The gold bust (*imago*) of Septimius Severus from Didymoteicho (*Plotinopolis*)

Anne de Pury-Gysel

The ancient city of *Plotinopolis* lies on Aghia Petra hill which rises gently above the plain south of Didymoteicho (Thrace), not far from the Hebros river. Little information on the city, which was renamed by Trajan, has come down to us, although it features on ancient route maps and was mentioned by Ptolemy (3.11.3) and Procopius (*Aed*. 4.11.19).[1] Few archaeological excavations have been carried out, and of the city itself few vestiges remain (fig. 1). In 1965, while the Greek army was excavating a trench at Didymoteicho, a gold bust of an emperor wearing a cuirass came to light.[2] There is no documentation on its discovery, no report on the Greek army's intervention, nor even any information on the follow-up excavation carried out by A. Vavritsas.[3] Having initially been hidden by its discoverers, the bust narrowly escaped being melted down — the fate suffered by the majority of antiquities made of gold — for already in the days directly after the discovery one part of the edge of the cuirass was cut into pieces and sold off by the soldiers. This reckless action betrayed the bust's discoverers and made it possible for the unit's officers to recover the bust. Considering its extreme rarity, this type of object is important, not only for the questions it raises regard-



Fig, 1. Simplified contour map of Plotinopolis. 1. Approximate spot where gold bust was discovered. 2. A set of steps from the Byzantine era. 3. Partially excavated Roman building. 4. Roman cistern and winged building housing baths and mosaics (2nd/3rd c.). 5. Current line of the road. 6. Line of the Thessaloniki-Istanbul railway. Dark spots indicate late-antique tombs.

Frequently cited: de Pury-Gysel 2017 = *Die Goldbüste des Septimius Severus. Gold- und Silberbüsten römischer Kaiser. Mit Beiträgen von A. Giumlia-Mair. Fotos der Goldbüste von T. Kartsoglou* (Basel), and at http://edoc.unibas.ch/56095/1/9783952454268_rights_restricted%285%29.pdf

1 *Itin. Ant*. 175.7 (*a Plotinopolim*) and 322.7 (*Plotinopolim*). *Tab. Peut*. 7B3/7B4 (Talbert). See de Pury-Gysel 2017, 18-20.

2 The bust was first noted by G. Daux at *BCH* 89 (1965) 683.

3 A. Vavritsas, "Eine Goldbüste aus Didymoteichon," in *Actes du premier congrès int. des études balkaniques et sud-est européennes. Sofia 1966* (Sofia 1969) 419. During the course of the on-site inspection, a 7th-c. coin was found in a layer deeper than that at which the bust was found, but the latter's location, on the side of the hill, does not exclude the possibility of the soil having banked up as a result of erosion, resulting in a kind of inverse stratigraphy.

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Figs. 2-6. Gold bust of Septimius Severus from Plotinopolis (ht. 28.4 cm, 980 gm, 23 carats; A.D. 194-196/197) (Archaiologiko Mouseio Komotinis, Greece, inv. 207).

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ing its original purpose and dating, but also for our understanding of toreutics. Our interpretation of the piece, which is effectively without archaeological context, has to rely on a critical analysis of its technical, iconographic and artistic aspects, taking into account extant depictions of imperial busts and textual references.

The bust (figs. 2-6 in colour)

The bust, now housed in the Komotini archaeological museum, is 28.4 cm high and weighs 980 gm, the approximate equivalent of 3 *librae* of 327.5 gm, which in turns corresponds to 135 *aurei*.[4] The thickness of the metal sheet varies between roughly 1 and 1.4 mm.[5] The first photographs, made shortly after the bust's discovery but after the edge of the cuirass had been cut off, show that, apart from a deep split in the left cheek and some cracks, the bust was complete and well preserved.[6] This split was probably caused by the soldiers' tools during the excavation of the trench. A tear and a gap can be observed on the bust where the rear edge was reinforced in antiquity by the addition of a piece of bronze (fig. 4).[7]

The bust was executed in an embossing process, probably starting from a single mass of 23-carat gold, an alloy that lends itself to this type of manufacture.[8] Its external surface is shiny in parts (hair, beard, moustache, edges of the ears, certain places on the cuirass), and matted in parts due to a deft cold-working process. These finishing touches were applied by means of at least 4 different tools, tools that were likewise used to indicate the eyebrows, irises, pupils, the first hairs along the edge of the beard line, and those beneath the mouth.[9] Some parts of the curls were retouched by means of a fine incising process, producing a contrast of light and dark between the shiny and matted areas of the hair. Incised contour lines between the hair and skin accentuate the contrast between different parts of the work, enhancing the plastic qualities.[10] The front of the neck was given an irregular, rugged surface: was this a desired effect or caused by the complexity of the embossing process? In

4 The *aureus* weighed 7.25 gm after its devaluation under Septimius Severus.

5 I am grateful to A. Giumlia-Mair for this information. I was able to take precise measurements of the gold bust of Marcus Aurelius at Avenches and of the fragment of a gold bust discovered at Dambach; de Pury-Gysel 2017, 108 and 118.

6 de Pury-Gysel 2017, 22, fig. 12.

7 For analysis of the metal, see Giumlia-Mair 2017, 37. This repair (*c.*5.3 x 2.2 x 0.1 cm) was executed with less skill than that evidenced by the original producer of the bust, probably by a craftsman who was unfamiliar with gold as a material. The exterior of the repair was gilded with gold leaf in a summary manner. See A. Giumlia-Mair, "Technical study on the gold bust of Septimius Severus from *Plotinopolis*," in de Pury-Gysel 2017, 37 and fig. 34.

8 Giumlia-Mair ibid. 36-41. It is difficult to localize the provenance of gold. Further, as gold was regularly melted down in antiquity, the same object can contain gold of several provenances; E. Pernicka, "Possibilities and limitations of provenance studies of ancient silver and gold," in H. Meller, R. Risch and E. Pernicka (edd.), *Metalle der Macht — Frühes Gold und Silber. 6. Mitteldeutscher Archäologentag vom 17. bis 19. Oktober 2013 in Halle (Saale)* (Halle 2014) 159-63. Thrace was a region famous in antiquity for its gold deposits, and the proximity of Plotinopolis to the auriferous Hebros river could lead us to think that the bust was made of "Thracian gold", but nothing allows us to prove this.

9 In *Trassologie an römischem Silber. Herstellungstechnische Untersuchungen am Hildesheimer Silberfund* (BAR S1621; Oxford 2007) 53-83, B. Niemeyer provides extensive analyses of the cold working observable on the silverware of the Hildesheim treasure and illustrates numerous applications of the punches employed.

10 Giumlia-Mair (supra n.7) 38-39 and figs. 37-38.

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light of the superb quality overall, it would be surprising if the goldsmith did not wish or know how to smooth out this part of the neck. The interior surface of the bust is matte, with areas covered in a brownish substance which may be connected with the bust's original consolidated stuffing.[11]

The male subject is shown with moustache and forked beard. The short hairstyle, of *c.*50 curls, does not cover the ears. The 7 curls on the forehead fall into a semicircle, creating a 'widow's peak'. The temples are covered with curls gathered into single masses, each with a curved contour. In profile view, the head has an elongated appearance, with a relatively high forehead and quite a long nose, which is slightly curved and the root of which is not particularly marked (figs. 3-4). In frontal view, the face is broad, with fleshy cheeks and bulging eyes with thick eyelids. The nasolabial folds and rings under the eyes indicate the subject's mature age. The frontal view also shows that the piece was not conceived symmetrically. It encapsulates two movements: the head is slightly turned to its right (the musculature of the neck reveals the head's movement), while the figure's left shoulder is higher and appears narrower than the right, as if the bust were intended to render just the upper part of a statue with a free left leg (*Spielbein*) and left arm extended. The gaze is directed in line with the head's axis of rotation and passes above the viewer (fig. 6). The overall asymmetry is clearly visible in a photograph taken from above.[12]

The bust features a cuirass of the *lorica plumata* type, which is Greek in origin. It has a metallic part made up of several rows of 'feathers' (the barbs are delineated by a cold-working process) held up by a frame, and shoulder-straps and protective epaulettes in leather (πτέρυγες/*pteryges*). The centre of the front is decorated with a winged *gorgoneion* (fig. 2) surrounded by serpents whose heads appear between the wings above the head and whose tails are knotted beneath the chin.[13] The pleated edge of an undergarment emerges from beneath the frame at the neck. At the front, the chest forms a semicircle that descends to the middle of the breast, whereas at the rear it is much shorter.

Iconography and dating

When one tries to classify the bust, it must be kept in mind that the particular nature of gold-working produces effects that have repercussions on style and artistic quality. The small number (15, including the uncertain female bust) of imperial portraits in precious metal that have come down to us hardly provide a sufficient basis either for identifying the nature of such effects or for establishing clear-cut rules that can be applied in comparisons with portraits in marble.

Our bust was first interpreted as a portrait of Marcus Aurelius, but it was soon identified by the authors of the two main typologies of Septimius Severus as an effigy of that emperor[14] and there is no current reason to cast doubt on that. Comparison of

11 de Pury-Gysel 2017, 18, fig. 18, and 27 with n.31 (with reference to other gold busts that exhibit the same phenomenon). The stuffing was probably of organic matter.

12 de Pury-Gysel 2017, p. 29, figs. 25 and 27, and pp. 51-52.

13 Cf. G. Paoletti, "Gorgones Romanae" in *LIMC* IV.1, 345-62 and IV.2, 201, fig. 201 (three-quarter profile); the gorgoneia on Roman Imperial cuirasses are generally shown frontal.

14 Hesitant identification as Marcus Aurelius: Daux (supra n.2); with only slight hesitation: A. Vavritsas, "Χρυσή προτομή εκ Διδυμοτειχου," *AAA* 2 (1968) 194-97. Septimius Severus: A. M. McCann, *The portraits of Septimius Severus (A.D. 193-211)* (MAAR 30, 1968) 99 and 143, no. 129, pl. 40; D. Soechting, *Die Porträts des Septimius Severus* (Bonn 1972) 132, no. 5. These scholars were not able to study the Plotinopolis bust in depth for want of direct access to both the

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the stylistic characteristics with corresponding elements on coins and marble portraits leads us to assign the gold bust to the group of portraits from the first phase of his reign (A.D. 194-196/97). Among the marble portraits of this first type according to D. Soechting's typology,[15] the bust from Thessaloniki[16] is particularly close to ours, even with respect to the slight flattening of the back of the head. At Rome, one can readily compare the portrait exhibited at the Centrale Montemartini.[17] Another comparison that is convincing in several respects is with the head of a bronze statue in Copenhagen.[18] If one examines portraits on medallions and coins of the same period, it can be seen that several types coexist. This may be due to the possible absence of an official type or to the independence/free hand of the designers where those issues were struck. Yet despite the divergences (to which one might add differences arising from the skill levels of those manufacturing these objects), these effigies have some points in common: two bronze medallions of 194/195, as well as bronze coins struck at Perinthos between the end of 193 and 196, show Septimius Severus with a slightly elongated profile,[19] with the same hairstyle as described above, and with a less deeply marked root to the nose than is normally found in the following years.[20] Some traits are shared with portraits of the Antonine emperors, especially Marcus Aurelius, palpably illustrating Septimius Severus' declaration having himself adopted in 195 by Marcus Aurelius.

The imperial portrait and the term "*imago*"[21]

Portraits of the emperor could take very different forms and lent themselves to a wide variety of uses. The portable portrait, such as a hollow bust, that is not able to stand by itself is often called an *imago*, more rarely an *effigies*, or εἰκών and προτομή, more rarely

object itself and good illustrations. For the history of research on the bust, see de Pury-Gysel 2017, 20-23.

15 Soechting ibid. 31-32 and 271; de Pury-Gysel 2017, 56.

16 Thessaloniki Archaeological Museum, inv. 898; de Pury-Gysel 2017, 42-45.

17 Rome, Centrale Montemartini, inv. 2309; McCann (supra n.14) no. 19; K. Fittschen and P. Zanker, *Katalog der römischen Porträts in den Capitolinischen Museen und den anderen kommunalen Sammlungen der Stadt Rom*. Bd. 1 (2nd edn., Mainz 1994) no. 82, pls. 101-2; de Pury-Gysel 2017, figs. 48 and 54.

18 Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, inv. 3422; F. Johansen, *Catalogue of Roman portraits* III. *Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek* (Copenhagen 1995) no. 1; de Pury-Gysel 2017, figs. 46-47.

19 E. Schönert, *Die Münzprägung von Perinthos* (Berlin 1965) 19 and pl. 25, no. 442; de Pury-Gysel 2017, 49, figs. 51 and 53.

20 Perinthos had lost the right to issue coinage for several years. Septimius Severus, who passed the winter of 193-194 there, as well as part of 195, returned this right to the city, just as he endowed it (by 196 at the latest) with the title of *neokoros*. See the medallion in Berlin's Münzkabinett, inv. 18200713, dated to 194-195 (de Pury-Gysel 2017, fig. 50); and the medallion formerly in the Gnecchi Collection, dated to 194 (de Pury-Gysel 2017, fig. 49). For bronze coins of Perinthos, see Münzkabinett inv. nos. 18239367 and 18239368, dating between the end of 193 and 196 (de Pury-Gysel 2017, figs. 51 and 53). On coins issued in the early years of the reign of Septimius Severus, see also Schönert, ibid. 19-20, and P. V. Hill, "The portraiture of Septimius Severus and his family on coins from the mint of Rome A.D. 193-217," in M. Price, A. Burnett and R. Bland (edd.), *Essays in honour of Robert Carson and Kenneth Jenkins* (London 1993) 184-85.

21 The main works on the term *imago* are: H. Kruse, *Studien zur offiziellen Geltung des Kaiserbildes im römischen Reich* (Paderborn 1934); R. Daut, *Untersuchungen zum Bildbegriff der Römer* (Heidelberg 1975); T. Pekáry, *Das römische Kaiserbildnis in Staat, Kult und Gesellschaft* (Das römische Herrscherbild 3.5; 1985); and D. Fishwick, *The imperial cult in the Latin West*, vol. II.1 (Leiden 1991). For a summary, see de Pury-Gysel 2017, 63-68.

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ἀνδριάς.[22] At first, the Romans used the term *imago* to designate painted or sculpted portraits of their ancestors and forebears.[23] From the 2nd c. B.C. it could also refer to the portrait of a living person. Originally, these effigies were executed in wax, but they could also be in wood, marble, bronze or clay, and later also in ivory, silver and (rarely) gold, gilded bronze or gilded silver.[24] From the Imperial period, the expression *imago* or εἰκών was used specifically to designate an effigy of the emperor; thus it is the word used for the portrait carried in Augustus' funeral procession in 14 B.C.[25]

The practice of making an *imago* in gold is attested for imperial portraits in particular, but also for some private portraits, at least in Asia Minor,[26] as self-promotion by means of a portrait, even one made of gold, was not the exclusive preserve of the emperor and his family. For that to have been the case, a *ius imaginum* would have been necessary, a law designed to manage and regulate the right of public display, with a view to maintaining certain lines of social demarcation. As J. Stäcker has argued, such a law probably did not exist, the emperor aiming instead to steer the upper class on a voluntary basis towards self-limitation in its luxury tastes.[27] The term *imago* appears most often in contexts where the emperor himself was not judged to be present: the *imago* thus presupposes a visible object that is effectively the embodiment of supreme authority, guaranteeing its legitimacy and thereby also legitimizing the local representatives of this authority. The immutability and untouchability of the *imago* are underlined in a letter of A.D. 162/63 from Marcus Aurelius to Ulpius Apuleius Eurycles, steward of the treasury of the temple at Ephesos: out of respect, portraits of deceased emperors should never under any circumstances be transformed into those of other emperors;[28] in the case of heavily damaged portraits, Marcus Aurelius

22 A selective list of references for these expressions is as follows. *Imago*: Plin., *Ep*. 10.96; *CIL* VIII 2586 = E. Schallmeyer *et al.* (edd.), *Der römische Weihbezirk von Osterburken. Corpus der griechischen und lateinischen Beneficiarier-Inschriften des römischen Reiches* (Stuttgart 1990) 783 (henceforth cited as *CBI*). *Effigies*: Tac., *Ann*. 3.70. εἰκών: Dio 56.34.1-2, 59.27.3 and 79.37.5; Marcus Aurelius letter of 162/63 (J. H. Oliver, *The sacred gerousia* [Hesperia Suppl. 6, 1941] 93, no. 11, ll. 9 and 11); Marcus Aurelius letter of 179 (Oliver, ibid. 111, no. 24, l.32); Veg. 2.6.2-3. προτομή: Jos., *AntJ* 18.3.1 (55); Marcus Aurelius letter of 179 (Oliver, ibid. 112, no. 24, l.34). See also G. Lahusen, *Schriftquellen zum römischen Bildnis*. I (Bremen 1984) 85 and 118-19.

23 Plin., *NH* 35.4; H. I. Flower, *Ancestor masks and aristocratic power in Roman culture* (Oxford 1996) 32-40; de Pury-Gysel 2017, 63-64.

24 Ancient authors do not always make a precise distinction between gold and gilding; G. Lahusen, "Zu Bildnissen aus vergoldeter Bronze und Edelmetall," in id. and E. Formigli, *Römische Bildnisse aus Bronze. Kunst und Technik* (Munich 2001) 505-10, with bibliography. Modern authors are also occasionally hesitant when expressing a view on the material; the busts of Septimius Severus at Brescia and of Magnentius at Chalon-sur-Saône were cast in bronze and then respectively gilded and silvered: they are neither made of gold nor of silver (de Pury-Gysel 2017, 103).

25 Dio 56.34.1-2: εἰκών.

26 J. Stäcker, *Princeps und miles. Studien zum Bindungs- und Nahverhältnis von Kaiser und Soldat im 1. und 2. Jahrhundert n.Chr.* (Hildesheim 2003) 275-76.

27 Ibid. 250-57.

28 Oliver (supra n.22) 93, no. 11, ll. 11-17. The same injunction is expressed in the provisions of the foundation of C. Vibius Salutaris at Ephesos: H. Wankel (ed.), *Die Inschriften von Ephesos 1a. Nr. 1-47 (Texte)* (IGSK 11; Bonn 1979) no. 27, p. 211. For the melting down of an effigy of Tiberius in order to make a silver vessel from it, see Tac., *Ann*. 3.70: *quod effigiem principis promiscum ad usum argenti vertisset*. No transformation of a bust in precious metal is attested, a phenomenon that is well known for portraits in marble. While changes in marble portraits are often explained by the *damnatio* of the original sitter, transformations of works in precious metal are generally tied to melting down in order to recoup the material; cf. Didius Iulianus's refusal to have *ima-*

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recommends that the inventories be investigated to establish the identity of the individual originally represented. Another of his letters, written in 164/65 to the *gerousia* at Athens, allows us to conclude that the name of the emperor represented was not inscribed on portable busts in metal but might be found on the support[29] (no material evidence for a support belonging with a precious-metal bust has ever been found).

The purpose of busts of emperors in precious metals

Since 1874, only 14 busts of Roman emperors in precious metal (6 in gold, 7 in silver, 1 in gilded silver), ranging from the 1st to the 4th c. and varying greatly in height between 11 and 55 cm and in weight between *c*.100 and 2850 gm, have become known; in addition, there is a bust of a woman datable to the 3rd c., discovered in the district of Plovdiv.[30] All

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gines in gold — not out of modesty, but out of an arrogant fear that the longevity of his portrait would be limited (Dio 79.12.7). Nonetheless, the face of a bronze equestrian statue of Domitian was transformed into that of Nerva: G. Macchiaroli (ed.), *Domiziano/Nerva. La statua equestre da Miseno. Una proposta di ricomposizione* (Naples 1987). The stylistic heterogeneity of the gold bust of Marcus Aurelius from Avenches led to a suspicion that the face underwent a secondary modification, but for the moment this suspicion has been removed, following neutron-imaging; A. de Pury-Gysel, E. H. Lehmann and A. Giumlia-Mair, "The manufacturing process of the gold bust of Marcus Aurelius: evidence from neutron imaging," *JRA* 29 (2016) 477-93.

29 Oliver (supra n.22) 111, no. 24, l.36. On the other hand, busts executed in other materials such as that of Caligula in terra sigillata, or two others, of Augustus and Livia, could bear the name of the person on the base.

30 See de Pury-Gysel 2017, 101-71, for a study of 13 busts.
Gold busts: Marcus Aurelius, from Aventicum (Avenches Musée romain, inv. 39/134); Septimius Severus, from Plotinopolis (Komotini Archaeological Museum, inv. 207); fragment from the Roman fort at Dambach (Munich Archäologische Staatssammlung, inv. 1986.2506); Licinius I, private collection; Licinius II, Ferrell Collection, Houston, TX; Valentinian I(?), head of the statue of St Foy, Conques Abbey treasury.
Silver busts: Galba, from Herculaneum (Naples Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 110127); Lucius Verus, from Marengo (Turin Museo di Antichità, inv. 5456); Gallienus, from Vaise (Lyon Musée gallo-romain, inv. 93 1 104 25); two busts of tetrarchs (Mainz Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, inv. O.39760 and O.39761); Licinius I (Munich, Archäologische Staatssammlung, inv. 1998,8124).
Bust in gilded silver: Caracalla (formerly identified as Trebonius Gallus), from Brigetio (Hungarian National Museum, inv. 2.1942.1).
At the 3rd International Conference "Roman and Late Antique Thrace", held in October 2018 at Komotini , I learned of two other, small-scale silver busts datable to the 3rd c. They are the one identified by V. Popova as Galerius, probably discovered in the Ratiaria region ("Monuments from the tetrarchy and the reign of the Constantinian dynasty in Bulgaria," in M. Rakocija [ed.], *Niš and Byzantium. Fourteenth int. symposium, Niš 2015. The collection of scientific works* XIV [Niš 2016] 184, pls. VIII.3-5), as well as the bust of a woman, published briefly as a portrait of Iulia Soaemias (I. Hristov, "Investigation of vicus from Roman time in the vicinity of Tuchenitsa village, Pleven district," in *Национален Исторически Музей – София Известия*, 16 [2005] 48 fig. 1). I am extremely grateful to Vania Popova and Milena Raycheva for their invaluable help. These last two busts have not been subjected to scientific examination and the illustrations of them are inadequate, but the bust of a woman seems to me to be rather a portrait of Julia Domna. Another silver bust portraying a woman used to form part of the Marengo treasure, along with the bust of Lucius Verus, but it is now lost; de Pury-Gysel 2017, 141 and n.432. See the lists of busts in precious metals and discussion of their uses in E. Künzl, "Zwei silberne Tetrarchenporträts im RGZM und die römischen Kaiserbildnisse aus Gold und Silber," *JbRGZM* 30 (1983) 393-400, and L. A. Riccardi, "Military standards, *imagines*, and the gold and silver imperial portraits from Aventicum, Plotinoupolis, and the Marengo treasure," *AntK* 45 (2002) 86-88.

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show the emperor in a cuirass, most frequently of the *lorica plumata* type (as is the case with ours); some also wear the *paludamentum*, which is sometimes closed, concealing the type of the cuirass. We also have representations of *imagines* in reliefs, paintings, ivory diptychs and coins, and references in written sources (see below). Their purpose has regularly been questioned, especially in the case of the gold bust of Marcus Aurelius from Avenches (one of the first to be discovered, in 1939) and the silver bust of Lucius Verus from the Marengo Treasure.[31] Some were discovered during the course of excavations, but others arrived on the art market without any indication of provenance or context. To judge by their form and weight, these 14 busts are in the nature of portable pieces presumably intended to be employed in various places to different ends. All were executed as hollow objects by an embossing process; they cannot stand by themselves and require a support to be displayed or carried. The bust could be moved from its stand and from the pole used in a military context. Figure 7 nos. 3-5 (colour) shows the 'handle' of the pole held by the *imaginifer*. The support would have had to be adapted to the way in which the bust was employed. The relative fragility of a hollow object in precious metal also required a filling to stabilize it.

We may distinguish three principal areas in which portable busts of the emperor were employed: (a) in the imperial cult; (b) in the army and for military ceremonies; and (c) in judicial contexts:

(a) The imago *in the imperial cult*[32]

In addition to a cult statue of the emperor,[33] every city authorized to celebrate the imperial cult presumably had at its disposal a portable bust that could be placed in an annexe to the temple.[34] Written sources illustrate the importance assigned in the imperial cult to the *imago* as an object carried in processions, but also as a votive object or offering.[35] Important information about busts is found in a letter from Claudius to the Alexandrians; two letters from Marcus Aurelius;[36] the *lex sacra* of Gytheion;[37] and in the provisions for two foundations, one of Oinoanda,[38] the other of C. Vibius Salutaris of Ephesos of A.D. 104.[39] The *imago* is also mentioned in inscriptions on statue bases in relation to the imperial

31 de Pury-Gysel 2017, 108-16 (Marcus Aurelius) and 141-46 (Lucius Verus).

32 There are too many studies on the imperial cult to list here, but see J. Süss, "Kaiserkult und Urbanistik. Kultbezirke für römische Kaiser in kleinasiatischen Städten," in H. Cancik and K. Hitzl (edd.), *Die Praxis der Herrscherverehrung in Rom und seinen Provinzen* (Tübingen 2003) 249-81, on the issue of sanctuaries of the imperial cult. For a brief summary of imperial cult locations, its priests, sacrifices and organization, see de Pury-Gysel 2017, 69-75.

33 S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and power. The Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge 1984) figs. 2g and 3a. It is rare to see the head of the emperor (as Augustus) in the interior of a temple: ibid. pl. fig. 2a (coin from Teos).

34 W. Van Andringa, "Le vase de Sains-du-Nord et le culte de l'*imago* dans les Gaules romaines," in id. (ed.), *Archéologie des sanctuaires en Gaule romaine* (Saint-Étienne 2000) 30 and figs. 1 and 3.

35 Fishwick (supra n.21) 532-50.

36 Oliver (supra n.22) 93, no. 11 (to Ephesos); ibid. 111, no. 24 (to Athens) = G. Flamerie de Lachapelle, J. France, and J. Nelis-Clément, *Rome et le monde provincial. Documents d'une histoire partagée* (Paris 2012) 186-87, no. 218.

37 H. Freis (ed. and transl.), *Historische Inschriften zur römischen Kaiserzeit von Augustus bis Konstantin* (Darmstadt 1984) 28-30; Flamerie de Lachapelle, France and Nelis-Clément ibid. 179-81, no. 210, with French transl. (of Tiberian date). See also M. Kantiréa, *Les dieux et les dieux augustes. Le culte impérial en Grèce sous les Julio-Claudiens et les Flaviens* (Μελετήματα 50; Athens 2007) 65-69.

38 M. Wörrle, *Stadt und Fest im kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien* (Munich 1988) (A.D. 124).

39 *I.Eph*. 1a, 27 = Wankel (supra n.28) no. 27, pp. 208-16.

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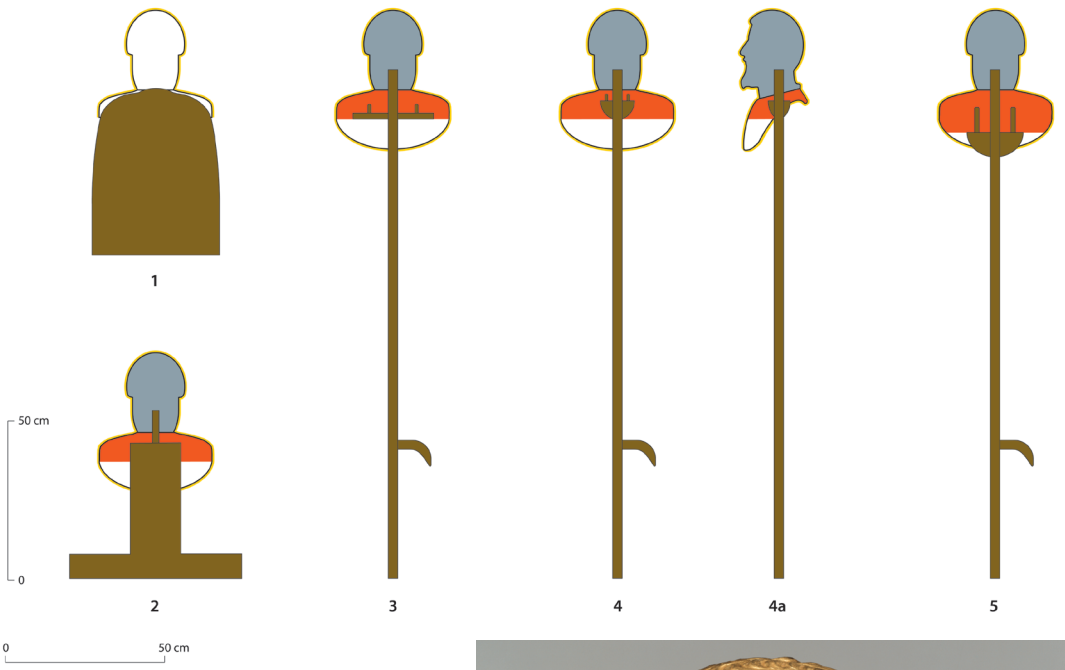


Fig. 7 (above). Proposals for how the gold bust of Septimius Severus would have been mounted. 1-5: longitudinal sections, frontal view; 4a: longitudinal section, profile view.
1: on a simple support, with no fastening.
2: on a support equipped with a rod secured in the stuffing of the head (1-2 match the principle of stands used by museums; if one had lain the bust down, it would have damaged the relatively thin metal sheet).
3-5: different possibilities for mounting the bust on a pole terminating in a console of various forms.
Yellow = gold bust; Grey = stuffing of the head; Red = mounting trestle.



Fig. 8 (right). Gold bust of Marcus Aurelius (ht. 33.5 cm, 1589.06 gm, 22 carats; AD 176-180). Found in 1939 in a channel beneath courtyard of the Cigognier Sanctuary at *Aventicum* (Avenches Musée Romain, inv. 39/134).



Fig. 9. Fragment of the *pteriges* of a gold bust (length 4.5 cm) datable from its context to the second half of the 2nd c., from Dambach fort in Bavaria (Archäologische Staatssammlung München, inv. 1986.2506).

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cult.[40] The letter from Claudius replies to a request of *c.*41/42 from the Alexandrians that they be allowed to organize a celebration in his honour.[41] He permitted (albeit not without a certain degree of reticence) a single gold bust in his likeness[42] to be carried in the planned *pompa* on a δίφρος/*diphros*, but refused to allow the creation of a sanctuary dedicated to him. From the letter of Marcus Aurelius to Ulpius Apuleius Eurycles at Ephesos in 163/64, not only do we learn about the rule concerning the immutability of *imagines*/*eikones*, we also gain some information as to the 'longevity' of an emperor's bust after his reign and, more generally, on the existence of inventories of sanctuary 'collections', as well as on the imperial regulations regarding the actual creation of effigies.[43] The same emperor's letter to the *gerousia* of Athens in 179[44] provides directions as to the material and weight of portable busts (*protomai*): bronze is preferred to silver or gold (perhaps a reflection of this emperor's well-known modesty), and the size (and therefore the weight) should remain modest, so that the effigies might be easily carried during processions. The *lex sacra* of Gytheion and the provisions for the foundations of Oinoanda and C. Vibius Salutaris furnish information on the rôle and placement of imperial portraits in the imperial cult. The *lex sacra* tells that *eikones* provided by the city were placed in the theatre during festivities (thus they were portable busts). The *agoranomos* had to report on the accounts to the assembly in the presence of effigies symbolizing political power; if the finances had been managed well, he would be returned to office. A close connection can thus be observed between, on the one hand, reporting on financial activity and the ensuing result, and, on the other, the imperial cult. In the provisions of the foundation of C. Vibius Salutaris we find specifications as to the numbers and weights[45] of the different offerings (including the portraits of Trajan and Pompeia Plotina) carried during the *pompa* that processed to the theatre, the locale for imperial cult activities, but we also learn that after the ceremonies all the offerings were returned to the temple's treasury with the exception of the imperial effigies; the latter had to be returned to the residence of C. Vibius Salutaris, where they were probably replaced in the *lararium*, ready to be made available for each new public celebration (this is one of the rare pieces of evidence for the presence of precious-metal imperial busts in a private cult context[46]).

A few inscriptions, mainly dedicatory, mention the weight of gold busts or their price. From these it is apparent that there were standard sizes. The commonest were of 3 or 5 *librae* of gold, which matches the weights of the gold busts of Septimius Severus from Plotinopolis (3 *librae*) and of Marcus Aurelius from Aventicum (5 *librae*),[47] the latter being

40 J. Mangas, "Un capitulo de los gastos en el municipio romano de Hispania a través de las informaciones de la epigrafia latina," *Hisp. Ant.* 1 (1971) 115, *imago* of Claudius from *Ipsca*, *CIL* II 1569; Fishwick (supra n.21) 550-66; J. M. Højte, *Roman imperial statue bases from Augustus to Commodus* (Aarhus 2005) 45.

41 *P.Lond.* 1,12 (l.36) = *Sel.Pap.* 2, 212 (Greek), A.D. 41 = Flamerie de Lachapelle, France and Nelis-Clément (supra n.36) 185-86, no. 217 (with French transl.).

42 The expression used for effigy in this text is ἀνδριάς, a word used more often to designate statues, but the fact that the object in question was supposed to be carried on a *diphros* indicates that we are dealing with a bust rather than a statue.

43 Oliver (supra n.22) 93, no. 11.

44 Ibid. 111, no. 24.

45 The total weight of the 29 offerings in gold and silver was as much as 110 *librae*.

46 I have suggested this was also the case for the busts of Lucius Verus and Gallienus: de Pury-Gysel 2017, 146 and 162. For the literary sources, see Fishwick (supra n.21) 532-33.

47 Lahusen (supra n.24) p. 514 and n.147. The silver bust of Pompeia Plotina belonging to C. Vibi-

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the only *imago* discovered in a sanctuary context (fig. 8 in colour).[48] Unfortunately, no represention of a procession or sacrifice undertaken in the context of the imperial cult survives that shows the σεβαστοφόροι/*sebastophoroi* or εἰκωνοφόροι/*eikonophoroi*, crowned and dressed in white, carrying *imagines*/*eikones* of emperors.[49]

(b) The imago *in the army*

The *imago* carried by the *imaginifer* (an officer of subaltern rank) seems to be attested for the Augustan era.[50] It is not clear at what period this became a permanent duty, but the *imaginifer* still existed in the 4th c. Vegetius (2.6.2-3) assigns the rôle to the first cohort of the legion. The *imago* indicated the emperor's proximity, notably during the *sacramentum*, the oath sworn annually, or during the ceremonial submissions of the rulers of conquered peoples. On certain momentous occasions the soldiers took the *imago* down from its pole as a sign of protest, indicating a renunciation of their loyalty towards the emperor represented.[51] The impact of the emperor's effigy as a tool of power and instrument of subjugation is described by several authors. Most vivid is Josephus' account (*AntJ* 18.3.1) of the *imagines* being brought by night within Jerusalem's city walls by the soldiers of Pontius Pilate, an act that provoked total defiance on the part of the Jews, followed by the start of a revolt that led to the Romans abandoning their project. Inscriptions from Lambaesis give the names and functions of the members of colleges of officers and the regulations for their organization. One, dating to the reign of Elagabalus or Severus Alexander,[52] details the fundraising carried out by 50 soldiers, including 30 *beneficiarii*, in order to have gold busts made (*qui imagines sacras aureas fecerunt*), certainly more than one, which could mean portraits of the emperor and his wife (this was also implied in Marcus Aurelius's letter to the *gerousia* at Athens and in the foundation of C. Vibius Salutaris at Ephesos). The

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us Salutaris weighed 3 *librae*, so it must have been close in size to the bust of Septimius Severus from Plotinopolis; *I.Eph*. 1a, 27 = Wankel (supra n.28) 210 no. 27.

48 de Pury-Gysel 2017, 108-16. In the Cigognier sanctuary where the bust was found, purely Roman cults were associated with indigenous divinities: J. Nelis-Clément, "Les dédicaces religieuses d'Avenches," in D. Castella and M.-F. Meylan Krause (edd.), *Topographie sacrée et rituels. Le cas d'Aventicum, capitale des Helvètes* (Antiqua 43; Basel 2008) 87-88.

49 See H. von Hesberg, "Archäologische Denkmäler zum römischen Kaiserkult," in *ANRW* II 16.2 Berlin 1978) 911-95; F. Fless, "Römische Prozessionen," in *ThesCRA I* (Los Angeles, CA 2004) 33-58. For the white robes, see Freis (supra n.37) 29 (provisions for the imperial cult at Gytheion).

50 A. von Domaszewski, "Die Fahnen im römischen Heer," *AbhWien* V, 1-80 = id., *Aufsätze zur römischen Heeresgeschichte* (Darmstadt 1972) 69-73; Kruse (supra n.21) 52-53; A. Alföldy, "Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser," in *RömMitt* 50 (1935) 96-97; *Der Neue Pauly* 5 (1998) col. 948, *s.v.* Imaginiferi, Imaginifarii (Y. le Bohec); Stäcker (supra n.26) 186-205; K. M. Töpfer, *Signa militaria* (Monog. RGZM 91, 2011) 26-28; id., "Standards," in Y. Le Bohec (ed.), *The encyclopedia of the Roman army* (Malden, MA 2015) vol. 3, 922; E. Kavanagh, *Estandartes militares en la Roma antigua* (Anejos de Gladius 16, 2015) 81-127; G. Baratta, "*Imaginarii vel imaginiferi*: note sul ruolo e le funzioni dei portatori di *imagines*," in C. Wolff and P. Faure (edd.), *Les auxiliaires de l'armée romaine. Des alliés aux fédérés* (Paris 2016) 329-41; de Pury-Gysel 2017, 78-88. An article will follow on the scene of the sacrifice of Iulius Terentius from Dura Europos (A.D. 230-240), which I argue is probably the only known representation of an *imaginifer* yielding the *imago* during military worship.

51 Under Nero: Dio 63.25 (see Kruse [supra n.21] 14, n.2). Under Galba: Tac., *Hist*. 1.41; Plut., *Galba* 26 (Kruse ibid. 14, n.3). Under Vitellius: Tac., *Hist*. 3.12, 3.13, 3.31; Dio 65.10 (Kruse ibid. 14, n.4).

52 *CIL* VIII 2586; see Fishwick (supra n.21) 541, and J. Nelis-Clément, *Les* beneficiarii: *militaires et administrateurs au service de l'Empire (Ier s. a.C. - VIe s. p.C.)* (Bordeaux 2000) 280-81 and 391, *CBI* (see n.21) 783; ibid. 313-22 (regarding wages). I am grateful to J. Nelis-Clément both for having brought this inscription to my attention and for discussions.

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epigraphic testimony never gives a weight of less than 3 *librae* (the weight of our bust), so that at Lambaesis if one were to hypothesize that this college committed 6 *librae* of gold for two busts, each of 3 *librae*, one would arrive at a total of 270 *aurei* (for two busts of 5 *librae* it would be 450 *aurei*); divided equally by the 50 men in the Lambaesis college, each individual could have contributed a sum close to 5 or 9 *aurei*, respectively, but of course the sum may simply have been paid out of college funds.[53]





Figs. 10a-b. Bronze coin of Gordian III (diam. 22 mm, bronze, 7.79 gm) issued at Viminacium in A.D. 242/243. Reverse: personification of *Moesia*, holding in each hand a pole surmounted by an *imago*, the one in her right hand being that of the *legio VII Claudia*, the one in her left hand that of *legio IIII Flavia*, the two legions stationed in *Moesia* at this period (Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, Budapest, inv. ET-A 36.1971.2).



Fig. 11 (right). Funerary *stele* of the *imaginifer* Aurelius Diogenes holding *imago* affixed to a pole (ht. 102 cm; second half of 3rd c.) (Grosvenor Museum, Chester, inv. 90).

Proving the presence of *imagines* made of gold in army contexts is the gilded silver bust of Caracalla discovered near the camp at Brigetio,[54] while from the fort at Dambach (Bavaria) came a gold fragment from the *pteryges* of a bust of the same size (33 cm height) as that of Marcus Aurelius at Avenches; it is dated by its context to the second half of the 2nd c. (fig. 9 in colour).[55] There are also at least two depictions of *imagines* in a military context in art of the 3rd c. The *signum* with *vexillum* on which an *imago* is held up is found in two murals that date to the 3rd c., one discovered at Meikirch, the other with three *imagines* at Ostia.[56] This fresco shows a cult scene in which children participate. The *imago* in a military context also appears on a bronze coin of Gordian III of A.D. 242/243 issued at Viminacium, on which the personification of the province of *Moesia* holds in each hand a pole surmounted by an *imago*, of *legio VII Claudia* and *legio IIII Flavia* respectively, the two legions stationed in the province (fig. 10).[57] Finally, a few representations of *imaginiferi* holding the pole crowned with the *imago* survive (fig. 11). They are found on *stelae* or

53 According to M. A. Speidel, "Roman army pay scales," *JRS* 82 (1992) 101, the annual wage of a *beneficiarius* under Septimius Severus was nearly 48 *aurei*; in the 3rd c. it was close to 72 *aurei*. It can be presumed that the price of gold objects of this size (including manufacture) was linked to the price of the weight of the gold itself Pekáry (supra n.21) 13, and Højte (supra n.40) 55.

54 de Pury-Gysel 2017, 147-56.

55 de Pury-Gysel 2017, 118-19.

56 de Pury-Gysel 2017, figs. 68 and 71. I am grateful to M. E. Fuchs for clarifying the dating of the Ostia fresco to the Severan era; see also Künzl (supra n.30) 389 on the *vexillum* with *imago*.

57 B. Pick, *Die antiken Münzen von Dacien und Moesien* (Die antiken Münzen Nord-Griechenlands 1; Berlin 1898), Sala Bolognese 1977-1978 (2nd edn.) 26-27 and 36, no. 87, pl. 1.7; de Pury-Gysel 2017, 87.

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funerary monuments, never in historical relief scenes.[58] In the few examples that we do have, the *imago* appears in the form of a less-than-lifesize bust.



Fig. 12. Sarcophagus fragment illustrating the scene of Nebuchadnezzar attempting to force the three young men to prostrate themselves before the gold effigy (Daniel 3,1-18) (Cimitero di San Sebastiano, Rome).

(c) The imago *in a judicial context*

Some texts make reference to judicial processes carried out in the presence of an effigy of the emperor. These are trials of those who refused to venerate the emperor and the gods of Rome, trials to which Christians were particularly subjected. Such proceedings are described in a letter of Pliny the Younger, and accounts of such trials appear in the Acts of the Martyrs.[59] The accused Christian is commanded to abjure his faith before an effigy of the emperor which is displayed or set up in the court to this end, and then to venerate the sovereign — an unacceptable act for a Christian. Another account that alludes to the refusal to venerate an image of the emperor or of a divinity is recorded in the Book of Daniel. This is the tale of three young Judaean men, appointed to the imperial administration in the region of Babylon, who were denounced for having refused to prostrate themselves before the massive gold statue erected by Nebuchadnezzar. Thrown into the furnace by a furious king, they miraculously emerged unharmed, which in the Biblical account brings about Nebuchadnezzar's conversion.[60] This is the scene that decorates an Early Christian sarcophagus, drawing an analogy to the situation in the Roman empire (fig. 12),[61] but the 4th-c. relief does not show the enormous statue but rather a bust on a socle. Another scene illustrating a trial in the presence of effigies of the emperor is found in the Gospel of Nicodemus (Acts of Pilate), an apocryphal text of which the final version is dated to *c*.400.[62] In the section on the trial of Jesus, the standards carried by the soldiers surrounding

58 Töpfer 2011 (supra n.50) 28 and 383; de Pury-Gysel 2017, 80-83. The absence of the *imago* from historical scenes may be explained by the fact that the emperor often features in the scene, so there was no need to represent him by an effigy standing in for the figure of the emperor.

59 Plin., *Ep*. 10.96.1-6; Kruse (supra n.21) 81-84; de Pury-Gysel 2017, 75-78 and nn. 229-32.

60 Daniel 3,1-18; the text dates to the 2nd c. B.C.

61 Price (supra n.33) fig. 1c, called "protomartyrs" on 199. See F. W. Deichmann, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage* I: *Rom und Ostia* (Wiesbaden 1967) no. 338, pl. 64 (from Rome's Cimitero di San Sebastiano). This motif is found on other Early Christian sarcophagi: the effigy always presents itself as a bust on a socle, not as a statue; ibid., pls. 35 (no. 160), 62 (no. 324) and 64 (no. 339). See also B. Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage* III: *Frankreich, Algerien, Tunisien* (Mainz 2003) 205 (no. 438), pl. 105.2.

62 This text exists in Latin and Greek; the older version is that in Latin; for translation, see

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Pontius Pilate bow down before Jesus as a sign of adoration when he enters the *praetorium*. Following reproaches from the Jews, who suspect that the standard-bearers themselves had lowered the standards, Pontius Pilate has Jesus enter a second and third time, the last time giving the command that the standards be carried by the Jews — but to no avail: the phenomenon is repeated, the standards doing obeisance before Jesus a third time.[63] The text seems to show that standards crowned with an *imago* remained in the memories of the compilers of the text of the Acts of Pilate. On the other hand, the terminology used to designate effigies has changed: it is no longer a question of *imagines* or *eikones*, but of *signa* and σημεῖα/*semeia*, terms used in earlier times to denote standards.[64] This scene of Jesus's trial is illustrated again in the *Codex purpureus Rossanensis* (6th c.),[65] as well as on one of the columns of the *ciborium* at St Mark's in Venice (early 6th c.).[66] In both cases the soldiers are carrying square-shaped standards, like a *vexillum*. In the *Codex purpureus Rossanensis* two *imagines* are placed on each square *signum*; on the *ciborium* column in St Mark's the square is either empty[67] or bears illegible traces.[68] These two illustrations can provide an idea of what an *imaginifer* looked like in the 6th c. On each there is a table before Pilate on which are placed an inkwell and a reed pen, the canonical symbols of judicial power in late antiquity. A further illustration of the Acts of Pilate according to the Gospel of Nicodemus appears in a manuscript of the 13th-14th c.; here the illuminator must have employed a different source for the *imaginiferi*, as their *signa* are crowned with gold busts.[69] We thus have several representations of the *imago* associated with a judicial context in late antiquity. In addition, the *imago* formed part of the *insignia* of dignitaries, such as those on ivory consular diptychs of the 4th-5th c.[70] (shown also on the *theka* (θήκη) in illustrations of the *Notitia Dignita-*

R. Gounelle and Z. Izydorczyk, *L'évangile de Nicomède ou Les Actes fais sous Ponce Pilate, suivi de La lettre de Pilate à l'empereur Claude* (Apocryphes 9; Turnhout 1997) 121-217.

63 Gounelle and Izydorczyk ibid. 129-34, Gospel of Nicodemus 1.4-7.

64 *Signa*: *Evangelium Nicodemi Incipit feliciter*. Augsburg, Gunther Zainer, *c.*1473. BNF dépt. Réserve des livres rares, A-560 (BIS), fol. 1v (https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k854527t/f6.image, viewed 12.2019); *ta semeia*: C. von Tischendorf (ed.), *Evangelia Apocrypha* (Leipzig 1867; 2nd edn., New York 1987) 291.

65 W. C. Loerke, in G. Cavallo, J. Gribomont and W. C. Loerke, *Codex purpureus Rossanensis. Édition fac-similé* (Rome 1985) 145-49 and fig. 17; T. Weigel, *Le colonne del ciborio dell'altare maggiore di San Marco a Venezia. Nuovi argomenti a favore di una datazione in epoca protobizantina* (Venice 2000) fig. 26.

66 Weigel ibid. fig. 38, and 49 nn. 206-7. The *ciborium* at San Marco probably originally came from Hagia Anastasia in Constantinople (founded in the 4th c.). For the chronology, see Gounelle and Izydorczyk (supra n.62) 45 (with further refs.); Weigel ibid. 25-49; Loerke (supra n.65) 165-66.

67 Weigel ibid. fig. 26. It was the rule in late-antique representations that the busts should be two in number. This illustration gives us an idea of how an *imaginifer* appeared at this period; see also M. F. Schwarze, *Römische Militärgeschichte,* Bd. 2. *Studie zur römischen Armee und ihrer Organisation im sechsten Jahrhundert n.Chr.* (Norderstedt GmbH. Books on demand, 2017) 384-85.

68 Weigel ibid. fig. 38.

69 Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Vitr. 23-8 (vol. II), fols 164v and 166r (13th-14th c.); Gounelle and Izydorczyk (supra n.62) 130 and 132; Weigel ibid. fig. 27. The fact that two or even three standards surmounted by an *imago* are represented in each scene is not a problem: from the 1st c., at the time when Christ appeared before Pontius Pilate, a representation could show several *effigies* — that of the emperor and those of members of his family.

70 E.g., R. Delbrück, *Die Consulardiptychen und verwandte Denkmäler* (Berlin 1929) 254, pl. 65, diptych of Probianus, A.D. 400, with two busts on the *theka*.

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tum.[71] In the illuminations of the *Codex purpureus Rossanensis*[72] two *imagines* are seen either on the front side of Pontius Pilate's table, and also on the *vexilla* of each of the two *imaginiferi*.

The original purpose of the bust of Septimius Severus

What, then, was the original purpose of the gold bust of Septimius Severus? Our review of three contexts for the use of *imagines* shows that there were no significant differences between the busts used, whether with regard to the figures represented as cuirassed, or in relation to the material or size of the busts — indeed, these last two factors vary across the three contexts. The size of our bust lends itself to use in each of the contexts: its weight would have allowed it to be carried easily, whether in a *pompa*, for a celebration of the imperial cult, or to be transported to a place where justice was being served; on the other hand, it is sufficiently large to be affixed to a pole and used as an *imago militaris*, such as that seen on the funerary relief of the *imaginifer* Diogenes. The bronze reinforcement on the back can be explained as the repair of damage caused by excessive wear at the point where the bust was attached to the pole. Is it necessary, then, to postulate a single use for each bust, or can one imagine that these *imagines* are polyvalent, able to be used sometimes in one context, sometimes in another? There seems to be nothing to contradict the possibility that a bust like ours may have been conceived from the outset with a view to serving variable purposes.[73]

This conclusion does not relieve us of the obligation to investigate the regional and institutional reasons for the creation of this gold bust. One question remains unresolved: was the bust used (and first 'instituted') at Plotinopolis, or was it brought from somewhere else? If Plotinopolis was not the first place at which it was used, where might it have been located previously? Here we should recall that it is datable by its typology to the first years of Septimius Severus's reign, between 194 and 196/97, a period during which he spent long periods in Thrace, notably at Perinthos. This was also the period when he struggled to conquer his rival Pescennius Niger, by laying siege to Byzantium. His crucial taking of Byzantium in 194 allowed him to execute his first campaign against the Parthians in 195, to return to Rome in 196, and then to vanquish his last rival, Clodius Albinus, at the Battle of Lyon in the same year. Perinthos was granted the status of neocorate (carrying the privilege of building an imperial cult centre) by Septimius Severus by 196 at the latest, in gratitude for its rôle during his confrontation with Pescennius Niger.[74] By then, at the latest, a temple of the imperial cult dedicated to Septimius Severus must have existed at Perinthos. Such a

71 de Pury-Gysel 2017, 76, fig. 63 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Clm 10991, fol. 178r): *insignia viri illustris praefecti praetorio per Illyricum*. This illustration of the *Notitia Dignitatum* dates to 1542 and 1550-51 but it is based on a late-antique version.

72 Loerke (supra n.65) fig. 17.

73 The silver bust of Lucius Verus, for example, could hardly be a multi-purpose object. It cannot be understood as an *imago militaris*, since, at a height of 55.3 cm, it is too large, and, at a weight of almost 3 kg (8 *librae* + 8 *unciae*, hence about three times the weight of the Plotinopolis bust), too heavy for this purpose. Conversely, some small-size busts probably served as gifts from the emperor.

74 Schönert (supra n.18) 19; B. Burrell, *Neokoroi. Greek cities and Roman emperors* (Leiden 2004) 236-37; D. Boteva, "Emperor Septimius Severus and his family members visiting the province of Thrace: AD 193-204," in M.-G. Parissaki (ed.), *Aspects of the Roman province of Thrace* (Μελετήματα 69; Athens 2013) 88-92; M. H. Sayar, *Perinthos-Herakleia (Marmara Ereglisi) und Umgebung. Geschichte, Testimonien und lateinische Inschriften* (Vienna 1998) 75 and n.179, 116-17 and 195-96 (no. 10).

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Fig. 13. Bronze coin (diam. 30 mm, 13.30 gm) issued at Perinthos in A.D. 196. Obverse: laureate, draped and cuirassed bust of Septimius Severus. Reverse: galley with 9 oarsmen sailing left; on the front deck, Septimius Severus standing, right arm raised; on the poop deck, two standards; in the background, an octostyle temple; in the lower portion: 'the second visit by Severus to the Perinthian neocorates' (Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, 1906 Löbbecke, Objektnummer 18239329).



temple is illustrated on a coin of precisely 196 that shows the emperor standing at the prow of a ship, his right arm extended in a gesture of greeting (fig. 13).[75] The scene takes place in one of Perinthos's ports, the base for the *classis Perinthia*, which was important strategically for the transport of troops between Thrace, Asia Minor and the Orient.[76] A temple of the imperial cult can probably be placed not far from the west port, from which it would have been visible, as seen in the scene on the coin.[77] Perinthos could always have been endowed with an *imago* intended chiefly for use in the imperial cult, but it certainly had one from its creation as a neocorate in 196. Could our gold bust, a specimen of toreutics of the highest quality, have been made for Perinthos, even the very *imago* offered to the imperial cult sanctuary on the occasion of its becoming a neocorate? Could the bust subsequently have been stolen, taken away and hidden, for some reason escaping the fate of being melted down (we may compare the fate of the *imago* of Marcus Aurelius). But the reality was perhaps more prosaic: Plotinopolis itself, like other Thracian cities, may itself have possessed a gold bust of Septimius Severus, an *imago* for use in the imperial cult and in the setting of judicial processes. And the imperial cult saw a significant blossoming in the eastern half of the empire under Septimius Severus, notably in Asia Minor,[78] but certainly also in Thrace.

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75 Schönert (supra n.18) 45, 172, no. 461.pl. 26.

76 Sayar (supra n.74) 59.

77 Ibid. 60. Several honorific and dedicatory inscriptions to emperors are attested in the area; furthermore, there is evidence of a temple dedicated to Hadrian and Vibia Sabina.

78 Price (supra n.33) 78-100; A. Lichtenberger, *Severus Pius Augustus. Studien zur sakralen Repräsentation und Rezeption der Herrschaft des Septimius Severus und seiner Familie (193-211 n. Chr.)* (Leiden 2011) 323-24.

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