead, the *constitutio* text can be interpreted as a more formulaic piece of legislation, one in which the newly enfranchised were simultaneously assured that their new legal status would not preclude their engagement with local customary law in the provinces whilst being reminded that their enfranchisement would result in an obligation to pay taxes levied against the citizen population.

The revised wording obviously does not meld flawlessly with the Latin construction seen in the text of the *tabula Banasitana*, but this is hardly surprising owing to the nature of the transliteration process from Latin into Greek.<sup>752</sup> Until the discovery of other materials relating to the *constitutio*, students of this document must accept that linguistic questions and arguments will persist.<sup>753</sup> The removal of the troublesome *dediticii* from the wording of this document, however, would appear to fit more comfortably with the extant evidence, none of which makes any reference to a population group disbarred from Caracalla's otherwise universal edict.<sup>754</sup>

Line 10: Although far less controversial than the previous line, the appearance of  $\nu\acute{\iota}\kappa\eta$  in this line has prompted disagreement on what is being alluded to. Johnson disputed any notion that the 'victory' being referred to was in connection to the assassination of Geta in late AD 211. He advocated a theory linking it to the German campaign of AD 213, instead.<sup>755</sup> Such a conclusion would, of course, have the resulting effect of questioning the date of the *constitutio*, inferring a promulgation date of AD 213 at the earliest, rather than the preceding year, as is most widely accepted. There is a fundamental problem with Johnson's hypothesis, however, in that he has attempted to

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<sup>749</sup> Kuhlmann (1994) 237. For examples of the term in the Latin corpus which Kuhlmann identifies, see *Dig.* 50.16.98.1 and *Tert. Resurr.* 52.

<sup>750</sup> Kuhlmann (1994) 236-37.

<sup>751</sup> This hypothesis is considered in greater detail in Chapter Four.

<sup>752</sup> Oliver (1989) 500.

<sup>753</sup> Lukaszewicz (1990) 98-101.

<sup>754</sup> In addition to the contemporaneous legal evidence, the idea that the *Constitutio Antoniniana* was an entirely universal one is maintained in later literature. Sidonius Apollinaris, for example, claimed that: 'none but the barbarian and slave is foreign' (*Ep.* 1.6.2).

<sup>755</sup> Johnson (1961) 226, n.2. Also see Oliver (1989) 501.

assign a particular event to an area of the edict which is clearly rhetorical. The appearance of ‘victory’ in this line is incontrovertible, but this edition favours a more general interpretation, in keeping with the literary tone of the text, rather than referring to any episode specifically.

Lines 11-13: These lines have prompted little variation between the various scholars who reconstructed the papyrus. The general idea of a spread in the greatness or magnificence of the Romans is preserved through the survival of μεγαλειότητα (μεγαλειότης = majesty) in line eleven and γεγενῆσθαι in line twelve. Line thirteen signals the beginning of the worst areas of damage to the papyrus, with significantly fewer characters surviving in this and subsequent lines when compared to those above. The reconstruction assigning the spread of greatness to a timeless Roman honour is accepted both by Wilhelm and Heichelheim.<sup>756</sup>

Lines 14-17: These lines are so damaged that only Heichelheim has attempted any significant reconstruction. In line fourteen, he continues the notion of the spread of Rome’s magnificence by suggesting that the decree stated that no one would be left stateless (ἀπολίτευτος) or dishonoured (ἀτίμητος). The latter would appear to be a fair reconstruction, fitting with the three extant letters in that section of the line, but lines 15-17 are based on so few surviving characters that, although interesting and eloquent solutions to the lacunae have been proposed, we are faced with the inescapable conclusion that we cannot be certain regarding the content of this line or any subsequent in the first column of *P. Giss. 40*.

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<sup>756</sup> Stroux follows a similar line, but employs notion of nobility (εὐγένεια) rather than honour.

## APPENDIX II

### *A Case of Mistaken Identity: Julia Domna as Concordia on RIC 380 and 381*

This article has been published in volume 160 of the *Revue belge de Numismatique et de Sillographie* (2014).<sup>757</sup> This and the following article were written during the course of my doctoral studies and are included as appendices in accordance with submission guidelines.

*Abstract: The reverse figures on two coin types of Julia Domna (RIC 380 and 381) have been identified as either the empress herself or a personification of Pax. This article offers a third possibility. By examining numismatic evidence pertaining to the empress in the context of the fraught period of Caracalla and Geta's joint rule of the empire, I will argue that the most likely identity of the personification depicted on RIC 380 and 381 is that of Concordia. This identification fits more comfortably with the rest of the numismatic corpus for the period, and also makes greater sense when considered in the midst of the intense rivalry observed between the young Augusti in months preceding Geta's eventual murder.*

Of all of the Roman empresses and imperial consorts, Julia Domna stands out as one of the most famous and best studied in recent years. Much attention has been devoted to the subject of her life and many have attempted to assess her unusually prominent role within the Severan dynasty.<sup>758</sup> Despite the differences in focus or purpose found in each of the many studies on the empress, there is a consensus that Julia represents one of the most honoured consorts of the imperial period. Although allusions to her prominence can be found in the ancient literature, the level of prestige afforded to Julia can be more easily observed in the sheer number and variety of coins struck in her honour, from the earliest years of her husband Septimius Severus' reign (AD 193-211) through to the death of her eldest son Caracalla in 217, not to mention the commemorative issues struck in her honour during the reign of Alexander Severus.<sup>759</sup> Among the many coins struck for Julia, there are two precious metal types produced in the aftermath of Septimius Severus' death in 211, included in the *Roman Imperial Coinage*, that warrant further discussion owing to questions surrounding the identity of the figure depicted on the reverse.<sup>760</sup>

Struck in both aurei and denarii, these coins depict an obverse bust of Julia Domna draped and facing right, her hair presented in its distinctive wavy and undulating style but without either the diadem or crescent found on other coins of the same period. The obverse also carries the legend: IVLIA PIA FELIX AVG. The reverse depicts a female figure (standing in 380, seated in 381) facing left, holding a branch

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<sup>757</sup> A full reference to the article can be found in the bibliography accompanying this thesis.

<sup>758</sup> There are a number of publications on the subject of Julia herself as well as her position as one of the famous set of powerful Severan women. For a good selection, see the following: BAHARAL 1992, p. 110-18; LEVICK 2007; MAGNANI 2007; SAAVEDRA-GUERRERO 2007, p. 120-31.

<sup>759</sup> The commemorative issues are struck on coinage produced for Julia Mamaea, during the reign of Alexander Severus, see RIC 715 and 716 *Alexander Severus*. For works on Julia's numismatic legacy, see GORRIE 2004, p. 61-72; LUSNIA 1995, p. 119-40; ROWAN 2011, p. 241-73.

<sup>760</sup> These coins are found in volume 4.1 of the *RIC* and will be referred to henceforth as *RIC* 380 and 381 respectively.

and long sceptre. The reverse legend is honorific in nature: MAT AVGG MAT SEN M PATR.



Fig. 1. Denarius of Julia Domna depicting the empress as Concordia (*RIC* 381). NAC Auction 64 (17 May 2012) lot 1217. (Image reproduced courtesy of Numismatica Ars Classica NAC AG.)

The first point of discussion regarding these coins concerns the nature of Julia's titulature. The appearance of PIA FELIX on the obverse suggests that the coins were struck after the death of Septimius Severus, while the use of the plural construction *mater augustorum* (MAT AVGG) on the reverse indicates that they were also produced prior to the murder of Geta in late December of AD 211.<sup>761</sup> This combination of information, therefore, allows a fairly confident dating of the coin types in question to the latter half of 211 but no later, significantly more specific than the general period 211-15 offered in the *RIC*.<sup>762</sup>

Regarding the reverse image depicted on these coins, the general consensus states that the figure simply represents Julia herself, an image of the empress accompanying her prestigious titles.<sup>763</sup> The appearance of a headdress on *RIC* 380 makes a definitive identification difficult, but the hypothesis certainly appears to be strengthened when it is observed that the figure found on *RIC* 381 clearly exhibits features of a hairstyle synonymous with Julia: intricate waves flow from the scalp and down the side of the empress' head, the tightly woven edging and bun gathered neatly at the back (see Fig. 1). The appearance of a hairstyle similar to that associated with the empress, however, is not sufficient evidence in itself to conclude that *RIC* 380 and 381 represent depictions of Julia Domna without any additional inference or meaning to the iconography.

It has already been noted that the figure represented on these coins, whether standing or seated, carries both a branch and a sceptre. The appearance of the latter item in particular, a symbol of ultimate authority and power usually associated with emperors or deities, is of interest since it would be an extremely irregular accoutrement

<sup>761</sup> For a chronological overview of the death of Geta and its aftermath, see BARNES 2012, p. 51-2.

<sup>762</sup> ROWAN 2011, p. 255.

<sup>763</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254-5. Julie Langford-Johnson has claimed that the figure is 'iconographic shorthand' representing Julia Domna's role as *genetrix* to the Severan dynasty, accepting the fundamental identification of the female as Julia. For more on this, see LANGFORD-JOHNSON 2005, p.160.

to accompany a standard depiction of an empress, even one with such evident prestige as Julia Domna. It seems more likely that if these coins do indeed depict the empress, they do so by depicting her in the form of a deity, similar to the figure claimed to represent Julia as the goddess Cybele (*RIC* 562) struck at some point between the years 209-11.<sup>764</sup>

It is perhaps owing to this potentially unusual depiction of Julia that the *RIC* also offers an alternative explanation regarding the reverse: rather than depicting the empress, the figure represents a personification of Pax instead. This alternative hypothesis would certainly better explain the appearance of the branch and sceptre accompanying the figure, since the numismatic representation of Peace is often depicted carrying both of these items.<sup>765</sup> A potential objection to this theory, however, is that if this identification is indeed correct, then these types would form the only allusion to Pax found on the coinage of Julia Domna throughout both the reigns of Septimius Severus and Caracalla.<sup>766</sup> Furthermore, it should be noted that rather than increasing, the number of reverse themes paired with obverses of Julia appears to have declined and shrunk in the aftermath of Septimius Severus' death and during the reign of Caracalla.<sup>767</sup> Given this context, it would seem highly unlikely that the types found on *RIC* 380 and 381 represent a hitherto unacknowledged depiction of Pax in connection with the empress.<sup>768</sup> A third potential explanation is required.

Rather than depicting the empress in her own right or as a personification of Peace, the evidence can equally be interpreted to suggest that *RIC* 380 and 381 were

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<sup>764</sup> This is another example where the significance of the reverse inscription *MATER AVGG* has been overlooked. The abbreviation of *augustorum* can again be employed to provide a more specific dating of the coin between 209 and 211 rather than the rather nebulous 196-211 period offered in the *Roman Imperial Coinage*. The extent to which it can be confidently said to represent Julia in the guise of Cybele, rather than simply the goddess in her own right, is questionable though.

<sup>765</sup> This style of depiction can be observed across the imperial period. For some examples of this figure with an accompanying Pax legend, see (in chronological order): *RIC* 770 *Vespasian*, *RIC* 168 *Alexander Severus*, *RIC* 157 *Volusian*. It is also worth noting the precious metal coinage of Tiberius (*RIC* 29, for example) in which a similar figure appears, carrying the same accoutrements. This case might *prima facie* seem central to the later Severan case, since it has been claimed that this figure may represent Livia in the guise of Pax. The Tiberian coin is a more problematic case, however, since it has also been suggested that the female was supposed to represent *Iustitia*, or even that it is simply Livia on her own, the accompanying legend *PONTIF MAXIM* making reference to her position as the wife of the first *pontifex maximus* during the imperial period and/or her position as stepmother to the second. For more on the 'Livia' type, see: GIARD 1983; SUTHERLAND and CARSON 1984, p. 87-88.

<sup>766</sup> In her survey of coin hoards across the Mediterranean, Langford-Johnson recorded the variety in numismatic themes struck on coins of Julia; there are no depictions of Peace: LANGFORD-JOHNSON 2013, p. 130-33. There is one example listed in the *RIC* (601) which does appear to carry the deity on the reverse. The denarius depicts Pax standing left, holding a branch and sceptre, with the accompanying legend *PACI VAETERNAE* (*sic*). The incorrect nature of this legend, however, lends credence to the notion that this coin type is, in fact, either a barbaric imitation or simply an ancient forgery and therefore should not be counted alongside the other output produced for the empress.

<sup>767</sup> For the number of reverse themes struck on Julia's coinage, see ROWAN 2011, p. 255, Fig. 4.

<sup>768</sup> Indeed, a conclusion of Pax, in this case, would lead to questions regarding what the imperial household hoped to achieve through such a miniscule output. Whilst coins could undoubtedly form an effective medium for official communications, Noreña is correct in observing that this would not have been achieved by individual types in the short term, see NOREÑA 2011, p. 197. For more on the question of numismatic authorship and agency, see below, n.32.

intended to present Julia Domna in the guise of another deity: Concordia. Similar to but distinct from Pax, the deification of harmony had a long association with Rome prior to the Severan era, with the first temple of Concord erected in the capital by Furius Camillus in 367 BC.<sup>769</sup> Concordia appears to have featured on coinage for the first time in 62/1 BC and was later struck notably on coins produced for Mark Antony during the civil wars which marked the end of the Republic.<sup>770</sup> During the Principate, the deity was used to promote a sense of concord established by the emperors, paired with the legend *Concordia Augusta*, especially in periods of unrest such as the Year of the Four Emperors.<sup>771</sup> The theme also became increasingly linked with the figures of the empresses and the notion of an internal harmony within the imperial household, being observed for the first time with Domitia, struck between the years AD 81-84, and becoming more common under the later Antonine empresses.<sup>772</sup>

In the case of Julia Domna, Concordia is a type that can be found on the empress' coinage during the reign of her husband from 193 until 211.<sup>773</sup> From analysis of data gathered from an extensive hoard sample, Clare Rowan has identified that Concordia appears on two percent of the total silver coinage output for Julia during the reign of Severus. From the same evidence, she has demonstrated that the deity is also found in vastly increased quantities associated with the other women of the Severan dynasty, namely Plautilla (37%), Julia Paula (85%), Aquilia Severa (99%) and Orbiana (99%).<sup>774</sup> The importance of this iconography to imperial wives, compared to mothers, is striking, but it need not change the identification of *RIC* 380 and 381, struck under Caracalla and Geta for Julia, if the general premise is accepted that 'the imagery on the empress's coinage was utilized to extend the prevailing ideology of the emperor in power'.<sup>775</sup>

Concordia was a theme of general importance to the early Severan dynasty, and one which Septimius Severus employed in three distinct ways. In the earliest years of his reign, during the Wars of Succession against Pescennius Niger and later Clodius Albinus, the majority of this iconography was decidedly militaristic in nature, stressing

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<sup>769</sup> Plut. *Camillus* 42.

<sup>770</sup> For the 62/1 issues, see the coins struck by Paullus Lepidus: *C.* 415.1 and *C.* 417.1b. For a good example of Civil War period coinage featuring Concordia, see: *C.* 529.4b, in which Mark Antony and Octavian stressed their harmony by depicting a bust of the personification on the obverse paired with two hands clasping around a caduceus on the reverse. I am grateful to Dr Sandra Bingham (University of Edinburgh) for allowing me to utilise her thorough database of Concordia coins during the writing of this note.

<sup>771</sup> For two examples, see *BMC* 57 *Galba* and *BMC* 48 *Vitellius*. These examples are also of interest to the later Julia Domna coins, since in both cases the figure of Concordia is depicted carrying both the branch and sceptre. Her identity is beyond question, owing to the reverse legend *CONCORD AVGVIS-C* in both cases.

<sup>772</sup> For the Domitia coin, bearing the legend *CONCORD AVGVST* and depicting a peacock standing right, see: *RIC* 212; *BMC* 61. For data concerning the Antonine empresses, see ROWAN 2011, p. 244-46. The earlier coin of Caligula (*BMC* 36; *RIC* 33) depicting his sisters as *Securitas*, *Concordia* and *Fortuna* on the reverse might seem to form an odd omission, but it must be remembered that this coin was struck in honour of the emperor rather than his sisters and carries his portrait on the obverse.

<sup>773</sup> *RIC* 547, for example, depicts Julia clasping hands with Severus, with the accompanying legend: *CONCORDIA FELIX*.

<sup>774</sup> ROWAN 2011, p. 257-70.

<sup>775</sup> *Ibid.*, p.272.

the military power under Severus' command by declaring the harmony that the emperor enjoyed with the Roman army.<sup>776</sup> With the pretenders to the throne defeated, there was a visible shift in emphasis, the emperor's family becoming the central focus of the Concordia imagery produced by the imperial government. The unity of the imperial family was stressed through a variety of visual media, as examples such as the Berlin Tondo, the family friezes on the Arch of the *Argentarii* and those found on the Severan Arch at Lepcis Magna testify.<sup>777</sup> The overall strength and unity of the dynasty was also promoted intensively at the Secular Games of 204.<sup>778</sup>

In the numismatic corpus, certain familial relationships were emphasised more owing to their importance to the Severan dynasty's long-term political survival. Severus made reference to the success of his marriage to Julia, mirroring earlier Antonine propaganda, through coinage bearing both Severus and Julia's busts on the reverse, wearing radiate and lunate crowns respectively, with the legend *CONCORDIAE AETERNAE*.<sup>779</sup> Similarly, a plethora of coins struck for Caracalla in the opening years of the third century publicise the harmony between the young Augustus and Plautilla, married in 202.<sup>780</sup>

The emphasis on the concord between the emperors themselves during this period also formed one of the most constitutionally important facets of imperial harmony prior to the death of Septimius Severus. The unity between Severus and Caracalla as *co-Augusti* was promoted through coinage declaring *AETERNITAS IMPERII*, with draped and laureate busts of the two emperors facing one another on the reverse.<sup>781</sup> This message of internal harmony was extended later to include the tempestuous fraternal relationship between Caracalla and Geta upon the latter's elevation to the position of Augustus in 209. In one type, for example, the brothers are depicted standing next to one another and holding a victory between them; the legend *CONCORDIA AVGVSTORVM* leaves little doubt regarding the message to be taken from the numismatic iconography.<sup>782</sup>

The desire of both Septimius Severus and Julia Domna to reconcile their warring children is well-attested in the ancient literature covering the period. Severus is reported to have warned his sons of the inevitable disaster that followed fraternal enmity in famous tales and legends and, according to Cassius Dio, used his final words

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<sup>776</sup> *RIC* 108, for example, derives from the early period and depicts the deity standing, holding a military standard in each hand, with the accompanying legend *CONCORDIAE MILITVM*.

<sup>777</sup> All of these examples were defaced to some extent during the process of the *damnatio memoriae* enacted following the murders of Plautianus in 205 and Geta in 211. For more on this, see FLOWER 2008, p. 97-115.

<sup>778</sup> For more on the political use of the Secular Games, see GORRIE 2002, p. 461-81.

<sup>779</sup> *RIC* 522.

<sup>780</sup> *BMC* 306.272, for example, depicts the couple on the reverse clasping hands, with the accompanying legend *CONCORDIA FELIX*. The propagandistic nature of this coin type is clear when the disastrous nature of the marriage is analysed. Herodian (3.10.8) noted, for example, that Caracalla had only married her under compulsion from Severus. For more the marriage, see: Dio 77.1.1-4.5, 77.6.3 (Loeb numbering system); Hdn 3.10.5-8.

<sup>781</sup> *RIC* 250.

<sup>782</sup> See *RIC* 255 and 330a for two examples of this type.

implored his sons to seek concord with one another in the aftermath of his imminent death.<sup>783</sup> For her part, Julia is reported to have continued to seek a lasting reconciliation between her sons after the death of her husband. Herodian, for example, recounted how the empress reacted to her sons' plans to divide the empire itself into two halves: 'She began weeping and crying out. Then she threw her arms around them both and drew them into an embrace, trying to reconcile them.'<sup>784</sup> Indeed, in Dio's account, it is specifically this desire to unite her sons which ultimately allowed Caracalla to construct a plot to strike at Geta while separated from his many bodyguards.<sup>785</sup> Langford-Johnson has raised the intriguing possibility that the senate may have opted to bestow the honorific *mater senatus* title on Julia in the aftermath of Septimius Severus' death precisely because they perceived her to be a 'champion of harmony', perhaps the only figure left in the imperial court that might engineer a lasting settlement between Caracalla and Geta.<sup>786</sup>

It is in the context of this period of increasing tension between the brothers in the latter half of 211, then, that *RIC* 380 and 381 ought to be considered. It should come as no surprise to observe a continuation of Concordia iconography appearing in the numismatic record for the empress. As the widow of one emperor and the mother of two more, Julia's coinage during these months appears to have continued to carry the message promoted extensively during the reign of Septimius Severus: that the imperial household was united and strong. It should also be noted that the ancient writers suggest that even the warring Caracalla and Geta did attempt to create a façade of harmony, albeit a very transparent one. Dio claimed that the emperors made public declarations of love and pride in each other despite being diametrically opposed.<sup>787</sup> This outward display of unity is also found in the numismatic record.<sup>788</sup> It is all too easy to view the fraternal relationship from a position of hindsight, where the eventual violence seems to have been inevitable. If it is accepted instead that the young *Augusti*

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<sup>783</sup> For Severus' warnings, see Herodian 3.13.3. The imperative used by Dio (77.15.2) in recording Severus' supposed final words, ὁμολοεῖτε, is significant since the Greek concept of *Homonoia* is equivalent to the Latin Concordia.

<sup>784</sup> Hdn 4.3.9 (tr. Whittaker).

<sup>785</sup> Dio (78.2.2) claimed that Caracalla induced Julia to summon both sons to a meeting as an intermediary, probably so as not to arouse Geta's suspicions regarding Caracalla's motive behind the request.

<sup>786</sup> LANGFORD-JOHNSON 2013, p. 21; LANGFORD-JOHNSON 2005, p.185. It seems evident from the ancient literature that there was an atmosphere of tension in Rome following the return of the imperial family from Britain. Dio (78.1.4-5) claimed, for example, that the senate ordered a sacrifice to Concordia but that the officials could not locate each other to perform the rite. Whilst this has clearly been inserted into Dio's prose to suggest both the irreparable state of Caracalla and Geta's fraternal relationship and the inevitable violence that would come of it, it can be inferred, at least, that the senators were eager to promote harmony between the two young *Augusti*.

<sup>787</sup> Dio 78.1.4. Similarly, Herodian (4.1.4-5) claimed that the emperors lived completely separate lives within the palace walls and that they only came together when attending functions in public.

<sup>788</sup> It is important to note that Julia's coins were not alone in declaring harmony within the imperial household during this time. Coinage struck for both Caracalla and Geta can also be shown to have promoted this message during the first decade of the third century across both precious and base metal denominations, a trend which continued after Severus' death. For selected examples of this iconography struck for Caracalla, see: *RIC* 152, 459, 482, 508a-c and 537. For those of Geta, see: *RIC* 40, 73a-b, 85, 86a-b, 134a-b, 164, 165 and 184.

at least attempted to project an outward image of harmony, then these coin types would make sense as an extension to the prevailing public message of the time.<sup>789</sup>

If examined in this manner, the coin types struck for Julia Domna seen in *RIC* 380 and 381 are not a simple depiction of the empress in her own right as the *mater augustorum*, nor are they indicative of an innovation whereby the iconography of Pax became associated with her for a period of months only to disappear before the end of the same year. Instead, these coins make better sense if interpreted as depicting either Concordia or Julia in the guise of Concordia. As such, they can be viewed not only as a continuation of one strand of Severan propaganda that had been continually promoted since the turn of the third century, but also one which was publically (if not privately) promoted by the young emperors Caracalla and Geta in the aftermath of their father's death.

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<sup>789</sup> This conclusion ultimately raises the issue of the agency behind this numismatic iconography. Noreña has persuasively argued that coinage could be an effective vehicle for political messages and propaganda, but the question of who chose the imagery remains more controversial, see NOREÑA 2010, p. 251-60. Despite Howgego's insistence that the problem is irrelevant since, under an autocracy, the numismatic output inevitably would be favourable to the regime, evidence from sources such as Suetonius and *De Rebus Bellicis* suggests that the emperors sometimes took an active interest in their coinage, see HOWGEGO 2001, pg. 70-71; Suet. *Aug.* 94.12, *Nero* 25.2; *De reb. bell.* 1.3-4. Whilst routine type selection was probably undertaken by mint magistrates, it also seems probable that they would often act in response to directives from the imperial household. Unlike the later case of Julia Soemias, who may have exerted a greater influence over her own coinage, owing to Elagabalus' relative youth, Julia Domna's coinage continually reflects and extends the iconography promoted by the incumbent emperors, both in the case of her husband and her sons. For more on the coinage of Julia Soemias, see ROWAN 2011, p. 244, 261-65.

### APPENDIX III

#### *The Prefect and the Plot: a reassessment of the murder of Plautianus*

This article was co-written with Sandra Bingham and was accepted for publication with *Journal of Ancient History* in early 2015.<sup>790</sup>

*Abstract: In AD 205, the praetorian prefect Plautianus was murdered in the imperial palace. The ancient sources, Dio and Herodian, tell of a plot, though they offer different versions as to who was behind it and who the target. This article will consider both accounts as well as numismatic and epigraphic evidence in an attempt to provide a new interpretation for this event.*

Early in AD 205, the praetorian prefect Gaius Fulvius Plautianus was summoned to the imperial palace. After a brief interrogation, he was murdered in the presence of the emperors, Septimius Severus and Caracalla. Modern scholars are nearly universal in attributing a plot to destroy the prefect to the younger emperor, accepting the testimony of the senator Cassius Dio. A contrasting account of the events of that night, however, can be found in the works of Dio's contemporary, Herodian, who presents us with a conspiracy devised by Plautianus to murder Severus and Caracalla and to seize the imperial throne for himself. Traditionally this report has been dismissed as an untrustworthy and confused retelling of the official version of events released by the imperial household in the aftermath of the prefect's death.<sup>791</sup> In this article, we intend to provide an alternative interpretation of this murder and the conspiracy which led to it.

Plautianus is said by Herodian to be a kinsman of Severus, through the latter's mother, Fulvia Pia.<sup>792</sup> While his early career is not well documented, it is clear that the emperor had confidence in the future prefect from the start of his reign.<sup>793</sup> Plautianus came to prominence during the civil wars that occurred in the first years of Severus' rule; according to the *Historia Augusta*, he was delegated by the new emperor to capture the children of his rival, Pescennius Niger.<sup>794</sup> He also accompanied the imperial family on their travels in the post-civil war period.<sup>795</sup> That Plautianus was praetorian prefect by June 197 is confirmed by epigraphic evidence.<sup>796</sup> It did not take long before he was sole prefect but whether he had removed rivals to ensure his

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<sup>790</sup> A full reference to this article can be found in the bibliography accompanying this thesis.

<sup>791</sup> For example, by Levick (2007), 79 and by Hohl (1975), 42.

<sup>792</sup> Hdn 3.10.6. The author also reports the rumour that the two men had been lovers by way of explaining Plautianus' rise to prominence under Severus. On the kinship between the two men, see Chausson (1998), 395-400; Birley (1988), 216-17 provides a stemma.

<sup>793</sup> A possible reference to Plautianus' early career is contained in a scholium about a "Fluvius" convicted by Pertinax when he was the proconsul of Africa. See Dio 74.15.4, with Birley (1988), Appendix 2, n. 32 (who accepts that this is Plautianus and provides a date of 188 or 189). The difficulty of establishing details about Plautianus' career in general should not be underestimated since the removal of his name and image after his death was thorough.

<sup>794</sup> HA, *Sev.* 6.10.

<sup>795</sup> ILS 2186, dating to AD 200 and celebrating the safe return of the family and the victories of Severus, mentioned Plautianus though his name has been erased.

<sup>796</sup> Plautianus is listed as praetorian prefect in ILS 2185, dated to 9 June 197. He may have been prefect of the *vigiles* by 195; see CIL XIV S.4380. There is a possibility that he held the positions of *praefectus vehiculorum* and *procurator XX hereditatum*, based on IRT 572, though the erasure of the name makes a secure identification problematic.

position is not clear.<sup>797</sup> Dio suggests that Plautianus wielded considerable power, though this was not unusual for praetorian prefects: by this time, the prefecture allowed the office holder much influence.<sup>798</sup> It is equally likely that Plautianus' background, namely his close relationship with Severus, provided him with many prospects. In fact, he was granted the *consularia ornamenta* and his daughter, Plautilla, was married to Severus' son, the young co-emperor, Caracalla in 202.<sup>799</sup> In the following year, Plautianus held the consulship with Severus' brother, Publius Septimius Geta, a singular honour for someone of his status.<sup>800</sup> He was also made *clarissimus vir*.<sup>801</sup> All of these honours were clearly driven by Severus' desire to publicly acknowledge his close friend.

Yet, in AD 204, Septimius Geta was said to have revealed on his deathbed "all the facts about Plautianus", though there are no further details.<sup>802</sup> Apparently he did this "for he hated the prefect and now no longer feared him." That there might have been animosity between them is not surprising, if Severus had favoured Plautianus in his reign. In fact, the *Historia Augusta* suggests that the emperor had earlier attempted to dash any hopes that his brother might have had for power by making Caracalla Caesar.<sup>803</sup> This message was made even clearer when Caracalla became Augustus three years later at the age of ten.<sup>804</sup> The marriage between Plautilla and Caracalla would not have helped matters. It was obvious that Severus intended a closer relationship between his family and that of Plautianus; the deathbed revelation, then, was probably a final attempt by Septimius Geta to undermine the prefect. It seems to have had the desired effect: Dio mentions that the emperor "stripped Plautianus of most of his power". But the reasons for this are not evident.<sup>805</sup>

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<sup>797</sup> On the removal of rivals, in particular, Aemilius Saturninus, see Dio 76.14.2. Howe (1966), 70 suggests, however, that there were other colleagues as well prior to 200. There was no rule regarding collegiality in the prefecture: in fact, there were more single prefects than double occupants in the long history of the post; see Absil (1997), 87-95.

<sup>798</sup> One might adduce Commodus' prefect Perennis by way of example; see Dio 73.9.1; Howe (1966), 65-6. On Dio's portrayal of Plautianus' power, see, for example, 76.14.1: "Plautianus, who not only shared Severus' power but also had the authority of prefect, and possessed the widest and greatest influence of all men, put to death many prominent men among his peers..."; 76.14.6: "...one might not improperly claim that Plautianus had power beyond all men, equalling even that of the emperors themselves." All quotes are taken from the Loeb translation unless otherwise specified.

<sup>799</sup> Plautianus is styled *cos II* ("consul for the second time") in ILS 9003 (see below); this use of the term is noted by Dio (46.46) as an anomaly. The date of his adlection is not certain but Whittaker (1969, 329, n. 4) puts it in 202, which would make sense, given the newly forged ties between the emperor and the prefect because of the marriage. On the marriage itself, see Dio 77.1.2; Hdn 3.10.5 and 7.

<sup>800</sup> To distinguish him from Severus' son, also Geta, we refer to Severus' brother as Septimius Geta throughout.

<sup>801</sup> ILS 9003. This inscription, which escaped the *damnatio*, shows the close relationship between the prefect and the imperial family:

C. Fulvio C. f. Quir. Plautiano | pr. pr., c.v., cos II, ad | sumpto inter patr. | famil.,  
necessario | dd. nn. Augg. Seve | ri et Antonini di | cato numini aeor., | patri  
Plautillae | Aug., omnium prae | cedentium praef. | excellentissimo | d. d. p.

To Gaius Fulvius Plautianus, son of Gaius, of the tribe Quirina, praetorian prefect, most illustrious man, consul for the second time, initiated among the patrician families, close companion of our lords the *Augusti*, Severus and Antoninus, dedicated to their divine will, father of Plautilla, most excellent of all the prefects before him, the people gave this monument.

<sup>802</sup> Dio 77.2.4.

<sup>803</sup> The date was 195; cf. ILS 8809; HA, *Sev.* 10.3; cf. also 8.10.

<sup>804</sup> Birley (1988) 215.

<sup>805</sup> Dio 77.2.5; cf. Hdn 3.11.3.

It may have been this diminishing of power, however, that led to his demise. The two main sources provide full details of the event, though offer different accounts of what actually happened. The version given by Dio is generally accepted by scholars. Here, the death of Plautianus is concocted by Caracalla, who was known to despise the prefect. One of the main problems seems to have been the marriage to Plautilla, which was doomed from the start. Caracalla is said to have refused to eat or sleep with his wife and Plautilla to have reported to her father all the threats supposedly made by Caracalla towards her.<sup>806</sup> In the years between 202 and 205, then, the relationship between the prefect and the young emperor must have deteriorated rapidly. Once Severus had acted against Plautianus after Septimius Geta's revelation, the animosity seems to have increased. Dio suggested that the prefect regarded Caracalla with even greater antagonism, blaming his son-in-law for his diminished position.<sup>807</sup> It is not clear why he held the son accountable for the actions of the father, but as co-emperor Caracalla may have had a say in whatever action Severus took. The young emperor then took matters into his own hands, plotting the removal of the prefect.<sup>808</sup> Making use of his tutor, Euodius, and officers of the guard including a certain Saturninus, Caracalla reported to his father that Plautianus was planning to murder the two of them. The task was made easier, Dio says, because of a dream Severus had the night before that his former rival, Albinus, was still alive and plotting against him.<sup>809</sup> Furthermore, Dio adds that Caracalla produced a note containing details of the plot. This convinced the author that the conspiracy was the work of the young emperor, "for Plautianus would never have dared to give such instructions either to ten centurions at once, or in Rome, or in the palace, or on that day, or at that hour, and especially not in writing."<sup>810</sup> Severus, however, was taken in by Caracalla's claim and summoned the prefect to the palace; when he offered Plautianus the opportunity to refute the charge, Caracalla disarmed the prefect, assaulted him and ordered an attendant to kill him after being stopped from doing so himself by his father.

The destruction of the praetorian prefect is not the only murder of an imperial family member attributed to Caracalla. In the works of both Dio and Herodian, he also is implicated in the killing of his younger brother in late 211. The actual act of Geta's murder in Herodian is lost owing to a lacuna in the text. Three interpolations, however, from the *Codex Monacensis*, Politian and John of Antioch, have traditionally been employed to fill this gap, all of which suggest that Caracalla killed his brother by his own hand.<sup>811</sup> Dio, however, does not claim that the young Augustus personally undertook the act of fratricide. Instead, Caracalla delegated the task to officers, who had been previously briefed, before luring his brother into a trap under the guise of appealing for a lasting reconciliation.<sup>812</sup> The process of entrapping his victim and

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<sup>806</sup> Hdn 3.10.8; the author notes that Caracalla had married only "under compulsion". See also Dio 77.2.5.

<sup>807</sup> Dio 77.2.5.

<sup>808</sup> Dio 77.3-4.

<sup>809</sup> Dio 77.3.4.

<sup>810</sup> Dio 77.3.4.

<sup>811</sup> Hdn 4.1.3. See also Whittaker (1969) 391, n.2.

<sup>812</sup> Dio 73.2.3. Dio claims that Caracalla used their mother, Julia Domna, as an intermediary. It is likely that Geta and Julia were close, prompting Whittaker (1969, 367, n. 2) to suggest that it was her intervention that caused Severus to make his younger son Augustus in 209.

ordering his execution by subordinates bears considerable similarity to the earlier murder of Caracalla's father-in-law recorded in the same source.<sup>813</sup> The act of fratricide is understandably one of the most enduring and memorable aspects of Caracalla's reign; it is an episode that has always drawn the attention of scholars. As a result, it is all too easy to let the events of 211 influence any analysis of what happened in 205, with Caracalla as the guilty party in both murders.

Dio's animosity towards Caracalla is well-known.<sup>814</sup> As a result, his account of the murder of Geta might be explained by the author's desire to blacken Caracalla's image and to emphasise the traumatic nature of the younger brother's assassination, presenting it as a final act of violence from the savage Caracalla towards a more submissive Geta.<sup>815</sup> One of the most notable features of Dio's history of the years 193-205 is that the younger brother is presented as a "nonentity".<sup>816</sup> Before his murder, Geta only appears eleven times, is always mentioned in conjunction with either Severus or Caracalla and is rarely even referred to by name.<sup>817</sup> Commenting on the joint rule of the empire between the brothers in the aftermath of Severus' death, Dio claimed that Caracalla shared the government of the empire with his brother in name only, in reality enjoying a monopoly of the imperial power.<sup>818</sup> The clear inference from this evidence is that Geta was only a minor figure in the imperial court and no match in either power or influence to his father and brother.<sup>819</sup>

Additional evidence provided by both Dio and Herodian, however, suggests that, rather than one brother dominating the other, Caracalla and Geta were equally recalcitrant. In the aftermath of Plautianus' murder, Dio was explicit in criticising both sons of Severus for living in a disgraceful fashion: "They outraged women and abused young boys; they embezzled money and made gladiators and charioteers their associates, emulating each other in the similarity of their deeds."<sup>820</sup> Contrary to the notion that Geta was a weak individual overshadowed by a vicious elder brother, evidence can be gleaned from the sources to suggest that Caracalla and Geta were both intensely competitive young men and shared a mutual enmity.

Herodian claimed that the two brothers were antagonistic, quarrelling even as early as childhood.<sup>821</sup> He added that the pair were complete opposites of one another: "whatever one liked, the other hated."<sup>822</sup> This fraternal discord is found again in Dio, who recorded that during their adolescence the young men were reckless in their

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<sup>813</sup> Birley (1988) 189.

<sup>814</sup> Millar (1964), 150-60.

<sup>815</sup> Kemmers (2011) 271-2; Millar (1964) 150.

<sup>816</sup> Kemmers (2011) 271.

<sup>817</sup> Dio 77.2.3; 77.7.1-2; 77.11.1; 77.14.1; 77.15.2; 77.15.3; 78.1.1; 78.1.3; 78.1.4; 78.2.1; 78.2.2-4.

<sup>818</sup> Dio 78.1.1.

<sup>819</sup> Kemmers (2011) 271.

<sup>820</sup> Dio 77.7.1, adapted from the Loeb translation.

<sup>821</sup> Hdn. 3.10.3. According to Herodian, the rivalry initially manifested as childhood arguments while attending quail fights, cock fights and wrestling bouts.

<sup>822</sup> Hdn. 3.10.4.

challenging of one another, Caracalla even breaking his leg in a chariot crash after one particularly heated encounter.<sup>823</sup> By 208, the hostility had apparently escalated to such a degree that Severus' British campaign was partly prompted by the emperor's desire to return his sons to their senses.<sup>824</sup> The conflict between the pair further worsened after their father's death, with both Dio and Herodian agreeing that the brothers lived entirely separate lives. Herodian even adds that the *Augusti* partitioned the imperial palace and raised personal bodyguards.<sup>825</sup> With this in mind, it appears that Herodian's claim that "each brother tried every way to get rid of the other" might be more credible than Dio's rather one-sided account.<sup>826</sup>

Herodian's narrative of Plautianus' murder thus deserves consideration.<sup>827</sup> In this account, the prefect did indeed plot against Severus and Caracalla after realising that his position had become precarious. Again, there is the involvement of Saturninus, said to be devoted to Plautianus and assigned the task of murdering the emperors because of his easy access to the palace as a tribune of the guard. He asked to have the instructions put into writing, to which Plautianus agreed.<sup>828</sup> Instead of killing the emperors, however, Saturninus decided to reveal the plot – but only after realising a major logistical flaw in the plan, namely that the two emperors resided in separate areas of the palace. A confession was made to Severus and Plautianus was summoned, though not before the emperor also questioned Caracalla; he suspected his son of devising a plot to remove the prefect, in an echo of the version given by Dio. Herodian adds that Plautianus put on a breastplate under his clothes before heading to the palace "as a protection against an attack on his person."<sup>829</sup> The breastplate was to become central in determining his guilt when standing before Severus, who, as in Dio, was beginning to find the prefect's defence plausible. Again Caracalla first challenged the prefect, in particular about the armour, then ordered his murder.<sup>830</sup>

Herodian's account has been considered by most scholars as "rhetorical, untrustworthy and represent[ing] a garbled account of the official story" put out after the death, hence the preference for Dio's version.<sup>831</sup> In fact, reading the plot as given, it is extremely ill-planned and short-sighted: of greatest significance is the fact that Plautianus' equestrian status stood in the way of his successfully usurping the principate. Dio's version of the events, though, given his attitude towards Caracalla noted above, should not necessarily be taken as more trustworthy. It is clear that Dio

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<sup>823</sup> Dio 77.7.2.

<sup>824</sup> Dio 77.11.1; Hdn. 3.14.2.

<sup>825</sup> Dio 78.1.4-5; Hdn. 4.1.4-5. Herodian (4.3.5-9) also claimed that there was a short-lived plan to divide the empire itself into two different realms.

<sup>826</sup> Hdn. 4.3.1.

<sup>827</sup> Hdn. 3.11-13.

<sup>828</sup> The existence of a note was what convinced Dio that the plot originated with Caracalla, since he did not believe Plautianus would have committed such things to writing. Yet in both Dio and Herodian, the note does not appear again – it is not used in condemning the prefect, an unusual omission since it seems to be the "smoking gun" in assessing the prefect's guilt. It is possible, therefore, that the note is a fabrication designed to lend credibility to the plot in both accounts.

<sup>829</sup> Hdn. 3.12.7.

<sup>830</sup> Hdn 3.12.7-11.

<sup>831</sup> Whittaker's description of Hohl's criticism (1969, 332, n. 1).

had an interest in portraying the murder in such a way as to tarnish Caracalla and to convince his readers that the young emperor was an impetuous bully, much as he does in the rest of his work. Herodian therefore should not be so easily dismissed here. When the murder of the prefect is considered in the broader context, another scenario begins to emerge, one that suggests his account offers a more plausible picture of what might actually have happened.

We must go back to the deathbed revelation of Severus' brother, Septimius Geta, to set the scene. What was said was not disclosed by Dio, but it was enough, we are told, to make Severus take a careful look at his prefect. Plautianus already knew that his position was under threat: the animosity between Caracalla and himself had been intensifying in the years 202-205. Given his proximity to the imperial family and his command of the guard, word about Septimius Geta's allegations would have quickly reached him. Furthermore, Severus himself was ill and no longer young; there is much made in the sources about his age and ailments.<sup>832</sup> Plautianus can have had no doubt as to what would happen to him should Severus die suddenly.

In all of this escalating tension within the imperial household, the figure of Geta remains conspicuously absent. As noted earlier, the literary evidence suggests that he could be equally as antagonistic as his older brother and it is easy to imagine that, even as a young teenager, Geta may have harboured considerable resentment at only being elevated to the position of Caesar in 198, especially given that less than a year separated the brothers in age.<sup>833</sup> This animosity would be aimed not only at Caracalla who had more official power than him, but also at Severus who had denied him promotion to the highest imperial level. Such bitterness may have been exploited by a senatorial faction who saw the youth as a way to regain their position. After all, several senators had supported Clodius Albinus in the civil war. Herodian notes that "many people...particularly the most distinguished senators were sending [Albinus] personal, private letters urging him to come to Rome while Severus was occupied away in the east. The nobles preferred to have him as emperor because he traced his noble birth back to a long line of ancestors and was said to be good-natured."<sup>834</sup> The new emperor took revenge on these men after Albinus' defeat. Severus sent his head back to Rome to be displayed in public and attacked his friends in the senate, producing a selection of their letters discovered among Albinus' papers. Furthermore he accused other senators of sending monetary support to Albinus, to assist in paying his troops.<sup>835</sup> Dio notes that Severus released thirty five prisoners who had supported Albinus because they were prominent senators, but put to death twenty nine others.<sup>836</sup> Furthermore Severus' recent adoption into the Antonine family along with his honouring of Commodus caused concern, according to Dio.<sup>837</sup> That some leading

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<sup>832</sup> Hdn 3.11.1; cf. also 2.15.4 (though Whittaker doubts the veracity of this account); Dio 77.16.1

<sup>833</sup> Barnes (1967), 93

<sup>834</sup> Hdn 3.5.2. Dio, undoubtedly better placed to know such things, concurs that many senators chose sides in the conflict between Severus and Albinus. See 75.4.2.

<sup>835</sup> Hdn 3.8.2-7, *passim*.

<sup>836</sup> Dio 76.8.4. Among these men is singled out Sulpicianus, father-in-law of the murdered emperor Pertinax and implicated in the "auction" of the empire. Perhaps he had acted as Albinus' agent in Rome during the civil wars.

<sup>837</sup> Dio 76.7.9. Gleason (2011) 52.

members of the senate might have been tempted to consider their options makes sense, given these circumstances.<sup>838</sup>

But who might these adherents be? In the aftermath of the murder of Geta, the sources record that there was an indiscriminate slaughter of those who had supported him.<sup>839</sup> Few names are provided, but among those listed by Dio are Valerius Patruinus (one of the praetorian prefects) and Lucius Valerius Messalla Thrax Priscus (consul in 196). Herodian mentions Afer (the young men's distant cousin and consul in 207), Tiberius Claudius Pompeianus (the grandson of Marcus Aurelius) and Helvius Pertinax (son of the former emperor and designated suffect consul for 212); he also includes 'senators distinguished by birth and wealth.'<sup>840</sup>

The individual of most interest is Aemilius Papinianus. A close companion of Severus, this man was *a libellis* to the emperor from autumn 197, at the latest, to February 202.<sup>841</sup> He was praetorian prefect by the end of May 205 and had as his colleague Quintus Maecius Laetus.<sup>842</sup> Papinian served in that post until dismissed by Caracalla in 211; the reason for the dismissal is not known.<sup>843</sup> His murder, in 212, is closely associated in the sources with that of Geta.<sup>844</sup> The removal of such a talented individual in 202 upon the family's return to Rome makes it tempting to link Papinian to the senatorial faction supporting Geta.<sup>845</sup> This is bolstered by Papinian's absence from public life in the period of 202-205.<sup>846</sup> But given the controversial nature of the position of procurator *a libellis*, the question of Papinian's involvement in the Getan faction must remain open.<sup>847</sup> Intriguingly, he next appears after the murder of Plautianus – and in the position of praetorian prefect. This appointment may have been the result of a decision to divide the responsibilities of the prefects, with Papinian handling administrative affairs while Laetus took care of military matters. Given

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<sup>838</sup> On the tense atmosphere in the capital at this time, see Daguet-Gagey (2006) 76.

<sup>839</sup> Dio 78.4.1; Hdn 4.6.1-4. The number given by Dio is 20,000, both men and women, and of every status. Yet this is clearly an exaggeration; see Sillar (2001b).

<sup>840</sup> Hdn. 4.6.2. Afer is also referred to as Lucius Septimius Aper; see Sillar (2001b) 415-17. The HA (*Car.* 3.8) provides other names but is of dubious authority.

<sup>841</sup> Honoré (1994<sup>2</sup>) 190. Honoré suggests that Papinian may have been an assistant prior to his appointment in 197. The dates are based on rescripts; see Honoré (1994<sup>2</sup>) 77. The HA (*Car.* 8.2) records that Papinian was related to Severus, though the text is ambiguous (*per secundam uxorem*); this could refer either to Severus' second wife, namely Julia Domna, or to Papinian's second wife.

<sup>842</sup> ILS 2187 mentions both men and is dated to 28 May 205.

<sup>843</sup> It has been suggested that Patruinus became prefect when Papinian was dismissed, with the latter adlected to the senate at the same time; see Meckler (1994) 121.

<sup>844</sup> Although the HA records that Papinian's son was also killed (*Car.* 4.2), there is no other evidence of this son and it is likely a creation of the author. See Sillar (2001a) 420-421.

<sup>845</sup> It is noteworthy that, also in 202, Severus appointed a stalwart, Lucius Fabius Cilo, to the post of urban prefect; see ILS 1142. The new prefect is attested by Dio to have enjoyed a close relationship with Caracalla (78.4.2). Cilo survived the purge of 212.

<sup>846</sup> It is not known what contact Papinian had with the court during those years.

<sup>847</sup> Evidence from the later third century suggests that the *a libellis* did not have to be with the emperor, as noted by Millar (1986) 278. In addition, we know of another individual performing the same task between 200 and 205 in connection with the imperial court: Aelius Coeranus (*JK Ephesus* VI [1980] no. 2026). There is, therefore, the distinct possibility that Papinian performed his duties in Rome.

Papinian's extensive experience and Severus' magnanimity, his return to such a prominent position is pragmatic.<sup>848</sup>

Yet the strongest evidence for a pro-Geta faction in Rome comes from the non-literary material. The majority of the epigraphic evidence indicates an established hierarchy between Severus and his sons (the former as the senior *Augustus*, Caracalla as junior *Augustus*, Geta as Caesar and later most junior of the *Augusti*).<sup>849</sup> The total number of inscriptions relating to Geta is inevitably small owing to the thorough nature of the *damnatio memoriae* enacted after his death. Of the 174 extant inscriptions on which his name features, only thirty-seven (c.21%) have survived intact.<sup>850</sup> This extremely high attrition rate led Murphy to comment that "in few cases has an order to efface a man's name from the monuments been so effectively carried out."<sup>851</sup>

Of interest here are a selection of inscriptions deriving from the eastern provinces, North Africa and the Pannonian/Danubian area that refer to Geta as Augustus prior to his elevation to the position in 209.<sup>852</sup> These inscriptions perhaps can be explained by the fact that the areas in question were Severan power bases, leading them to be overly enthusiastic in their presentation of the Caesar in the expectation that he would eventually become one of the *Augusti*. On the other hand, following Geta's death, Caracalla was eager to establish his own men in these regions, which may hint at pro-Getan sentiment in some of the provinces.<sup>853</sup> Because of Geta's *damnatio*, it is impossible to know to what extent the designation as Augustus occurred elsewhere in the empire before 209 or how widespread pro-Getan sentiment was among the provinces.<sup>854</sup>

More striking evidence can be found in the numismatic corpus. It would be easy to assume that the relative frequency of numismatic output struck for the men of the imperial household would reflect the established hierarchy of the *domus Caesaris* during this period, in a similar fashion to that of the epigraphic data mentioned above. This is not the case, however, and it is the coinage for Geta that upsets the pattern. Between 200 and 202, the number of coins commissioned on Geta's behalf far surpasses that of Caracalla. More surprisingly, in 202 itself, production of Getan coinage even exceeded the number struck for Severus, forming nearly half of all the

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<sup>848</sup> On Severus' clemency, see Dio 76.8.4 (senators spared after the civil war).

<sup>849</sup> Kemmers (2011) 272.

<sup>850</sup> Varner (2004) 182.

<sup>851</sup> Murphy (1945) 105.

<sup>852</sup> CIL 3.1602; CIL 3.3615; CIL 3.7540; CIL 3.7602-4; CIL 8.006; CIL 8.2527-8; CIL 8.2557; CIL 8.8991; CIL 8.9035; CIL 8.22579; AE 1910, 141; AE 1944, 74; AE 1961, 281; AE 1967, 537; AE 1967, 539; AE 1967, 569; AE 1968, 590; AE 1980, 798; AE 1981, 747-749; AE 1985, 881a; AE 1993, 1374; AE 1997, 1325; IGRR 3.1533.

<sup>853</sup> Sillar (2001a). A specific example is provided by Dacia, where the legate Postumus was removed suddenly in 212; see 117-8.

<sup>854</sup> The Arch of the Silversmiths in Rome, dating to 204, is a well-known example of the thorough nature of *damnatio* visited upon Geta. The arch's inscription has recently been reinterpreted; it is possible that Geta was singled out for specific honours as the patron of *Regio XI* (where the arch stands), though the reconstruction of the text is uncertain. See Flower (2008) 105-114.

imperial coinage created in Rome for the year.<sup>855</sup> These findings are all the more noteworthy when it is considered that, as part of the process of *damnatio memoriae*, Caracalla is alleged to have ordered all coinage bearing his brother's image to be melted down and re-struck.<sup>856</sup> Whether or not this destruction was enacted (the extant numismatic evidence featuring Geta's portraiture demonstrates the difficulty in enforcing any such order), the fact remains that the numismatic output for Geta in the opening years of the third century was entirely disproportionate to his relatively junior position within the imperial household.

It is unlikely that Geta himself lay behind this anomaly; after all, he was only 11 in 200. The question of agency in coin selection is a controversial issue owing to a paucity of definitive evidence on the subject. While it seems clear that emperors, such as Augustus and Nero, had taken an active interest in their coinage, Noreña has shown that a number of officials were involved in the organisation of the central mint and that the reality of imperial coin production was logistically complex.<sup>857</sup> Administrative control of the mint rested with the *procurator monetae*, while the secretary *a rationibus* appears to have been the official who determined the level of output.<sup>858</sup> In addition to these men were the *triumviri monetales*, attested into the Severan period, but with little information on their precise duties.<sup>859</sup> Any one of these officials could have been responsible for overseeing the Roman coinage between 200 and 202, especially when it is noted that the imperial family was travelling in the eastern provinces during this period.

The nature of the iconography on this unusually high output is also noteworthy. In terms of precious metal coinage struck at the central mint, around eighty percent of the Getan types between 200 and 202 is spread between only four different reverse themes, namely *Felicitas Publica*, *Securitas Imperii*, *Nobilitas*, and *Princeps Iuventutis*.<sup>860</sup> It is important to note that the last of these themes, the *Prince of the Youth*, seems to have been a numismatic icon commonly associated with the *Caesares* in this period.<sup>861</sup> The concentration of these reverse types for Geta differs markedly, however, from the more militaristic themes promulgated for Caracalla during the same period. If it is accepted that monetary propaganda was specifically tailored to the different figures within the imperial household, it would seem that Kemmers is correct to conclude that someone appeared to be promoting Geta's individual suitability to rule

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<sup>855</sup> Kemmers (2011) 276, 278 fig. 4.

<sup>856</sup> Dio 78.12.6.

<sup>857</sup> Suetonius, *Aug.* 94.12; *Nero* 25.2; Noreña (2010) 251-60.

<sup>858</sup> Noreña (2011) 191.

<sup>859</sup> ILS 1181, dating to the Severan period.

<sup>860</sup> For a precise breakdown of this data, see Kemmers (2011) 279 fig. 6. Consultation of the *RIC* reveals that a similar thematic concentration is repeated in the base metal coinage for the same period, but constitutes only around one third of the extant total.

<sup>861</sup> Manders (2012) 40. She has shown that the *Princeps Iuventutis* type formed ca. 35.5% of the *Caesares'* output between 193-284. This model fits perfectly with Geta, for whom the theme represents nearly 35%; see Kemmers (2011) 279.

the empire: “Geta is the hope of the empire, destined to rule and well qualified to do so.”<sup>862</sup>

While it is possible this coinage is the result of an imperial directive by Severus, what is striking about the appearance of *Princeps Iuventutis* legends in the case of Geta is the brevity of the period in which this theme and the others mentioned above appear in any significant quantity. If this coinage was intended to form the basis of a propagandistic programme devoted to the young Caesar, the logical expectation is that the concentration of imagery would be continued and sustained across a period of years rather than being abruptly halted less than twenty-four months later.<sup>863</sup> In fact, production of these coins was abruptly halted in the latter half of 202, coinciding with the return of the imperial family from the east. Furthermore, from 203 onwards, there is an identifiable shift in the iconographical emphasis of Getan coinage, with the *Princeps Iuventutis* and *Securitas* types completely disappearing from the precious metal output struck at the Roman mint.<sup>864</sup> Interestingly, the presentation of *Princeps Iuventutis* appears to increase dramatically on his base metal coinage during the same period, but the iconography contained on this output further suggests a significant change in the presentation of Geta.

The most visible characteristic of the *Princeps Iuventutis* reverses struck on precious metal between 200 and 202 is that the Caesar was presented on his own, usually carrying a combination of either a branch, spear or trophy. On the later examples found on *aes*, Geta is always accompanied by other figures, principally those of Severus and Caracalla.<sup>865</sup> Far from emphasising Geta's individual quality, the coinage struck for him from 203 onwards was designed to promote his place within the imperial household but stressed the subordinate nature of his position compared to those of his father and older brother. This change in iconography can further be paired with a general reduction in the volume of Getan coins. By the end of 204, output of coinage struck in Geta's name had been reduced by over twenty percent, clearly relegating him to the least prominent of the Severan men.<sup>866</sup>

The numismatic evidence, therefore, suggests that there was a concerted effort between 200 and 202 to promote Geta as an individual successor to the imperial throne. That this is evidence of a pro-Geta faction in Rome rather than the result of an imperial mandate is suggested by the rapid halt and reversal of this policy upon the return of the *domus Caesaris* to the capital from the eastern provinces, inferring that the output

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<sup>862</sup> Kemmers (2011) 279. For more on the tailoring of numismatic iconography to the members of the imperial household, see Manders (2012) 40.

<sup>863</sup> Individual reverse types or short runs of iconography were unlikely to have any meaningful propagandistic impact. The value of ancient coinage in propaganda was found through the concentration of similar coin types over periods of years; see Noreña (2011) 196-97.

<sup>864</sup> *Felicitas* appears to have been maintained, but in considerably reduced quantities; see *RIC* IV. 27-93.

<sup>865</sup> See *RIC* IV. 124a-125A, 130a-131.

<sup>866</sup> Kemmers (2011) 278.

was not the result of a pre-existing directive by Severus.<sup>867</sup> In support of this hypothesis, a similar epigraphic reaction can be identified, with an increase in the number of inscriptions honouring Caracalla, many proclaiming him *Princeps Iuventutis*, leading to a marginalisation of the Caesar.<sup>868</sup>

This shift away from Geta would have been emphasised as well, of course, by the marriage between Caracalla and Plautilla. With this act, the future of the Severan dynasty clearly lay with Caracalla and the future heirs that might be born to him. Any hopes that Geta might have harboured to become an Augustus would have been crushed by the marriage, an action which, in the context of the increasingly fierce fraternal rivalry, handed political dominance to Geta's loathed older brother. The marriage also would have checked the aspirations of any pro-Geta faction. By early in 204, however, it was clear that things were not going according to plan: the marriage between Caracalla and Plautilla had been a failure and no offspring had been produced; Plautianus was becoming increasingly disaffected because of the deteriorating relationship between himself and his son-in-law; Geta was still only Caesar with no prospect of advancement in sight. In the same year, Severus celebrated the Secular Games through which he hoped to promote the strength and unity of the dynasty. The Games also allowed him to highlight a connection with Augustus and to "represent himself as a new Augustus, inaugurating a period of renewal after the turmoil of civil war."<sup>869</sup> Domestic discord was not to be tolerated on such an occasion: in fact, all members of the imperial family had a prominent role in the celebrations.<sup>870</sup> One can only imagine their feelings as they took part. This forceful show of artificial unity would continue into the following year, when Caracalla and Geta were consuls together. Moreover, after the deathbed revelation of Severus' brother, Plautianus must have realised he had few options left. Given the disaffection, then, of the prefect and the young Caesar, that they might have found common interest would not be surprising.

The evidence taken as a whole, therefore, provides for the following interpretation. The senators perceived Geta as their way to toppling the unpopular Severus and Caracalla as early as 200; they may not have liked Plautianus but evidence gleaned from the aftermath of his murder and the subsequent inquiry suggests that a number were willing to work with him.<sup>871</sup> Both Geta and Plautianus would have realised that their futures were limited under the regime as it stood in 204, with power concentrated on the figure of Severus and increasingly on Caracalla: both the Caesar and the prefect were in real danger if Caracalla were ever to become sole ruler in the event that Severus died unexpectedly. The disaffected senators' animosity towards Severus owing to his Antonine pretensions and his persecution of Albinus' supporters

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<sup>867</sup> While it should be stressed that it is unlikely that senators would have been able to dictate numismatic output in the absence of the *Augusti*, it is not inconceivable (owing to the number of men involved in the production of coinage, as noted by Noreña) that pro-Getan individuals would have been able to exert influence on some of the magistrates responsible for the minting operation in the capital.

<sup>868</sup> Murphy (1945) 105.

<sup>869</sup> Gorrie (2002), 465.

<sup>870</sup> Gorrie (2002), 480, n. 100.

<sup>871</sup> Dio 77.5.1-6.

attracted them to the younger son as a malleable figurehead. Geta, for his part, had little reason to oppose any approach. The fierce resentment between himself and Caracalla was public knowledge. It might also be expected that the Caesar harboured resentment against his father in being denied a full share of power despite being only eleven months younger than Caracalla. Until 202-204, however, the closeness of Plautianus to the regime meant that any real action was impossible, since in such a bold act, the assistance of the praetorian guard would prove vital. Once the prefect's position began to decline, an approach could be made for his support. Herodian's account, whether the official version or not, offers an intriguing alternative to Dio in distancing the figure of Caracalla from the murder plot of 205 and instead making Caracalla himself an object of the conspiracy. While the author may be wrong to depict Plautianus as the mastermind behind the plan, this is hardly surprising, since accusing a Caesar of high treason was unlikely to have resonated well with the imperial household. The fact remains, though, that many stood to gain from the deaths of Severus and Caracalla. Geta would succeed to the position of ultimate power, something denied him previously. The senate would rid themselves of unpopular autocrats. Rather than coveting the throne for himself, the best that Plautianus could have hoped for in 205 was to maintain his influential position in the imperial court: his life depended on it.

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