Under Divine Auspices

This book explores how deities were used to communicate and negotiate imperial power under the Severan dynasty (AD 193–235). Septimius Severus connected his reign to the divine support of Liber Pater and Hercules, while Caracalla placed a particular emphasis on the gods Apollo, Aesculapius and Sarapis. Elagabalus’ reign was characterised by the worship of the Emesene deity Elagabal, which resulted in a renewed emphasis on the cult of Jupiter under Severus Alexander. Numismatic evidence is reintegrated into the wider material culture of the Severan period in order to bring new insights into the use of the divine in this period, as well as the rôle played by the provinces in the formation and reception of this ideology. By taking a dynastic approach, this book demonstrates the dynamic nature of the imperial public image and the complex dialogue that existed between Rome and the wider empire in this period.

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To my fellow students of history, past and present
Contents

List of figures  [page viii]
Preface    [xiii]
List of abbreviations  [xv]

1 Introduction    [1]
2 Contextualising a ‘foreign’ dynasty     [7]
3 Septimius Severus, Liber Pater and Hercules     [32]
4 Medical tourism and iconographic dialogues in the reign of Caracalla     [110]
5 Elagabalus, summus sacerdos Elagabali     [164]
6 Severus Alexander and the re-founding of Rome     [219]

Conclusion: Divine ideology in the Severan dynasty     [246]

Appendix 1: Silver reverse types from Trajan to Severus Alexander     [253]

Appendix 2: Reverse silver dies of the ‘stone on quadriga’ type of Elagabalus     [258]

Appendix 3: List of hoards used     [260]

Bibliography     [265]
Index     [298]
Figures

1. Aureus of Septimius Severus with Liber Pater and Hercules. © Trustees of the British Museum. [page 2]
2. Denarius of Pertinax displaying a caduceus with corn ears. © Trustees of the British Museum. [35]
3. Aureus of Clodius Albinus with a radiate figure. From Numismatica Ars Classica NAC Ag, Auction 24, lot 127. [36]
4. Aureus of Clodius Albinus with Baal Hammon. © Trustees of the British Museum. [37]
5. Denarius (reverse) of Septimius Severus with Liber Pater. © Trustees of the British Museum. [43]
6. Silver Liber Pater types of Severus (AD 194–198) as represented in hoards. [43]
7. Reverse silver types of Septimius Severus as represented in hoards. [44]
8. Denarius (reverse) of Septimius Severus displaying Hercules. © Trustees of the British Museum. [46]
9. Silver Hercules types of Severus (AD 196–198) as represented in hoards. [46]
10. Aureus of Caracalla with a ship surrounded by animals. © Trustees of the British Museum. [52]
12. Denarius of Domitian displaying a saecular ludio. © Trustees of the British Museum. [56]
13. Denarius of Domitian with a ludio. © Trustees of the British Museum. [56]
14. As of Caracalla displaying Liber Pater and Hercules. © Trustees of the British Museum. [57]
15. Aureus of Septimius Severus with Liber Pater and Hercules. © Trustees of the British Museum. [58]
List of figures

17. Aureus of Augustus showing the distribution of suffrmenta. © Trustees of the British Museum. [61]
18. Sestertius of Domitian showing the distribution of suffrmenta. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. [61]
20. Aureus of Caracalla displaying Hercules dining with Potitius and Pinarius. From Leu Numismatik Ag, Auction 93, lot 68. [72]
21. Aureus of Geta displaying the marriage of Bacchus and Ariadne and the legend PONTIF COS. From Classical Numismatic Group, Triton IX, lot 1526 (www.cngcoins.com). [73]
22. Denarius of Septimius Severus with Dea Caelestis. Photo courtesy of the Australian Centre for Ancient Numismatic Studies. [78]
23. Silver Indulgentia Aug in Carth types of Severus and Caracalla (AD 202–210) as represented in hoards. [79]
24. Severus’ reverse silver types of AD 207, as represented in hoards. [83]
25. The Severan quadrifons at Lepcis Magna. Photograph by Bob Snow. [85]
26. The ‘triumphal’ relief from the Severan quadrifons at Lepcis Magna. Photograph by Bob Snow. [87]
27. The ‘dextrarum iunctio’ relief from the Severan quadrifons at Lepcis Magna. Photograph by Bob Snow. [91]
28. Sestertius (reverse) of Caracalla showing Caracalla and Geta clasping hands. © Trustees of the British Museum. [92]
29. The ‘sacrificial’ relief from the Severan quadrifons at Lepcis Magna. Photograph by Bob Snow. [93]
30. ‘Capitoline Triad’ relief from the Severan quadrifons at Lepcis Magna. Photograph by Bob Snow. [95]
31. Inner sacrifice relief from the Severan quadrifons at Lepcis Magna. Photograph by Bob Snow. [96]
33. The Severan basilica in Lepcis Magna. Photograph by Bob Snow. [100]
34. North-west keystone of the Arch of Severus in the Roman forum. Photograph by author. [105]
35. Representation of Hercules on the arch of the argentarii. Photograph by author. [107]
x

**List of figures**

36. Silver Neptune types of Severus (AD 209–211) as represented in hoards. [109]
37. Reverse silver types of Caracalla (joint rule with Severus) as represented in hoards. [111]
38. Reverse silver types of Caracalla (sole rule) as represented in hoards. [112]
39. Denarius of Caracalla with Apollo. From UBS Gold and Numismatics Ag. Auction 78, lot 1765. [117]
40. Caracalla’s reverse types from AD 214, as represented in hoards. [118]
41. Caracalla’s reverse types from AD 215, as represented in hoards. [118]
42. Bronze of Herennius Etruscus from Colophon. Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund. [123]
43. Sestertius of Caracalla displaying Aesculapius. © Trustees of the British Museum. [129]
44. Aureus of Caracalla showing the emperor sacrificing at a temple of Aesculapius. © Trustees of the British Museum. [130]
45. Coin of Caracalla from Pergamum showing the emperor on horseback before a statue of Aesculapius. From Classical Numismatic Group, Triton XV, lot 1383 (www.cngcoins.com). [133]
46. Coin of Pergamum showing the city’s three neokorate temples. © Trustees of the British Museum. [134]
47. Aureus of Caracalla displaying Sarapis. © Trustees of the British Museum. [139]
48. Aureus of Caracalla displaying Sarapis. © Trustees of the British Museum. [139]
49. Denarius of Domitian displaying Sarapis seated in a temple. © Trustees of the British Museum. [140]
50. Silver Sarapis types of Caracalla (AD 212–217) as represented in hoards. [141]
51. Alexandrian coin showing Sarapis crowning Caracalla with a wreath. © Trustees of the British Museum. [150]
52. Coin of Philippopolis displaying the emperor in adventus. From Gorny & Mosch Giessener Münzhandlung GmbH, Auction 146, lot 307. [155]
53. Coin of Philippopolis showing the emperor sacrificing to Apollo. From Classical Numismatic Group, Male Bid Sale 69, lot 944 (www.cngcoins.com). [156]
List of figures xi

54. Coin of Nicaea showing Sarapis crowning Caracalla. From Numismatik Lanz München, Auction 102, lot 761. [158]
55. Coin of Nicaea with Tyche standing between Liber Pater and Hercules. Reproduced from H. Lindgren & F.L. Kovacs, *Ancient Bronze Coins of Asia Minor and the Levant*, pl. 6, no. 143. [159]
56. Reverse silver types of Elagabalus as represented in hoards. [166]
57. Aureus of Elagabalus with the sacred Emesene stone in a *quadriga*. © Trustees of the British Museum. [177]
58. Coin of Aelia Capitolina showing the Emesene stone in a *quadriga*. © Trustees of the British Museum. [179]
59. Coin of Anazarbus showing the Emesene stone in a *quadriga*. From Numismatik Lanz München, Auction 117, lot 1004. [179]
60. Coin of Neapolis showing the Emesene stone. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. [180]
61. Antoninianus of Elagabalus with the Emesene stone in a *quadriga*. From Numismatica Ars Classica NAC Ag, Auction 29, lot 596. [181]
62. The Vigna Barberini complex. Drawing by N. André in collaboration with F. Villedieu, CNRS, France. [192]
63. Reconstruction of the *Elagabalium* complex. Drawing by P. Veltri in collaboration with F. Villedieu, CNRS, France. [193]
64. Medallion of Elagabalus showing the *Elagabalium* on the Palatine. Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, picture courtesy of the Münzkabinett online catalogue, photography by Fotostudio Lübke & Wiedemann, Stuttgart and Reinhard Saczewski, Münzkabinett. [193]
65. Medallion of Elagabalus. © Trustees of the British Museum. [195]
66. Capital of Elagabal. Photograph by author. [199]
67. Aureus of Elagabalus with the Emesene stone in a *quadriga*. © Trustees of the British Museum. [204]
68. Denarius of Elagabalus. Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund with the assistance of Ben Lee Damsky. [207]
69. Aureus of Elagabalus. From Numismatica Ars Classica NAC Ag, Auction 54, lot 514. [208]
70. Silver types showing Elagabalus as Emesene high priest, as represented in hoards. [211]
71. Reverse silver types of Julia Soaemias as represented in hoards. [216]
72. Reverse silver types of Julia Maesa as represented in hoards. [217]
73. Reverse silver types of Severus Alexander as represented in hoards. [223]
74. Medallion of Severus Alexander showing the Temple of Jupiter Ultor. © Trustees of the British Museum. [224]
List of figures

75. Aureus of Severus Alexander with Jupiter. © Trustees of the British Museum. [225]
76. Aureus of Severus Alexander with Jupiter. © Trustees of the British Museum. [228]
77. Silver Jupiter types of Severus Alexander as represented in hoards. [229]
78. Medallion of Severus Alexander showing the emperor sacrificing to Jupiter. From Numismatik Lanz München, Auction 100, lot 185. [230]
79. Aureus of Severus Alexander with Jupiter hurling a thunderbolt. © Trustees of the British Museum. [231]
80. Silver Mars types of Severus Alexander as represented in hoards. [234]
81. Denarius of Severus Alexander. From H. D. Rauch GmbH, Mail Bid Sale 10, lot 610. [236]
82. Coin of Anazarbus showing Severus Alexander sacrificing before a temple. From Classical Numismatic Group, Mail Bid Sale 69, lot 1077 (www.cngcoins.com). [239]
83. Dupondius of Severus Alexander. Yale University Art Gallery, Transfer from Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University. [241]
84. Silver Sol types of Severus Alexander as represented in hoards. [243]
85. Trajan’s silver coinage in the Reka-Devnia hoard. [253]
86. Hadrian’s silver coinage in the Reka-Devnia hoard. [254]
87. Antoninus Pius’ silver coinage in the Reka-Devnia hoard. [254]
88. Marcus Aurelius’ silver coinage in the Reka-Devnia hoard. [255]
89. Commodus’ silver coinage in the Reka-Devnia hoard. [255]
90. Septimius Severus’ silver coinage in the Reka-Devnia hoard. [256]
91. Caracalla’s silver coinage in the Reka-Devnia hoard. [256]
92. Elagabalus’ silver coinage in the Reka-Devnia hoard. [257]
93. Severus Alexander’s silver coinage in the Reka-Devnia hoard. [257]
Preface

When I began work on this project, it was not my intention to produce a book so heavily focused on numismatic evidence. At that time I was not trained as a numismatist and had little idea about the potential uses of this often neglected type of evidence. But the more I learnt about the Severans the more I became convinced of the importance of addressing the numismatic evidence and examining it in a proper manner. It was from coinage, I believed, that we could make great advances in our understanding of the public image of the Severan emperors and the image of the principate in general. I believe that the final result has more than justified the deviation from my intended course.

This book derives from my doctoral thesis Under Divine Auspices: Patron Deities and the Visualisation of Imperial Power in the Severan Period, completed at Macquarie University in 2009. The conversion of this work into a book took place under the kind advice of the anonymous readers from Cambridge University Press, and was assisted by the tireless efforts of Michael Sharp, Josephine Lane and Gillian Dadd. The adaptation of my raw doctoral work into publishable form was made possible by a postdoctoral grant to the British School at Rome. The school and its staff provided an ideal environment in which to write, and living in Italy informed my ideas about Severan Rome in a way I had hardly thought possible. Enormous thanks are due to the stimulating community housed in the British School, particularly the scholars and artists in residence. A debt is also owed to Mrs Janet Gale for her continued funding of the Macquarie Gale Scholarship.

The genesis of this study and its metamorphosis could occur only with the sage advice of my doctoral supervisors, Professor Samuel Lieu, Associate Professor Andrew Gillett and Dr Ken Sheedy, who each provided a complementary area of expertise and unflagging support. My research was funded by an Australian Postgraduate Award and supported by a generous travel allowance granted by Macquarie University. I got my first taste of numismatics as a fellow at the Australian Centre for Ancient Numismatic Studies and this Centre went on to form a home for my research. Thanks are
Preface

due here to Dr Bill Gale and Janet Gale, not only for establishing the Centre, but providing the monetary support for research and training.

In 2007 I participated in the American Numismatic Society Summer School, where I did much of my research on Severus Alexander. The seminar and its participants taught me more than I can express, and so a hearty thanks to the ANS staff, guest lecturers and my fellow students, particularly to Professor Dr Bernhard Weisser, Dr Andrew Meadows, Rick Witschonke, and Dr Peter van Alfen, who continued to encourage me well after the seminar was over.

Thanks are also due to my parents, who have provided emotional, economic and culinary support over the years. Finally, I acknowledge the enormous debt this work owes to my fellow students, both at Macquarie and abroad, who have continually engaged and challenged me, and have provided support and friendship. Much of this thesis has been shaped by their intelligent questioning, and by their patience in listening to various numismatic problems and topics. This book is dedicated to them.
Abbreviations

Unless otherwise stated, all translations are those of the Loeb Classical Library. Ancient authors and their works are abbreviated according to the style laid out in the Oxford Classical Dictionary. Journals are abbreviated according to L’Année Philologique.

Since it is anticipated this work will have an audience without specialist numismatic training, I have attempted to be as clear as possible in referencing ancient coins. References to the Roman Imperial Coinage (RIC) or Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum (BMCRE) provide the relevant volume as well as the emperor concerned. References to the catalogue series Greek Coins in the British Museum (BMC) provide the standard name by which the volume is known, as well as the particular city concerned in parentheses. References to Gnecchi’s I Medaglioni Romani (Gnecchi 1912) provide the volume number, followed by the page number and medal number. These conventions were deemed necessary since the work switches rapidly between emperors and cities, and it is hoped this system will keep confusion to a minimum.

Other abbreviations used frequently throughout are as follows:

ANS American Numismatic Society.
ANSMN American Numismatic Society Museum Notes.
BCTH Bulletin archéologique du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques.
CHRB Coin Hoards from Roman Britain (1975–). London.
List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FMRÖ</td>
<td><em>Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Österreich</em> (1970–). Vienna.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LCL</td>
<td>Loeb Classical Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Patrologia Latina.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNG</td>
<td><em>Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum</em> (1931–).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>