The Tetrarchy as Ideology

Reconfigurations and Representations of an Imperial Power

Edited by
Filippo Carlà-Uhink and Christian Rollinger

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CONTRIBUTORS

JAVIER ARCE is Professor emeritus for Roman Archaeology at the Université de Lille in France. After studies of Classical Philology at the University of Salamanca (Spain), he was Assistant Professor of Classical Archaeology at the University of Madrid, Research Professor in the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas in Madrid, Director of the Escuela Española de Historia y Arqueología in Rome, and Associate Professor at the University of Strasbourg in France. He has directed excavations in Rome (the so-called temple of Iuppiter Stator), Tusculum and Rab (Croatia). His most recent publications include *Insignia dominationis. Simbolos de poder y rango del emperador romano en la Antigüedad tardía* (2022) and *Romanos y sasánidas: el Breviarium de Festus* (2022).

NICOLA BARBAGLI is annual Research Fellow at the Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici of Naples. He studied Roman History, Classical Archaeology, and Egyptology in Florence and Pisa. He has recently obtained a PhD in Classics from the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, with a thesis entitled *Faraoni romani: Rappresentazioni del potere imperiale in Egitto da Augusto a Domiziano*. He is interested in the history and culture of the Roman empire, particularly of Egypt. His current research focuses on the representation of the emperor in the Egyptian province as conveyed by texts and images.

FILIPPO CARLÀ-UHINK is Professor for Ancient History at the University of Potsdam, Germany. After studying Classics and Ancient History at the University of Turin and completing his PhD in the same subjects at the University of Udine, he taught and researched at the Universities of Heidelberg, Mainz, Exeter, at the University of Education Heidelberg and at the University of Tübingen before joining the Historical Institute in Potsdam in 2018. His main research interests include the economic and social history of the (later) Roman empire, the performances and discourses of power in the ancient world, and the reception of Greek and Roman antiquity in modern popular culture.

FABIO GUIDETTI studied Ancient History, Classics, and Ancient Art History at the University of Pisa and the Scuola Normale Superiore, where he obtained his PhD in 2011. After working as a post-doctoral fellow at the Topoi Excellence Cluster in Berlin, and as a Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellow at the University of Edinburgh, he is currently a Research Assistant in Roman History at the University of Pisa. His interdisciplinary interests include the social and cultural history of the Roman world and the history of ancient historiography and science.

NIKOLAS HÄCHLER is working on the reception of Cicero's notion of justice in late antiquity as a member of the ERC-project 'The Just City' under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Benjamin Straumann at the Department of History at the University of Zurich. In his dissertation, supervised by Prof. Dr. Anne Kolb (Zurich), he studied the history of the senatorial order between 235–284. Results of this prosopographical analysis were published under the title *Kontinuität und Wandel des Senatorenstandes im Zeitalter der Soldatenkaiser* in the series *Impact of Empire* (2019).

MARK HEBBLEWHITE completed his PhD at Macquarie University, Australia, in 2012 and has taught widely in the field of Ancient History. His research interests centre on the ideology and politics of the later Roman Empire, with particular reference to the role of the army in imperial politics and ways the emperor maintained control over the institution. His published works include *Theodosius and the Limits of Empire* (2020) and *The Emperor and the Army in the Later Roman Empire* (2017). He currently works at the Australian Catholic University.

MONICA HELLSTRÖM is Departmental Lecturer in Ancient History at Oxford University, and a Research Associate of Corpus Christi College. After completing her PhD from Columbia University she has held postdoctoral fellowships in Rome and the UK, most recently as Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at Durham University. She has published on the history, historiography, urbanism, art and architecture of the High and Later Roman Empire.

MARK HUMPHRIES is Professor of Ancient History at Swansea University. He is the author of numerous studies of Italy, Rome, and imperial politics in late antiquity, and is currently completing a study of the reign of Valentinian I. He is one of the general editors of the Liverpool University Press series *Translated Texts for Historians*.

ANNE HUNNELL CHEN is Assistant Professor in the Art History and Visual Culture and Experimental Humanities Programs at Bard College (NY) and specializes in the art and archaeology of the globally-connected Roman world. She is the founder and co-director of the International (Digital) Dura-Europos Archive (IDEA), an archaeological data accessibility project, and is Co-Chair and Annotations Activity Co-coordinator for the international Pelagios Network. She has published on Roman, Persian, and Digital Humanities topics, and taught equally wide-ranging coursework. She also serves as an historical consultant for the Virtual Center for Late Antiquity (VCLA).

ADRASTOS OMISSI is Lecturer in Latin Literature at the University of Glasgow. His work focusses on power, inter-imperial competition, and court culture in the late Roman world. He is the author of *Emperors and Usurpers in the Later Roman Empire: Civil War, Panegyric, and the Construction of Legitimacy* (2018) and the co-editor, with Alan Ross, of *Imperial Panegyric from Diocletian to Honorius* (2020).

CHRISTIAN ROLLINGER is Reader for Ancient History at the University of Trier, where he completed his PhD on Roman elite society and *amicitia*, and his *Habilitation* on late antique court ceremonial. He has published on the social, economic and cultural history of the late Roman republic and early imperial period, Hellenistic and Roman monarchic courts and power in antiquity, as well as pop culture receptions of the ancient world, especially in video games. He is currently preparing the manuscript of his next book, *Zeremoniell und Herrschaft in der Spätantike. Die Rituale des Kaiserhofs in Konstantinopel (4.–7. Jh.)*, for publication.

MARC TIPOLD studied History and (Protestant) Theology at the Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen. He has been working as a research assistant and PhD candidate at the University of Potsdam since 2019. In his PhD project, he analyses the spatial construction of Roman-Persian peace treaties in Late Antiquity. His research focuses on the history of pre-islamic Iran, especially the Sāsānian and later Roman empires.

REBECCA USHERWOOD is Assistant Professor in Late Antique and Early Byzantine Studies in the department of Classics at Trinity College Dublin. Her research examines emperors and imperial ideology, with particular focus on material evidence and collective responses to political ideas. Her first book, *Political Memory and the Constantinian Dynasty*, was published by Palgrave-Macmillan in 2022.

BYRON WALDRON is Lecturer in Ancient History at the University of Sydney and a member of the Serbo-Australian Glac Project, which is excavating a Late Roman imperial villa near Sremska Mitrovica. He holds the Australasian Society for Classical Studies Early Career Award, and published a monograph titled *Dynastic Politics in the Age of Diocletian, AD 284–311* with Edinburgh University Press in 2022. He has also published articles for various journals including *Journal of Late Antiquity*, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, and *Papers of the British School at Rome*.

THE TETRARCHY AS IDEOLOGY: AN INTRODUCTION

Filippo Carlà-Uhink & Christian Rollinger

'The tetrarchy', as the first chapter in this collection eloquently puts it, 'was a language, not a system'.[1] This basic understanding of the re-arranging of Roman imperial government under Diocletian is the fundamental starting point for the present volume, which includes 14 contributions to the study of this period of Roman imperial history and the form of imperial government established by Diocletian in successive steps from 285.[2]

The tetrarchy is commonly seen as lasting, in some form or other and depending on what is understood by 'tetrarchic' rule, either to ca. 312, when Constantine I, son of one former tetrarchic *Augustus*, vanquished Maxentius, the son of another former tetrarchic *Augustus* in a battle near Rome, or to 324, when the same Constantine eventually defeated Licinius, who had been made an Augustus in 308 by Diocletian and Galerius.[3] It has been the object of extensive study. Diocletian has variously been interpreted as the last barracks-emperor or (more often, under the powerful influence of Edward Gibbon) as the first late antique emperor; as an original thinker and subtle innovator or as a naïve military man given to fanciful ideas; as a decisive military commander or a grandiose tyrant. Traditionally, and particularly in 19th century and early 20th century scholarship, his name has been associated with a clear break in the history of the Roman Empire, marking the end of the 'classic' principate and the coming of something simultaneously new and lesser, the 'dominate'.[4] More generally, scholars have been near-unanimous in seeing his rule as one of significant, even radical change.[5] His opposition to the spread of Christianity and (less so) his persecution of Christians launched in the waning years of his rule has earned him high marks from scholars such as Voltaire or Gibbon, sympathetic attempts at explanation by some, and the opprobrium of others.[6]

This drastic view has abated somewhat over the years, as our view of Diocletian himself and of the form of government associated with his name has changed in the context of a still relatively recent re-evaluation of the period now known as Late Antiquity. No longer simply the harbinger of decadence and decay, his attempts at reform have attracted the attention of significant scholars and resulted in many articles, biographies and monographs devoted to analysing the minutiae of his all-

1 CARLÀ-UHINK, this volume, 46. The chapters in this volume use UK spelling and single quotation marks for direct quotes.
2 Unless otherwise indicated, all dates throughout this volume are CE.
3 On the story of the use of this word to define this historical period, see VOLLMER 1991.
4 For a decisive debunking of this notion, see MEIER 2003b.
5 CARLÀ-UHINK 2019, 9–11.
6 LEPPIN 2004; see also CARLÀ-UHINK 2019, 185–196.

encompassing activity. Various monographs and edited collections, as well as a veritable flood of articles and smaller works, have been devoted to Diocletian's and other tetrarchs' biographies,[7] as well as to individual aspects of their rule and reforms, from an analysis of tetrarchic representations in various official state media, to palace architecture and legal innovations.[8] The astonishing recent discovery of a series of monumental reliefs and statues from what has been interpreted as the imperial cult complex in Diocletian's residence of Nicomedia (modern İzmit) shows how our understanding of tetrarchic imperial representation and ideology can still be augmented and how much more remains to be analysed and interpreted.[9]

The present volume, we hope, is a step in this direction, as the papers collected herein illustrate a new approach to the thorny issues of Diocletian's twenty-year rule. Much of previous scholarship has been singularly devoted to understanding the precise nature of Diocletian's reforms, particularly his innovations in Roman monarchic rule, whereby he first selected a single colleague to serve as his co-*Augustus* and then selected two more colleagues to serve as 'junior' emperors or *Caesares*. While neither joint rule between two equal *Augusti* nor the appointment of *Caesares*, with an understanding that this title circumscribed potential heirs designate, were new phenomena in themselves, the specific configuration of what has been called the 'tetrarchic system' was, indeed, unprecedented. The core question that 20th century scholarship on the tetrarchy has been trying to answer is that as to the nature of this 'system'. Were Diocletian's innovations, as, e.g., William Seston and Stephen Williams maintained, mere reactions of external circumstances, a collection of ad-hoc measures introduced to alleviate the most significant stresses on an empire that had been tottering near the abyss in the decades immediately preceding his rule?[10] (An abyss, it must be noted, in the guise of the so-called 'crisis of the third century', whose catastrophic aspects have been intensely revised in the past three decades.)[11] Or were the years between 286–305 witness to the systematic and planned introduction of a well thought-out, previously conceived new imperial 'system', as Frank Kolb and Wolfgang Kuhoff have alleged, 'ein tatsächliches "System", das sich im Laufe weniger Jahre verfestigte und in hohem Maße ideologisch

7 To name but the most important biographies and monographs: SESTON 1946. WILLIAMS 1985. KOLB 1987a. KUHOFF 2001a. REES 2004. ROBERTO 2014. RÉMY 2016. CARLÀ-UHINK 2019. WALDRON 2022. DEMANDT 2022. Diocletian's imperial colleagues and successors (apart from Constantine) have received less attention, with some significant exceptions: FELD 1960. PASQUALINI 1979. CULLHED 1994. LEADBETTER 2009. CASELLA 2017. The papers collected in DEMANDT, GOLTZ & SCHLANGE-SCHÖNINGEN 2004 still serve as a valuable introduction to the *status quaestionis*.

8 CORCORAN 2000. BOSCHUNG & ECK 2006. CAMBI, BELAMARIĆ & MARASOVIĆ 2009. CAMBI 2017. ECK & PULIATTI 2018.

9 ŞARE AĞTÜRK 2018. 2021.

10 SESTON 1946. WILLIAMS 1985. The alternative proposed by KÖNIG 1974, that Maximian had in fact usurped against Diocletian and was then recognised by the latter, thus creating an 'involuntary' college of emperors, was original but has found few followers. For KÖNIG, this college was not founded on concord and harmony, but rather on rivalry and bitter opposition. Cf. ROUSSELLE 1976. KÖNIG 1986.

11 See e.g. WITSCHEL 1999.

untermauert wurde'?[12] Kuhoff, for example, speaks of the 'tetrarchy' as a 'true system' ('einem wirklichen System'), identifying as its main elements the

> ideologische Überhöhung des Kaisertums und der sie ausübenden Personen, die nach und nach vollzogene Zuweisung territorialer Zuständigkeitsgebiete mit zugehörigen Münzstätten, die Verteilung der Jahreskonsulate unter die Mitglieder des Kaiserkollegiums und schließlich die freiwilligen Abdankungen der beiden Augusti und die Weitergabe an die bisherigen Caesares mitsamt deren Eintritt in den höheren Rang.[13]

Each of the individual points he makes is disputable: the 'superelevation' of the imperial power, is most decidedly not specific (and even less exclusive) to the tetrarchy; the division of territorial competences was never formal;[14] the (more or less) even distribution of consulates among co-emperors is well-known for previous situations in which a college of emperors existed; finally, the 'voluntary abdication' of the *Augusti* is neither as simple nor as clear-cut as Kuhoff would have it.[15]

Determining whether we are dealing with a 'true system' depends on minute and, at times, highly speculative interpretations of fragmentary and complex sources. In turn, adherence to one or the other of these two great 'schools' of scholarship influences how the available evidence is interpreted. Understanding the tetrarchy as a system of government, as a significant, systematic overhaul not only of how the administration and defense of the Roman Empire functioned, but of the nature of emperorship as such, independent of the forms and reasons for its genesis, also inevitably generates further research questions: why did this tetrarchic 'system' collapse? Could it have endured without its *spiritus rector*? How? Why did some notable aspects of tetrarchic rule survive, while others did not? This applies particularly to the realm of imperial representation and performance, which followed and adapted the path laid out (allegedly) by Diocletian, but also to the question of co-emperorship, which remained the norm with Constantine (who was never sole ruler, but always 'shared' his emperorship with *Augusti* and/or *Caesares*) and afterwards. Wolfgang Kuhoff attributed the demise of the tetrarchy to an inherent lack of flexibility in its systemic configuration, but how are we to explain that a fundamental reform touching on all aspects and facets of imperial administration should then result in an inflexible, monolithic new 'system', which, in the end, is simply postulated by Kuhoff?[16] And how are we to reconcile the image of Diocletian as a methodical thinker and thorough reformer with the facts of his troubled succession? Adopting the position that he 'invented' a new system of government out of whole cloth forces us to assume that he somehow seems to have then overlooked or ignored the importance of familial relationship in the Roman succession and the contingencies of life as a military emperor.[17]

12 Kolb 1987a. Kuhoff 2001a. 2001b. 2004 (quote: 18–19).
13 Kuhoff 2001b, 149.
14 Bleckmann 2004.
15 Carlà-Uhink 2019, 151–164.
16 Kuhoff 2004, 19.
17 On the importance of familial and/or dynastic templates for Roman rulers, see Hekster 2015.

Thus, the discussion as it stands now has exhausted its possibilities and the dichotomy of two opposing 'schools' has lost its usefulness. Definitively concluding whether the tetrarchy was a carefully planned system imposed 'top-down' by Diocletian or rather a 'bottom-up' institutional arrangement deriving from circumstance, is impossible. The former idea requires a significant amount of speculation and unprovable postulates, and encounters difficulties in explaining the delay in the realisation of the individual parts of an alleged 'master plan'. The latter does not account for the undeniable novelty of the forms of (self-)representation and legitimation of 'tetrarchic' political power.

It is our contention that this avenue of research has reached an impasse and become intellectually sterile. In the light of our fragmentary and selective source traditions, it is impossible to further advance the discussion centred on the question of pre-planning and implementation of reforms. Even if new papyrological, numismatic or epigraphic material should come to light which could conceivably lead to revisions of individual datings or interpretations, it is unlikely that this would significantly impact the wider discussion – the incredible discoveries at İzmit have advanced our knowledge of imperial representation and art in the 280s and early 290s but have not radically changed the discussion on the 'tetrarchy'. Even the discovery of Gamzigrad – or, rather, the discovery of the inscription clearly identifying those ruins with Romuliana, in 1984 – did not significantly shift the terms of the debate on the tetrarchy as 'political system'.[18] Even if we were able to definitively answer the question as to whether or not Maximinian was adopted by Diocletian; or able to conclude whether or not Constantius Chlorus and Galerius both were related by marriage to Diocletian and Maximian prior to their appointments as Caesars; or even capable of ascertaining the role that Diocletian envisioned for Constantine and Maxentius, two adult sons of *Augusti*, the larger picture would only be slightly modified. It is with this conviction in mind that this book has been conceived, with the firm intention of shifting the terms of the question and thus hopefully arriving at answers through an approach that might throw new light on the formation, development, and end of the 'tetrarchy'.

A 'TETRARCHIC IDEOLOGY'?

'Historical explanations are inevitably shaped by the ontological commitment of the historians who frame them'.[19] Indeed, the impasse in scholarship about the tetrarchy which we have described can be conceptualized as deriving from being framed into dichotomic oppositions – such as 'individual' vs. 'society' or 'agency' vs. 'structure':

> Taking the side of the first terms in these dichotomies yields narratives in which the actions or ideas of persons, typically 'great men', are the main factors shaping events, situations, or the outcomes of particular struggles. […] Taking the side of the second terms, on the other hand,

18 SREJOVIĆ 1985.
19 DE LANDA 2016, 13.

> yields narratives framed in terms of the transformations that enduring social structures have undergone.[20]

'Individual' and 'agency' lead us to Diocletian the creator, 'structure' and 'society' to the interpretation of his activity as imperial reaction to historical contingency. One possible way to overcome this dichotomy is by looking at societies as assemblages, in which 'persons are featured too but not as great men, while larger entities, like kingdoms, empires, world economies, are treated not as abstract social structures but as concrete historical individuals'.[21] This is not in itself a particularly new thought; Braudel was already moving in the same direction. And yet, combining his approach with assemblage theory, as proposed by Manuel De Landa, can lead to a different, more complex understanding of the tetrarchic empire in its political, cultural, social context and thus to overcome, in our turn, the scholarly dichotomy presented above.

One crucial consequence of this is the possibility of re-thinking and thus deploying in a different way the concept of 'ideology' when referring to the tetrarchy. Going back to the elements that, according to Wolfgang Kuhoff, compose the 'tetrarchic system', he first names the 'ideologische Überhöhung des Kaisertums und der sie ausübenden Personen'. Such a 'superelevation' of the imperial function and of the emperors is defined by Kuhoff as 'ideological', without much discussion about the use of this word. It is probably intended here to mean simply that such 'superelevation' did not correspond to any 'factual' increase in power, but rather consisted in a discursive exaltation of the members of the imperial college and of their 'superhuman' faculties; it is therefore probably mostly meant in reference to the adoption by the 'tetrarchs' of the *nomina* Iovius and Herculius, which have been re-explored for this volume by Anne Hunnell Chen.

Kuhoff is not the only author who has used the concept of 'ideology' in reference to the tetrarchy. Oliver Hekster had done the same two years before and in a similar fashion, identifying the idea of the joint rulership as the main aspect of 'tetrarchic ideology' and defining the usage of the *nomina* Iovius and Herculius as one of the 'modes of representation' that contributed to pinpoint such an 'ideology'. His aim was mostly to contrast 'tetrarchic' ideology with that of Maxentius, which was based on sole rulership and on the centrality of Rome. In this case as well, the word 'ideology' seems to have been used to simply indicate a principle orienting government and encompassing a variety of legitimation strategies, without much discussion of the concept itself.[22] Almost simultaneously, Roger Rees similarly used the expression 'imperial ideology' to define the messages of unity and agreement in the imperial collegium as they are deployed and reproduced by Eumenius in his speech *For the Restoration of Schools* (*Pan. Lat.* IX(5)) in 297/298 CE.[23]

And yet, 'ideology' is a famously complex and disputed concept. In his introductory work to it, Terry Eagleton singles out sixteen definitions which were in use

20 De Landa 2016, 13.
21 De Landa 2016, 14.
22 Hekster 1999, particularly 718.
23 Rees 2002, 150–151.

at the time of his writing and which are at least in part in contradiction with each other.[24] Eagleton distinguishes between two main approaches to ideology, an epistemological and a sociological one, with the latter 'concerned more with the function of ideas within social life than with their reality or unreality'.[25] If we consider it a necessary attribute of ideologies that they must mould and shape an entire society, it is quite difficult to identify any 'ideology' before the 20th century with its rise of systems of mass communication and their use by totalitarian regimes.[26] This is not strictly necessary though, and many different scholars have understood 'ideology' as being a broad, diverse, and comprehensive set of beliefs shared by a group in its interpretation and communication of the world – and thus successfully applied this concept to antiquity.[27]

In the context of the ancient world, 'ideology' has for example been used by Nicolas Wiater to

> refer to the discursive practices through which a 'group [establishes] an all-encompassing comprehensive view not only of itself, but of history and, finally, of the whole world,' as a community's specific 'ideology.' Thus understood, the term 'ideology' describes not, as in its Marxist use, the conscious manipulation of the lower classes by the ruling elite; rather, it describes a characteristic of human perception in general, the selective perception and concomitant shaping of the world according to a set of rules or norms which are provided by the social worlds in which we are organized – 'something out of which we think, rather than something that we think.'[28]

Following Paul Ricoeur's phenomenological approach, we can thus posit as a working definition that ideology 'expresses the necessity for any social group to make and to give itself an image, to "represent" itself, in the theatrical sense of the word'[29] – and is therefore deeply connected to shared historical narratives, the deployment of symbols, and collective memory. At a second level, Ricoeur adds, 'authority raises a claim to legitimacy, and ideology serves as the code of interpretation which secures integration by justifying the system of authority as it is. Inasmuch as the systems of authority and domination differ according to their basis of legitimacy, the typology of these systems of legitimacy tend to coincide with the typology of ideologies'.[30] As formulated by Ivan Jordović and Uwe Walter, ideology thus absolves to two crucial functions: founding and reinforcing identity and orienting choices and actions.[31]

The role of ideology in the survival and stability of the Roman empire has been the specific study of a seminal study by Clifford Ando, which attempts to answer a deceptively simple question: what ensured that Roman emperors – of the Principate

24 EAGLETON 1991, 1–2.
25 EAGLETON 1991, 3.
26 ANDO 2000, 20.
27 JORDOVIĆ & WALTER 2018, 21–25, in specific reference to democratic Athens.
28 WIATER 2011, 21–22, quoting RICOEUR 1978, 47. For the traditional Marxist view of ideology see ALTHUSSER 1970, particularly 172–173.
29 RICOEUR 1978, 45.
30 RICOEUR 1978, 48.
31 JORDOVIĆ & WALTER 2018, 22.

– were obeyed? With extensive reference to the works of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, among others, and making use of Max Weber's sociological typologies of rule and domination, Ando understands Roman 'imperial ideology' as a system of beliefs making 'explicit the particular principles of legitimation to which it appeals, and to the extent that the regime is successful the ideology gives voice to the foundational beliefs on which an individual subject's normative commitment to the social order is based.'[32] As for its means of operation, in his study of provincial reception of and interaction with this ideology, Ando has shown that ideology, in this sense, is better understood as a multidirectional communication (instead of a top-down imposition) by means of 'symbolic phenomena' generated both by the state and by individuals, 'in order to represent their imagined relationship' to each other.[33]

When it comes to the rule of Diocletian and his imperial colleagues, therefore, the question to be asked is whether they shifted these communicative mechanisms of legitimation up to a point where we can say that they developed a new and different typology when compared to earlier and later forms of legitimation of the Roman imperial power. As the individual contributions to this volume show from a range of different perspectives, the answer is both yes and no. 'No', if we look at communicative contexts and individual symbols and representations deployed within these, which are to a significant degree conventional and traditional; 'yes', if we look at the new ways in which these symbols are connected and made functional. Many of the relevant aspects of 'ideologies', indeed, fit the 'tetrarchic' system of symbols particularly well, for instance their heterogeneity, as 'ideologies are usually internally complex, differentiated formations, with conflicts between their various elements which need to be continually renegotiated and resolved'.[34]

We will see throughout this volume that this applies very well to the different forms and means of communication of imperial power during the 'tetrarchy': the continuous communication as well as aspects that, from an external perspective, appear contradictory or at least inconsistent, are explained by the multiplicity of configurations and interpretations that could be (and were) ascribed to the same symbols, and thus by the necessity of a differentiation.[35] Additionally, ideologies often deploy mechanisms of universalisation and naturalisation that make their contents appear eternal, responding to the needs of each society and individual, and innate to human nature – and thus present themselves as a-historical or de-historicized (or omnihistorical, in the Marxist view).[36] Once again, this perfectly fits the kind of political communication developed during the 'tetrarchy', which strongly insisted on imperial rule as unavoidable, eternal, and universal.

32 Ando 2000, 24
33 *Ibid*.
34 Eagleton 1991, 45.
35 Eagleton 1991, 45–46.
36 Eagleton 1991, 56–61. Cf. Ando 2000, 20–21. Jordović & Walter 2018, 23.

It is in this sense, understanding 'ideology' mainly as a 'discursive or semiotic phenomenon', 'a particular set of effects *within* discourses',[37] contributing to the legitimation of the social and political order, that we understand the tetrarchic system of symbols and representations as a 'tetrarchic ideology'. Indeed, the crucial aspect in this approach is the role played by the symbol which cannot be separated from the overarching concept of the 'ideology'. As Eagleton puts it, 'if ideology cannot be divorced from the sign, then neither can the sign be isolated from concrete forms of social intercourse. It is within these alone that the sign "lives"'.[38] This implies that the same symbol can be used, interpreted and mobilized in service of different forms of legitimation and of 'ideology'. At the same time, this definition also posits that 'ideology should not be seen as a univocal entity, but as a constantly negotiated position which could encompass several competing and conflicting ideas, justifying and reconciling them to each other and to the history of their development'.[39]

This in turn implies that individual symbols which play a role within specific ideological structures can be detached from these and re-signified in a new context, in which they then express a new meaning. In this sense, 'ideologies' should be conceived of not as 'organic totalities', but rather as

> what the philosopher Gilles Deleuze calls *assemblages*, wholes characterized by *relations of exteriority*. These relations imply, first of all, that a component part of an assemblage may be detached from it and plugged into a different assemblage in which its interactions are different.[40]

This perspective allows us to recognize that the 'tetrarchy' did not need to develop completely new symbols and signs – the re-deployment, re-signification and re-contextualization of existing and established symbols of imperial power, of ideologemes (the fundamental units of ideology) such as the divine protection of the emperors, the *nomina triumphalia*, the creation of fictive family relations, can be re-configured to create a new 'ideology', a new 'assemblage',[41] that is a whole 'whose properties emerge from the interaction between parts', which eventually shifts the forms of political (self-)representation and of legitimation as well as the normative definition of the imperial power and the expectations connected to the imperial role.[42]

37 EAGLETON 1991, 194; italics in the original.
38 EAGLETON 1991, 195.
39 MITCHELL 1997, 179.
40 DE LANDA 2006, 10–11; italics in the original.
41 It is important to stress here that the English word 'assemblage' is different from the original French *agencement*, as it gives 'the impression that the concept refers to a product not a process'. On the contrary, *agencement* relates 'to the action of matching or fitting together a set of components (*agencer*), as well as to the result of such an action' (DE LANDA 2016, 1); this is also the meaning intended in our usage of 'assemblage'.
42 DE LANDA 2006, 5. On ideologemes, see BAKHTIN 1981, 429 and LYLO 2017, 19: 'The ideologeme is a unit of ideology and its explication. It can not only form an individual's attitude to reality, but primarily it can construct this reality on the axiological level and even replace it.'

When studying organizations and governments as assemblages, Manuel De Landa suggests for simplicity's sake to separate elements playing a 'material role', i.e. which ensure the '*enforcement* of obedience', from those playing 'an expressive role, that is those components that express the *legitimacy* of the authority', the latter including slogans and mottos, images, rituals and performances.[43] However, the two roles must be conceived as ideal types in the Weberian sense, as hermeneutic tools, since they cannot be strictly separated: the symbols expressing legitimacy and the discourses they produce are precisely among the elements ensuring obedience through consensus, as Ando has demonstrated.[44] The representation and performance of obedience and its enforcement, for example in the display of punishment, are clear examples of how most elements, to various degrees, serve both functions.[45] The way in which such practices and ideologemes thus combine into an assemblage which legitimates, reinforces and attempts to perpetuate political structures is what we understand, from a sociologically inspired perspective, as 'ideology'.

THE 'TETRARCHY' AS A 'DISCOURSE'

Such a definition of 'ideology' is undeniably closely related to the concept of 'discourse' as defined by Michel Foucault – as a system of communications that constructs and shapes what is understood as truth, and thus constructs and legitimates power relations. But the two concepts do not completely overlap, neither are they interchangeable. Even if Foucault recognized the role of practices as parts of discourse containing enouncements, the very concept of discourse and the methods of discourse analysis mostly concentrate on verbal communication, and less on the role of rituals and performances that we have already identified as crucial to the 'assemblage ideology'. On the other hand, while Foucault's discourse highlights rather the structures of exclusion and the negotiation of power implicit in each human interaction, 'assemblage ideology' as a heuristic category as we understand it, is more focused on the categories of inclusion, of identity creation, and of homologation of systems of belief. However, Foucault ascribes to discourse not only the function of communicating, but also the function of creating and shaping the very realities that are defined and described. This is also crucial to our understanding of the 'tetrarchic ideology'. It would be quite simply wrong to understand imperial ideologemes, the set of symbols, signs and messages that represented and legitimated tetrarchic power, merely as a premodern and abstract form of propaganda, deployed to 'mould the masses', and/or cynically elaborated at the highest echelons

43 De Landa 2006, 68; italics in the original.

44 Ando 2000, 73–276.

45 De Landa 2006, 71; cf. also 2016, 31–32. The role of punishment as performance of power and authority, especially in reference to the public forms of torture and execution of the premodern and early modern states, is of course based on Foucault's analyses in *Surveiller et punir* (Foucault 1975).

of the empire to reinforce their own position.[46] Ideology, to again quote Clifford Ando, 'is a system of belief that channels rather than stifles creativity; [it] is generative'.[47]

Understanding this 'assemblage' analogously to discourse allows us to clearly see that those who use and manipulate it are deeply entangled in it. This signifies then further that the development of a specifically 'tetrarchic' ideology, as any other, continuously shifted instances of legitimacy and normative values. From this point of view, the question of whether the 'tetrarchy' was a thought-out system of government, planned in advance and implemented step-by-step, or whether it was rather an *ad hoc* reaction to circumstances beyond the control of its 'founder', loses much of its significance. We propose instead to understand the tetrarchy not as a system of government, but as an assemblage of symbols, a system of communication, a language, which, through constant redeploying in new fashions and new functionalisations of the same elements that were available to their predecessors, reformed and reshaped imperial political communication and (self-)representation.

Thus, this new language of empire created (or contributed to creating) a new sense of what imperial power should be, how it should work, how it should look and feel, and what should determine its legitimacy. In this sense, it was generative, as it established new configurations of empire, some of which lasted longer than others. To put it provocatively: it is very likely that no Roman before 305 would have had a notion in mind that *Augusti* should (or even could) become *seniores Augusti* after 10 or 20 years in that role.[48] And yet, the fact that this did happen and that this decision was communicated, explained and legitimated through various communicative and representational means, might have generated, at least in some circles, an expectation that the next *Augusti* would do the same. In other words, a new imperial ideologeme might have been generated. As Oliver Hekster writes, one can only stress 'how important ideological messages of a predecessor are if one is to understand the ideology of a new ruler'.[49]

Setting out from this approach, it is in our view irrelevant for the 'big picture' of the tetrarchy – and in any case impossible to determine with certainty, even though much effort has been expended on it – whether an imperial 'college' of four members with two *Augusti* and two *Caesares* was intentionally planned, when it

46 The use of the concept of 'propaganda' for the study of the ancient world has been widely discussed, and sometimes rejected, especially by German-speaking scholars (see WEBER & ZIMMERMANN 2003, 14–31. EICH 2003). This is not the place to reopen this discussion; yet it must be highlighted that the concept of propaganda can also be used with a broader definition, as 'the deliberate attempt to influence public opinion through the transmission of ideas and values for a specific purpose, not through violence and bribery' (CULL, CULBERT & WELCH 2003, 318). In this more general sense, it is applicable to antiquity: see CARLÀ & CASTELLO 2010, 31–36.

47 ANDO 2000, 21. Ando is specifically referring to Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which he equates with ideology.

48 The concept of 'abdication', frequently used to refer to the political act of 305, is highly problematic: see CARLÀ-UHINK 2019, 151–164.

49 HEKSTER 1999, 718.

was conceived and what the specific modalities of its appointment were. Once it had come into existence and a specific language of symbols across different media had been developed to legitimate the number four as the correct, normative number of rulers, this language then suggested and furthered the expectation that the imperial college would go on being formed by four members in the future. In this sense, the numerological justifications of both the 'dyarchy' of 286-293 and of the 'tetrarchy' after 293, as revealed by the *Panegyrici Latini*, are significative: they give us glimpses into these processes and they reveal precisely by what means the ideological 'construction' of the current number of emperors as the only normatively correct number acceptable was undertaken.[50]

The analysis of those elements constituting the 'ideology' of the imperial college and its legitimacy informs the first section of this volume, with individual chapters undertaking a revision of some of the best-known aspects of 'tetrarchic' representations of imperial power. In the first chapter, Filippo Carlà-Uhink investigates the role of real and fictive families and family representations, comparing the use of such elements during the 'tetrarchy' with the practice of the 3rd and of the early 4th century. Following this, Byron Waldron focuses on the concept of brotherhood, the one specific family relationship that played a crucial role in 'tetrarchic ideology'; he demonstrates its connections to military language and shows the deep interlocking of the various aspects of imperial (self-)representation, in this case the familial metaphor and the role of the emperor as military commander. In the third and last chapter of this section, Anne Hunnell Chen reconsiders the *nomina* Iovius and Herculius, highlighting that 'tetrarchic ideology', as assemblage, was also subject to regional variations and hues, a point on which we will come back later.

Hunnell Chen's chapter likewise stresses that any analysis of the 'assemblage tetrarchy' cannot be exclusively limited to literary sources; as mentioned above, the spoken and written word are part of all ideological constructs, but these also include and are informed by visual representations, by performances and rituals, whose importance in establishing and reinforcing the legitimacy of (imperial) power cannot be underestimated. The second section of the volume is thus dedicated to such tetrarchic performances and manifestations of power. This is not a completely new approach: a collective volume edited in 2006 by Dietrich Boschung and Werner Eck has been seminal in showing the necessity of studying in greater depth the different forms of mediatic presentation of tetrarchy – yet the authors of that volume still started from the assumption that the tetrarchy represented a new 'political system', as explicitly stated in the very title of the book.[51] This collection of studies was additionally structured according to the different media deployed in representing the tetrarchy – from inscriptions to laws, from papyri to coins. What we have tried to pursue here is a different approach, aiming rather at reconstructing the complex interaction of different media in composing the political language developed in individual contexts or aimed at specific target publics.

50 Cf. Carlà-Uhink 2019, 47–58.
51 Boschung & Eck 2006.

Christian Rollinger thus proposes a new perspective on the changes in aulic imperial ceremonies and political rituals that have been traditionally ascribed, by both our sources and modern scholarship, but for different reasons, to Diocletian. Fabio Guidetti's chapter is also centred on political rituals, but of a more 'public' nature, as he specifically analyses ceremonies occurring outside the palace and court, particularly the 'new' tetrarchic *adventus*, which he understands as a 'staging of tetrarchic ideology'. In this section's final chapter, Monica Hellström investigates the role of statues in representing both the members of the imperial collegium and the local officials, thus shaping an articulated representation of power, from the 'abstract presentation' of the *Augusti* to the very concrete depiction of the local authorities in charge. This shows the potentiality of investigating the imperial representation next to and together with the representation of other elites and interest groups within the empire, to highlight the convergence into the new tetrarchic assemblage of different levels of political (self-)representation and discourse.

Indeed, the need to reject any image of an ideology as 'organic totality' and the necessity of thinking of them as 'assemblages', become even clearer when one considers the flexibility of ideology – and also of 'tetrarchic ideology': individual elements could be deployed in a more or less present way, or in different functional combinations, according to the specific public that was addressed and its forms of understanding and constructing legitimacy and obedience. The third section of the volume is dedicated to the investigation of a series of case studies revealing these individual forms that 'tetrarchic language' assumed when addressing specific social groups or localities of the empire. Mark Hebblewhite thus investigates tetrarchic messages aimed at the military and the construction of a common ideology of victory; Nikolas Hächler concentrates on the relationships between the imperial college and the Senate, traditionally described as difficult or even hostile; finally, Nicola Barbagli analyses the forms adopted by 'tetrarchic language' in a very peculiar local context: the city of Hermonthis in Egypt.

A crucial element in the construction of any 'ideology', which, as we have seen, shapes identities and notions of belonging through (inter alia) the definition of a recognisable set of normative values, is the representation of those deviating from the acknowledged norm. As mentioned above, their identification, portrayal and punishment are crucial aspects both for their material and their expressive role within the 'assemblage'. For this reason, a separate section is dedicated to two case studies analysing the role of the 'Others', that is of those who are perceived and identified as the 'outsiders' and 'enemies' of the 'tetrarchic order'. Adrastos Omissi thus devotes his chapter to the representation of 'barbarians', usurpers and dissidents within the language of the 'tetrarchy', particularly in the context of imperial panegyric. Marc Tipold, on the other hand, investigates the discursive construction of the Sāsānian empire as an enemy power and thus the role of the military actions against it in defining aims and legitimation of the imperial power of Diocletian and Galerius.

The chapters of a final section look at the discursive and ideological presentation of former emperors. Javier Arce investigates the imperial mausolea and the forms that have been developed to memorialise the 'tetrarchic emperors' after their

death, while Rebecca Usherwood considers the practices of *damnatio memoriae* exercised against individual 'tetrarchs'. This again leads us to the point of stressing the continuous change, the dynamic nature of 'ideology' conceived as assemblage. Famously, the 'tetrarchic ideology' did not survive long enough to allow for a true embedding of the previous generation of emperors within it. Or, better put: the death, memorialisation, and disgrace of the 'tetrarchs' took place mostly at a time, when forms of legitimation and enforcement had already changed noticeably.

THE 'END' OF THE 'TETRARCHY'

Yet the approach developed here allows us indeed to reopen the discussion about the 'end' of the 'tetrarchy'. In literature, this has been too often conceived as the narrative of a clash between the 'defenders' of the 'system' created by Diocletian (i.e. Galerius) and the 'opponents' (i.e. Constantine), whose aim was to destroy that institutional setting.[52] This narrative cannot be accepted in this rather simple form.[53] It has been shown repeatedly that neither can Galerius be considered as a sheepish epigone of Diocletian, struggling to keep the 'tetrarchic dream' alive, nor should Constantine be thought of as someone who, from the very beginning, subverted the existing institutional arrangement while dreaming of becoming sole emperor (for instance, it has been convincingly argued that Constantine's accession to the imperial college in 306 was not an usurpation and that he immediately received the title of a *Caesar*, rather than settling for it in order to avoid a civil war.)[54]

Assemblage theory – which stresses that every assemblage has 'a fully contingent historical identity',[55] and is thus completely unique – comes to our help again, as it recognizes the existence of

> variable processes in which these components become involved and that either stabilize the identity of an assemblage, by increasing its degree of internal homogeneity or the degree of sharpness of its boundaries, or destabilize it. The former are referred to as processes of *territorialization* and the latter as processes of *deterritorialization*. One and the same assemblage can have components working to stabilize its identity as well as components forcing it to change or even transforming it into a different assemblage. In fact, one and the same component may participate in both processes by exercising different sets of capacities.[56]

And furthermore:

> The identity of any assemblage at any level of scale is always the product of a process (territorialization and, in some cases, coding) and it is always precarious, since other processes (deterritorialization and decoding) can destabilize it. For this reason, the ontological status of assemblages, large or small, is always that of unique, singular individuals.[57]

52 For Galerius as faithful successor to Diocletian see particularly Leadbetter 2009.
53 See Carlà 2012.
54 Kuhoff 2001a, 796–799; Wienand 2012, 119–127.
55 De Landa 2016, 19.
56 De Landa 2006, 12 (italics in the original).
57 De Landa 2006, 28.

Crucial to the processes of territorialization and deterritorialization are phenomena of coding and decoding: expressive components – languages, when dealing with human societies – are structured in codified rituals and rules that contribute to the fixation and legitimacy of the whole. In this sense, the development of the tetrarchic 'language of power', as composed by its slogans, its panegyric texts, but also its visual languages and expressions, its performances, acted in coding the system and territorializing it.

The decoding – and deterritorialization – can and should be sought therefore at the semantic level, where they manifest as shifts in the meaning, use and significance of individual units. After the deterritorialization which 'disassembled' the tetrarchic assemblage in a long process starting in 307/308 and continuing well beyond 324, its components were readapted and reassembled, shaping political thought, (self-)representation and 'ideology' of Constantine's empire and then of that of his successors.[58] Constantine's unrealized succession plans, foreseeing a form of intrafamilial 'tetrarchy', with two *Augusti* (Constantine II and Constantius II) and two *Caesares* (Constans and Delmatius), three of which were brothers (and the fourth a cousin),[59] is a perfect example of both the persistence and the transformation of the tetrarchic language.

In this sense, we can stop looking for the 'end of the tetrarchy', meant as the moment in which a supposed system would have 'collapsed'. This is a problem that cannot be solved, as shown by the variety of different moments chosen to signify when the tetrarchy would have stopped existing. We should rather look at how the components of that language went on being used, displaced, and replaced in new assemblages, in which the legitimacy of the imperial power was constructed in a different way.

Literature on the tetrarchy in the past two generations has been abundant. We hope and feel, however, that this contribution will not have been useless if it helps in shifting the dominating perspectives in scholarship on this period. Overcoming the dichotomy (or, rather: dichotomies) that have characterized reflections and studies on Diocletian and the tetrarchy until now – we believe – can help understand better not only the historical period between 284 and 308 (or 312, or 324 …), but also of the Constantinian age and the following decades. However, this must not mean again placing Diocletian at the beginning of Late Antiquity, as the Gibbonian emperor who, in parallel to Augustus, shaped a new empire. On the contrary, we are confident that our shift in perspectives and our approach can contribute to a clearer insertion of Diocletian and the 'tetrarchy' within the continuous flux of assemblages and ideological shifts that constitutes, in the end, the history of power, its languages and its representations.

58 Cf. CARLÀ 2012.
59 CHANTRAINE 1992. CARLÀ & CASTELLO 2010, 134–140.

QUOD OMNI CONSANGUINITATE CERTIUS EST, VIRTUTIBUS FRATRES

FAMILIES AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN 'TETRARCHIC' IDEOLOGY

Filippo Carlà-Uhink

INTRODUCTION

As argued in the introduction to this volume, the 'tetrarchy', independent of the purposes and ways in which it came into being and independent of its possible characterisation as a 'political system', developed a specific, consistent and innovative language of imperial legitimation and self-representation, propagated through different media, which can therefore be defined as an 'ideology'.[1] A crucial part of this language concerns the relationship between the members of the imperial college, and generally the position and role of the imperial family/ies. It is often argued that Diocletian's accession to the throne brought about radical change, as did the construction, in the following year, of the imperial college that we term the 'tetrarchy', which has often been supposed to be a 'new non-dynastic imperial system'[2] and to have eventually failed because of a postulated opposition of the soldiers and of the armies, 'ontologically' bound to a dynastic faithfulness to their emperor.[3] It is not relevant for the purpose of this chapter whether Diocletian had planned from the very beginning, as argued by Kolb, a new political system with the clear aim of defining a new and clearly structured succession system based on a non-dynastic choice of the future emperor and on his 'training' as a *Caesar* to the future role as *Augustus*,[4] or, as many other scholars believe, whether the new political language concerning families was 'imposed' on Diocletian by his familial situation, as he had no sons.[5] What really matters is that the 'ideology' of the third century is supposed to have been radically altered: a new discourse and a new iconography of relation and parenthood within the imperial college supposedly emerged. It is the aim of this chapter to show that this is an overly simplistic picture, and that the construction of

1 See the introduction to this volume, 14–19.
2 HEKSTER 2015, 279. See also KOLB 1987a, 86–87. ECK 2006, 327.
3 E.g., KOLB 1997, 36. On the unreliability of this postulate, see WALDRON 2018, 134–145. See also BÖRM 2015, 242–243, who argues on the contrary that the soldiers would actually be against a strong dynastic principle.
4 KOLB 1987a, 2–9. 1997, 37–38.
5 E.g., KUHOFF 2001a, 30. LEADBETTER 2009, 48.

'imperial family/ies' in 'tetrarchic' language is much more complex and varied than hitherto recognized.

Those who argue for a 'tetrarchic revolution' assume, to begin with, that the emperors of the third century provided a homogeneous 'ideology': in the presence of more than one emperor, an *Augustus* or a *Caesar*, these were (with maybe just a few exceptions) members of the same family. In this sense, the emperors of the third century would have tried to establish an ever-stronger dynastic principle. Accordingly, young sons and women in the imperial family played a crucial role: the former as possible future emperors, the latter as guarantors of dynastic continuity – as mothers of future emperors. For this reason, many emperors' wives received the title of *Augusta* and were correspondingly honoured with statues, on coins, in inscriptions etc.[6]

But much less considered in scholarship is the successful and long-lasting 'fiction' that constructed the relation, or rather the direct descendancy from one another, of Roman emperors through onomastics, and therefore 'invented' dynasties. The practice of changing names upon becoming emperor was indeed probably much more widespread than we generally tend to think and went well beyond the best-known example Decius, who assumed the *cognomen* Traianus. Starting with Septimius Severus, who presented himself as the fictive son of Marcus Aurelius (a mere discursive kinship which did not correspond to any real blood relation, nor to any act of adoption), and thus famously (re-)named his elder son Marcus Aurelius Severus Antoninus,[7] most emperors of the 3rd century share the *nomen* Aurelius, often with the praenomen Marcus. This might also have been influenced by Caracalla's *Constitutio Antoniana*, following which the 'new citizens' acquired the name Marcus Aurelius from the emperor who gave them Roman citizenship,[8] as many 'soldier emperors' of this period might have fallen into this category, even if in most cases we do not have sufficient information.[9] But even in this case, the name similarity generated an 'ambiguity' that was surely not unwelcome. In the context of the 'crisis of the 3rd century', which mostly represented a crisis in the recognized and shared forms of legitimation of imperial power, it helped to construct in discourse and at a symbolic level a substantial continuity that was badly needed by often very ephemeral emperors: 'the imperial change of name and implicit link with a predecessor was taken up without difficulties'.[10]

Just to provide an example, we can consider the imperial college ruling the Roman Empire just before Diocletian's accession: Carus, Carinus and Numerianus. The idea of an imperial college was not created by Diocletian (nor by Carus)[11] – yet

6 KUHOFF 1993, 255. SCHADE 2003, 8–12. JOHNE 2008b, 608–615. JOHNE & HARTMANN 2008, 1038.

7 HEKSTER 2015, 209–217.

8 See e.g., KEEGAN 1973, 41–43. BLANCO-PÉREZ 2016 has further shown that it is not true, as has previously been believed, that the name Marcus Aurelius would have been used before the *constitutio Antoniniana*, and the simple Aurelius afterwards.

9 See e.g., POTTER 2004, 265. WALDRON 2018, 30.

10 HEKSTER 2015, 217. See also KUHOFF 2001a, 30.

11 JOHNE & HARTMANN 2008, 1041–1043.

this college consisted solely of members of one and the same family: a father and his two sons.[12] Marcus Aurelius Carus from Gaul[13] (who might originally have been a Numerius and have taken the *nomen* Aurelius upon becoming emperor) nominated his sons Marcus Aurelius Carinus and (shortly afterwards) Marcus Aurelius Numerius Numerianus as *Caesares*. Carinus was then promoted to the role of *Augustus* in the spring of 283, when he was left in the West as his father and brother moved against the Sāsānians. Numerianus became an *Augustus* only upon his father's death in July 283.

Interestingly, the name of Carus' wife is unknown, and she was not honoured with the title *Augusta*, nor with inscriptions or coins. This might be a consequence of her death before Carus' accession to the throne,[14] or of the fact that, having given birth to two already grown-up sons (and possibly a daughter), her role in guaranteeing the continuity of imperial power was already 'fulfilled' and did not therefore require special honours. But in this sense, too, Carus is not an innovator, and the view that great honours for the women of the imperial houses during the 3rd century were the absolute norm must be radically corrected. Regarding Probus, for instance, we do not know what his wife was called, or even whether he had a wife, as no inscriptions, statues or coins in her honour are known (and might have never existed), nor was she ever mentioned in literary sources. The same applies to Tacitus and Florianus, even if here the advanced age of the former and the short reign of both might be regarded as attenuating circumstances.

While Numerianus' wife is also unknown (we only know that the praetorian prefect Aper was Numerianus's father-in-law), the construction of a dynastic discourse for imperial propaganda is clearly visible in the case of Carinus: his wife Magna Urbica, whom he married in 283, received the title *Augusta*, the appellative *mater castrorum* and was represented on coins throughout the empire.[15] The dynastic ambition is further strengthened by the honours received by Carinus and Urbica's son, (Marcus Aurelius?) Nigrinianus, who was born in 284 and died just a few months old: he received a *consecratio* and was thus deified as *divus Nigrinianus*.[16] And yet, it has also been noted that Carinus and Numerianus do not refer to their descent from Carus in their titulature, which shows a sort of 'detachment' from the rhetoric of kin. This might be a product of the evolution of the political language that now relied on *nomina*, such as Aurelius, to indicate continuity without a direct reference to paternity in formulas such as *Cari filius*.[17] The picture is therefore much more blurred than generally admitted.[18]

12 See ALTMAYER 2014, 185–206.
13 ALTMAYER 2014, 66–67.
14 Yet Caecina Paulina and Mariniana were divinized and represented on coins even if they died before their husbands' accession to the throne: KLEIN 1998, 6.
15 RIC V/2, pp. 181–185, nn. 334–351 (Roma, Lugdunum, Ticinum, Siscia). ALTMAYER 2014, 75–76.
16 *CIL* VI 31380; *RIC* V/2, pp. 202–203, nn. 471–474 (Roma). See ALTMAYER 2014, 77–78; 163–165; 237–239.
17 HEKSTER 2015, 96–98; see also 100–101.
18 WALDRON 2018, 180–181.

THE *GENS VALERIA AETERNA*

With Diocletian, too, a first important step took place in the construction of the language of imperial familiarity in the onomastics. In this case, we know for sure that his name before the 20th November 284 was Gaius Valerius Diocles, and that it was changed upon his accession to the imperial throne.[19] He is then attested as Marcus Aurelius Gaius Valerius Diocletianus in an inscription from Ayasofya in Pamphylia that has long been believed to date to the very first weeks of his reign;[20] yet there are good reasons to assume that the inscription dates to 288 and displays a contamination of the names of Diocletian and Maximian.[21] If assigned to the beginning of the reign, it could imply a fictive adoption into Carus' family and this might also have been an attempt to placate Carinus so that he might recognise Diocletian as legitimate co-emperor,[22] later 'undone' when it was clear that Carinus was not ready to come to any compromise. If the inscription was produced at a later stage, as seems more probable, the name, intentionally steering away from the *nomen* Aurelius, might have been chosen exactly to display opposition to Carinus.[23] Indeed, Diocletian is otherwise, before Maximian's accession, always called Gaius Valerius Diocletianus.[24] Finally and most stably, at least since 286, he assumed the name Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus.

As his predecessors, therefore, Diocletian presented himself, at least from 286, as a member of the family of the Aurelii; this placed him within a long and fictive imperial dynasty, stretching from Marcus Aurelius to his immediate predecessor Numerianus whom, it is important to remember, he claimed to have avenged (thus also removing from himself any suspicion of complicity in Numerianus' killing).[25] Diocletian, who was crowned emperor by soldiers, had to fight against Carinus and to stabilise and legitimise his power. Diocletian thus followed the 'tradition' of establishing a nominal continuity with immediate predecessors and emperors who had left a positive mark in Roman cultural memory (such as Claudius II or Probus).[26] That he possibly wanted, through this act, also to obscure his origins might be a

19 *Epit. Caes.* 39.1. I will not here discuss the question of when precisely Diocletian assumed the new name: this might have happened sometime after his accession to the throne on the 20th November 284, as *P.Oxy* 42, 3055 (7th March 285) knows him as emperor with the name Diocles, but *P.Michaelidis* 21 knows him as Gaius Valerius Diocletianus on the 10th February 285. Stefan 2015, 274, argues for instance that the emperor still was called Diocles in the first weeks after his accession to the throne.

20 LORIOT 1975, 71–72.

21 STEFAN 2015, 278–279.

22 LORIOT 1975, 72.

23 STEFAN 2019, 289.

24 STEFAN 2019.

25 On the importance of this narrative element in Diocletian's legitimation strategy, especially in reference to the figure of Aper and his killing (a subject that is beyond the scope of this chapter), see CARLÀ-UHINK 2019, 35–39.

26 KUHOFF 2001a, 19. HEKSTER 2015, 57: 'Including a predecessor's name (or that of his *gens*) in a new nomenclature was the most common way to forge connections'.

further aspect: Diocles is a Greek name,[27] which might have been perceived as unseemly for a Roman emperor. Assuming that Diocletianus does not seem to come from Diocles, but rather from Diocletius, Nenad Cambi has thus suggested that this name, a marker of a humble origin, was first changed to Diocles and then to Diocletianus.[28] This is not necessary: Diocles derives from a root Dioclet- (genitive Diocletis) and could therefore generate the name Diocletianus by adding the typical suffix used in name-giving after adoption.[29] But of course, Diocletian was not adopted, just as Septimius Severus had also not been adopted, nor it is clear who the adoptive father was supposed to be if the name Aurelius was really added only in 286. What is clear is that Diocletian builds on the political language of the 3rd century consistently and constructs from the very beginning what can be defined as a fictional family that is an instrument of legitimation and stabilization of his power.

It is therefore no wonder that this continued to happen also when Diocletian promoted Maximian to the imperial power. It is not necessary here to discuss whether and for how long Maximian had been a *Caesar* before being elevated to the rank of an *Augustus*; it is more important to highlight that the earliest documents already call him Aurelius Valerius Maximianus (*CIL* VIII, 10285; 10396), then Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maximianus (at least after he became *Augustus*). Maximian displays thus both the *nomen* Aurelius and the *nomen* Valerius, which creates a relationship to Diocletian that goes beyond general belonging, as for most emperors, to the Aurelii. From this moment, as already mentioned, Diocletian also definitively assumes the name Aurelius. It is impossible to know what was the exact sequence and the precise meaning of this further name change, and scholarship has filled the gap both by assuming that Diocletian took the name Aurelius as a homage to Maximian, who bore this name already before the imperial accession,[30] and by suggesting the contrary reading, that Maximian took both names from his senior colleague.[31] It might be relevant that, beyond the references to many predecessors, as already explained, the name Aurelius might at this time also have functioned as a 'lieu de mémoire' recalling a previous pair of reigning brothers, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Aurelius Verus.[32]

This is of minor relevance once it becomes clear that the two *Augusti* share the same *nomina*, and thus present themselves as members of the same family. Indeed, as early as 286, with Maximian's elevation to *Augustus*, the political language revolves around the *concordia* of the two emperors, and around their great affinity –

27 *Epit. Caes.* 39.1 seems to insist on this: *Graium nomen in Romanum morem convertit*. See Stefan 2015, 276–277. On Diocletian's origins, humble according to all sources, see Carlà-Uhink 2019, 29–30.

28 Cambi 2004, 38–40.

29 Stefan 2015, 271–272; 275. Stefan does not connect the suffix to adoption, though, but considers it merely a strategy to 'latinize' the emperor's name.

30 Loriot 1975, 72. See also Waldron, this volume, 52–53.

31 Kuhoff 2001a, 31. Cambi 2004, 41.

32 Kolb 1987a, 16–17. 1997, 39. Hekster 1999, 719–720. Stefan 2019, 289, argues that this was the very reason for the adoption of the name Aurelius.

an affinity that makes them into brothers.[33] The panegyric for Maximian of 289 CE already reveals, before the creation of the 'tetrarchy' in 293, the strength of this language: Maximian is repeatedly called Diocletian's brother.[34] The rhetor explicitly addresses the fact that this brotherhood is fictional, and stresses this as a sign of even surer harmony, a crucial component of 'tetrarchic' propaganda, as revealed by the fact that Lactantius twists it polemically:[35]

> Both of you are now most bountiful, both most brave, and because of this very similarity in your characters the harmony between you is ever increasing, and you are brothers in virtue, which is a surer tie than any tie of blood. And so it happens that such a great empire is shared between you without any rivalry; nor do you suffer there to be any distinction between you but you plainly hold equal share in the State, like those twin Lacedaemonian kings, the Heraclidae. However, you are better and more just in this than they, for their mother compelled them to rule as peers in age and authority by craft, since she would confess to no one which she had given birth to first. You on the other hand rule in this fashion voluntarily, you whom not any resemblance of features, but rather resemblance of character, has made equal at the summit of affairs.[36]

Diocletian and Maximian are even compared to Romulus and Remus, to conclude that they are better than the mythical founder of the city and his twin brother[37] – also hinting in this way at the lack of that competition that, in the tradition about the origins of Rome, would lead to fratricide. The same concept is repeated in Maximian's birthday speech in 291:

> Surely all men would be struck dumb with admiration for you, even if the same father and same mother had inspired you to that harmony of yours by Nature's laws. Yet how much more admirable or glorious it is that camps, that battles, that equal victories have made you brothers! […] Your brotherhood is not of chance but of choice; everyone knows that unlike children are often born to the same parents, but the likeness of only the most certain brotherhood reaches all the way up to the supreme power.[38]

The language of brotherhood is also not new, and emperors of the third century have constructed a dynastic legitimacy by attributing important political and administrative roles to their brothers.[39] We have no idea whether Diocletian had any siblings and why, eventually, they did not get any share in his power – yet his

33 On this brotherhood and its origins, see also WALDRON in this volume, as well as WALDRON 2018, 201–229. STEFAN 2015, 272–273, argues that an inscription from Tyre, known through the Talmudic tradition and defining Maximian as Diocletian's brother, should be dated to 286, and thus that the 'language of brotherhood' started immediately after Maximian assumed the title of *Augustus*.

34 *Pan. Lat.* X (2) 1.5; 4.1; 9.1; 10.6. See KUHOFF 2001a, 54–55. LEADBETTER 2004. WALDRON, this volume, 48–49.

35 Lact. *DMP* 8.1–2; see REES 2002, 54–55; 74–77. LEADBETTER 2004, 264. BROSCH 2006, 88–91. These passages can also be compared with Plin. *Pan*. 7.4, which insists on the similarity in excellence that binds Nerva and Trajan.

36 *Pan. Lat*. X (2) 9.3–5; transl. Nixon & Rodgers.

37 *Pan. Lat.* X (2) 13.1–3. On this passage see also HUNSUCKER 2018, 90–93, who curiously does not refer to the theme of the brotherhood of the *Augusti*. WALDRON, this volume, 49.

38 *Pan. Lat.* XI (3) 7.4–6; transl. Nixon & Rodgers.

39 JOHNE 2008b, 606–608. JOHNE & HARTMANN 2008, 1042–1043.

decision to present Maximian as a brother is not surprising and finds precedents in the generations immediately before. Philippus Arabs, for instance, made his brother *praefectus praetorio* and *rector Orientis*, and Claudius II gave Italy to his brother Quintillus. Florianus was probably a brother or half-brother of his predecessor Tacitus, but we cannot exclude, considering the difficulties and contradiction of the sources, that the brotherhood was not real, but was discursively constructed.[40] Carinus and Numerianus, finally, were brothers.

This language is developed further after 293, through its extension to the *Caesares*. These become 'sons' of the *Augusti*. The panegyric of 297 for Constantius coherently calls the *Augusti* 'father and uncle' of the *Caesar*: Maximian is his father, and thus Diocletian, Maximian's brother, his uncle.[41] For Eumenius, speaking in 297–298, Maximian is again Constantius' father, thus making Heracles his 'ancestor', or maybe grandfather (*avus*).[42] Once again, the construction of such an 'imperial family' is accompanied by name changes. Constantius is Caius or Marcus Flavius Valerius Constantius: he assumes therefore the *nomen* Valerius and the *praenomen* of one of the two *Augusti*.[43] Galerius might have originally been called Maximinus, and Diocletian might have changed his name to Maximianus 'as a good omen because of the loyalty of his fellow Augustus'.[44] The *Epitome de Caesaribus* adds that he was called Armentarius, defining this a *cognomentum* – if this was a *cognomen* and not simply a 'nickname', it was also dropped upon the assumption of the title of Caesar.[45]

Some sources hint at the practice of name changing, even if they relate to the *Caesares* nominated in 305. Most notably, in Lactantius' narrative (and it does not matter that it is probably completely invented), when Galerius on the 1st May 305 becomes *Augustus* and names as his *Caesar* the unknown Maximinus, the soldiers, who were expecting Constantine to be nominated, at first think that Maximinus is Costantine's new name, thus revealing that such a name change would be normal, even expected.[46] According to the same author, Maximinus was called Daza and received the former name only upon appointment and because it was Galerius' name.[47] In this way, Galerius was 'emphasizing the dynastic nature of the appointment', as Maximinus was his nephew,[48] and working within a tradition of name change that was clearly widespread. Maximinus is Galerius Valerius Maximinus, and Severus Flavius Valerius Severus: both are therefore members of the *gens*

40 SAUER 1998, 174–178. See also WALDRON 2018, 126.
41 *Pan. Lat*. VIII (5) 1.3: *patris ac patrui tui*. See also *Pan. Lat.* VIII (5) 13.2.
42 *Pan. Lat*. IX (4) 6.2; 8.1.
43 CAMBI 2004, 42. BARNES 2011, 29. It is irrelevant here whether he already bore the *cognomen* Chlorus, as Cambi believes, or, as is more likely, this is a later invention (as it is attested only since the 6th century).
44 MACKAY 1999, 206. See also CAMBI 2004, 41.
45 *Epit. Caes.* 39.2.
46 Lact. *DMP* 19.4.
47 Lact. *DMP* 18.13. On the reasons why Daza is to be preferred to Daia, see MACKAY 1999, 207–209.
48 MACKAY 1999, 206.

Valeria (as all emperors until Crispus),[49] and additionally receive a name directly connecting them to their *Augustus*, Galerius or Flavius. It is important to highlight that this throws a different light on the 'tetrarchic system': should we assume that the new *Caesares* and their *Augusti* were understood to be a compact familiar group in the same way as the 'first tetrarchy', or should the different form of name-giving, as I believe, be taken as a clue that a systematically planned 'tetrarchic system' did not exist?

The 'relatedness' of the emperors and their connection to a fictive family was propagated throughout the empire through the different media of imperial propaganda. Two of the most important stylemes in this sense were similarity and affection. The fact that the emperors of the 'tetrarchy' were represented very similarly to each other has been noted many times: on coins, just as on statues and in paintings, the 'tetrarchs' did not display sufficient physiognomic features that would allow us now to recognize individual rulers in their portraits. This has been explained mostly as the reification of the similarity mentioned in the panegyric quoted above, as a desire to show how the 'tetrarchs' corresponded to an 'imperial idea', more than being individual rulers, and to demonstrate, through their resemblance, their harmony, their *concordia* (indeed a central concept of 'tetrarchic' self-representation, and the one most stressed in the ancient sources).[50] Yet there is an additional dimension to this iconographic choice: in Roman art similarity was traditionally a styleme deployed to identify and represent family relations.[51] The similar physiognomy of the 'tetrarchs' is thus also a way of visually representing a 'genetic connection' and belonging to one and the same family. The concept of *concordia* had also already been crucial in the imperial propaganda in earlier periods, often to stress the agreement between emperor and soldiers (*concordia militum*), but also in connection to the relationships within the imperial family, and particularly between emperor and empress.[52] *CONCORDIA AETERNA* was thus, for example, represented on coins of Salonina, who is also accompanied by *CONCORDIA AVGG*, deployed also for Magnia Urbica.[53] A silver medallion for Salonina presents on the reverse the legend *CONCORDIA AVGVSTORUM* and shows the empress next to Gallienus; coins minted for Severina with the legend *CONCORDIA AVG(G)* show the emperor and the empress clasping hands, thus making clear that their agreement is at stake.[54]

49 CAMBI 2004, 42.

50 L'ORANGE 1965a, 46–52. REES 1993, 182–183; 187–193. KOLB 1997, 41–42. SMITH 1997, 180–181. HEKSTER 1999, 720. KUHOFF 2001a, 574–586. BOSCHUNG 2006, 349–353. ECK 2006, 340–343. WEISER 2006, 210–211. DEPPMEYER 2008, 61–62. KUHOFF 2009, 105. ECK 2013, 23–26. EFFENBERGER 2013a, 59. HEKSTER 2015, 280–282. WALDRON, this volume, 53–54.

51 HEKSTER 2015, 80–82. HUNNELL CHEN 2018, 53–54.

52 But also between father and son: see e.g. *RIC* V/1, p. 106, n. 1 (Roma).

53 *RIC* V/1, p. 105, nn. 1–3 (Roma); p. 192, n. 2 (Roma); p. 195, n. 34 (Roma); p. 198, n. 71–72 (Siscia); V/2, p. 185, n. 348 (Siscia).

54 *RIC* V/1, p. 63, n. 1; pp. 317–318, nn. 16 (Serdica); 19 (Antiochia).

Also the *dextrarum iunctio*, the clasping of (right) hands, often used in representations of the 'tetrarchs',[55] is a well-known symbol of agreement, deployed also in the political field.[56] There is more: sculptural representations of the 'tetrarchy', as the 'tetrarchic' group from Venice, or that from the Vatican Library, show its members embracing, an unprecedented gesture for Roman emperors, and this bodily contact has been interpreted as a sign and symbol of *concordia*.[57] But once again, signs of affection such as embrace are in Roman iconography reserved for members of the family, and particularly for couples;[58] also clasping hands, an iconography that represents harmonious marriage, was typical from the Republican time.[59] It was then adopted in imperial representation from the time of Antoninus Pius to show the union of emperor and empress, sometimes with the addition of a personification of *concordia*.[60] With such gestures, therefore, the 'tetrarchs' were showing throughout the empire, in effigy, that they perceived themselves as belonging to one and the same family.[61] As with the language of brotherhood, we might have confirmation that this kind of visual language had already been developed in the time of the 'diarchy' of Maximian and Diocletian: a relief found in Nicomedia in 2009, belonging to a 50m long frieze that decorated what probably was 'an audience hall that might have functioned as a space for imperial justice and imperial cult',[62] and dated because of its iconography to the period between 286 and 293,[63] shows an *adventus* scene, in which two emperors, probably the two *Augusti*, descend from their ceremonial quadrigas and embrace each other.[64] Only one other example of such an iconography from earlier times is known. It represents Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus – interestingly enough, as brothers.[65] One should also not forget that they were Aurelii, and until Diocletian and Maximian the only emperor pair who presented themselves as siblings.[66]

What comes into being is therefore an 'imperial family', the *domus augusta* or *domus divina*,[67] which receives as such honours and cult throughout the empire –

55 E.g., *Pan. Lat.* X (2) 9.2; see Hekster 2015, 305.

56 As e.g., on the coins celebrating Hadrian's adoption by Trajan, which showed the two emperors clasping hands: *RIC* II, p. 339, n. 3 (Roma).

57 Kolb 1987a, 127. Rees 1993, 193.

58 Kampen 2009, 110–119; Şare Ağtürk 2021, 56–57.

59 Reekmans 1958, 25–30.

60 Reekmans 1958, 32–37. Alexandridis 2000, 17–20. Rees 2002, 61–63. Kampen 2009, 112–113.

61 Hekster 2015, 285–286. See also Laubscher 1999, 213–217. Effenberger 2013a, 60–62.

62 Şare Ağtürk 2021, 23.

63 Şare Ağtürk 2021, 45; 57–58, suggesting that the relief might represent an actual encounter between Diocletian, and Maximian, which took place in 288, but should more probably 'be understood as a symbolic and timeless representation of a continuous state of like-minded concord between the two emperors, who in reality rarely saw each other'.

64 Şare Ağtürk 2021, cat. 16, 118–122; see also 54–55.

65 Şare Ağtürk 2018.

66 Kolb 1987a, 47.

67 On the concept of *domus augusta* and similar, see Hekster 2015, 25. Questions about the specific relevance of the religious component and about the divine descent of the 'tetrarchs',

as *gens Valeria aeterna*, for example, it received a temple and a cult in the African city of Thibari.[68] It is important to note that this *domus divina* is only one – and not two, as it has sometimes been claimed by insisting on the distinction between Jovii and Herculii. It is only with Maximinus and Severus that we can see the onomastic formation of two branches, even if both still clearly inserted within the *gens Valeria*.

THE DISCUSSION ON ADOPTION

What has been described above should make it immediately clear that the language of familiarity deployed in 'tetrarchic' imperial self-representation is consistent in u-sing themes of relation and parenthood to explain what binds the four emperors. A good example is offered by the dedicatory inscription of the Baths of Diocletian in Rome, dating to 305–306. It is said here that the baths were built on Maximian's order to be dedicated to his brother Diocletian; additionally, the two, with the title of *seniores augusti* acquired on the 1st May 305, are named 'parents of the emperors and of the Caesars'.[69] Diocletian and Maximian are here thus not only the fathers of Constantius and Galerius, but those of Maximinus and Severus too. A dedication to Diocletian from the rest of the imperial college from the same period still calls Maximian his brother (*frater*).[70]

Yet, as it has been highlighted,[71] the language is very varied, shifts often and cannot be considered completely consistent: on a statue basis for Diocletian realized after 305 and displayed in Alexandria, for instance, the senior *Augustus* is defined as father of both the current *Augusti* – and not as father of Galerius and uncle of Constantius.[72] The relation of brotherhood and of fatherhood (implying, but only at a later moment, also the presentation of Maximian as 'grandfather' of Constantine, as we will see) coexists with other denominations as colleagues, as 'creator of gods', as 'parents of humankind',[73] etc.

What does this mean for the interpretation of the imperial college as a family? Scholarship has seldom asked this question, often assuming that the 'tetrarchs' constructed family ties through adoption, and not investigating this aspect further, thus incurring in contradiction and lack of clarity. A typical statement, for instance, is that the *Caesares* were adopted by the *Augusti* and that the 'tetrarchs' thus built a fictive family.[74] Now, while it is true that in anthropological literature adoption is

particularly in connection with the possible definition of the 'tetrarchy' as a theocracy (thus KOLB 1987a, 88–114. 1988), and thus connected to the persecutions of Manichaeans and Christians, are not relevant here.

68 *AE* 2010, 1805.

69 *CIL* VI 30567; 31242; 31463; *AE* 2012, 203. The title *patres augustorum et caesarum* for Diocletian and Maximian after the 1 May 305 is recurrent: see e.g. *RMD* 78.

70 *AE* 1964, 235; see SORDI 1962.

71 HEKSTER 2015, 279.

72 *CIL* III 14125.

73 *CIL* III 710: *Edict. Diocl. praet*., pr.

74 CLAUSS 2002, 140.

considered a fictive form of kinship,[75] in a legal sense a family constructed through adoption is not fictive, but very real, to which family law applies entirely. Without entering this debate, it is worth remembering that discussions around this issue are not specific to the 'tetrarchy' and that scholarship has been debating at length, for example, whether Nerva's adoption of Trajan was a proper one in legal terms, considering that Trajan took Nerva's *cognomen*, but not the *nomen* Cocceius.

It is therefore necessary to question whether this *domus divina* was also legally configured as a 'family' – and whether Diocletian and later Maximian proceeded to bind to themselves the other members of the imperial college through adoption – or even through multiple and contradictory adoptions, as it has sometimes been suggested.[76] This has been argued on many occasions by scholars, who sometimes stress that the use of adoption did make, in the end, the 'tetrarchic' language a dynastic one.[77] In particular, it has been repeatedly argued that two measures of this kind took place, namely that in 286 Diocletian adopted Maximian, and the two *Augusti* in turn adopted one Caesar each in 293. It is therefore necessary to deal with these two hypothetical adoptions separately. I will argue, in fact, that neither of them took place, that the *domus divina* was a family only at the discursive level and that the four emperors were not brothers, cousins, or fathers and sons in any legal sense.

The idea that Maximian was adopted by Diocletian is based mostly on the name change and on the passages from the *Panegyrici Latini* presented above. As scholars have found it implausible, however, that Maximian was adopted as Diocletian's son, considering the language of brotherhood,[78] it has been thought that Diocletian might have legally inserted Maximian in his own family in the position of a sibling.[79] This idea cannot be accepted for a very simple reason: the adoption as brother does not exist in Roman law, or, rather: it is explicitly forbidden. Ironically enough, the law preserved in the Justinian Code that clearly excludes this possibility even among foreigners (*nec apud peregrinos*) was released by Diocletian and Maximian in 285.[80] The change in the names of the 'tetrarchs' is no proof. In fact, already in the Principate people could assume the name of a relative or a friend, and the fact 'that friends could enter into the nomenclature reveals the high esteem in which they were held in Roman society'.[81] The practice of constituting fictive families was therefore known and widespread.

75 Hekster 2015, 24; 206.

76 According to Barnes 2011, 46, for instance, Diocletian first adopted Maximian as a son in 295, then as a brother in 286, adding to that the adoption of the *Caesares* as sons of the *Augusti* in 293.

77 Chantraine 1982, 482.

78 Hekster 2015, 277–278. Rousselle 1976, 457, nonetheless thinks that Diocletian adopted Maximian as a son in 285 upon making him a Caesar, and is followed on this by Rees 2002, 33. There are no sources to support this.

79 Kolb 1997, 38.

80 *CJ* 6.24.7.

81 Corbier 1991, 131.

It is much more frequently assumed that Diocletian and Maximian adopted Galerius und Constantius as sons.[82] Again, this is based on very thin evidence once it is accepted that changing names does not necessarily imply adoption. The occurrences presented above are not conclusive: the filiation could be 'collateral', based on marriages with the *Augusti*'s daughters (on which see below),[83] and more generally there is no need for the *Caesares* to rely on any stronger juridical institution than Diocletian's and Maximian's 'brotherhood'. Maxentius' mints, for example, produced two kinds of consecration coins for Constantius Chlorus, calling him *adfinis* and *cogn(atus)*.[84] The first term, which indicates a relationship through marriage,[85] is easy to explain, as Constantius had married Maxentius' sister Theodora. But it has been argued that the *cognatus*-coins, deploying a term that indicates a blood relation, would be a demonstration of Maximian's adoption of Constantius, that would have made Maxentius and Constantius siblings.[86] This assumption does not hold – and not only because the term could be a result of Maxentius' attempts to represent Constantius as being nearer to him than he really was,[87] but also because *cognatus* is a word used also to identify specifically the husband of a sister,[88] which could thus be adopted to properly indicate the brother-in-law while possibly also hinting, through the use of a generic word indicating many forms of relation and familiarity, at a general connection between the emperors.[89] Not much changes when considering the panegyric of 307, which addresses Constantine as Maximian's 'grandchild through adoption' (*iure adoptionis nepotem*), since he is called at the same time a 'son by ranking in majesty' (*maiestatis ordine filium*), and finally a 'son-in-law' (*etiam generum*) because of his marriage to Fausta:[90] at a discursive level, different roles and positions of familiarity are used together and in an interchangeable fashion, without apparent contradiction, to stress the familiarity and connection of the members of the imperial college.[91] What the panegyric offers is a 'deliberate blurring of constitutional and family affairs'.[92] Inscriptions also call

82 HEKSTER 2015, 278, for instance, recognizes many problems with this interpretation, and yet argues that at least Constantius was adopted by Maximian, deducing from this that the adoption of Galerius is also then plausible for the sheer sake of symmetry. See also KUHOFF 2001a, 121. WALDRON 2018, 60–62.

83 REES 2002, 105–106.

84 *RIC* VI, p. 404, nn. 27–29 (Ostia).

85 CORBIER 1991, 136.

86 MACKAY 1999, 202–203.

87 Thus HEKSTER 2015, 295.

88 *ThlL*, s.v. cognatus 2b, vol. III, coll. 1481–1482.

89 *Cognatus* is also used in *Pan. Lat.* X (2) 3.1 to define the relationship between Diocletian and Maximian.

90 *Pan. Lat.* VII (6) 3.3.

91 KOLB 1987a, 94, recognizes that the co-existence of the divine and the human family created 'curious forms of relatedness', but does not investigate this further and believes both in the legal adoption and that the emperors could marry within family relations without further problems.

92 REES 2002, 173.

Constantine the 'grandchild of Maximian',[93] but this is no stronger demonstration of an adoption than the filiation of the *Caesares* by the *Augusti* (as in the title *filius Augustorum*, which was 'invented' by Galerius in 309 for Constantine and Maximinus).[94]

The idea of a systematic adoption of the *Caesares* by the *Augusti* also cannot hold for the imperial colleges after 305. For Severus only the onomastics is available, and no further sources help, nor does Lactantius' reported speech in which Valeria would have told Maximinus that her husband was his father need to mean anything beyond the fictive discourse of relation.[95] At a further stage, Licinius' access to the throne makes again visible all the difficulties of such a model – and of the idea that the 'tetrarchy' must have been a system working with clear rules. Inserted into the imperial college as *Augustus* to replace the dead Severus, Licinius would have to belong, according to the model of the strictly organized 'tetrarchic family', to the side of the Herculii – but he presented himself as a Iovius, something that additionally happened only at a later stage (nor there is any source hinting at a possible previous 'Herculian' affiliation). The idea that Licinius' propaganda and onomastics would demonstrate that he had been adopted by Diocletian in 308, to be made a brother of Galerius and thus to insert him into a new 'tetrarchic' system,[96] does not make much sense. Following the idea of a family constructed through adoption – indeed, Galerius and Constantius Chlorus had not been brothers, but cousins – Constantine would now have to be adopted by Licinius, which obviously never happened. Lactantius' assertion that Galerius did not want Licinius to be a *Caesar*, as he did not want to call him a son, but a brother, as he did with Constantius,[97] confirms in the end the purely discursive nature of these familial definitions.

It is therefore necessary to conclude that the discursive relation of the members of the 'tetrarchy' had nothing to do with a juridical relation created by adoption, and that the name-giving and the adoption of the names Valerius and Aurelius are disconnected from any legal practice and are a part of the imperial self-representation as a cohesive group, the *gens Valeria aeterna*.[98] This would have allowed Galerius and Constantius Chlorus, once they became *Augusti*, to be brothers exactly as Diocletian and Maximian had been, and their Caesars to be their sons. Indeed, following the theory of a planned and strictly ruled 'tetrarchic' system implying adoption, one would have to explain what kind of relation the emperors would have had after a few generations, when they would be cousins with an elevated degree of separation. Rather, we must interpret the language of relation deployed by the 'tetrarchs' purely as 'fictive kinship' – something that was very well-known and

93 E.g., *CIL* XII 5470. See GRÜNEWALD 1990, 34, for a complete list.

94 STEFAN 2004.

95 Lact. *DMP* 39.4: *primo non posse de nuptiis in illo ferali habitu agere tepidus adhuc cineribus mariti sui, patris eius*.

96 CHANTRAINE 1982, 483–486. KUHOFF 2001a, 834–835.

97 Lact. *DMP* 20.3.

98 CAMBI 2004, 45. See also HEKSTER 2015, 304, who argues, in relation to the panegyric of 291, that 'the exact relationship between emperors and gods, and before the two men, remains unclear'.

practiced in Rome since Republican times, for instance in forms as the 'mothers' and 'fathers' of *collegia*, of towns, etc.

THE ROLE OF THE IMPERIAL WOMEN AND THE 'FAMILY OF MEN'

There is a further problem in believing that the 'tetrarchy' was structured through the adoption of the *Caesares* by the *Augusti*. Constantius Chlorus, it is true, married Maximian's daughter Theodora, and Galerius Diocletian's daughter Valeria. There is some discussion on the chronology of these weddings, and it has been argued that Constantius might have already been married to Theodora in 289, but without any convincing arguments (based on a reference to what seems to be a wedding in the panegyric of that year);[99] if they were, the family relationships would be even stronger than hitherto thought, as 'the existing sons-in-law' would have become *Caesares*.[100] Independent of this, an adoption would have created huge legal difficulties, as it would have configured both couples as incestuous (this applies also to Constantine's marriage to Fausta in 307).[101] While it is true that legal devices were available to avoid such problems, for instance the emancipation of the daughters,[102] the issue provides rather a further hint for understanding the *domus divina* as a purely discursive and fictional family.[103] These marriages were crucial to the construction of the imperial college: such unions have been used already since the Republic as an important instrument for creating political connections and transmitting power, and therefore they were, from the very beginning of the Principate, a means to 'strengthen the profile of possible successors'.[104]

Despite this, it has been noted in scholarship how absent 'tetrarchic' women are from the language of imperial self-representation, especially in comparison with the role played by the empresses of the 3rd century – this has thus been identified as

99 *Pan. Lat.* X (2) 11.4. Thus, e.g., LEADBETTER 1998a, 75–77. KUHOFF 2001a, 117–120. REES 2002, 156. POTTER 2004, 288. LEADBETTER 2009, 60–61. BARNES 2011, 39–41. HUNNELL CHEN 2018, 48. WALDRON 2018, 54–56. CASELLA 2020, 237–238. Yet this is in most cases (with the exclusion of Barnes and Waldron) based on the assumption that Constantius Chlorus had been praetorian prefect of Maximian, which is highly unlikely; the only praetorian prefects attested for Diocletian and Maximian are Asclepiodotus and Hannibalianus, and they seem to have been already in charge by late 288: see PORENA 2007, 103–133. The idea that this passage alludes to Maximian marrying Eutropia, who was Hannibalianus' ex-wife, is therefore still the most tenable. There is no need to see in this an opposition between Maximian and a Diocletian already keenly opposing any dynastic succession, as e.g. does CULLHED 1994, 14–15.

100 CORCORAN 2012a, 4.

101 CORBIER 1991, 134.

102 CORCORAN 2012a, 5. HEKSTER 2015, 278. See CORBIER 1991, 142.

103 It is indeed impossible to follow KOLB 1987a, 68–69 when he argues that Diocletian and Maximian would not have cared about this and followed the model of the *princeps legibus solutus*, as this radically contrasts with the principles informing 'tetrarchic' lawgiving (see e.g. *CJ* 2.4.16 and 6.23.10). GRÜNEWALD 1990, 34, rejects this interpretation and simply states that this problem appears insoluble.

104 HEKSTER 2015, 5–6.