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The Empire's Golden Shade

Icons of Sovereignty in an Age of Transition

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On the cover of this volume appears a ceremonial gold coin of the finest quality, produced in AD 346 by the Roman mint at Antioch (cf. Figure 20.1).[1] Seen in context, this medallion neatly encapsulates the main themes of this volume: administration, imperial representation, and religion. A closer look at this specific coin reveals how a fourth-century emperor had to integrate these three fields to forge the image of a ruler equal to the specific challenges of the times. The following discussion of this medallion, its ceremonial context, and the political-military circumstances draws together in a concluding epilogue the central subjects of this book and retraces how in the fourth century not only such precious coins but also the emperors themselves served as icons of sovereignty in an age of transition.

The obverse of the medallion bears the imperial titulature FL(avius) IVL(ius) CONSTANTIVS PERP(etuus) AVG(ustus) and depicts in profile the bust of Emperor Constantius II facing left in military dress, that is, in a cuirass and a general's cloak (*paludamentum*) pinned at the shoulder by a decorative brooch. The emperor is crowned with a diadem consisting of two parallel strings of pearls and a magnificent centerpiece over his brow. The reverse of the medallion shows the emperor standing facing in the car of a triumphal quadriga

1 RIC 8 Antioch 78 (erroneously described, since in contrast to RIC the medallion does not have a reverse legend); cf. Depeyrot 1996, Antioche 6–8/RIC 78 (297); Bastien 1988, 86 n. 3. The medallion is not mentioned in Cohen 1888; Gnecchi 1912; Toynbee 1944. Only two specimens of this medallion are known today. The specimen depicted here was auctioned by Leu (Auction 13, April 29, 1975, lot 503), held in the collection of Nelson Bunker Hunt, auctioned by Sotheby's New York (June 19, 1990, lot 159) and Numismatik Lanz München (Auction 106, November 27, 2001, lot 763), and finally came into the possession of Prof. Dr. Ulrich Zwicker, after whose death it entered the Numismatic Collection of Erlangen University, Germany. Dr. Hubert Lanz has kindly helped me track down the medallion, and Ms. Ilse Zwicker has generously granted reproduction rights. A further exemplar was auctioned by Leu (Auction 71, October 24, 1997, lot 542) and Numismatica Ars Classica (Auction 24, December 5, 2002, lot 305). This is the exemplar that was once held in the collection assembled by Michael Vlastos (see Kent 1981, 518 n. 78) and sold by his heirs in 1947. A cast of this specimen is in the British Museum, of which Richard Abdy has kindly provided an image.

Figure 20.1 Gold medallion of emperor Constantius II, RIC 8 Antioch 78.

drawn by four symmetrically arranged horses. He wears the *tunica palmata* and *toga picta* and is crowned by a diadem. In his left hand, he holds a scepter (*scipio*) surmounted by an eagle and, with his right hand, he scatters money to a jubilant crowd one must imagine just beyond the scene. In the field right, a Christogram appears in the form of a staurogram.

In contrast to the vast majority of Roman coin issues, the reverse does not bear a regular legend. Its suggestive, triumphal type in this case is not identified more specifically; it must speak for itself. In exergue stands merely the mint mark SMAN (= *sacra moneta Antiochia*), indicating that the medallion derives from the "sacred mint of Antioch." This abbreviation was used under Constantius exclusively for ceremonial issues of small denominations in gold or (less often) silver; it thus identifies not only the mint but also the ceremonial status of the issue.[2] The size and weight of the medallion likewise attest to its exceptional character. The medallion was coined on the standard of 1/60th a Roman pound; it is thus what today is called a festaureus (a ceremonial aureus), reminiscent of the heavier gold standard in use before Constantine introduced the solidus in AD 310 at the lower ratio of 1/72nd a Roman pound.[3]

The extraordinary artistic refinement of the medallion, its exceptional weight standard, and its production in pure gold unmistakably indicate that it was not minted for ordinary state expenditure but rather for an imperial

2 Kent 1981, 506; Baldus 1984a, 79.

3 The two specimens mentioned in n. 1 above weigh 5.32g and 5.31g. On the introduction of the solidus under Constantine and the significance of this denomination for late-antique society, see Carlà 2009; Banaji 2001.

largitio, that is, as a gift from the ruler on the occasion of a specific celebration.[4] Only high-ranking members of the civil and military administration come into consideration as the recipients of such an exceptional medallion. It is likely that the emperor regularly made such gifts of money with a fairly large number of such medallions, which were generally presented to recipients at a ceremonial occasion (an audience, the conferral of an honor, or some such event) on an ornamental silver *largitio* dish adorned with images and legends.[5] With such valuable gifts, the emperor expressed his generosity (*liberalitas*), one of the most important imperial virtues, and tangibly illustrated the benefits of his reign. The types and legends of such medallions simultaneously shaped the ruler's image. In this case, the emperor's military-triumphal quality is emphasized, insofar as he is depicted as a victorious *triumphator*. Only two specimens of this exceptional medallion are known today, but they were coined from different pairs of dies, which indicates that the original issue was not too small.[6] Hence, the Antiochene festaureus seems not to have been minted for an individual or for a small group of recipients but rather for a wider group of high-ranking supporters of the emperor. In order to elucidate the significance of the medallion, then, we must identify more closely the historical circumstances in which these pieces were distributed as imperial gifts.

The Antiochene medallion was most probably coined in spring 346, when the Sasanian king of kings Shapur II called off the three-month siege of Nisibis and retreated empty-handed.[7] The siege of Nisibis was but one episode in a

4 On the organization, significance, and scope of imperial largesse during the Principate and Late Antiquity, see Toynbee 1944, 73–121; MacMullen 1962; Delmaire 1989, 535–593, esp. 563–584; Bauer 2009; Wienand 2012, 66–86. Specifically for the fourth century, the occasions of known ceremonial issues have been reconstructed by Bastien 1988 and Beyeler 2011, although neither author makes the terminological distinction between *donativa* as special payments to soldiers and other imperial *largitiones* and *dona* specifically for the highest ranking members of the civil and military administration. The Antiochene festaureus should be viewed in the context of a *largitio*, not a *donativum*.

5 In particular on largesse dishes, see Toynbee/Painter 1986; Cameron 1992; Painter 1993; Leader-Newby 2004.

6 It is not possible, however, to assess the precise extent of the issue reliably. The exact number of coins that could be produced by an ancient die, necessary for such a calculation, is unknown. The figures cited in the literature and confirmed by experiments range from 1,000 to 40,000 coins; see Wolters 1999, 104 with n. 246 (with references to further literature). For gold issues, a higher number of pieces per die is generally assumed on account of the softness of the metal. The life span of a die, however, also depends on its position (obverse or reverse) and physical material, on the composition, temperature, and thickness of the flans, and on minting technique—factors that cannot be quantified reliably.

7 The three-month siege is mentioned by Jerome *Chron.* ad ann. 346. The dating of the Roman "victory" to spring (probably April or May) results from the circumstance that Constantius was still in Antioch on May 21 (*Cod. Theod.* 10.14.1) but already in Constantinople on May 26 (*Cod. Theod.* 16.2.10). That the conflict was over when Constantius traveled to the metropolis on the Bosporus is attested by a series of victory issues that were distributed virtually along the emperor's route, in Antioch, Nicomedia, and Constantinople (on these issues, see n. 29 in this chapter). It is less likely that the

long-lasting conflict between the Romans and Persians. In the last years of Constantine's reign, Shapur initiated an increasingly aggressive policy of threatening the Roman sphere of influence in the East. Over the course of this conflict, the Persians would besiege Nisibis three times without success: in 337 (or 338)[8], 346, and 350.[9] Yet Constantius did not take the field personally in any of these struggles for Nisibis. This is all the more surprising in the case of the second siege, since he undoubtedly was residing in Antioch not far from Nisibis at the time.[10]

Constantius' decision to keep clear of the front seems due to a carefully calculated strategy. In all the larger and smaller skirmishes along the Roman and Persian frontier during Constantius' reign, according to the testimony of the breviator Festus, Constantius participated personally in only two significant battles.[11] What one might interpret as passivity or timidity is in fact the expression of strategy, characterized by B. H. Warmington as "strictly defensive": "The Persians were to be allowed to waste their energies on lengthy sieges while Roman casualties were kept to a minimum."[12] Even if the impression that Constantius enjoyed at best mixed success on the battlefield became fixed in

emperor had gone to Constantinople before the end of the siege (thus also Barnes 1980, 164 n. 15, although he draws a different conclusion; on this, see n. 33 in this chapter). The gold medallions from Antioch were dated by Kent 1981, 502–510; Baldus 1984a; Bastien 1988, 86 with n. 3; Beyeler 2011, 132. Bastien 1988, 86 n. 3, conjectures that imperial largesses were distributed upon the conclusion of the second siege of Nisibis; it is in this context that he (plausibly, in my opinion) places the issue RIC 8 Antioch 78, which is at the center of our attention here.

8 On the date, see Portmann 1989, 8; Burgess 1999.

9 Cf. Festus *Brev.* 27: *Ter autem a Persis est obsessa Nisibis, sed maiore sui detrimento dum obsidet hostis adfectus est*. On the sieges, see Warmington 1977, 513; Lightfoot 1988; Blockley 1989, 489–490; Portmann 1989, 8; Burgess 1999; Mosig-Walburg 1999, 369–372; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 284–285. The second siege of Nisibis by the Persians is mentioned in Jer. *Chron.* a. Abr. 2362 and Festus *Brev.* 27; the evidence of Festus is critically analyzed by Portmann 1989, 14–18; Mosig-Walburg 1999, 369–372.

10 On the emperor's itinerary, see n. 33 and 34 in this chapter.

11 Festus *Brev.* 27. This statement probably refers to the so-called "Night Battle" of Singara in 344 (Mosig-Walburg 2009, 284) and a battle near Antinupolis/Constantia (thus Portmann 1989, 15) or the second battle of Singara (thus Mosig-Walburg 1999, 371; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 284). Constantius did not personally take part in the three sieges of Nisibis. Zonaras (13.7) states that Constantius inspected the fortress at the conclusion of the third siege, but only after hostilities had already ended.

12 Warmington 1977, 513; similarly, Barnes 1985, 135–136, with the reservation that Constantius had not pursued such a defensive strategy from the beginning. Seeck 1900, 1060 (cf. Seeck 1919, 194) conjectures that the second letter of Constantius to Athanasius preserved in Athan. *Apol. c. Ar.* 51.5 (and Socr. *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.8–9; Theod. *Hist. eccl.* 2.11), composed in Edessa (this at least is suggested by Athan. *Apol. c. Ar.* 51.6), dates from the summer of 346. This would place Constantius halfway between Antioch and Nisibis during the siege, which could be regarded as clear evidence of imperial intervention. It is now generally accepted, however, that the second letter dates to the year 345: cf. Martin/Albert 1985, 292 n. 53 (with reference to Athan. *Index* 17 and *Hist. ac.* 1.1–2); Barnes 1993, 220; Portmann 2006, 380 (document E 11) and 214–215 n. 137.

late-antique literature,[13] his defensive strategy was essentially effective until the fall of the fortress Amida in 359, which even eight legions and auxiliary troops could not hold.

Since Constantius dispensed with a large-scale offensive and the Persians were unable to register any substantial successes until the end of the 350s, the military confrontation of the superpowers during the forties and fifties resembled an entrenched stalemate. The Romans maintained the status quo with minimal effort; spectacular victories were out of the question. Yet the triumphal glory of the emperor still played a major part in the legitimation of his rule.[14] This is why during this bitter and largely indecisive contest, even minimally decisive Roman "victories" might loom large in imperial representation and as memorable events of the long-lasting war leave significant traces in the ancient tradition—for instance, the devastating capture of the Persian camp during the Battle of Singara in 344 or the Persians' three unsuccessful sieges of Nisibis.[15] Although Roman gains in the 340s and 350s were limited, Constantius had an understandable interest in wringing triumphal significance from his strategy's success.[16] The Antiochene festaureus clearly illustrates this effort, as its type and legend convey the idea of a totally victorious emperor. Constantius is depicted in the typical guise of a proper *triumphator* riding in the triumphal car; the military success evoked by the medallion is thus raised to the level of the most glorious victories of Roman history, even though Constantius certainly did not hold a victory parade comparable to the triumphal processions of the Roman past—nor did he have to: the Roman emperors of the fourth century promoted the idea that they were *semper triumphatores*, whose authority, legitimacy, and power did not depend on any particular military success; imperial victoriousness was rather conceived as an intrinsic and permanent quality. The Antiochene medallion supports this idea insofar as it does not explicitly refer to a particular military success: the intentional vagueness of its design blends the triumphal message with overtones of Constantius' consulship and his *vicennalia*, which is typical for late Roman victory issues.

13 Cf. Festus *Brev.* 27: *Constantius in Persas vario ac magis difficili pugnavit eventu*; Eutr. 10.10: *Diversa Constantii fortuna fuit*. Eutr. 10.10 goes so far as to list primarily Persian victories: *A Persis enim multa et gravia perpessus, saepe captis oppidis, obsessis urbibus, caesis exercitibus, nisi quod, apud Singaram, haud dubiam victoriam ferocia militum amisit . . .*

14 On this, see the chapters by Humphries and Wienand in this volume.

15 The so-called "Night Battle" of Singara was ultimately one of the most serious Roman defeats of the fourth century, but the storming of the Persian camp made it the occasion for celebrating a victory; on this, Portmann 1989 is fundamental; see also Mosig-Walburg 1999. The celebration of the end of the second siege of Nisibis is discussed later in the chapter in detail.

16 See also Portmann 1999, 318.

The ceremonial character of the medallion nonetheless suggests that the Roman success was celebrated with appropriate festivities in the imperial residence.[17] Usually the men in charge who had been responsible for a military success were decorated by the emperor and richly rewarded for their loyal service, typically during a ceremonial audience with the emperor himself. The emperor's guests included his highest-ranking officials—in the case of Constantius, these will have included the *praefectus praetorio per Orientem* Flavius Philippus, one of the emperor's most important military advisers, as well as other members of the imperial *consistorium*.[18]

How the victory was celebrated in Antioch, besides the ceremonial honors for high-ranking imperial officials implied by the existence of the gold medallions, is not directly attested.[19] Regardless of how exactly the successful defense of the nearby frontier fortress was celebrated in the imperial residence, by 346 large celebrations had long ceased to be rare in the metropolis on the Orontes. The impact of long-term imperial presence and a high concentration of imperial administrative and military officials had transformed the city into one of the liveliest and proudest centers of the later Roman empire. Antioch could boast of repeated imperial visits already in the Early and High Empire;[20] then during the Tetrarchy, Antioch served for years as the chief residence of several rulers (Galerius from 293 to 296, Diocletian from 299 to 302, Maximinus Daza from 305 to 306 and again from 309 to 313).[21] An imperial

17 Kraft 1958, esp. 144–145, 183–185, focusing on the coinage of Constantius II in the 340s, has convincingly shown that their iconography makes reference to specific events. The reflections on the iconography of the Antioch medallion of 346 presented here support Kraft's thesis.

18 PLRE 1, Philippus 7; Moser 2013, 97–101. Moser gives a revised list of senatorial officials in the eastern administration of Constantius. The list is based on PLRE 1; Kuhoff 1983, with revisions in light of recent epigraphic finds. After the Persians' retreat, probably also the governors and other administrative personnel in the neighboring provinces traveled to the court in Antioch to celebrate the victory with the emperor. These persons might also have been among those to receive the medallion.

19 In the imperial palace, such occasions were normally marked by receptions and banquets, at which the emperor was celebrated with panegyrics and in turn decorated his officials with honors and gifts; among the troops, such events typically included donatives, acclamations, and imperial addresses; in the public sphere of the city, imperial *adventus* or other processions and public games were held and largesses of money were distributed to the people; in the wake of progressive Christianization, thanksgiving and memorial services as well as ecclesiastical processions rose in importance. Such victory celebrations are occasionally called *triumphi* in the ancient sources, even if they were far from the spectacular victory processions the emperors still celebrated from time to time in the city of Rome. See especially MacCormack 1981; McCormick 1986.

20 An overview of the Roman imperial presence in Antioch down to the Flavian dynasty may be consulted in Carter 2001, 37–46. Lucius Verus, Marcus Aurelius, Septimius Severus, Caracalla, Severus Alexander, and Valerian would later reside in Antioch, sometimes for long periods of time. On the late-antique period, see Downey 1961; Liebeschuetz 1972.

21 Kuhoff 2001; see the imperial itineraries in Barnes 1982, 61–64 (Galerius), 49–56 (Diocletian), 65–68 (Maximinus).

palace was built on the Orontes island; in the nearby suburb Daphne an imperial villa complex was constructed in Tetrarchic-Constantinian times. Under Licinius and Constantine, though, imperial interest in the city initially declined: both emperors pursued de-escalation with the Persians and, it seems, deliberately avoided residing provocatively on the eastern frontier.[22] But when Shapur from the middle of the 330s made clear his intention to recover the territory lost to Galerius in 297, the situation reversed itself dramatically. In the last years of his reign, Constantine not only placed two family members in Antioch, his son and *caesar* Constantius and his half-brother and *comes* Flavius Dalmatius, but he also prepared a Persian campaign that failed to materialize only because of his death on May 22, 337.[23]

From Constantine's death until the year 350, an almost constant imperial presence is attested in Antioch[24]—with the result that further members of the imperial house, the imperial *consistorium*, central departments of the imperial administration, the court, guard units, and, besides already permanently stationed frontier troops, even further units of the mobile field army were present in the metropolis on the Orontes. "Rome is where the emperor is," as Herodian aptly put it,[25] and in the years between 337 and 350, the emperor resided regularly and sometimes for longer periods of time in Antioch and its environs, so that the city rose to become one of the most important centers of the Roman world.[26] During these years of concentrated imperial presence, the ceremonial

22 Licinius was in Antioch only in 313–314, immediately after his victory over Maximinus Daza, and Constantine probably never visited the city personally. A visit by Constantine to Antioch early in 325 is suggested by the legend of a solidus minted in Antioch (RIC 7 Antioch 48), reading ADVENTVS AVGVSTI N(ostri). Eusebius (*Vit. Const.* 2.72.2–3) implies, however, that Constantine canceled his plans to visit Antioch at short notice. The period between his stay in Constantinople on November 8, 324, and Nicomedia on February 25, 325, permits at most only a very brief visit. On the emperor's itinerary over winter 324–325, see Barnes 1982, 76. Bruun 1966, 664 n. 2 presumes that Constantine really was in Antioch; likewise Barnes 1981, 212; Barnes 1982, 76; Beyeler 2011, 117–118. See contra Bastien 1988, 78 n. 10: "la présence de Constantin semble peu probable. Son séjour dans la capitale syrienne aurait été particulièrement bref puisqu'il se trouve à Nicomédie le 25 février 325."

23 Constantius himself resided primarily in Antioch from 335, then still the *caesar* of his father Constantine entrusted with the *praefectura Orientis* including Egypt (Euseb. *Laus Const.* 3.4; Iul. *Or.* 1.13b; Sozom. *Hist. eccl.* 3.5.1). Constantine's half-brother Flavius Dalmatius (RE Delmatius 2; PLRE 1, Dalmatius 6.) also resided in Antioch; he had been appointed *censor* in 333, thereby standing equal in rank to a praetorian prefect and potentially in command of troops stationed on the eastern front (*Chron. Pasch.* s.a. 335; he is here called a στρατηγὸς Ῥωμαίων).

24 The years after Constantine's death were marked by almost constant imperial presence. From 337 to 350, Constantius used Antioch as his chief residence; on the itinerary of the emperor during this period, see Seeck 1919, 184–199; Barnes 1993, 219–224.

25 Herod. 1.6.5: ἐκεῖ τε ἡ Ῥώμη, ὅπου ποτ' ἂν ὁ βασιλεὺς ᾖ.

26 For Ausonius, Antioch was the "third city" of the empire: *Tertia Phoebeae lauri domus Antiochia* (*Ordo urb. nob.* 4). On Antioch, see also Brands 2004. Amm. Marc. 22.9.14 calls Antioch *oriens apex pulcher.*

culture of Antioch unsurprisingly also blossomed, as illustrated by the imposing list of events at court that can be reconstructed from scattered literary references and imperial medallion issues—among them such pre-eminent ceremonies as imperial accessions, jubilees, imperial *adventus*, and the inauguration of consulates.[27]

Precisely in the year 346—the same year in which the Antiochene festaureus was produced—the imperial presence in the metropolis on the Orontes manifested itself in a particularly remarkable way. Several celebrations, interrelated and interconnected in their importance for monarchic rule, are attested in Antioch beginning with the celebrations for a joint consulate of the two emperors on January 1, 346 (though only recognized in the eastern half of the empire), followed by victory celebrations after the Persian retreat in the spring and an imperial *adventus* in the summer, and ending in imperial anniversary celebrations in late summer and autumn.[28] Interwoven with these significant dates on the courtly calendar are diverse aspects such as the disputed division of power between Constantius and Constans, the triumphal representation of the emperors, and imperial religious policy. The events, their interdependence, and their representation on coin types from the Antiochene mint require closer examination, since only by viewing them in context can we ascertain just how Constantius wanted his victory over the Persians, celebrated by the Antiochene festaureus, to be understood. The most convenient starting point will be to take a broader look at the other ceremonial issues produced by the mint of Antioch in 346.

The Antiochene festaureus was not the only ceremonial issue after the end of the siege of Nisibis that illustrated the emperor's victoriousness in its iconography and legend. The medallion is directly related to a series of further *largitio* issues that were also minted for the occasion. Alongside the festaureus, an extensive issue of precious metal coins produced after the Persian retreat was minted not only in Antioch, but also in Nicomedia, Cyzicus, and Constantinople, all of which (implicitly or explicitly) refer to the felicitous outcome of the battle for Nisibis. The series consists primarily of solidi, but in Antioch additionally includes small, lightweight silver coins, the dies of which are cut with a degree of care typical for medallions. The British Museum owns a silver coin weighing just 2.23g from this series issued from Antioch (Figure 20.2).[29] The obverse bears the legend FL(avius) IVL(ius) CONSTANTIVS PERP(etuus) AVG(ustus) and depicts the bust of the emperor, facing right, crowned with a pearl diadem

27 Bastien 1988, 82–87; Beyeler 2011, 126–133.

28 On the question of the chronology, see n. 7 and n. 33 in this chapter.

29 BM R.5981 (not listed in RIC).

Figure 20.2 Lightweight silver medallion of emperor Constantius II. British Museum (R.5981).

and wearing a cuirass and *paludamentum*. On the reverse, the goddess Victory is depicted walking left, holding a palm branch in her left hand and shouldering a trophy and, in her right hand, holding a victory wreath encircling the number XXV. In front of her kneels a typical Persian barbarian, who conjures the Persian military defeat with the gesture of supplication. The legend reads VICTORIA AVGVSTORVM, "victory of the emperors." The number XXV refers to the *vota* for the twenty-fifth jubilee of the elevation of Constantius to *caesar*.[30] The very same iconography is used on the reverses of solidi minted in Antioch, Nicomedia, Cyzicus, and Constantinople.[31] Such coins were issued not only with the portrait of Constantius on the obverse but also with that of Constans.[32]

The fine design of the series and its execution in the precious metals gold and silver suggest a ceremonial character; yet the fact that it was produced

30 Strictly speaking, this jubilee commenced in 348–349; Kent 1981, 51, however, has plausibly argued that the Antiochene *xxv*-issues were produced already in the year 346, as if in anticipation of the correct date of the jubilee, and accordingly overlapped with the tenth anniversary of the emperor's elevation as *augustus*. The issue of *vota* types in advance of the actual date is not uncommon in the Tetrarchic-Constantinian period. The highly triumphal character of the types suggests some connection between the *vota* issues and the victory issues, centering on the Roman victory in battle for the frontier fortress of Nisibis; contra Baldus 1984a, 82 n. 18.

31 The statement in Kent 1981, 467, that coins of this type are found only in Nicomedia and Antioch, is mistaken. The specific issues are (1) Antioch: RIC 8 Antioch 79 (cf. Depeyrot 1996, Antioche 6/1); (2) Nicomedia: RIC 8 Nicomedia 26–28 (cf. Depeyrot 1996, Nicomédie 3/1–2); (3) Cyzicus: CNG Auction Triton 8, lot 1259 (this coin has not yet been registered in scholarly reference works); (4) Constantinople: RIC 8 Constantinople 55 (= Depeyrot 1996, Constantinople 2/1).

32 Three variants of this type are attested specifically from Nicomedia in RIC 8 (Nicomedia 26–28); the obverse shows Constantius or Constans with the titulature FL(avius) IVL(ius) CONSTANTIVS PERP(etuus) AVG(ustus) or FL(avius) IVL(ius) CONSTANS PERP(etuus) AVG(ustus), respectively.

only in light silver coins and simple solidi and not in more valuable multiples likely means that the pieces were not distributed to the highest-ranking members of the ruling elite but more probably were used for donatives primarily in honor of the lower and middle levels of the military. The fact that these issues were also produced in Nicomedia and Constantinople supports the conjecture that Constantius halted at Nicomedia on his way back to the capital on the Bosporus, which he visited in early 346 after the Persian retreat, and there also distributed an imperial largesse.[33] Constantius certainly seems to have made constant use of the land route between Antioch and Constantinople; and precisely during his reign, we can detect the dramatic expansion of the harbors along the Levant, on the southern and western coasts of Asia Minor, and in Constantinople for military purposes, which seems to justify the inference that some part of the logistics, provisioning, and personnel arrangements to accommodate the emperor's movements between Antioch and Constantinople in the 340s was managed by sea route.[34] Since the victory issue is also attested in Cyzicus, it seems likely that imperial officials traveling on the sea route between Antioch and Constantinople were also honored here.

The element of the imperial titulature *perpetuus augustus* and the *vota* count of the *vot xxv* issues highlight an aspect that is not expressed on the festaureus: the duration and permanence of Constantius' reign. The timeless quality of the political order is stressed here, which according to the logic of the iconography and legend results directly from the emperor's victoriousness. The *perpetuitas, aeternitas*, and *sempiternitas* of triumphal rulership is also frequently invoked in late-antique panegyrics. The iconography of the *vot xxv* issues thus expands the semantic field of the image of the triumphal ruler by means of topical concepts that were not new, but could not be omitted from the image of a triumphal ruler.

The emperor's victoriousness, which serves as the basis for the permanence of the political order, is conceived as an innate, intrinsic characteristic of Constantius that enables him to surpass even the most glorious precedents of ancient military genius. This emerges from a special siliqua issue at Antioch that likewise is connected to the Roman "victory" over the Persians. The coin

33 The assumption that Constantius had left the Syrian metropolis Antioch after the retreat of the Persian troops in order to travel to Constantinople, has been proven wrong by the existence of a 1½-solidus multiple from the mint of Antioch in honor of the FELIX ADVENTVS AVG(usti) N(ostri): RIC 8 Antioch 75. Bastien 1988, 86 n. 3 speculates rightly, in my opinion, that this issue refers to Constantius' return from Constantinople in summer 346.

34 Drinkwater 2004, xvi, notes the "continuing overriding importance of travel by land." A series of harbors was built along the sea route from Antioch to Constantinople; M. Moser (Frankfurt) is currently pursuing a research project on the military harbors under Constantius II.

Figure 20.3 Siliqua coin of emperor Constantius II, RIC 8 Antioch 36.

presents a portrait bust of Constantius facing right in heroic-divine nudity, gazing upward, crowned with a pearl diadem (Figure 20.3).[35] The iconography of this type recalls Hellenistic models and adopts a portrait type that was connected first and foremost with Alexander the Great.[36] Constantius is thus deliberately assuming the role of a Novus Alexander.

With Constantius, though, this portrait type opens yet another interpretive level through dynastic reference to his father Constantine: this Alexanderesque ruler portrait was issued extensively for the first time in the history of Roman coinage for the *vicennalia* of Constantine shortly after he had won sole power over the entire empire in civil war by defeating Licinius, his last rival in the collapsing Tetrarchy.[37] The types in question were issued by all Constantinian mints until Constantine's death in 337. Not only was Constantine's portrait designed gazing upward and wearing a diadem like Alexander, but the coins were also issued for the *caesares*, including Constantius himself. Thus in Antioch in 346, Constantius revived an issue that had first been minted for him as *caesar* twenty years earlier.

The reference to his father's coinage in the siliqua issue from Antioch is calculated to stress the legitimacy of Constantius' right to rule. This dynastic element is reinforced by means of an interesting peculiarity of the portrait: busts of Constantius on his own coinage normally depict him with a large and

35 RIC 8 Antioch 36.

36 See R.-Alföldi 1963, 93–94. The resemblance is especially vivid in RIC 7 Constantinople 53—a type that draws inspiration directly from the massive issue of tetradrachms of Lysimachus depicting the portrait of Alexander on the obverse and Athena Nikephoros on the reverse.

37 Some particularly interesting types of this extensive series are discussed in Lenski's contribution to this volume.

remarkably straight nose—as does the Antiochene festaureus, for example. In the Novus Alexander issue of 346, however, Constantius sports the aquiline nose typical of his father. The issue thus depicts Constantius not only as Novus Alexander but also as a Novus Constantinus. These physiognomic loans from his father must have been intended to evoke the idea of inherited charisma with exceptional vividness.[38]

With the issue of 346, reference to Alexander the Great is placed firmly in the realm of foreign politics and is clearly intended as an affront to the Persians.[39] This emerges not only from the immediate context of the Antiochene issue of 346 but also from two exceptional literary witnesses in which Constantius is directly linked with Alexander the Great:[40] the *Res gestae Alexandri Macedonis* and the *Itinerarium Alexandri Magni Trianique*. The *Res gestae* are the first Latin translation of the Greek Alexander romance, probably composed and dedicated to the emperor toward the end of the 330s by Iulius Valerius Alexander Polemius, a *vir clarissimus* from Alexandria and consul of 338.[41] The *Itinerarium* is a brief description of the deeds of Alexander and Trajan, although only the section on Alexander is extant; it was composed around 340 by an anonymous author, probably also Valerius.[42] Since the preface of the *Res gestae* has been lost, how the author introduced the connection between

38 Already Constantine had based his own imperial self-representation on that of his father Constantius I (Chlorus); in this manner, an iconographically interrelated representation of the Constantinian dynasty could develop over the generations of rulers. On dynastic rule, see Börm's contribution to this volume.

39 Such a message referring directly to the Persians had not been explicit in the coins issued under Constantine, which served as Constantius' model. Constantine appears to have attempted to free Alexander imagery from its classical reference to foreign events and apply it instead to his successes within the empire, in particular, the acquisition of sole rule, the integration of the eastern half of the empire into his territory, and the foundation of his victory city, Constantinople.

40 From the beginning of the empire, the Roman emperors regularly made both implicit and explicit references to Alexander the Great, but such references became especially frequent during the Tetrarchy and under the members of the Constantinian dynasty. In general, on the two works discussed in the following, see Cracco Ruggini 1965; Barnes 1985, 135–136; Lane Fox 1997; Callu 1999; Bohmhammel 2008.

41 The most recent edition is Rosellini 2004; further editions and literature on the *Res gestae Alexandri Macedonis* are collected in Schmidt 1989, 212; on their socio-historical context, see Bohmhammel 2008; for the identification with the consul of 338, see Lane Fox 1997, 242–243 with n. 24.

42 Editions and literature on the *Itinerarium* are collected in Fuhrmann 1989, 214–215. Merkelbach 1954, 182, and Cracco Ruggini 1965, 5, date the text to the years 340 to 345; Barnes 1985, 135, "close to 340"; Fuhrmann 1989, 214–215, "bald nach 340"; Callu 1992, 439: February 340 at the latest. Merkelbach 1954: 179–182 (reiterated in Merkelbach 1977, 101) and Lane Fox 1997, hold that the author of the *Itinerarium* was also Valerius. The author certainly has relied on Arrian and the Greek text or on the translation of Pseudo-Callisthenes made by Valerius; see Merkelbach 1954, 179–182. The author imitates Varro (§3.6), who dedicated his *Ephemeris Navalis* to Pompey for the war in Spain: *Itin. Alex.* 3(6).

his historical subject and the dedicatee is impossible to determine in detail. The exordium of the *Itinerarium*, however, reveals how a high-ranking aristocrat close to the emperor might attempt to curry favor with comparisons to Alexander the Great and a flattering ruler image.[43] Since the text is close in date to the Antiochene coinage and refers to the same series of military conflicts, a closer look is warranted.

In the exordium of the *Itinerarium*, Constantius, the *bonis melior imperator*,[44] is compared to Alexander the Great and Trajan in detail:

> You are now at the same age as the one, while you possess the strategic ability of the other, by which you stand to gain advantage over your own youth. With Alexander, then, for the present you shall be thus equated: he was surnamed 'Great', while you are the son of the 'Greatest'; you were born in roughly the same part of the world as he was, and it is to the same area that you lead your army, which in the number of its soldiers is equal to his, though superior in its standard of training; you mean to avenge a like injury, though it was not of equivalent insolence. Quite rightly therefore may one presume that you, fighting under the same auspices, may gain the same degree of good fortune.[45]

Alexander, Trajan, and Constantius here constitute a triumphal triad: as Alexander triumphed over the Achaemenids and Trajan over the Parthians, so now Constantius has humbled the empire of the Sasanid Persians, "to the end that the latter, who have so long trembled at Roman arms, may finally be enrolled by you among our peoples and then be given Roman citizenship among your provinces, where they may learn to be free by the grace of their conquerors."[46] The author thus elaborates on the topical, traditional goal of *propagatio imperii*, though in a situation that called for holding the areas conquered by Galerius and maintaining the allegiance of buffer states to the Roman empire.[47]

43 In particular on the exordium, see the detailed commentary by Callu 1992.

44 *Itin. Alex.* 1(1); cf. the senatorial acclamation *felicior Augusto, melior Traiano* mentioned in Eutr. 8.5.3.

45 *Itin. Alex.* 4(8–10) (trans. Davies 1998).

46 *Itin. Alex.* 2(5) (trans. Davies 1998).

47 Barnes 1985, 135–136, interprets the call for aggressive action against the Persians as a sign that the defensive strategy that marked the Romans' subsequent actions crystallized only gradually. However, the Antiochene siliqua issue of 346 and the other triumphal victory issues of this year show that Constantius even portrayed himself as Novus Alexander when the goal of *propagatio imperii* had long been abandoned. Whether the highly topical *Itinerarium* thus can provide reliable evidence for the emperor's strategy is doubtful.

In the *Itinerarium*, Alexander exhibits the typical ambivalence between a military genius and conqueror, on the one hand, and an egomaniacal adventurer, on the other, as he is depicted generally from a Roman perspective. In the *Itinerarium*, Constantius proves equal to Alexander's abilities as a general and surpasses him by far in strategic ability, which in turn connects him to Trajan: for "fortune favored the rational planner" (§2[3]). But ultimately, it is Constantius' place as a member of the Constantinian dynasty that gives him a decisive edge. In his youth, Constantius emulates not only Alexander but also the achievements of his father as a mature man, whereby he "may outdo the great deeds of the most famous of all past supreme commanders" (§2[3]). As the "son of the 'Greatest' " (§4[9]), Constantius is both son and brother "of the two very mighty Constantines," whose accomplishments are represented in the *Itinerarium* as the greatest and most successful that can serve as *exempla*.[48]

Membership in the Constantinian dynasty also permits Constantius to rely on a more effective guardian deity than either Alexander and Trajan could:

> Quite rightly one may presume that you, fighting under the same auspices (as Alexander), enjoy equally good fortune; for up to now you have been his peer in emulation, but you eventually will deserve greater success, namely because your guardian god hears prayers conceived in righteousness and moderation more gladly than those made rapaciously by the reckless arrogance of a savage disposition.[49]

Against the background of these passages, in which membership in the Constantinian dynasty makes Constantius significantly superior to Alexander, we can also understand why Constantius did not simply adopt the Novus Alexander imagery as such but rather incorporated in it (in the form of the nose) a clearly recognizable reference to Constantine.[50]

Reference to Constantine simultaneously emphasizes the religious element explicitly raised also in the *Itinerarium*. Constantine's Novus Alexander portrait could also easily be read in a Christian manner, as attested by Eusebius in the *Vita Constantini*. One could recognize, the bishop asserts, how great the force of belief in Constantine's soul was in the fact that the emperor had himself depicted on his gold coins gazing upward, "like a man reaching toward God in

48 *Itin. Alex.* 2(4). Constantius had also inherited the conflict from Constantine: §2(5) *Tibi in Persas hereditarium munus est*: "You have an inherited duty (of war) against the Persians."

49 *Itin. Alex.* 4(10) (trans. Dillon).

50 This clearly shows that it is not merely Valerius who sees membership in the Constantinian dynasty as an essential characteristic of Constantius' rule. With the *nomen gentile* Flavius, Constantius emphasizes his dynastic connection to his glorious predecessor in almost all of his coin and medallion issues.

prayer."[51] The coin design may not warrant a primarily religious interpretation of the new portrait, but the self-representation of the first Christian emperor makes it possible and, to a certain extent, promotes it: in his description of the reform of military ritual in 321, Eusebius cites the upward-looking gaze as a key aspect of the new form of worship, which was marked by numerous, albeit implicit, references to the traditional sun cult, but could also be understood in a Christian sense.[52] The iconographic formula of the upward gaze must have acquired religious or cultic significance at least within the military context. The charismatic resemblance to Alexander in the new Constantine portrait could thus merge with the metaphorical solar imagery of Constantine's self-representation. The Christian interpretation was a possible but by no means obligatory reading of the dazzling new image of the emperor.

The opening of key aspects of monarchic representation for Christian readings is far from a systematic Christian redefinition of the emperor's role: both the coins and the ruler conception in the *Itinerarium* still clearly draw primarily on traditional military charisma. And it is precisely the classical imperial role of the successful general and glorious conqueror that could not easily accommodate Christian demands on the position and function of the Roman monarch in a Christian world.[53] This incompatibility of Christianity and the ruler's military image is also illustrated by the fact that the Christogram on the Antiochene festaureus (Figure 20.1) is not integrated directly into the iconography of the type. Instead, the medallion is marked by a disjointed juxtaposition of Christian and traditional typological elements. In an almost identically designed coin bearing the legend GLORIA ROMANORVM (about which more later), this Christian symbol is lacking entirely without affecting the basically triumphal message of the iconography and text. Quite obviously, Christianity and military charisma at the time had not yet become fused in an unbreakable bond.

The imperial ideology of victory illustrates that Christianization at first remained limited to the sporadic use of religious set pieces and had not led to a systematic synthesis of Christianity and Roman imperial rule; and at least in the military sphere, it had not yet entailed the propagation of specific doctrine.[54] It is rather the weal and woe of the Roman state in a very traditional

51 Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 4.15.1–2.

52 On this, see Wienand 2012, 319–329.

53 In his contribution to this volume, Harold Drake investigates how these claims developed and gradually shaped the emperors' self-understanding.

54 An emperor like Julian could only arrive at the conclusion that this development could be reversed, since at the middle of the century Christian and traditional views still stood so disjointedly alongside one another. At the death of Theodosius some thirty years later, the Roman world looked quite different; the idea of a return to the pagan past could now no longer seriously be entertained.

sense that takes center stage, as emerges clearly from the *Itinerarium*. There, the emperor's efforts toward *salus Romana* constitute the central test of imperial legitimacy and the cardinal point of his *aemulatio Alexandri*:

> Alexander boasted that he had won his victories for himself alone, and became the more cruel to his friends as his success increased; in his enjoyment of victory he became enraged at those who expressed indignation at this. You, by contrast, will be fighting for the welfare of Rome (*saluti vero Romanae tu militans*), destined soon to rival him in empire at a time of life equal to his; and for this, immortal glory shall go with you.[55]

By citing *salus Romana* as the goal of warfare, the author implicitly evokes the idea of an *aureum saeculum*, which dawns again and again in the coin issues of the year 346. A gold medallion exhibiting nearly identical iconography and legend to the Antiochene festaureus makes this connection most explicitly, and it serves as the most important issue for comparison. The only known specimen of this type is held today in the British Museum. The piece was also struck on the standard of 1/60 a Roman pound (and so also a festaureus) and the iconography of its reverse type is largely identical (Figure 20.4).[56] Here, too, the emperor rides in a triumphal quadriga, holds a scepter with an eagle in his left hand, and throws coins to an imaginary crowd with his right hand. But for all the similarity between the two ceremonial aurei, there are two striking differences: on the specimen in the British Museum, the Christogram is missing, but now the coin bears a regular reverse legend (in contrast to the reverse of the Antiochene festaureus introduced first above). The absence of the Christian symbol shows that it was not an essential component of the iconography but should rather be viewed as an optional semantic accessory, the absence of which did not fundamentally alter the basic message of the triumphal depiction of the ruler. How the military representation of the ruler and the Christianization of the Roman monarchy interact has been explored earlier in this chapter. Therefore, in the following, we turn our attention to the second difference between the two medallion types: the legend.

In the history of Roman coin and medallion issues, reverse types depicting the emperor in a quadriga drawn by horses or elephants are combined with a wide variety of legends, among them, for example, FELICIT(as) AVGVSTORVM, TRIVMP(hus) AVG(usti), or INNVMERI TRIVMFI AVG(usti) N(ostri).[57] Since the reverse legend is directly related to the reverse type and

55 *Itin. Alex.* 4(11) (trans., with minor alterations, Davies 1998); cf. 3(6).

56 RIC 8 Antioch 77.

57 On coins and medallions depicting the Roman emperor as triumphator in the quadriga, see Mittag (forthcoming).

Figure 20.4 Gold medallion of emperor Constantius II, RIC 8 Antioch 77.

thus serves as an immediate commentary on the type, the legend is of no small importance for our understanding of the medallion as a whole. On the medallion in the British Museum, the expression *gloria romanorum* was chosen as a commentary on the depiction of the emperor progressing on his triumphal car. This choice of words entails that the imperial victoriousness expressed in the image does not serve to glorify the victorious emperor exclusively but rather refers to the glory and greatness of the entire Imperium Romanum and its citizens.

How the concept *gloria romanorum* should be understood in the context of the year 346 specifically, can be reconstructed with the evidence of a series of thematically related issues. Via the legend GLORIA ROMANORVM, the Antiochene festaurei make reference to a series of still more precious issues (up to 4½-solidi multiples, weighing approximately 20g of pure gold) minted at Antioch in the years 343 to 348 and bearing the same reverse legend GLORIA ROMANORVM.[58] Either Roma or Constantinopolis, or both city Tyches together, are depicted on the reverses of these issues (Figure 20.5). One of several peaks in the production of these issues was the joint consulship of Constantius and Constans in 346. The medallions, therefore, were distributed in a ceremonial context in Antioch at a point in time near the festaurei; at least part of them presumably will have gone to the same recipients.[59]

58 RIC 8 Antioch 69–74. On the date, see the following footnote.

59 The issues can be dated from 343 to 348, during which period there appear to have been three peaks: the *vicennalia* celebration in 343 (Baldus 1984a, 82 n. 18), the joint consulship in 346 (Bastien 1988, 86 n. 3), and a final peak around the year 348 (Toynbee 1947, 140–141; Kent 1981, 504). Kraft 1958, 146, has conjectured that the eleven-hundredth anniversary of the city of Rome may have played a part; but, as Portmann 1999, 308, has shown, there is no evidence of Secular Games.

Figure 20.5 Gold medallion of emperor Constantius II, RIC 8 Antioch 72.

The *gloria romanorum* issues with the city Tyche types evidently were intended to project the notion of a harmoniously unified empire ruled by both consuls, Constans in the West (notionally centered on Rome) and Constantius in the East (notionally centered on Constantinople).[60] Hence, coins bearing not only the portrait of Constantius, but also that of Constans were issued. If then the reverse legend of these consulship issues, GLORIA ROMANORVM, was chosen also for the festaureus in the British Museum, celebrating victory in battle against the Persians, this must indicate that Constantius wanted the victory to be understood as a victory of all Romans: his achievements benefit not just himself and his own territory but the entire Roman empire. His co-ruler Constans is thus also implied.

The fact that Constantius indeed intended, not to claim the victory for himself alone, but rather to include his western co-ruler in it, emerges with exceptional clarity in a 9-solidi gold multiple—a medallion consisting of 41.9g of pure gold, the most precious known medallion minted under Constantius, today in the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (Figure 20.6).[61] It also was produced in honor of the Roman victory at Nisibis and impressively juxtaposes the motifs of triumph and the unity of the empire. The obverse depicts a portrait of Constantius in cuirass and *paludamentum* with the titulature D(ominus) N(oster) CONSTANTIVS MAX(imus) AVGVSTVS. The emperor is crowned with a pearl-rosette diadem, gesturing with his raised right hand and holding

60 The exceptional importance of both these centers for the late-antique Imperium Romanum was strongly emphasized and supported by Constantine; see the chapters by Bleckmann and Lenski in this volume.

61 RIC 8 Antioch 67; see also Baldus 1984a, 86–87 (convincingly dating to 346).

Figure 20.6 Gold medallion of emperor Constantius II, RIC 8 Antioch 67.

a Victoriola (i.e., a small statue of Victory upon a globe) in his left hand, thus conveying the idea of the emperor's triumphant victoriousness together with the claim to universal rule. While the obverse is limited to familiar pictorial and textual elements *grosso modo*, the reverse is extraordinary. Under the legend DD(omini) NN(ostri) CONSTANTIVS ET CONSTANS AVGG(usti), both emperors are depicted in equal size, stature, and stance, facing, standing in a car drawn by six symmetrically arranged horses. Each of the emperors, depicted nimbate and in full dress uniform with *paludamentum*, holds a globe in his left hand and gestures with his raised right hand. The emperors are flanked by two hovering Victories that crown them with garlands. The mint mark A–N in the exergue indicates Antioch as the mint, and the ceremonial status of the issue is highlighted by the inclusion of objects related to a *largitio* between the letters: wreaths, money bags, and a money basket.

The triumphal imagery of the medallion, evoked already in the essentially still conventional design of the obverse, is heightened to an unusual degree in the reverse type. Triumphal rulership is not limited exclusively to Constantius but rather is attributed to both emperors, who are depicted in harmonious unity, whereby their different statuses are also emphasized: in accord with his greater *tribunicia potestas* and age, Constantius is named first; he also takes the title *maximus augustus* on the obverse, clearly establishing his primacy with respect to his co-ruler. The medallion thus illustrates a successful joint rule under the supremacy of Constantius.

The fact that Constantius and Constans are depicted here as harmonious co-rulers prevented neither of them from reserving precisely the most precious medallions for individual self-representation. This is shown by two further

Figure 20.7 Gold medallion of emperor Constantius II, RIC 8 Antioch 68.

9-solidi medallions connected to the piece just described: one from Antioch and one from Aquileia. The medallion from Antioch, of which the only known specimen is in the Staatliches Münzkabinett of Berlin (Figure 20.7), was struck with the same obverse die as the piece in the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg; thus, with high probability, it belongs to the same issue.[62] The reverse, however, is dedicated to Constantius alone. With the legend D(ominus) N(oster) CONSTANTIVS VICTOR SEMPER AVG(ustus), the emperor is depicted alone in the car in an otherwise identical setting (drawn by six horses, flanked and crowned by two Victories).

Both extraordinary Antiochene medallions with the six-horse carriage are complemented by a "Gegenstück" (H. R. Baldus) minted in Aquileia—likewise a 9-solidi multiple with triumphal iconography that draws in several ways on the Antiochene medallion, even demonstrably copying it and likewise datable with some certainty to 346 (Figure 20.8).[63] The obverse type is virtually identical in design. On the reverse, Constans is depicted alone in a martial pose. Armed with helmet, spear, shield, cuirass, and *paludamentum*, the emperor

62 RIC 8 Antioch 68; Dressel 1973, no. 233; Gnecchi 1912, vol. 1, no. 4; see Baldus 1984a, 90–94. According to Dressel, the piece was minted at the same time as the medallion from the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Baldus 1984a, 91–92 with n. 50, prefers a later date (356–357); his argument for a *terminus post quem* of 350 ("Constans zu Lebzeiten wegzulassen . . . wäre aber angesichts der Vorlage ein Fauxpas gewesen") is not convincing, however, in light of the close connection to RIC 8 Antioch 67.

63 RIC 8 Aquileia 35 (= Dressel 1973, no. 216); cf. Baldus 1984a, 88–90. Two specimens of this medallion are known; the piece illustrated here is in the Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin; a further copy was in the private collection of Vierordt, auctioned by Schulman, March 5, 1923, lot 2718, then in the collections of the Johns Hopkins University and J. W. Garrett, and auctioned by Leu (October 16, 1984, lot 341) and again by Leu (May 5, 2003, lot 1001).

Figure 20.8 Gold medallion of emperor Constans, RIC 8 Aquileia 35.

drags a male barbarian behind him by the hair, while a female barbarian is depicted in supplication before him. The emperor is crowned by a Victory hovering behind him.

The issues in which Constantius and Constans individually stage their victoriousness in reference only to themselves permit us to recognize the great potential of military success for profiling the legitimacy of an emperor's rule. Constantius knew how to take advantage of this potential, but he refrained from exploiting it against his western co-ruler. He cites his own victories not to demonstrate his superiority to Constans but rather to conjure the image of an intact, harmoniously ruled empire, in which East and West unite in solidarity, and one cannot think of Constantinople or Rome without thinking of the other. The Antiochene medallion issues of 346 thus incorporate references to the victoriousness of Constantius into an overall picture of the harmonious joint rule of the brothers. This is striking and demands an explanation.

The reason imperial harmony resounds so clearly in 346 has to do with the emperors' joint consulship and the tenth jubilee of their joint reign, which fell on September 9.[64] Both events were interrelated to a certain extent and prominently celebrated in Constantius' coin and medallion issues. Especially the consular issues of 346 are marked by the picture of harmonious consular colleagues. A series of gold multiples conveys this most vividly: the reverse bears the legend DD(omini) NN(ostri) CONSTANTIVS CONSTANS AVGG(usti), showing the brothers in identical, full-length consular portraits, each wearing

64 On September 9, 337, Constantius, Constans, and Constantinus assumed the title *augustus* together: *Chron. min.* 1.235; Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 4.68. On September 9, 346, the beginning of the tenth year of this joint rule was celebrated.

Figure 20.9 Gold medallion of emperor Constantius II, NAC 31 (2005), no. 157.

the consular toga, nimbate, and holding a scepter in the right hand and a globe in the left (Figure 20.9).[65] Constantius is normally named first, depicted standing on the ceremonially more important left-hand side, and slightly larger in size; otherwise, no differences can be detected. Thus harmony between the two co-rulers stands in center stage.

The issues were presumably produced for the celebration of the *processus consularis*, when both consuls officially entered office, traditionally on January 1. In 346, Constantius was celebrating his fourth consulship; Constans, his third. The brothers had held the consulship together twice previously, in 339 and 342. Constantius probably celebrated the official beginning of this third joint consulship in Antioch, where he seems to have resided at the time.[66] Constans meanwhile was either on the Rhine frontier or in Illyricum.[67] Constantius thus celebrated the *processus consularis* alone in Antioch.

Graver than the physical absence of Constantius' consular colleague was the fact that Constans initially refused to recognize their joint consulship in his half of the empire. While Constantius' self-representation evokes the picture of harmonious relations between the two co-rulers, tensions had risen to such a pitch in 346 that it proved impossible to come to terms even on such a basic question as the holding of the consulship. The eastern issues of 346 thus are not a reliable reflection of a smoothly functioning joint rule; rather they evoke an

65 NAC Auction 31, October 26, 2005, lot 157. The two-solidi piece illustrated has not been published previously; a 1½-solidi multiple identical in design is discussed by Baldus 1984a, 83–85, with general remarks on the consular issues of 346; cf. Bastien 1988, 86f. c, n. 2.

66 Kent 1981, 504.

67 Constans' whereabouts during the years after 345 are not entirely known; see Barnes 1980, 165–166.

ideal state of affairs far removed from reality. What the harmonious coin types were intended to communicate can be established only by taking into account the brothers' conflict-ridden relationship.

In the period up to 346, shifting tensions can be detected that threatened to escalate into a full military confrontation. At the climax of the crisis, in the years 344–345, Constans even threatened Constantius explicitly with war.[68] The eastern and western halves of the empire appear here to have reached an impasse.[69] There had been tensions already before the civil war between Constans and Constantinus that were exacerbated after Constantinus' death in 340. The outcome of the civil war had placed the younger brother, despite his formally lower rank, at the head of a much larger territory that included the traditional capital Rome. Constantius himself had not intervened in the civil war, abstaining from realizing his political interests by military means—as Julian would later explain, not implausibly, because Constantius' hands had been tied by the struggle against the Persians.[70]

Constans subsequently exploited Constantius' difficult situation to strengthen his own claim of supremacy. He put his eastern co-ruler under pressure by giving their political conflict a religious dimension.[71] In particular, Constans used the fate of the Alexandrian bishop Athanasius as a touchstone for his position and authority within the imperial college. Athanasius adhered to the Nicene Creed strictly and did not shy from confrontation with the emperor. He had already been exiled several times under Constantine, after whose death he quarreled with Constantius and the Arian bishops of the eastern half of the empire, who had benefited under Constantius' religious policy. Just a few months after Constantius' accession, the dispute between Constantius and Athanasius culminated in the renewed exile of the bishop, who was forced to live in the West, where a growing number of bishops interceded with Constans on his behalf.[72]

Constans had taken the side of the majority of western bishops, who demanded that Athanasius be restored to his see in Alexandria. The western emperor apparently recognized that he could force Constantius with this

68 On the dating, see Portmann 1999, 302–304.

69 Lib. *Or.* 170–171; Athan. *Hist. Arian.* 19.3–4; see Portmann 1999, 303–304.

70 In his second panegyric to Constantius, he attempts to explain this with Constantius' moderation; cf. Iul. *Or.* 1.18b–20b, 41b–d, 47a–d (cf. Them. *Or.* 2.38c–d); *Or.* 2.95a.

71 Portmann 1999, 329 characterizes this as "Constans' Funktionalisierung des kirchlichen Dissenses für seine eigenen Machtansprüche." Diefenbach, who has analyzed the ecclesiastical controversies under Constantius II for this volume, also states that Constans "seized upon empire-wide religious standardization as a means of putting Constantius under political pressure."

72 On this, see also Steffen Diefenbach's contribution to this volume.

demand into a subordinate position in religious politics and thus turn the formal hierarchy of the imperial college on its head to his advantage. Since Constantius was preoccupied by the troubles on the eastern front and seems to have had neither the will nor the strength to risk yet another military conflict, he actually made concessions to Constans. In 342 or 343,[73] the Council of Serdica was convened to resolve the conflict over Athanasius. The council had been demanded by Constans, and Constantius had complied, but the delegation of eastern bishops rejected Constantius' intention of reaching a compromise. The conflict thus continued to escalate, until the threat of war and impasse described above.

Seemingly impressed, Constantius finally yielded in 345 and suggested that he would permit Athanasius to return to the Alexandrian see. Some time would pass, however, before Athanasius resumed his duties; Constans meanwhile left reconciliation with Constantius in limbo. W. Portmann argues persuasively that Constans did not accept the joint consulship as the symbol of their political settlement until Athanasius actually recovered his position in Alexandria on October 21, 346.[74] Until then, Constans had not nominated a pair of consuls of his own in his own territory—a conspicuous sign of restraint toward the extorted offer of reconciliation from Constantius: a majority of administrative documents from the West in 346 show a dating by postconsulate according to the consuls of the preceding year, Amantius and Albinus. Only after Athanasius' restoration does Constans appear to have accepted the joint consulship of the two emperors also in the West and thus expressed the restoration of the brothers' consensual rule.[75] Even if political relations between the two emperors remained tense, their newly won domestic consensus was still widely celebrated in the coinage, not least in the extensive *fel(icium) temp(orum) reparatio* series.[76]

Constans thus was able to impose his political will on the higher-ranking Constantius and obtain formal recognition of his authority. This struggle for rank and status had, as has been seen, far-reaching effects on the rulers' ceremonial and monarchic representation. These effects are especially palpable in the numismatic record because this type of source material is preserved in comparably comprehensive numbers; because concentrated, yet semantically nuanced evidence for monarchic representation may be read in the

73 On the dating, see Portmann 1999, 301 with n. 3.

74 Portmann 1999, 307–308.

75 Since the political reconciliation of the two emperors occurred in October, Constantius had to celebrate alone not only the joint consulship, but also the tenth jubilee of their joint rule on September 9.

76 see Kraft 1958; Portmann 1999; Olbrich 2004.

iconography and legends of imperial coins and medallions; and also because the *largitio* issues themselves were used as means of communication and representation at ceremonial events, about which they provide valuable information.

The Antiochene festaureus, which together with the other largesse issues once bathed the empire in golden shade and today adorns the cover of this volume, thus stands in the midst of a complex politico-military situation, in which an emperor of the fourth century labored to stabilize the fragile political order of the Roman monarchy. Our knowledge of the contexts we have retraced here is decisive for our understanding of the *largitio* issues as functional icons of sovereignty. At first glance, they seem to have served as simple commemorative victory issues, but they were embedded in a broad discursive, narrative, and symbolic program that served to meticulously attune and alleviate a highly contested monarchy: in terms of administration, imperial representation, and religion.

Postscript: A Hat that Lets the Rain in

One of the most conspicuous items depicted on the medallions discussed above is the imperial diadem, an integral component of the emperor's regalia. Although the Romans were familiar with this symbol from Alexander the Great and his successors, it took no fewer than three and a half centuries after the fall of the Republic until a Roman emperor adopted the diadem as an official crown. As an unambiguous emblem of monarchic power, the diadem could not establish itself in the anti-monarchic Republic—in contrast to the laural wreath, which was adopted early as a distinction for magistrates (though its use was subject to strict regulations) and which, particularly as the crown of a triumphator, had been intimately connected to the Principate from the beginning.

An instructive episode illustrates how highly problematic the diadem was considered: when Pompey showed himself in public with white leg bands in 60 BC, a certain Favonius supposedly shouted out, "it doesn't matter on which part of the body the diadem sits."[77] Even over four hundred years later, Ammianus was familiar with the idea that Pompey's extravagant clothing had inspired his desire for *res novae*.[78] The sensitive response of Pompey's aristocratic peers to the ambitious and successful general's attempts at distinction may be explained by the massive competition for influence, glory, and honor within the senatorial aristocracy of the late Roman Republic.

77 Val. Max. 6.2.7; on this incident, see Meister 2012.
78 Amm. Marc. 17.11.4.

Under the Principate, a genuinely autocratic order arose from the ruin of the Republic, yet it was gilt with Republican rhetoric for an astonishingly long time. Caesar had perished, after all, in the attempt to underline his claim to supremacy by means of outright monarchic performances and symbols. Augustus and most of his successors learned the lesson of Caesar's failure. Whoever, like Domitian, for instance, openly broke with Republican norms risked, at the very least, aristocratic backlash after death, which could burst forth in the denigration of the emperor's *memoria*. Seen in this light, it is not at all surprising that the diadem became an established symbol of power only after the political system of the Roman empire had undergone a fundamental metamorphosis and gained sufficient distance from the aristocratic stamp of its origins:[79] not until July 25, 325, did Constantine officially assume the powerfully symbolic crown, which thereby replaced the laural wreath as the symbol of the *augustus* and reassigned it to the *caesares*.[80] The diadem was henceforth the most prominent headgear of the emperors.

The date of the introduction of the diadem is significant: with his decisive victory over Licinius on September 18, 324, Constantine had finally overcome the domestic turmoil of the late Tetrarchy and had emerged from nearly twenty years of civil war as the glorious victor and sole ruler of the entire Imperium Romanum. As such, Constantine could now transform his own imperial self-representation.[81] The victor was no longer a warrior, but rather the peaceful ruler of the earth. The vivid language of the Constantinian coinage expressed this idea insofar as the helmet now yielded to the diadem: as an unambiguously military attribute, after Licinius' defeat the helmet does, in fact, suddenly and utterly disappear from the obverse portraits of Constantine's coinage—it had featured in nearly 30 percent of the portraits in the six preceding years, from 318 to 324.[82] This is by no means coincidence but symptomatic of a major readjustment of Constantine's self-representation. The concept of a bold and noble warrior, supported by divine power, is unmistakably succeeded by the concept of a world ruler, crowned with the diadem and reigning auratically,

79 On the political metamorphosis in the third century, Eich 2005 is fundamental.

80 On the introduction of the diadem under Constantine, see Lenski's chapter in this volume.

81 On this, see Wienand 2013.

82 For the period from 318 to 324, RIC 7 lists a total of 645 coins that were minted in Constantinian mints with an obverse portrait of Constantine; 178 of them portray the emperor with a helmet. This abruptly changes after victory over Licinius. Afterward, no coins are minted for Constantine that depict him in a helmet. Shortly before Constantine's death in 337 there appear, probably in connection with his anticipated campaign against the Persians, new coin types that depict the emperor in a helmet.

who now embodies the divine qualities of his erstwhile patron deity and rules over the tranquilly reunited empire with righteousness and justice.[83]

To emphasize this profound transformation of the emperor's self-understanding, a simple band diadem was first introduced in 325. It would increasingly be supplanted by pearl and rosette diadems. In subsequent decades, the circlet of the imperial crown became ever more elaborate, now usually made from beaten gold, richly studded with gemstones, and in later times occasionally incorporating relics. If such a crown, as formulated in the introduction to this volume, should be understood as a tile in the mosaic of performances and discourses from which monarchy itself emerges as a highly complex social system, one legitimately might ask: who could lay hands on this object, direct its communicative power, and control the message?

In Roman ideology, the imperial headgear was conceived independently from the consent of the governed for an astonishingly long time. This is illustrated already by the fact that no proper coronation ritual is attested, and probably did not exist, until Julian's usurpation in AD 360. Prior to that event, the legitimacy of the emperor seems not to have been based on a concrete coronation by representatives of specific segments of society. In the pictorial language of the Roman monarchy, this corresponds to the fact that well into the fourth century the emperor was always crowned by a deity: in royal imagery (most prominently on coins, medallions, and imperial reliefs), the monarch is traditionally crowned by Victoria, by Jupiter, or by a personalized protective deity, for example, the sun god Sol Invictus. Under Constantine, the first medallions appear that show a heavenly hand crowning the emperor—an innovative way of conveying divine legitimation. This depiction now permitted Christian readings, but the legitimacy of the emperor nonetheless continued to rest upon an exclusive relationship between himself and divine power(s).[84] A concrete coronation ceremony was still lacking; the emperor thus continued to hold a monopoly on the symbolism of the imperial crown.

The progressive institutionalization and ceremonialization of the Roman monarchy in the course of the fourth century brought about profound changes. For the first time, a real coronation seems to have been performed at the usurpation of Julian, when for want of imperial insignia he was lifted onto a shield

83 Both in coin and medallion issues and in imperial inscriptions, references to a new *aureum saeculum* that has begun with the defeat of the last tyrant and the beginning of Constantine's sole rule, become increasingly common. The coin and medallion issues of the years 324 to 326 are too extensive to be discussed in detail here, but one may observe generally that Constantine's image undergoes a significant transformation with his final victory over Licinius; see the collection of ceremonial issues in Bastien 1988, 78–80, and Beyeler 2011, 115–121; on the inscriptions, see Grünewald 1990, 133–162.

84 RIC 7 Constantinople 42; on this, see Wienand 2012, 433–434.

in the camp at Paris, crowned with a torque, and proclaimed *augustus*. In the decades and centuries after this event, and promoted by the development of Constantinople into an imperial capital, a proper coronation ceremony evolved eventually comprising different ceremonial stages involving soldiers, officials, courtiers, the urban population, and clerics.[85]

As the ceremony developed, coronation became an indispensable part of an accession and a decisive stage in the complex of rituals by which a new monarch was created. The crowning of an emperor united the subjects of the empire in a moment of consensus; the actual configuration of the coronation ceremonies shifted with the political power and significance of status groups and the influence they could bring to bear on events.[86]

The crown thereby rose to become the most prominent royal emblem of western monarchy. Yet the meaning and function of the crown—an object that at first sight seems to have been controlled by the emperor as closely as possible—evolved within a dense network of negotiation processes between the most important players in the late-antique Imperium Romanum. With the passage of time, the balance tipped away from the emperor to the army and *plebs urbana*, and finally to the church. The coronation ritual thus united the monarch and the most important social protagonists of the empire in a fragile consensus; they all participated in the coronation, which became perhaps the most significant act of public declaration of mutual loyalty, commitment, and allegiance.

As a true coronation ceremonial emerged, interpretive control over the crown slowly but surely slipped from the emperor's grasp, although he and his crown (paradoxically, it seems) came ever more to constitute an indissoluble unit—in almost the same way that Ibrahim al Koni in his novel *Al Waram* depicts the "cloak of power" that gradually eats into the flesh of its bearer. Cicero allegedly once remarked about Caesar, "When I look at his hair, which is arranged with so much nicety, and see him scratching his head with one finger, I cannot think that this man would ever conceive of so great a crime as the overthrow of the Roman constitution."[87] The diadem left the late-antique ruler, on the contrary, no room even to scratch his head: the emperor himself had become an icon of sovereignty, who, as Ammianus describes on the occasion of Constantius' appearance as triumphator, hardly dared to move: "he turned his eyes neither to the right nor to the left, as if he had been a statue: nor when the carriage shook him did he nod his head, or spit, or rub his face or his nose; nor

85 On the significance of the capital, see Pfeilschifter 2013.
86 On this, cf. Trampedach 2005, esp. 277.
87 Plut. *Caes.* 4.9 (trans. Perrin 1919).

was he ever seen even to move a hand."[88] Together, the body and regalia of the ruler constituted the body politic of the monarchic order. It was alive only to the extent that it was infused with the lifeblood of the most diverse aspirations and expectations of the subjects. Maybe Frederick the Great was not wrong in principle when he remarked that a crown was only a hat that let the rain in—but it was still a quite contested hat.

88 Amm. Marc. 16.10.10 (trans. Yonge 1862).