

Zeitschrift: Schweizer Münzblätter = Gazette numismatique suisse = Gazzetta numismatica svizzera

Herausgeber: Schweizerische Numismatische Gesellschaft

Band: 23-27 (1973-1977)

Heft: 91

Artikel: The coinage from Commodus to Constantine : some types that mirror the transition from principate to absolute monarchy

Autor: Storch, Rudolph H.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-171024>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 31.07.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

THE COINAGE FROM COMMODUS TO CONSTANTINE: SOME TYPES THAT MIRROR THE TRANSITION FROM PRINCIPATE TO ABSOLUTE MONARCHY

Rudolph H. Storch

Although the sources for Roman history from Commodus ¹ to Constantine ² are notoriously inadequate, major historical trends are well-known including (1) an increased attention to the military and (2) the breakdown of traditional narrow formulas of the principate in favor of wider viewpoints inherent in the monarchy of Diocletian and Constantine ³. The imperial coinage most vividly mirrors these changes. Militarism of the age is reflected in developments connected with the legends PIETAS, FELICITAS, SALUS, SECURITAS, and PAX ⁴. Modification of precise formulas of the principate is indicated by the novel suggestions of «perpetuity» and «eternity» on the coins ⁵. Moreover, both trends are consummated in two new

¹ The reign of Commodus was a watershed (W. Weber in CAH XI, 386–392). This is most obvious in the light of his coins, his titulature, his association with Hercules, and in the forced adulation of Commodus imposed on the Senate (The coins – BMC: Emp. IV, clxxxiii and the catalogue of Commodus' coins. The titulature – Dio LXXI, 15; L. Berlinger, Beiträge zur inoffiziellen Titulatur der röm. Kaiser [Breslau, 1935], 16–17, 21; O. Th. Schulz, Die Rechtstitel und Regierungsprogramme auf röm. Kaisermünzen [Paderborn, 1925], 46, 75–76; Th. Ulrich, Pietas [pius] als politischer Begriff im röm. Staate bis zum Tode des Kaisers Commodus [Breslau, 1930], 74–82. The association of Commodus with Hercules – SHA, Comm., 8, 11, 17; Dio LXXII, 7, 15, 20; Herod. I, 14. J. Babelon, «Commode en Hercule», RN, 15 [1953], 23–36; F. S. Dunn, «The Monetary Crown Titles of the Emperor Commodus», The Numismatist, 32 [1919], 189–196; H. J. Stein, «Herculi Romano Augustus», The Numismatist, 47 [1934], 785–786. M. Rostovtzeff, «Commodus-Hercules in Britain», JRS, 13 [1923], 91–109 including the appendix by Mattingly treating the history of Hercules on the imperial coinage; J. Aymard, «Commode-Hercule Fondateur de Rome», REL, 14 [1936], 350–364. The forced adulation of the senators – Dio LXXII, 20; M. P. Charlesworth, «The Virtues of a Roman Emperor: Propaganda and the Creation of Belief», ProcBritAc [1937], 123). The best summary is RE II/2, «Aurelius» (89), 2464–2481.

² Bruun in RIC VII («The Message of the Reverses», 46–56) argues that Constantinian reverses lay foundations for the Byzantine state. The current essay points to the reverses of Constantine's coins as the culmination of imperial trends since Commodus. For a comparison of Diocletian's and Constantine's reverses with those of the early empire: H. Mattingly, Roman Coins (London, 1960), 229–244. For the reign of Alexander Severus and the transition: E. Görlich, «Alexander Severus und der Ausgang des Prinzipates», Aevum (1937), 197 ff.

³ The end of the principate: O. Th. Schulz, Vom Prinzipat zum Domat (Paderborn, 1919 – this discussion begins with Septimius Severus, not Commodus. See esp. 247–257 for changes in titulature); W. Ensslin in CAH XII, 352–382 (356–361 for a discussion, based primarily on the coins, of the divinity of the imperial office); G. C. Picard, Les Trophées Romains (Paris, 1957 – 451 ff.: the development of an «absolutist» theology of victory beginning with Commodus). For the breakdown of the traditional formulas of the principate seen in the light of the imperial title *invictus*, and in the coin legends CONSERVATOR and RESTITUTOR see my article soon to appear in ClMed («The 'Absolutist' Theology of Victory: Its Place in the Late Empire») and M. Imhof, «Invictus», Mus Helv, 14 (1957), 208 ff.

⁴ Cicero argued that worship of the virtues had an uplifting effect on the worshipper (De legibus II, 11, 28) while Pliny saw no value (N. H. II, 14). G. Wissowa, Religion und Kultus der Römer (Berlin, 1912), 52 ff. for the origins of the virtues among the Romans. More general discussions of the virtues of the emperor: Mattingly, Roman Coins, 159–164, 241–242, and The Man in the Roman Street (New York, 1947), 75–81 and «The Roman Virtues», HarvTheol-Rev, 30 (1937), 103–117; M. P. Charlesworth, «The Virtues of a Roman Emperor», ProcBritAc, 15 (1937), 105–133. The virtues as imperial propaganda: Schulz, Rechtstitel und Regierungsprogramme, 51–81. The virtues are often discussed in P. L. Strack, Untersuchungen zur röm. Reichsprägung des zweiten Jahrhunderts, I–III (Stuttgart, 1931–1937. See below for specific citations).

⁵ Ensslin in CAH XII, 358.

legends dramatically appearing for the first time under Constantine: GLORIA and GAUDIUM.

Indicative of the endless stream of virtues on the imperial coinage were piety, felicity, health, security, and peace. These suggestions appeared in connection with a variety of types but most frequently with a personification of the virtue in the form of a goddess who usually had a characteristic attribute (there were variations but, for example, Pietas was pictured at an altar or with little children, Securitas leaned on a column, Felicitas held a caduceus, Salus a snake, and Pax an olive branch). It is well-known that types and attributes were carefully chosen to present the goddess and the positive contribution made by the government to the citizens of the empire. Any alterations were the result of a deliberate decision which modified the message of the coin.

Before the third century these virtues were, with few exceptions, not connected with military types and attributes. However, there was a general pattern of change during the period from Commodus through Constantine when the influence of the military became paramount.

Piety was a persistent theme on the coinage of the empire⁶. Often the virtue is celebrated in the abstract, i.e., the legend PIETAS. Although this legend bore various types such as an altar or temple or a bust of the empress⁷, most frequently *pietas* was personified. As piety in a religious sense she often appeared at an altar dropping incense, praying, or raising her hand sometimes holding a sacrificial box or sceptre. A piety in a familial sense she was shown touching the head of a little girl while holding a child, or, in a variation, while holding a flower bud and cornucopiae to suggest the additional benefit of abundance.

There were other *pietas* legends. The «Piety of the Augustus» was a favorite message of imperial propaganda. PIETAS AUGUSTI was connected with the type of a temple or priestly implements to denote the emperor's religious devotion to the gods or with the type of Mercury perhaps to suggest that through the ruler's piety commerce was flourishing (RIC IV/3, 149, no. 213). Occasionally the emperor himself was pictured. Titus and Domitian appeared holding a sceptre in clasped hands which were held, in turn, by a female (BMC II, 258, no. 177). Septimius Severus, in an act of piety, was veiled, holding a roll while sacrificing (RIC IV/1, 146, no. 413). Aurelian, performing the same ceremony was accompanied by a priest (RIC V/1, 280, no. 138). Generally, however, the «piety of the Augustus» was represented by Pietas herself in her traditional activities⁸.

⁶ Pietas often appears in the XII Panegyrici Latini as a virtue most desirable in a ruling prince (Pan. II, 14; III, 6, 13; IV, 3; VI, 7; VII, 7, 22; X, 6, 7, 12, 16; XI, 3; et. al.). Pietas from Trajan to Antoninus Pius in Strack, Untersuchungen, I, 75–76; II, 51–57, 169–171; III, 107. For piety and military success: M. P. Charlesworth, «Pietas and Victoria: the Emperor and the Citizen», JRS, 33 (1943) pp. 1–10; and Ulrich, Pietas als pol. Begriff, 41–49. C. H. Dodd discusses Pius on the coins of Antoninus: «The Cognomen of the Emperor Antoninus Pius», NC, 11 (1911), at 14–33. J. Liegle, «Pietas», ZfN, 42 (1935), 60–71 discusses Pietas as a personification of cult devoutness and the propaganda use made of this concept by Augustus in his wars (86 ff.). Also Koch, «Pietas», RE XX/1, 1221–1232.

⁷ E.g. BMC I, 133, no. 98; II, 287, no. 291; IV, 47, no. 319, 236, no. 1468, 310, no. 1869; RIC V/1, 217, no. 83.

⁸ Other *pietas* legends appeared, however rarely: PIETATI AUGUSTAE (Iulia Domna placing her hands on Caracalla and Geta); PIETAS PUBLICA (Pietas at an altar); PIET(as) SENAT(us) (Commodus clasping hands with the Genius Senatus); PIETAS SAECULI (on an obverse, a draped bust of Valerian II).

As piety, felicity was an important message on the coins ⁹. FELICITAS AUGUSTI legends were generally represented by Felicitas herself, perhaps sacrificing on behalf of the emperor, holding a sceptre and cornucopiae, sitting on a throne, standing, or clasping hands with the fortunate ruler ¹⁰. A variant type was that of a galley and its crew with Neptune occasionally in the stern, a type designed to show the Roman mastery of the seas or commercial advantages of the empire (BMC IV, 660, no. 1615).

Celebrated, too, were the «public felicity», the «felicity of the times», and the «felicity of the age». FELICITAS PUBLICA generally was represented by the goddess herself ¹¹. FELICITAS TEMPORUM was connected with a variety of types designed to propagandize abundance and plenty: two cornucopiae or a basket containing corn, fruit, and grapes. An interesting FELICIA TEMPORA type depicted the four seasons as children at play emphasizing the continuing felicity of the empire (RIC V/2, 239, no. 189). FELICITAS SAECULI was generally denoted by Felicitas although there were exceptions such as the series under the Severi picturing Septimius, Geta and Caracalla seated with Libertas in front with a citizen (RIC IV/1, 124, no. 263). On a variant, Septimius and his sons sat on a platform with officers behind and citizens receiving gifts (RIC IV/1, 289, no. 470) or, with the rulers seated, a citizen dipped his hand in an urn (RIC IV/1, 202, no. 815) ¹².

Clearly Felicitas was not a military goddess. Her presence on the coins was designed to propagandize certain benefits of the regime including an emperor blessed by the gods and a state characterized by good fortune, generosity and abundance ¹³.

A third imperial benefit, «soundness» or «health», played an outstanding role in imperial propaganda. Almost invariably SALUS appeared with the type of the goddess personified. She often held a snake, the symbol of health-restoring faculty, which is either in her arms, rising from an altar, or coiled before her on a column. Salus' attributes indicate abundance (corn ears and poppy), imperial power (sceptre), or her divine honors (patera). Two interesting types depict Salus sacrificing with her foot on a globe while holding a rudder to reflect the sound direction in which the state was being guided and Salus holding a sceptre with a serpent coiled around it while raising a kneeling man indicating the emperor's return to health. The legends include: SALUS, SALUS AUGUSTA, SALUS AUGUSTI, and the broader, SALUS PUBLICA and SALUS GENERIS HUMANI ¹⁴.

⁹ Otto, «Felicitas», RE VI/2, 2163–2166; H. Erkell, Augustus, Felicitas, Furtuna Latinische Wortstudien (Göteborg, 1952), 120–127 for a discussion of felicitas on the coins. For the *felicitas* of the Roman emperors: Berlinger, Bei. z. inoffiziellen Titulatur, 9 ff. und Strack, Untersuchungen, I, 170–175. Felicitas in the XII Panegyrici Latini: I (Pliny), 1, 4, 5, 8, 11, 14; II, 13; VI, 10; X, 2, 38, et. al. See esp. Pan III, a eulogy on the emperors's felicity.

¹⁰ E.g. BMC II, 255, no. 156; III, 319, no. 610, 468, no. 1501; VI, 158, no. 470.

¹¹ BMC I, 329, no. 120; II, 255, 158; VI, 160–161, nos. 483–495; RIC V/1, 340, no. 137.

¹² Other infrequent felicity legends: FELIC(itati) COM(modo) with the type of Felicitas; FELIC(itati) PERPETUAE pictured Commodus clasping hands with Felicitas; a type of Felicitas holding a branch and cornucopiae bore the legend FELICITAS PR; under Gallienus FELICI(tas) AET(erna) was connected with Felicitas leaning on a column.

¹³ There were exceptions. A coin of Hadrian (FELICITAS AUG) bore a representation of Felicitas holding a spear and not a normal attribute (BMC III, 548, no. 1941). Another felicity legend depicted a galley with a standard and vexillum and Minerva on the prow brandishing a javelin and holding a spear. In variations of the galley type a vexillum stands on the prow or two legionary eagles appear behind the steersman (BMC III, 450–455, nos. 1385a–1414; IV, 552–553, nos. 1047–1052; V, 573, no. 277).

¹⁴ *Salus* personified: BMC I, 212–213, nos. 87–99, 328, no. 119, 361, no. 265; II, 16, nos. 87–89, 124, nos. 574–575, 309, no. 54; III, 3, no. 19, 87, no. 410, 279–280, nos. 313–322; RIC V/1, 227,

Another outstanding message of the imperial coinage was that of «security»¹⁵. From the beginning of the empire to the reign of Constantine, legends denoting the security of the Augustus (SECURITAS AUGUSTI), the security of the empire (SECURITAS PUBLICA, SECURIT[as] IMPERII), the security of the world (SECURITAS ORBIS), or the security of the age (SECURITAS SAECULI) were connected solely with the type of *securitas* personified¹⁶. She was depicted always at ease perhaps leaning on a column or seated with her head in her hand. Occasionally, to add the notion of divinity, she held a wreath and sceptre or, to suggest abundance, cornucopiae are present. The security of the world was sometimes denoted by the goddess holding a globe. To indicate security gained through the state religion the goddess was pictured looking at an altar¹⁷.

Finally, an outstanding theme of the propaganda of the empire was that of «peace»¹⁸. Various legends proclaimed aspects of the imperial peace (e.g. PAX AUGUSTA, PAX AUGUSTI¹⁹, PAX ET LIBERTAS, PAX ORBIS TERRARUM, PAX PUBLICA, PAX ROMANI), most of which bore a personification of *pax* in various poses. She was presented with a variety of attributes indicating abundance (corn ears and poppy, cornucopiae), worldly peace (globe, rudder), dignity (sceptre), and she often carried the olive branch as the symbol of peace. A favorite *pax* type shows the goddess setting fire to a pile of arms while holding a cornucopiae to indicate plentiful times following a period of war²⁰.

The evidence is clear: on pre-third century imperial coinage the virtues *pietas*, *felicitas*, *securitas*, *salus*, and *pax* were not connected with military types or attributes. This ideal was lost during the period beginning with Commodus and the Severi when an increased interest in the military became an underlying influence on the propaganda effort.

The traditional view of piety was modified when a PIETAS issue of Julia Domna showed the goddess holding Victoria and a sceptre thus connecting piety, victory, and royal power (RIC IV/1, 174, no. 612). On a PIETAS AUG coin of Gallienus, the

no. 190, 331, nos. 56–57, 342, nos. 158–161. During the principate SALUS legends were given a military flavor on only one issue which appeared during the civil wars of A.D. 68. The legend SALUS GENERIS HUMANI bore the type of Victoria on a globe (BMC I, 298, no. 34). Strack, Untersuchungen, I, 171–173; II, 63, 93–94, 172–173.

¹⁵ Hartmann, «Securitas», RE II A/1, 1000–1003. Strack, Untersuchungen, I, 65–67, 170–171; II, 61.

¹⁶ The sole exception was a series appearing under Caracalla Caesar, A.D. 196–197, depicting Minerva (BMC V, 50, no. 181).

¹⁷ Securitas personified: BMC I, 241, nos. 212–213, 366–367, nos. 13–20; III, 331–332, nos. 730–731; IV, 209, nos. 1311–1312, 737, no. 261; RIC IV/3, 127, no. 54 and 129, no. 71.

¹⁸ Berlinger, Beit. z. inoffiziellen Titulatur, 52–54 for Pax Augusta on coins and inscriptions; Koch, «Pax», RE XVII/4, 2430–2436. Strack, Untersuchungen, I, 52–56, 125; II, 47–49. Good background for an understanding of pax as related to Roman imperialism is in S. Weinstock, «Pax and The Ara Pacis», JRS, 50 (1960), esp. 44–52.

¹⁹ Strack (Untersuchungen, I 54) distinguishes between Pax Augusta as a Roman cultural notion of a state of peace arrived at through such things as *leges* and *iustitia* and Pax Augusti as a condition of peace earned by the emperor through military success.

²⁰ Pax personified: BMC I, 112, no. 691, 305, no. 58, 320, no. 76, 331, nos. 131–133, 352, no. 242, 364, nos. 1–4, 377, nos. 54–57; III, 483; RIC IV/3, 73, nos. 40–42, 195, no. 8. Pax igniting a pile of arms: BMC II, 369; III, 85, no. 400; IV, 274, no. 1698. Other types were connected with PAX legends: clasped hands holding a *cadeceus*; Nemesis advancing with a snake preceding; an altar and priests; a naked Bonus Eventus holds a patera and corn ears; Vitellius being welcomed by Roma and being ushered in by Pax (BMC I, 289–290, nos. 3–6, 296–297, nos. 26–27, 377, nos. 54–57; II, 82, no. 399, 86, no. 421, 249, no. 148, 384. For *Bonus Eventus*: 58–61 in W. Koehler, Personifikationen Abstrakter Begriffe auf röm. Münzen (Königsberg, 1910).

emperor was depicted in the act of sacrificing while holding a spear instead of a usual sacrificial implement (RIC V/1, 186, no. 618). Under Claudius Gothicus the same legend bore an image of Pietas herself holding a spear (RIC V/1, 235, no. 284). An issue of Maximian suggesting piety presented the emperor holding a spear as a symbol of military prowess while raising a kneeling woman, the symbol of a defeated enemy (RIC V/2, 274, no. 478). With Constantine the legend PIETAS AUGUSTI N(*ostri*) bore a type of the emperor in military dress raising a kneeling woman as he is crowned by the military goddess Victoria. In a variation the military element is stronger as a soldier presents the female figure (RIC VII, 219, nos. 569–570 and 612 no. 69).

Just as the earlier conception of *pietas* was altered, the nature of *felicitas* changed. An issue of Valerian (FELICIT[as] AUGUSTORUM) bore a representation of the emperor and his sons in a triumphal car with accompanying soldiers (RIC V/1, 50, no. 156). Under Gallienus the suggestion of felicity was related to the emperor and three children seated before the bringer of military victory, Victoria (RIC V/1, 191, no. 6). Carausius was pictured holding a spear and globe indicating the military domination of Rome (FELICITAS SAECULI). Types of Postumus included a bust of Felicitas next to a bust of Victoria (FELICITAS AUG) reflecting the desire for good fortune in military exploits, and, more dramatically, FELICITAS was inscribed on a triumphal arch under which there were two captives and a trophy, the cardinal symbol of the universal Roman victory ²¹.

On Constantine's coinage military types and felicity were intimately related. A FELICITAS ROMANORUM issue pictured the emperor and two princes standing under a triumphal arch. On another, a prince was shown mounted, in military dress with his cloak flying and bearing a spear (FELIX ADVENTUS CAESS NN). A type depicting the emperor on a platform with a prince in military dress on either side holding a spear and shield had the legend FELICITAS PERPETUA AUG ET CAESS N. The Constantinian types that most directly connected *felicitas* with the military were the numerous FELICITAS PERPETUA SAECULI issues on which the emperor was shown in military dress receiving Victoria on a globe from Sol. Between them is a suppliant ²².

The third century also witnessed a change in the nature of *Salus*. Two new and revolutionary legends reflected the importance of the army for emperors whose reign depended upon sound military forces: SALUS MILITUM under Probus (RIC V/2, 28, no. 98) and SALUS EXERCITI under Postumus (RIC V/2, 363, no. 327). There were tradition-breaking types and attributes as well. Subtle reference to the military came on coins of Gallienus when the legend SALUS ITAL(*iae*) bore a type of *Salus* offering health-giving fruits to the emperor who appears holding a spear (RIC V/1, 99, no. 400). Two additional *salus* issues of Gallienus depict a soldier holding a spear leaning on a shield to indicate that the emperor's health was dependent on his soldiers (RIC V/2, 425, 291) and Victoria was presented (RIC V/2, 410, no. 125).

The full triumph of the connection between «health» and the military came under Constantine. On one issue the emperor in military dress is standing on a cuirass while receiving Victoria on a globe as he is crowned from behind by the same goddess (SALUS ET SPES REIPUBLICAE) to suggest that the empire depended on its ruler's military success for soundness and hope. Constantine's SALUS REIP/DANUBIUS message bore the type of a bridge with the emperor advancing and

²¹ RIC V/2, 347, no. 118, 353, no. 195, 359, no. 267, 483, no. 222.

²² RIC VII, 470, no. 19, 500, no. 10, 628, no. 169, 631, no. 173.

holding a spear and shield. Before him is Victoria *portans tropaeum*. A final outstanding type has Constantine with a trophy across his shoulder being crowned by Victoria with nine soldiers present (SALUS REIPUBLICAE) again reflecting dependence on the emperor's military success ²³.

Of the long series of imperial coins suggesting «security» none was connected with the military until the reign of Florian (A.D. 276) when the goddess Securitas was shown holding a spear in place of her peacetime attributes (RIC V/1, 358, no. 94).

The major change came with Constantine when a number of new military-security types appeared. On one, Securitas is shown leaning on a column with her head in her hand holding a sceptre but with the addition of a captive on either side to propagandize the security brought about by the successful military exploits of the emperor. The legend: SECURITAS AUGUSTI N. A SECURITAS PERPETUA issue depicted the emperor holding a parazonium and army standard with three princes in military garb indicating the intimate tie between the military and the security of the empire. In a variation there were four princes two of whom hold a parazonium and spear. Two SECURITAS REIPUBLICAE series included Securitas holding a spear and the goddess, again with a spear, offering Victory on a globe to a turreted Respublica. Constantine's SECURITAS PERPETUA (PERPETUAE) coinage most dramatically connected imperial security with a military theme. These types depicted the emperor in military dress leaning on a sceptre while erecting a trophy with a cuirass and shield below. Here is the full portrayal of a military-security message as the army is regarded as the basis of the empire's safety ²⁴.

Finally, the most ironic transition in the nature of imperial virtues was the consistent connection of PAX with the military. This, too, occurred during the anarchy ²⁵ when unprecedented legends and types became common. Under Claudius Gothicus emerged the remarkable PAX EXERC (RIC V/1, 224, nos. 159–160). Carus issued a PAX EXERCITI series depicting Pax holding a branch, and, in place of a traditional attribute, an army ensign (RIC V/2, 143, no. 72). New «peace» types completed the break with tradition. Under Gordian III, PAX AUGUSTI was connected with a warrior holding a spear with a shield at his feet (RIC IV/3, 35, no. 190). Later series depicted the emperor holding a spear while addressing suppliants (Probus), the emperor being crowned by the goddess Victoria as he stands before an altar (Probus), and the emperor attacking a falling enemy (Numerian) – all in the name of peace ²⁶. The most outstanding of the military-peace series was that of Gallienus reading PAX FUNDATA with the type of a trophy and two captives (RIC V/1, 188, no. 652). The emperors of this period were much more interested in their ability to bring peace through warfare than in the benefits of a peaceful empire.

Thus, in an age of prolonged warfare, the essential nature of the imperial virtues was altered. During the first two centuries of the empire the virtues on the coins conveyed a notion of benefits provided by the government to the people of the

²³ Id., 331, no. 298, 364, no. 36, 555, no. 99.

²⁴ Constantine's security legends: RIC VII, 162, no. 2, 332, no. 299, 346, no. 402, 580, no. 67, 583, no. 89. SECURITAS PERPETUA (E) with the emperor erecting a trophy: 367, no. 49, 397, no. 33, 609–610, nos. 53–54.

²⁵ Under the principate PAX legends had been joined with military types in a rare number of instances: Nerva appeared with the war-god Mars (BMC III, 9); a PACI AUGUSTAE legend of Vespasian bore the type of Victoria advancing (BMC II, 89, no. 431); under Titus Pax appeared before a kneeling suppliant (BMC II, 237 and 250, no. 6A); a type of Trajan had Pax placing her foot on a Dacian (BMC III, 170, no. 800); under Trajan Pax held a Victoria and cornucopiae (BMC III, 33, note 14).

²⁶ RIC V/2, 21, no. 7, 32, no. 136, 193, no. 390.

empire. There were many: a blessed, healthy, and pious emperor; seas rich with steady commercial endeavor; a sound and secure empire whose subjects enjoyed the generosity of their rulers and an empire blessed with the benefits of peace.

But these emphases were modified during the third century under the weight of military aspirations of the rulers. Piety related now to victory and dominance over conquered people; *felicitas* was directed to the triumph and to world domination; *Salus*' benefits included the health of the army; security was achieved through victory as well as through good government; as for *Pax*, the victory that gained the peace was now important and the peace of the army deemed necessary.

The realities of the times had dictated a change in the imperial propaganda effort whereby the nature of the Roman virtues was enlarged to include aspirations of military success.

As the coins indicate an increased interest in the military during the third century, so they mirror another trend – a breakdown of traditional narrow formulas of the principate in favor of wider claims on the part of the emperors. This is most striking in the notions of «perpetuity» and «eternity».

The suggestion of perpetuity, a rather broad propagandistic claim, did not appear on the coinage of the principate. During the period beginning with Commodus this narrow tradition came to an end as *PERPETUA* was used in a number of contexts. A new legend was *PERPETUITAS AUG* (or *PERPETUITATI AUG*) which appeared under Severus, Severus Alexander, Gallienus, Florian, Probus and Carus ²⁷. Certain obverses of Probus bore the legend *PERPETUO IMP C PROBO INVICT AUG* (RIC V/2, 111, no. 859).

During this transitional age perpetuity was further connected for the first time with the traditional themes of *felicitas*, *securitas*, and *pax*.

Felicitas, of course had consistently appeared on the coins of the early emperors but, characteristically, always within a narrow framework. Celebrated were *FELICITAS AUGUSTI*, *FELICITAS PUBLICA*, *FELICITAS TEMPORUM*, or the felicity of the age (*FELICITAS SAECULI*). But Commodus' legend *FELIC(itati) PERPETUAE AUG* marked a sharp break with the past (RIC III, 395, no. 249). «Perpetual felicity» then became a theme on the third century coinage ²⁸ and on that of Constantine ²⁹.

Securitas, too, had been contained within narrow formulas during the principate: e.g. *SECURITAS AUGUSTI*, *SECURITAS PUBLICA*, *SECURITAS P ROMANI*, *SECURITAS*. «Perpetual security», a wider claim, was introduced under Caracalla ³⁰. *SECURITAS PERPETUA* later became a frequent message during the war-torn years of the anarchy ³¹ and under Diocletian, Maximian, and Constantine ³².

The same development occurred with the traditional legend *PAX*. Certain fixed formulas were standard during the principate and even into the third century: e.g. *PAX*, *PAX AUGUSTA*, *PAX AUGUSTI*. The broader notion of «perpetual peace»

²⁷ BMC VI, 159, no. 472, 161–162, nos. 499–502, 164, no. 534; RIC V¹, 175, no. 504, 352–353, no. 21, 357, nos. 76–77; RIC V/2, 50, no. 317, 143–144, nos. 76–79.

²⁸ BMC VI, 165, no. 537; RIC V/2, 232, no. 127 (gold medallion), 262, no. 357.

²⁹ RIC VII, 474, no. 46, and 631, no. 173. A new Constantinian legend was *FELICITAS PERPETUA SAECULI* (500, no. 10).

³⁰ BMC V, 374, no. 101, 411–412, nos. 248–252 and 255–256, 484, no. 272.

³¹ RIC IV/3, 31, no. 151, 32, no. 164, 39, no. 228; V/1, 39, no. 17, 40, no. 25, 57, no. 256 1, 136, no. 69, 140, no. 118, 155, no. 280, 162, no. 355, 163, no. 372, 170, no. 452, 176, no. 515, 178, no. 543, 194, no. 27, 195, no. 39, 232, no. 243, 342, no. 163; V/2, 77, no. 572, 99, no. 759.

³² RIC V/2, 228, nos. 80–84, 269, no. 427, 478, no. 167, 542, no. 1004; VII, 367, no. 49, 397, no. 33, 580, no. 67, 583, no. 89.

was not introduced until Tacitus ³³ who was followed by Probus (RIC V/2, 21, no. 7), and, characteristically, by Constantine (RIC VII, 314, no. 143).

Aeternitas ³⁴ on the coins is equally indicative of the breakdown of the more precise conceptions of the principate. Eternity was a common theme of the early empire most often in connection with the type of a personification of *aeternitas* ³⁵ but occasionally with other deities ³⁶ or the current empress (BMC IV, 241, nos. 1501 and 1505). The «eternity of the Augustus» was a persistent legend.

But when «eternity» was linked to *felicitas*, *pax*, and Victoria the rigid traditions of the past became obsolete.

As indicated above, *felicitas* and *pax* were confined within narrow formulas during the principate. Gallienus was an innovator when he introduced the new legend FELICI(tas) AET(erna) (RIC V/1, 147, no. 185 and 181 no. 564). Although «eternal peace» had appeared first under Marcus Aurelius (on two series A.D. 175–177) ³⁷ it did not become common until later, under Commodus ³⁸ and the Severi ³⁹ and during the anarchy ⁴⁰.

The goddess Victoria was a frequent imperial coin type. Most often the suggestion was VICTORIA AUGUSTI but also an important effort was made to announce victories over specific enemies (e.g. Germans, Britons, Parthians). The precise claims of victory were modified when the new, and wider, legend VICTORIA AETERNA appeared under Septimius Severus ⁴¹. The emperors of the anarchy ⁴² continued the theme of «eternal victory» as did Constantine (RIC VII, 239, no. 70).

Clearly coin types and legends vividly reflect two major trends from Commodus to Constantine, an increased interest in the military and a breakdown of traditional narrow formulas of the principate. These trends are consummated in two legends, both of which dramatically appeared for the first time under Constantine: GLORIA and GAUDIUM ⁴³.

The suggestion of glory had been absent from the coinage until Constantine when it became a major part of the propaganda effort with legends including GLORIA CONSTANTINI AUG, GLORIA PERPET, GLORIA ROMANORUM, and GLORIA SECULI (*sic*). Remarkably, these suggestions were often connected with military types. On one, the emperor was shown in military dress with a trophy across his shoulder holding a spear with a captive on either side, or, in a variation, dragging a captive by the hair while spurning another. Also in the interest of «glory» he appeared between two captives holding Victoria on a globe and leaning on a spear

³³ RIC V/1, 333, no. 72 (on the PACI PERP of BMC I, 188 note, see M. Grant, Aspects of the Principate of Tiberius, 77 ff.).

³⁴ Aust, «Aeternitas», RE I/1, 694–696; Koehler, Personifikationen Abstrakter Begriffe, 22–43; Fr. Cumont, «L'Eternité des Empereurs Romains», Rev. d'histoire et de littérature religieuses, I (1896), 435; Charlesworth, «The Virtues of a Roman Emperor», 124; R. Reitzenstein, Das iranische Erlösungsmysterium (Bonn, 1921), 210–231 for a discussion of the notion of an «eternal state» among the Romans.

³⁵ E.g. BMC II, 48, no. 271, 348, no. 1; III, 81–82, nos. 373–377, 378, no. 7; IV, 240–242, varia.

³⁶ BMC IV, 240–241, nos. 1498 and 1500, 651, nos. 1558–1562.

³⁷ BMC IV, 648–649, no. 1549, 660, no. 1617, 663, no. 1631.

³⁸ Id., 732, no. 236, 737, 814, no. 606, 822.

³⁹ BMC V, 154, 227, no. 16; VI, 126, nos. 127–137.

⁴⁰ RIC V/1, 147, no. 185 and 181 no. 564.

⁴¹ BMC V, 188, no. 174, 194, nos. 209–210, 200, nos. 247–248. I have alluded to the connection between «eternity» and Victoria in my article cited in note 3.

⁴² RIC IV/2, 141; IV/3, nos. 154–156, and 32, no. 165; V/1, 51, no. 176 and 156, no. 291.

⁴³ Note that the Gallic emperor Victorinus introduced GAUDIUM to the coinage but it disappeared after him, not to be revived until Constantine (RIC V/2, «Corrigenda and Addenda», 387).

with his foot on a captive, or, in military garb, standing and holding a vexillum and sceptre. Other GLORIA types included that of a soldier holding a spear and that of two soldiers facing, each holding a spear with two standards between them ⁴⁴.

The notion of «joy» likewise had not appeared on pre-Constantinian coinage. He introduced various legends, GAUDIUM ROMANORUM, GAUDIUM ROMANORUM/ALAMANNIA, GAUDIUM ROMANORUM/FRANCIA, GAUDIUM ROMANORUM/FRANC ET ALAM., and GAUDIUM REIPUBLICAE. Militarism was most intimately connected with the imperial *gaudium*. Often a personification of the Franks or Alamanni or Sarmatians as a female figure is shown before a *tropaeum*, symbol of the Roman victory. On another type Constantine is between his sons. He is being crowned by a heavenly hand as one son is crowned by a soldier, the other, by Victory. «Joy of the Romans», was connected with two further types: Mars in military dress with a trophy and spear as he put his foot on a suppliant; a soldier holding a shield was shown dragging a captive to the emperor ⁴⁵.

The keynotes of Constantine's monarchy are summed up in his GLORIA and GAUDIUM coinage. These novel claims broad in scope, reflect the trend of the third century resulting in the disappearance of rigid, legalistic, formulas of the principate. When the suggestions of glory and joy appeared in connection with military types a further third century development was evident: the marked increase in the influence of the military. The messages of Constantine's coins firmly rooted in developments of the previous age, openly conveyed the reality that the benefits of empire were intimately linked to the pillar of society, the armed forces.

⁴⁴ RIC VII, 451, nos. 206–207, 520, no. 163, 572, nos. 16–17, 573, nos. 22–23, 621, no. 132, 624–625, nos. 151–152. For the two soldiers type see varia.

⁴⁵ RIC VI, 221, no. 811; VII, 165, no. 15, 185, nos. 237 and 243, 196 nos. 362–365, 213, no. 516, 216, no. 535, 365, no. 37, 368, no. 52, 426, no. 23, 576, no. 42.

A PROPOS DU TRESOR DE SELTZ *

Michel Amandry

En 1971, le Cabinet numismatique de la Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg a acheté un lot de 380 folles provenant de Seltz. Il est clair que ces pièces font partie du trésor découvert en 1930 ¹ dans cette localité: l'identité de patine et de composition du lot l'atteste.

En attendant la publication de cet ensemble (que nous appellerons Seltz IV), il nous a semblé intéressant de faire le point sur l'état actuel de dispersion de ce trésor

1. Seltz I

Le premier lot, connu dès l'époque de la trouvaille, comprenait 3200 folles. Ces pièces furent alors ainsi réparties: 2000 au Cabinet numismatique de Strasbourg, 198

* Au Cabinet numismatique de la Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg et au Musée préhistorique et gallo-romain, Mme Lang et M. J.-J. Hatt m'ont accordé toute facilité de travail. Qu'ils trouvent ici l'expression de mes remerciements.

¹ R. Forrer, *L'Alsace romaine*, Paris 1935, p. 187.