

Project Description

"Semper vincimus". The Representation of the Military Might of the Roman Imperial Family

In the last two decades, the self-representation of the Roman emperors has become a major research topic in classical and ancient studies. Many studies have shown that Roman imperial propaganda was especially focused on highlighting the victoriousness of the emperors and the greatness of their families.¹ Considering the frequent propagation of these two aspects, it is astonishing that modern research has never asked the question to what extent the concept of victoriousness was also used for the propagation of the emperors' families and not only for the emperors themselves.²

Therefore, the goal of this dissertation project is to analyze to what extent and with which strategies the imperial Family propagated victoriousness in the city of Rome during the Augustan and early Tiberian period. Although the temporal focus of the study will consequently be on the beginning of the principate, the reigns of the later emperors until Constantine I. will also occasionally be taken into account. Thus, the study aims to show how certain propagandistic strategies developed under Augustus and Tiberius were adapted or modified in later times.

As one aim of the project is to reconstruct the entire Roman discourse on the military exploits of the early imperial family, the study will not only analyze sources that were produced directly at the emperor's request and therefore reflect his own political intentions. Instead, the thesis will also look at sources which were relatively independent from the grip of the central government (as for example Ovid's exile poetry or private works of art), because these sources show how the propagation of the new dynasty was reflected by the Roman subjects. Since many different media were used to represent the military exploits of the *domus Augusta*, the source material for the dissertation is rather heterogeneous. One major group of sources will be written texts. The study will take into account both panegyric literature and historiographical works; the latter usually offer accounts of triumphs and other public events that celebrated the imperial family's military power. A minor focus will be on coins minted in the city of Rome; these objects occasionally show the emperor's relatives and may be a useful means to complete the image of the family presented in our written sources. Finally, the study

¹ Cf. Hekster, Olivier: *Emperors and Ancestors. Roman Rulers and the Constraints of Tradition*. Oxford 2015; Hölscher, Tonio: *Krieg und Kunst im antiken Griechenland und Rom. Vier Triebkräfte kriegerischer Gewalt: Heldentum, Identität, Herrschaft, Ideologie*. Berlin, Boston 2019 (Münchener Vorlesungen zu Antiken Welten 4); Michels, Christoph: *Antoninus Pius und die Rollenbilder des römischen Princeps. Herrscherliches Handeln und seine Repräsentation in der Hohen Kaiserzeit*. Berlin, Boston 2018 (Klio. Behefte, Neue Folge 30); Seelentag, Gunnar: *Taten und Tugenden Trajans. Herrschaftsdarstellung im Principat*. Stuttgart 2004 (Hermes. Einzelschriften 91).

² However, there are a few, usually shorter studies which have taken into account the representation of the military might of the Roman imperial families. Cf. for example Balbuza's article on the propagation of the emperors' families in triumphs (Balbuza, Katarzyna: *Der Triumph im Dienste dynastischer Politik*. In: Goldbeck, Fabian / Wienand, Johannes (Hrsg.): *Der römische Triumph in Prinzipat und Spätantike*. Berlin, Boston 2017, S. 255-282).

will also analyze representative Roman monuments (e.g. triumphal arches and statues) that propagated the victoriousness of the imperial family.

Through the By a comparative analysis of these sources the dissertation project aims to show that different concepts of dynastical victoriousness were propagated during the early principate and that these concepts were of major importance in dealing with both successes and setbacks for the imperial family.