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Empire of virtue? normative language and the legitimation of power in Roman North Africa

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CHAPTER II

PRAISING EMPERORS

The previous chapter surveyed a range of different media – from literature to coinage – which all in one way or another gave expression to normative ideals of legitimate power. Each of these various forms of media had the capacity for travel well beyond the confines of the imperial court. Whereas the spread of literary works was admittedly limited, administrative documents often travelled great distances and could play a very public role in civic life. Few provincials will have ever held an *aureus*, yet bronze and silver coinage found a wider audience. And the spread of sculptural trends, particularly in the imperial portrait, is in evidence throughout the empire. It is debatable to what extent these various media were ever consciously intended to convince provincial subjects of the legitimacy of imperial rule. Nevertheless, these media spread throughout the provinces, accompanied by a host of non-material claims to legitimacy – from rituals of the imperial cult to a governor’s speech in honour of the emperor. Together they not only made persuasive claims about the legitimacy of imperial rule, but also transmitted Roman normative beliefs of what legitimate rule should look like.

To gauge whether these persuasive claims and normative beliefs found fertile ground in the provinces, I turn to the epigraphically-rich communities of North Africa. The comparison between African communities that forms the basis of this chapter is founded on the epigraphic material of cities with a sizeable number of inscriptions which employ normative language with reference to the emperor. Colonies – in most African cases, honorary colonies – provide a first point of departure. Through the granting of colonial status, we can be assured that these communities stood, for a short while at least, in contact with the Roman imperial administration. Major non-colonial settlements, such as Gigthis or Dougga, were likewise included for their clear signs of interaction with members of the imperial administration and their rich epigraphic record. The current chapter is based on a collection of 632 inscriptions from 35 communities, which contain some form of normative language referring to the emperor or the imperial family or include more general expressions of loyalty to the regime.²⁵⁸

As noted above, the differences between the epigraphic record of each of these cities are large. Whereas Tacape only yields two honorary inscriptions dedicated to the emperor and containing some form of normative language, Lepcis Magna counts 57 such dedications.²⁵⁹ As with the number

²⁵⁸ Cities and sites included in the dataset: Gigthis, Thysdrus, Capsa, Sufetula, Cillium, Sufes, Ammaedara, Mactar, Thuburbo Maius, Vaga, Bulla Regia, Thugga, Sicca Veneria, Theveste, Thamugadi, Madauros, Thubursicum Numidarum, Calama, Thibilis, Caesarea, Cirta, Rusicade, Milev, Cuicul, Sitifis, Hadrumetum, Carthago, Thigibba, Uchi Maius, Zama Regia, Tacape, Hippo Regius, Sabratha, Lepcis Magna, Uthina.

²⁵⁹ In stylistic regards too, Lepcis Magna occupies a somewhat peculiar position from an epigraphic perspective, though the city shares a number of epigraphic trends with its Tripolitanian neighbours Oea and Sabratha. The detail and variety of Lepcis’ epigraphic record means that the city often provides useful illustrative material, even if some of the features of the city’s inscriptions are unique.

of surviving inscriptions, the differences in preservation and archaeological excavation of the various cities is considerable. While Lepcis Magna, Dougga and Cuicul make frequent appearances in discussions on urbanism and civic life in North Africa, the same cannot be said for communities such as Tacape, Vaga or Zama Regia. By taking a large number of cities into account, we may be able to perceive some of the larger trends current throughout North Africa. With this goal in mind, I will also occasionally include inscriptions from other cities and towns in the region to illustrate certain points and arguments. Although this investigation will mostly focus on the second and third century, inscriptions from the first and fourth centuries will make a regular appearance, either within a chronological arrangement or as comparative material. The epigraphic record of North Africa by and large follows Macmullen's well-known bell curve, with a distinct peak in the Severan era – perhaps partially influenced by the wide-spread grants of municipal rights in Africa Proconsularis under Septimius Severus.²⁶⁰ The number of surviving inscriptions from the first century and fourth century dedications is usually limited in comparison to second and third-century material, although some sites, such as Cirta/Constantine and Lepcis Magna, diverge from this general trend. As I nevertheless hope to show, this need not necessarily prevent us from making more quantitative arguments about the surviving epigraphic material, if properly contextualised.

2.1. – Early responses – the second century

Of the various African communities under investigation, Lepcis Magna in particular has provided us with a large number of early imperial statue bases, building dedications and other forms of honorary dedications to the emperor spread out over a number of locations throughout the city. Among the most prominent of these, particularly in the first century, was the Forum Vetus. Also known as the Old Forum, the forum received its definite form in the late first century B.C. Together with the theatre, built in the same period, the Forum Vetus formed the main focus for dedicatory activity in the city until the completion of the Severan Forum in the early third century A.D. Besides temples to Liber Pater, Hercules and Augustus and Roma, the Forum Vetus housed a multitude of dedications to the Julio-Claudian emperors, occasionally in the form of dynastic 'group portraits' consisting of various statues, placed there at different intervals during the first century.²⁶¹ The dedications include statues of Augustus, Tiberius and Claudius, as well as various members of the imperial family such as Livia, Germanicus and Antonia Minor. The accompanying dedications were set up by various dedicators, including the citizen body as a whole, elite families such as the Italian Fulvii as well as Roman officials.²⁶² None of these dedications mention the virtues of the emperor or the imperial family, instead only highlighting the official titles of the reigning emperor or the dynastic ties between the various members of the imperial household. We see the same trend in the dedications to Augustus in the theatre and the so-called Punic Market of Lepcis.²⁶³ The relative lack of normative language is cast into sharper relief by the importance of *pietas*, *concordia* and other virtues in Augustan ideology in Rome.²⁶⁴ Lepcis certainly was not immune to ideological impulses from the

²⁶⁰ Macmullen 1982: 243; Gasco 1982: 207–220.

²⁶¹ Boschung 2002: 8–21.

²⁶² *Citizens*: IRT 334; *Fulvii*: IRT 328; *officials*: IRT 338.

²⁶³ IRT 321–323, 319.

²⁶⁴ Zanker 1990: 102–104, 111; Lobur 2008.

centre: besides the number of dedications to Augustus, local Lepcitan coinage featured the imperial portrait and on occasion adopted Augustan imagery such as the *capricornus* with a globe and cornucopia.²⁶⁵ Although visual aspects (such as the imperial portrait) and textual aspects (such as the presence of imperial titles in epigraphy) of Augustan ideology were adopted in Lepcis Magna, imperial virtues were not among them. We see a similar lack of honorific language in dedications to Tiberius, Vespasian and Titus, Domitian, Trajan, and Antoninus Pius.²⁶⁶ In the first two centuries of imperial rule, we find numerous expressions of consent, but in a conservative, formulaic format: only in Latin and repeating imperial titulature with great uniformity. Normative beliefs on the importance of virtues in legitimate rulers may well have been shared in Lepcis Magna, but there was evidently no strong need to give explicit expression to these beliefs.

Yet Lepcis Magna has a number of surprising exceptions to this paucity which suggests that some dedicators were at least familiar with the importance of imperial virtues and similar honorifics. One of these exceptions comes in the shape of a large inscription (some 4.5 meters wide) mentioning Augusta Salutaris, dedicated by the proconsul Caius Vibius Marsus around 30 A.D.²⁶⁷ Pieces of the inscription were found beside the base of an arch spanning the *decumanus*. Ward-Perkins describes it as a statue base, while Di Vita considers it part of a gate, under the name of *porta Augusta Salutaris*.²⁶⁸ Given the location at the edge of the city's new monumental core, surrounded by the Punic Markets, the Chalcidium and the theatre, we are most likely dealing with a monumental entrance way to the city, though the large inscription also had a honorific function. Augusta Salutaris is worded in the nominative, not the traditional dative of dedications. The adjective Salutaris furthermore suggests that we are not dealing with a personified concept such as Salus Augusta, but with a 'health-giving Augusta'. Given the building date of the structure, the only realistic candidate is Livia.²⁶⁹ Livia died in the previous year and although the construction of the arch may have begun before her death, it could have been intended as a commemoration of the recently passed Augusta. Tiberian coinage places no strong emphasis on *salus*, with the only known issue bearing Salus Augusta being a *dupondius* struck between 22-23.²⁷⁰ On this coin however, the profile of Salus bears a strong resemblance to Livia, who had recovered from a major illness in the same year.²⁷¹ After her death, Livia was voted an arch by the Senate; a unique honour that appears to have been vetoed by Tiberius together with many other honours awarded to Livia.²⁷² The Lepcitan arch may have been conceived in this ambiguous climate, honouring the deceased Augusta but in a circumspect way. The dedication mentions no other dedicators or financiers beyond the proconsul, suggesting that the dedication and its wording might have been influenced or perhaps specifically chosen by the governor. Marsus may have had a general association between Livia and Salus in mind while

²⁶⁵ As on a Lepcitan *semis* (RPC I, nr.845), Kreikenbom 2008: 198–199.

²⁶⁶ *Tiberius*: IRT 332, 333; *Vespasian and Titus*: IRT 345; *Domitian*: IRT 318, 347; *Trajan*: IRT 354, 355; *Antoninus Pius*: IRT 368-370.

²⁶⁷ IRT 308.

²⁶⁸ Di Vita 1977: 137.

²⁶⁹ Bullo 2002: 179.

²⁷⁰ RIC I Tiberius 47; see also an issue from the same year from the mint of Augusta Emerita, RPC I 72 no.38-39.

²⁷¹ Wood 2000: 109–110.

²⁷² Severy 2004: 242.

dedicating his gate, or may simply have felt it an appropriate wording to commemorate the empress-mother. In either case, the wording of the inscription is highly idiosyncratic.

A second exception comes in the form of two statue bases, dedicated to Augustus and Hadrian respectively, each lauding the emperor as “defender/saviour” (*conservator*).²⁷³ This honorific title is peculiar, in that it does not appear in the epigraphic record of other African cities until the third century.²⁷⁴ Naturally, we should be careful in drawing statistical conclusions from the epigraphic data – the record is incomplete and may not have been representatively preserved. It is equally possible, however, given the expenditure and nature of the dedications, that the title held some sort of local resonance and that the use of *conservator* was a deliberate inclusion by the dedicators of both statues. The statue of Augustus was dedicated by the Fulvii, an Italian family who had settled in Leptis and quickly rose to prominence in the city.²⁷⁵ The base was placed in the city’s theatre in the year 2 B.C., one of the earliest dedications at the site. It is tempting to connect the title *conservator* to the honorific Greek title *soter*, which appears in Athenian dedications.²⁷⁶ Yet *soter* had a decidedly religious component and is often found within the context of the imperial cult in the Greek East.²⁷⁷ If the find spot of the base corresponds to its original location, the Leptis statue had no direct association with the imperial cult in the city, which at the time of dedication was focussed on the Temple of Augustus and Roma in the Forum Vetus. Rather, the choice for *conservator* may have been intended to underline the loyalty of the Fulvii to the new emperor. In this they did not differ from a host of other leading elite families in Leptis who were keen to include the emperor and the imperial family in their personal benefactions.²⁷⁸ Yet the title itself seems lifted from Augustan ideology, which placed heavy emphasis on the new emperor’s role in restoring and preserving the *res publica*. An Italian provenance of the title is possible, especially given the family’s Italian origins. Expanding our horizon, the title seems to appear in only three early imperial inscriptions, from Brundisium and Capena in Italy and Anticaria in Spain.²⁷⁹ In all three cases, *conservator* appears in dedications to Tiberius. The Capena inscription for example, dedicated by the *Augustalis* Aulus Fabius Fortunatus, was set up “to the greatest emperor and most just protector of the fatherland” (*principi optumo [sic] ac iustissimo conservatori patriae*). Although other, lost dedications may have contained this title, the surviving material indicates that it was never particularly prominent in either Italy or the provinces. Returning to Leptis Magna, the inclusion of *conservator* appears to betray the influence of the dedicators. Given that other typically Augustan imagery appeared on for example local coinage, it is possible that the Fulvii were consciously

²⁷³ IRT 320, 362.

²⁷⁴ CIL VIII 2620 (a dedication to Severus Alexander from Lambaesis), CIL VIII 2346 = CIL VIII 17813b = D 632 = AE 1893, +115 and CIL VIII 2347 = CIL VIII 17813c = D 631 = AE 1893, 115 (paired dedications to Diocletian and Maximian from Thamugadi) and CIL VIII 7010 = ILS 581 = D 691 (a dedication to Constantine from Cirta). In other cities, including Bulla Regia, Cuicul, Thugga and Gigthis, the term does not appear. Variations on *conservator* do appear in a number of Spanish towns: See CIL II 5486 (from Iluro); CIL 3732 (from Valentia); CIL II 2054 (from Aratispi); Noreña 2011a: 246.

²⁷⁵ Birley 1988: 3–5; Fontana 2001: 162.

²⁷⁶ See for example SEG 29 (1979) no.178; IG II² 3266; IG II² 3173, with discussion in Schmalz 2009: 80–82.

²⁷⁷ See Foerster 1964; Clauss 1999: 342–343.

²⁷⁸ See for example the building dedications of the theatre (IRT 321–323), the Chalchidium (IRT 324) and the market (IRT 319).

²⁷⁹ AE 1965, 113; CIL XI 3872 = ILS 159; CIL II-V 748 = CIL II 2038.

responding to ideological concepts from Rome. If so, they appear as something of an exception within their community from an epigraphic standpoint.

The Hadrianic dedication using the same honorific title, dating to the year 132-133 A.D., was set up by “the Lepcitans publically” in the Temple of Liber Pater in the Forum Vetus. This location might suggest some connection to the imperial cult, but the base could also have been moved to the temple environs during the building of the Byzantine defences around the forum.²⁸⁰ The wording of the inscription implies the use of public funds to erect the statue, but the text is silent on the precise motivation behind the dedication. The wording of the honorific (*per omnia conser[v]atori suo*) nevertheless suggests a considerable benefaction. It likely refers to one or more benefactions by Hadrian (including allowing the city to construct an aqueduct, IRT 358-359), which in turn may be related to Hadrian’s tour of the region some years earlier.²⁸¹ Few other dedications to Hadrian survive from Lepcis Magna (see IRT 361), making it difficult to estimate exactly how unique the use of *conservator* was. It is nevertheless noteworthy that no other dedications appear to honour the emperor as *conservator* between Augustus and Hadrian, again suggesting that the title was employed only in exceptional circumstances. Rhetorically, this exceptional honorific serves to highlight the relationship between honorand and dedicator, suggesting the emperor’s active involvement in the community and the lives of the Lepcitans.

Elsewhere in North Africa we find the first examples of normative language in honorific inscriptions during the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian. In two dedications from Calama, Trajan is praised as an *optimus Augustus*.²⁸² One of these texts is heavily damaged while the other was set up by the city council. The inclusion of *optimus* may have resulted from Trajan’s official adoption of the title. Although the title only starts appearing on Trajanic coinage from 114 onwards, Pliny’s *Panegyric* suggests that it was offered to the emperor already before his suffect consulship in the year 100.²⁸³ It is the only occurrence of *optimus*, or other forms of normative language for that matter, in any of the dedications to Trajan in my epigraphic database. Unsurprisingly, the title appears after the emperor’s cognomen but before his *cognomina ex virtute*, suggesting that the city council of Calama was following official precedent. In the previous chapter, we noted the *sermo* praising Hadrian’s virtues in the Bagradas Valley, highlighting the emperor’s *providentia* and *cura* in particular. Among the civilian dedications however, only a single dedication from Gigthis contains personal praise for Hadrian, lauding him as *conditor municipii*, “founder of the community”. The title could have been devised as a response to Hadrian promoting the city to *municipium*, though opinion is divided whether the full *ius Latii* was awarded under Hadrian or Antoninus Pius.²⁸⁴ In Dougga and Thubursicum Bure, cities close to the Bagradas Valley, no extant dedications to Hadrian praise any of the emperor’s virtues, let alone his *providentia* or his *cura*.

²⁸⁰ Kleinwächter 2001: 237.

²⁸¹ Halfmann 1986: 188–210.

²⁸² ILAlg-01, 238; CIL VIII 5289 = ILAlg-01, 178.

²⁸³ See Pliny the Younger, *Panegyric* 88.4; the title was also adopted on Trajanic coinage from 114 onwards, see for example: RIC II Trajan 315-317, 323-335, 340-342, 345, 346, 349, 350.

²⁸⁴ CIL VIII 22707 = ILTun 17 = ILS 6779 = Freis 00118 = BCTH-1993/95-89 = AE 1902, 00163 = AE 1953, +220 = AE 2003, +1924. See Guéron 2018: 143 and n.52.

Normative language became a somewhat more common feature of dedications under Antoninus Pius, with examples scattered across a number of North African sites. In Carthage, we encounter a possible building dedication set up to Antoninus Pius and dated to the years 145-161.²⁸⁵ The badly fragmented plaque mentions construction work on a bathhouse, possibly financed (indirectly) by the emperor. It praises Antoninus Pius with the 'Trajanic' titles *optimus maximusque princeps* and mentions his "benefactions" (*beneficia*). Although one of the fragments records *Val[...]*, who may have been responsible for the production of the inscription, the dedication seems to have been decreed by the city council acting in name of the community.²⁸⁶ Far to the west of Carthage, outside of the city of Milev, two milestones praise the emperor's "indulgence" (*indulgentia*) for allowing the city to levy a toll (*vectigal rotare*) to secure the local road network.²⁸⁷ In Hadrumentum, a damaged inscription dedicated to Marcus Aurelius records road repairs; the emperor appears to be honoured for his "farsightedness" (*providentia*), most likely for ordering or financing the repairs.²⁸⁸ Another damaged inscription, this time from Thysdrus, may have been dedicated to the *concordia* of Antoninus Pius, although its dedicator and motivation remains unknown.²⁸⁹ A consistent element in all of the dedications is their reactive nature: they were set up after some form of imperial benefaction. The emperor's benefactions not only gave a direct impulse to praise the emperor's virtuous qualities, it also narrowed down a wide field of potential linguistic choices. *Indulgentia* and *providentia* were obvious options to express gratitude for investments in local building projects.

2.1.1. – Worshipping imperial virtues

As discussed in the previous chapter, Rome had a lengthy tradition of worshipping deified virtues. By the second century, the tradition appears to have spread to Africa. In Ammaedara the local priest [...] Pinarianus Arator C[...] paid for the construction of a temple to Concordia Augusta between 125-149.²⁹⁰ As recorded by the temple's dedicatory inscription, Arator attained equestrian rank and was placed on the honorary roll of jurors (*in quinque decurias*) by the emperor Hadrian. The inscription not only notes the large sum expended upon the temple – some 30,000 *sestertii* – but also its richly decorated interior and accompanying gladiatorial games, suggesting that Arator was a prominent member of the civic elite in Ammaedara. The Ammaedara temple is a reflection of a broader African interest in the cult of Concordia: Carthage, Dougga, Gales, Gigthis and possibly Madauros featured temples to the deified virtue.²⁹¹ However, not all of these sanctuaries were necessarily dedicated to Concordia Augusta or related to imperial *concordia*. Only in Gigthis did a local decurion pay for the erection of a temple to Concordia Panthea Augusta, making the intended association between Concordia and emperor explicit.²⁹² In Dougga, the goddess seems to have held strong local connotations and was not associated with either emperor or imperial cult, a point we shall return to in a later chapter. Whether the same can be said for Carthage, Gales or Madauros is unclear, but

²⁸⁵ CIL VIII 12513 = ILS 345 = ILPBardo-A, 9 = ILTun 890 = Horster p. 416 = Saastamoinen 167.

²⁸⁶ Suggested by the fragmentary *colonia Con[cordia] Iulia Karthago*.

²⁸⁷ CIL VIII 10327-10328.

²⁸⁸ CIL VIII 10026 = CIL VIII 21980 = AE 2014, +1455.

²⁸⁹ ILTun 102 = AE 1928, 33.

²⁹⁰ NDEAmmaedara 5 = Saastamoinen 146 = AE 1999, 1781. See commentary Benzina Ben Abdallah 1999: 8–11.

²⁹¹ Benzina Ben Abdallah 1999: 10.

²⁹² CIL VIII 22693 = ILPBardo 3 = ILTun 19 = Saastamoinen 280 = AE 1908, 119.

the lack of the epithet Augusta does seem to suggest it. Concordia Augusta did not receive the reception in North Africa which its importance to numerous emperors may seem to suggest, yet the deified *concordia* was clearly familiar enough to receive cult in both Gighthis and Ammaedara.²⁹³

It would be a mistake to view temples as the only possible form of cult. The *pagus* and *civitas* of Dougga, the two civic components of which the community consisted, erected a now broken dedication to Concordia Augusta in the second half of the second century.²⁹⁴ The exact nature of the dedication remains unknown. It may have been an altar or a statue base. The stone was found near the so-called Dar Lachhab and possibly stood in the small square in front of the structure. If this was the original location of the stone, the placement is peculiar; especially given that it was erected with public funds. A publicly funded altar or statue with such strong imperial connotations is usually found in the forum area. Although the dedication offers evidence for the veneration of Concordia Augusta in Dougga, the modest size of the inscription and the relatively low-key setting suggest that this particular cult of Concordia was less prominent than the local cult of Concordia, to which several temples were erected.

Concordia was not the only virtue to receive an active cult in North Africa. In Dougga, the local benefactor Caius Pompeius Nahanus financed the construction of a small, semi-circular temple to Pietas Augusta. The dedicatory inscription notes that it was dedicated by Pompeius Rogatus, in accordance with the will of his brother Nahanus, with Marcus Morasius Donatus and Caius Pompeius Cossutus acting as curators.²⁹⁵ The dating of the inscription and the temple is contested, with dates ranging from the late first to the early third century, but the building was most likely constructed during the reign of Commodus, on the basis of stylistic evidence and other building activity around the site.²⁹⁶ The small temple is a rarity: despite the prominence of *pietas* in the repertoire of imperial virtues, few African communities feature cults of Pietas.²⁹⁷ But the temple is also unique within the urban landscape of Dougga itself: *pietas* is almost exclusively associated with the funerary sphere in the city, where it appears in the ubiquitous formula *pius vixit*. Because of its uniqueness and insecure dating, the motives of Pompeius Nahanus remain somewhat nebulous. A desire for the continued prosperity of the empire and by extension a display of loyalty to that empire obviously played their part. But as with the sources mentioned in the previous chapter, the inscription also signals messages about the authors of the inscription. The Pietas Augusta is echoed in the *pietas* of Pompeius Nahanus himself for having the temple built at his personal expense, as well as Pompeius Rogatus' observance of his brothers' will. Another member of the Pompeii appears as curator of the building project, making the temple as much a monument to the ambitions of the members of a local elite family as to the divine virtues of the emperor. In size and decoration, the temple was dwarfed by other elite dedications in the city. The uniqueness of the dedications and

²⁹³ Concordia and emperors: Fishwick 2016: 77.

²⁹⁴ CIL VIII 26466, with commentary Khanoussi and Maurin 2000: 153–154.

²⁹⁵ CIL VIII 1473 = CIL VIII 15522 = Saastamoinen 126 = CIL VIII 15543 = CIL VIII 15246e = CIL VIII 26493 = Dougga 30 = AE 1904, 120; with commentary Khanoussi and Maurin 2000: 80–86.

²⁹⁶ Khanoussi and Maurin 2000: 86.

²⁹⁷ Khanoussi and Maurin 2000: 86. A possible example is a damaged inscription from Sicca Veneria (CIL VIII 15849); the editor's reading is, however, contestable.

the cult, as well as its prominent location along the thoroughfare leading to the theatre, may have gone some way towards offsetting this imbalance by calling attention to the structure and its builders.

2.1.2. – *The forum of Cuicul*

The presence of virtues both in cult and in dedications to the emperors suggests that North African dedicators were well aware of the normative language employed in imperial media. Yet the somewhat scarce appearance of virtues across North African sites also suggests that second-century African dedicators were disinclined to include explicit descriptions of imperial virtues in epigraphic texts. This impression is further strengthened by the responsive nature of many dedications, set up after imperial interventions within the community. We may speculate that this reflects a mixture of both political caution and the conservative influence of local epigraphic traditions. Yet not all communities shared these epigraphic conventions. The forum of Cuicul offers an interesting example of a community where normative language appears in a more consistent manner in local dedications. Here, we find several statue bases – all located in the city’s administrative centre, the North Forum – which directly praise the personal virtues of reigning emperors. The first of these is a statue base dedicated to Antoninus Pius in 156-157 by the city council of Cuicul.²⁹⁸ The base stood beside the entrance to the *curia* in the town’s Old Forum and had a distinct presence in the forum – the remains of the inscription alone stand at 1,65 meters.²⁹⁹ The base is dedicated to the *pietas* of the emperor and this virtue receives special visual prominence in large lettering in the first line of the inscription. The visual emphasis on *pietas* is further enhanced by a *patera* carved into the left side of the base and by the statue of a personified Pietas which most likely stood on top.³⁰⁰ After the dedication to *pietas*, the city council also seems to have erected a statue base to the *concordia* of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, found close to the city’s Capitol.³⁰¹ There is some confusion on the identification and reading of the inscription, but the titulature of both emperors makes a date of 165-166 most likely.³⁰² The dedication finds an interesting parallel in a dedication set up a few years later. This statue base, again of considerable height and rediscovered on the western side of the forum, was set up *ob honorem* by the local aedile Lucius Gargilius Augustalis.³⁰³ The inscription is dedicated to the Concordia Augusta of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus and was set up by Gargilius between 166-169, in other words several years after the dedication by the city council. Finally, a dedication to the *virtus* of Commodus was found in the ruins of the Capitol.³⁰⁴ The original dedicator – a local *duumvir* named Cornelius Iustinus – died before the statue could be set up, leaving his son Cornelius Pudentius to complete the project with additional funds.

The statue bases of Cuicul are of a different order than the dedications we have seen thus far. In addition to being directly dedicated to imperial virtues, they were likely accompanied by statues of

²⁹⁸ ILaig-02-03, 7688 = AE 1916, 17.

²⁹⁹ Zimmer 1989: 18, no.2.

³⁰⁰ Zimmer 1989: 30.

³⁰¹ CIL VIII 8301.

³⁰² See the discussion in Kleinwächter 2001: 129.

³⁰³ Zimmer 1989: 57, C9; with additional commentary by Kleinwächter 2001: 133–134.

³⁰⁴ Zimmer 1989: 67, C51; with additional commentary by Kleinwächter 2001: 135.

personified virtues, and bear no known relation to imperial benefactions in the city. The motivation behind this local trend – beyond general motives of loyalty and allegiance – remain unclear. In the first dedication of its kind, the city council may simply have given expression to the long-standing association between Antoninus Pius and *pietas*.³⁰⁵ In a similar fashion, the dedications to the *concordia* of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus may have been the product of broader ideological trends current under the joint reign of both emperors. Contemporary imperial and provincial coinage for example regularly include images and legends referring to *concordia* and orations such as Aelius Aristides' *On Concord* or *Panegyric in Cyzicus* equally place emphasis on the virtue.³⁰⁶ And through Commodus' association with Hercules and participation in gladiatorial combat, the significance of *virtus* was likely clear to the emperor's subjects.³⁰⁷ *Pietas*, *concordia* and *virtus* were far from the only virtues associated with Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, and Commodus, but each of these virtues received emphasis in their respective reigns. Whether the Cuicul dedicators sought to align their dedications with key values of the imperial regime, is a question that is impossible to answer conclusively. Given the cost of the dedications and the importance of the honorands – especially for private individuals – we may assume that some thought went into the text of the inscription and its implications. However, this holds true of all dedications, including the many North African dedications which make no mention of imperial virtues. The explanation is perhaps to be found in the influence of epigraphic traditions at a local level, impacted by both imperial ideology and the authority of civic institutions such as the city council. The dedication to the *pietas* of Antoninus Pius by the city council may have set a precedent for later dedications. Dedications to divine personifications in general seem to have had a strong presence in the public spaces of Cuicul, with statues to the local *genii*, Fides Publica and Victoria Augusta set up throughout the second century.³⁰⁸ Private dedicators such as Gargilius and the Corneliis may have followed this more-or-less authoritative precedent.

Beyond following epigraphic precedents, the language of these dedications intertwined local and imperial authority. The dedications employ a language that is open to multiple interpretations. The dative in *Pietati Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris)* or *Concordiae Augustor(um) Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris)* for example makes it absolutely clear the city council of Cuicul recognizes the close relationship between the reigning emperor(s) and a given virtue. Yet the inscription leaves open what the exact nature of this relationship is. Are we to imagine the emperors always being in possession of these virtues, or are these more general qualities to which emperors can only lay a claim? The act of dedicating a statue to imperial *pietas* or *concordia* implies recognition and honour, but also implies a wish on part of the city council of Cuicul that the close relationship between virtue and emperor will be retained in the future, in a similar way to the panegyrics we saw in the previous chapter.

It is at the level of private dedicators that imperial virtues really take on a local political importance. Both Gargilius and Cornelius senior publicly vowed the erection of the statues while 'campaigning'

³⁰⁵ Wesch-Klein suggests that the base was set up in response to the imminent *vicennalia* of the emperor in 158, Kleinwächter is critical of the notion. See Zimmer 1989: 54, C2; with additional commentary by Kleinwächter 2001: 133.

³⁰⁶ Coinage: as argued for imperial coinage by Zimmer 1989: 29; see also Heuchert 2005: 53–54 on the popularity of the *concordia* theme on provincial coinage in the East. See also Aelius Aristides, *Orations* 23.78; 27.22–45.

³⁰⁷ Hekster 2002: 162, 200. See also Cassius Dio, 73.20.2.

³⁰⁸ Zimmer 1989: 21–31.

for civic offices. It is within this context that we should also place the above dedications. Although we do not know the exact details of the vow and how explicit both men were in what type of statue they were going to erect, we can nevertheless imagine that a vow to erect a statue to the *concordia* or *virtus* of the emperor would paint the candidate as both a loyal citizen of the empire and a sound moral arbiter, capable of recognizing virtue. Even though neither Gargilius nor Cornelius senior may have met with much competition for their civic offices, such markers of respectable behaviour were important in a political system that revolved around the display and recognition of honour. The statues may reflect the types of claims to legitimacy originating from the imperial court, yet they are as much a product of the ambitions of both Gargilius and Cornelius senior.

2.1.3. – Safeguarding the emperor

My definition of normative language as set out in the introduction was purposefully wide-ranging. It allows for the inclusion of a variety of terms, concepts and phrases that gave expression to normative beliefs about power. Yet even within this wide-ranging definition, the inclusion of the term *salus* is not a clear fit and demands some justification. *Salus*, denoting well-being, health and success, is not a personal quality or a honorific, but rather a state of being that is wished for in others. Countless inscriptions throughout North Africa and the empire begin with the phrase *pro salute*, occasionally supplemented with additional expressions of well-being such as *pro salute et incolumitate*³⁰⁹ or *pro salute et victoria*³¹⁰. The main subject of these wishes for well-being and success is in almost all cases the reigning emperor, sometimes accompanied by members of the imperial family. And it is precisely because *salus* is almost universally associated with the emperor and the imperial family that it falls within the scope of my analysis. My stated aim is to delve deeper into legitimacy and its expressions in language from a provincial perspective. The decision of dedicators to include *pro salute* in their dedications is a clear expression of consent. By dedicating costly objects such as altars, statues and even entire buildings to the well-being and continued success of the emperor, dedicators sent out a powerful message of loyalty. Although they may have held far more ambivalent opinions on the nature of imperial power, in their dedications – often prominently placed in the civic landscape – dedicators made public statements on the legitimacy of the reigning emperor and by extension the empire.

The popularity of *salus*, particularly in the second and third centuries, is generally acknowledged even if explanations for the trend are scarce. Perhaps this is the result of the common appearance of *pro salute* on a wide range of monuments and dedications without particular motivation. For Cooley it is a development that can be traced from altars and other votive offerings to an increasingly large range of buildings and monuments that had little to do with harnessing the emperor's safety, including baths and cisterns – a development she describes as “beyond logical

³⁰⁹ CIL VIII 625 = CIL VIII 11819 = CIL VIII 11821 = CIL VIII 11822 = CIL VIII 11892 = CIL VIII 23412; CIL VIII 307 = CIL VIII 11531 = Saastamoinen 337 = Saastamoinen 338 = Haidra-05, 6; BCTH-1951/52-196 = BCTH-1953-46 = Hygiae p. 65 = Epigraphica-2002-94 = AE 1955, +49 = AE 1955, +54 = AE 1957, 54 = AE 2002, 1667; CIL VIII 23405; ILAlg-01, 1256 = Saturne-01, p. 369 = Saastamoinen 392.

³¹⁰ CIL VIII 20138 = ILAlg-02-03, 7824 = Saastamoinen 500 = AE 1913, 120 = AE 2012, +49; CIL VIII 17841 = ILS 6842; CIL VIII 10625; CIL VIII 18894 = ILAlg-02-02, 4638.

limits”.³¹¹ This judgement however immediately raises the question as to why communities and elites would participate in an epigraphic tradition for such a long period of time for no apparent reason. For Fishwick “[p]roliferation of the formula reflects a realization on the part of the dedicator that he is a member of the empire and that loyalty should be expressed to its head since the life of the individual and his successful conduct is dependent on the ruler of the *orbis Romanus*.”³¹² Although Fishwick is surely right in tracing the impulse behind *pro salute* to expressions of loyalty to the emperor, he perhaps overemphasizes the personal agency of dedicators. This point of criticism is also raised by Saastamoinen, who only offers the additional explanation that some *pro salute* dedications may have been set up with ulterior motives.³¹³

The *pro salute* phrase first appeared in the late first century, became common under Hadrian and reached a peak under the Severans; in the third century it declined, appearing only occasionally in the fourth century.³¹⁴ Within this general pattern, however, there is considerable local variation which tends to be overlooked by scholars. Among the many second- and early-third-century dedications in Lepcis Magna, only two include the phrase *pro salute*.³¹⁵ In Sabratha, only one dedication bearing the phrase *pro salute* has been found.³¹⁶ For Lepcis Magna and Sabratha, with their extensive number of dedications to the Severan emperors, the argument that *pro salute* has simply not been preserved in the epigraphic record is weak. Rather, we are dealing with an epigraphic tradition that never seems to have gained a foothold in the Tripolitanian region. A sharp contrast is provided by Africa Proconsularis and Mauretania Caesariensis, where *pro salute* regularly appears in dedications.

In Thuburbo Maius, the first extant dedication containing the phrase *pro salute* is a statue base to Diana Augusta which was set up *ex voto* by a Lucius Romanus Gallus.³¹⁷ Soon after, however, it also appears on building dedications, such as that of a possible temple to Frugifer Augustus set up by the prominent Carthaginian Lucius Decianus Extricator.³¹⁸ In Uchi Maius, *pro salute* appears in a particularly early case on a temple to Saturnus Augustus set up for the *salus* of Nerva by a local freedman.³¹⁹ Later it is included in the building dedications of, among other monuments, Hadrianic and Severan temples set up by members of the local elite.³²⁰ But it is Dougga in particular that stands out in terms of the presence of *pro salute* on most of the city’s major monuments. One noteworthy example includes the dedicatory text on the Capitol temple built by Lucius Marcius Simplex and Lucius Marcius Simplex Regillianus, consecrated around the year 168 and part of a grand urban

³¹¹ Cooley 2012: 156–157.

³¹² Fishwick 2004: 357; see in general Fishwick 2004: 352–360.

³¹³ Saastamoinen 2010: 90–91.

³¹⁴ The evidence for building dedications provided by Saastamoinen 2010: 91–93 is also borne out in honorary dedications to the emperor, which show a broadly similar pattern.

³¹⁵ IRT 292, 316.

³¹⁶ IRT 2.

³¹⁷ ILAfr 237 = AE 1917/18, 20.

³¹⁸ ILAfr 238 = ILPBardo 334 = Saastamoinen 132 = AE 1915, 22; see also the commentary in Abdallah 1986: vol. 92, 125–126.

³¹⁹ CIL VIII 26241 = Uchi-01-Rug 1 = Uchi-02, 9 = Saturne-01, p. 272 = Saastamoinen 58 = AE 1907, 153.

³²⁰ CIL VIII 26245 = Uchi-01-Rug 3 = Uchi-01-Ugh 2 = Uchi-02, 16 = Saastamoinen 154; CIL VIII 25484.

building scheme which also included the adjacent forum.³²¹ The large dedicatory inscription running along the front of the temple mentions not only the Capitoline Triad, but is also dedicated to the *salus* of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. Various second- and early-third-century temples are likewise dedicated to the *salus* of emperors from Hadrian to Gallienus.³²² Although the dedication of temples to the *salus* of the reigning emperor is an understandable extension of the small-scale votive offerings to the *salus* of the emperor, the inclusion of *pro salute* was far from limited to religious monuments. The theatre of Dougga was completed around the year 166 by Publius Marcus Quadratus, a priest of the imperial cult and a decurion. The theatre features a number of large inscriptions commemorating both the financier of the project and features a dedication to the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus.³²³ The highly visible inscription running along the *summa cavea* is dedicated to the *salus* of both emperors as well as listing Quadratus' expenditure on the project.³²⁴ The forum *porticus* was dedicated to the *salus* of Antoninus Pius, while another possible building dedication, commemorating the construction of a *porticus* and the pavement of the local market, was dedicated to the *salus* of Commodus.³²⁵ Likewise, the completion of the aqueduct of Dougga under Commodus was commemorated with a monumental inscription, possibly dedicated to the *salus* of the emperor.³²⁶ Two large inscriptions – one dedicated to the *salus* of Severus Alexander and his father-in-law Seius Sallustius, the other to the *salus* of Severus Alexander, his wife Sallustia Barbia Orbiana and Julia Mamaea – graced the circus of Dougga, possibly at the location of the *meta*.³²⁷ Other inscriptions mentioning *salus* can't be connected to particular monuments, but due to their size likewise point to a prominent public setting.³²⁸ Smaller dedications – usually statue bases – follow building dedications in their use of *pro salute*, though not as frequently.³²⁹

³²¹ Khanoussi and Maurin 2000: 73–80, 87–90.

³²² Among others: CIL VIII 1483 (dedication of a temple to the Victoria Germanica of Caracalla, to the *salus* of Caracalla), CIL VIII 26471 (a temple dedicated to Fortuna Augusta, Venus, Concordia and Mercurius Augustus, to the *salus* of Hadrian), ILAfr 555 (a temple dedication to an unknown god/goddess, to the *salus* of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus), CIL VIII 1482 (an architrave frieze found in the portico of the temple of Saturn, to the *salus* of Septimius Severus, Clodius Albinus and Julia Domna), CIL VIII 1505 = 15510 (a frieze found in the portico of the temple of Tellus, to the *salus* of Gallienus), CIL VIII 26479 (dedication of the temple of Mercurius, to the *salus* of Marcus Aurelius).

³²³ Khanoussi and Maurin 2000: 90–92.

³²⁴ CIL VIII 1498 = CIL VIII 26528 = Saastamoinen 233.

³²⁵ CIL VIII 26524 = ILAfr 521 = Dougga 29 = Saastamoinen 194 = AE 1914, 175 = AE 2011, 1760; CIL VIII 26530 = CIL VIII 26533 = ILAfr 523 = Saastamoinen 303 = AE 2011, 1760.

³²⁶ CIL VIII 1480, Khanoussi and Maurin 2000: 102–109; the first part of the inscription is missing, and although the formula *pro salute* would make sense given the size and length of the inscription, its inclusion is far from certain.

³²⁷ CIL VIII 1492, with commentary Khanoussi and Maurin 2000: 39–42; CIL VIII 26548 with commentary Khanoussi and Maurin 2000: 38–39.

³²⁸ CIL VIII 15246I = CIL VIII 15528 = CIL VIII 26527 = ILTun 1404 = Saastamoinen 207 = AE 1899, 214 (containing a dedication to the *salus* of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus); CIL VIII 26535 = ILAfr 524 = Dougga 9 = Saastamoinen 304 = ZPE-175-290 = AE 2010, +1810 (to the *salus* of Commodus); possibly CIL VIII 1489 = CIL VIII, 26562 = ILTun 1497 = ILAfr 531 = Saastamoinen 632 = Dougga 134 = CCCA-05, 87 = AE 1941, 158 (to the *salus* of Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius Chlorus, Galerius).

³²⁹ See for example CIL VIII 26479 = ILTun 1395 (a dedication to Mercurius for the *salus* of Marcus Aurelius and the *domus divinae*); ILAfr 562 (a dedication to the Severan family by the people of Dougga). A further noteworthy feature of Douggan epigraphy is an altar to the Divi Augusti, the genius of Dougga, Aesculapius, Salus and Victoria, set up by a local *sodalis* named Tiberius Claudius Abascantus, in his name and that of his fellow-*sodales* (ILAfr 546). The altar is dated to the middle of the first century by Marin on the basis of onomastics, though this dating is far from certain. The inscription was read by Fishwick as referring not to a range of separate deities, but specifically to the 'Augustan' deities

Dougga's adoption of *pro salute* differs from that in other cities in North Africa primarily through its sheer quantity.³³⁰ Part of the explanation for this discrepancy is to be found in the number of surviving building dedications from Dougga, which is exceptional in comparison even to much larger sites such as Carthage or Caesarea. This cannot, however, be the full explanation. Other cities with a considerable number of extant building dedications from the second and early third century – such as Theveste, Cuicul or Cirta³³¹ – have a far lower number of monuments dedicated to imperial *salus*; in some cities, *salus* hardly appears at all in the epigraphic record, either in honorific inscriptions to the emperor or building dedications.³³² According to Saastamoinen, only about 15% of all African building dedications from the second and third centuries included the phrase *pro salute*.³³³ It should be noted that Saastamoinen's statistics offer a slightly skewed image: since the phrase did not become popular until the later second century, inscriptions from the first half of the second century drag down the total percentage for the second century. Nevertheless, it is clear that the popularity of the phrase *pro salute* in Dougga is not simply a formality of imperial building dedications, but an indication of local preferences and influences. Most privately-sponsored monuments in Dougga bore a dedication to imperial *salus*, an indication that imperial well-being was an important concern for high-ranking members of Dougga's elite.

To formulate an answer to the question what motivated this trend, we must delve deeper into the chronology of *salus* in the city's epigraphy. The first mention of the phrase *pro salute* in Dougga dates from the reign of Hadrian and appears on two major elite-sponsored building projects. One dedication appears on the temple to Fortuna Augusta, Venus, Concordia and Mercurius Augustus, financed by Quintus Maedius Severus and his daughter Maedia Lentula.³³⁴ Whereas Maedia is listed as a *flaminica perpetua*, Maedius is praised as a patron of the *pagus et civitas*. It is unclear where the temple structure might have stood, but the inscriptions inform us that the Maedii paid at least 70,000 *sestertii* for the construction and decoration of the temple. The second known use of *pro salute* dates from approximately the same period and appears on a large cultic complex dedicated by one of the most prominent clans of Dougga, the Gabinii.³³⁵ Unlike the dedication by the Maedii, which starts with a dedication to the gods and only afterwards follows with a *pro salute*, the dedicatory inscription by the Gabinii opens with a prominent *pro salute*. The exact function of the

ensuring the success and protection of the emperor, in this case the genius of Dougga, Aesculapius, Salus and Victoria. The hypothesis is an attractive one, though the dedication nevertheless has a strong local aspect and the invoked deities may as well be read as protectors of the local community as much as the empire. Of particular interest is the inclusion of both Aesculapius and Salus, which hints at a strong identification by Abascantus and his associates of Salus with Hygeia. See Fishwick 1989: 113, Khanoussi and Maurin 2000: 263–264.

³³⁰ For other examples, see *Thuburbo Maius*: ILAfr 238 = ILPBardo 334 = Saastamoinen 00132 = AE 1915, 22; ILAfr 237 = AE 1917/18, 20. *Mactar*: 11799 = ILAfr 200 = Saastamoinen 227. *Uchi Maius*: CIL VIII 26241 = Uchi-01-Rug 00001 = Uchi-02, 9 = Saturne-01, p 272 = Saastamoinen 58 = AE 1907, 153; CIL VIII 26264 = Uchi-01-Rug 27 = Uchi-01-Ugh 13 = Uchi-02, 50 = Saastamoinen 553.

³³¹ Of the three, only Cuicul has a surviving inscription dedicated *pro salute*: CIL VIII 20138 = ILAlg-02-03, 7824 = Saastamoinen 500 = AE 1913, 120 = AE 2012, +49.

³³² Such as Gigthis (CIL VIII 22715), Tacape (CIL VIII 22796 = ILTun 72 = AE 1906, 17) and possibly Capsa (CIL VIII 100 = CIL VIII 11228 = Saastamoinen 599).

³³³ Saastamoinen 2010: 90.

³³⁴ CIL VIII 26471 = ILTun 1392 = Dougga 136 = Saastamoinen 123 = AE 1904, 116 = AE 2011, +1760.

³³⁵ CIL VIII 1493 = CIL VIII 15520 = CIL VIII 26467 = CIL VIII 26469a = CIL VIII 26469b = Saastamoinen 120 = ILTun 1389 = ILAfr 515 = Dougga 27. On the Gabinii, see also Khanoussi and Maurin 2000: 194–198.

monumental complex of the Gabinii – which includes several cultic spaces and an auditorium – is not clear, but included a sanctuary to Concordia, Frugifer and Liber Pater. Marcus Gabinus Bassus is mentioned in the inscription as a *flamen Augusti*, and both he and his brother Aulus Gabinus Datus are honoured as patrons of the *pagus* and *civitas*.

In both cases, we are dealing with benefactors with important roles in the local community who spent considerable sums on prominent monuments in Dougga. The lack of a civic *cursus honorum* in these dedications is not a sign of the unimportance of the benefactors in question, but is rather explained through Dougga's unique civic constitution consisting of a *pagus* and a *civitas*. This constitution seems to have included two *sufetes*³³⁶, but of other civic magistracies we know very little.³³⁷ Within a different and perhaps more limited system of civic politics in a polity whose civic life was to a considerable extent dominated by Carthage, even more emphasis might have been placed on priesthoods and munificence as ways towards local prestige. Both the Maedii and the Gabinii were influential figures in their community and acted as early adopters of a new epigraphical custom, possibly along with other benefactors whose dedications have not survived. Their choice to include the phrase *pro salute* in their building dedications may have helped the new trend take root in the local epigraphic traditions of Dougga, whereas the same did not happen in for example in Tripolitania. As we have seen, later elite benefactors in Dougga would regularly incorporate *pro salute* in their building dedications. The forces that were to safeguard the emperor and the empire are often left implied: whereas altars tend to invoke specific deities for the protection of the emperor, building dedications generally do not. Nor are dedications which include the phrase *pro salute* limited to temples and sanctuaries. The architrave inscriptions running along the forum *porticus* set up by Quintus Gabinus Felix Faustianus between the years 138-161, also included a dedicatory *pro salute*, despite the structure having a mostly decorative function.³³⁸ An answer perhaps lies in the uncoupling of monument and text: *pro salute* was an epigraphic convention which acted in relationship to other inscriptions, but need not directly invoke the gods or have a 'logical' relationship with the monument on which it was inscribed. Rather, what seems to have mattered was that dedicators showed their willingness to act on behalf of the emperor's well-being. Large, monumental inscriptions dedicated *pro salute* signalled a wish by the dedicator for the continued success of emperor and empire, as suggested by Fishwick. Largely implicit in Fishwick's explanation, however, is the role of the benefactor: inclusion of *pro salute* also expressed an active part for the benefactor in safeguarding the empire through his actions and expenditures. Such a declaration transformed a potential deed of self-aggrandizement in the local civic context into an act for the public good of the empire and by extension the community. Elite competition around the empire is usually envisioned in terms of *munificentia* or the jostling for civic offices. I would argue that expressions of consent to imperial rule also served their purpose within this inter-elite dynamic. By erecting statues to imperial virtues, or by dedicating ever more lavish monuments to the well-being of the emperor, members of the elite in Dougga and elsewhere outdid one another in expressions of loyalty to the empire. Note for example the monumental features throughout

³³⁶ The highest-ranking among the traditional Punic magistracies; see also chapter 4.3.

³³⁷ Khanoussi and Maurin 2000: 141.

³³⁸ CIL VIII 26524 = ILAfr 521 = Dougga 29 = Saastamoinen 194 = AE 1914, 175 = AE 2011, +1760, see also Khanoussi and Maurin 2000: 73–80.

Dougga: a temple to *Pietas Augusta*, a temple to *Victoria Germanica* and an altar to *Concordia Augusta*.³³⁹ Although there was likely an external motivation involved – perhaps gaining a positive reputation with the local governor, procurator or other official – such displays of consent also by necessity had a local, communal audience. With their shows of loyalty and consent to a legitimate regime, members of the local elite not only claimed honour for themselves but also gave a clear expression to the close relationship between local elite power and imperial rule.

2.2. – *Central message, local response*

In the last few pages we saw normative language appear in relation to various emperors. On the one hand, this normative language appears irregularly and does not correlate closely with the virtues and benefits most often propagated in imperial media, such as *virtus*, *pietas*, *aequitas* or *iustitia*. On the other hand, dedicators clearly show a familiarity with normative language and its appropriate context, for example in response to imperial benefactions or in the dedication of a statue of the personified *pietas* of Antoninus Pius. We can trace a clear chronological development with normative language becoming more pervasive from the second half of the second century onwards. Although undoubtedly the result of a general rise in epigraphic texts towards the end of the second century, normative language also became a more entrenched aspect of dedications with precedents set by city councils and private dedicators. And as argued earlier, we should not discount the idea that increasingly explicit expressions of consent to imperial power could also be part of inter-elite competition and the entrenchment of elite power in general. With the rise in dedications towards the late second century, elite dedicators may have sought for new and more varied means of expressing their loyalty to the empire in sincere terms, spurring the use of normative language. Noticeably lacking, however, appears to be any form of top-down influencing of preferred ideological phrases or imagery. As noted, even dedications by governors and other imperial officials often lack normative language. Beginning with the reign of Septimius Severus, however, we can trace a clear shift in epigraphic conventions: virtues and honorifics become far more common.

The clearest example is undoubtedly the title *fortissimus felicissimus*, which in a few years spread across North Africa and the empire in general.³⁴⁰ *Fortissimus felicissimus* usually appears coupled,

³³⁹ *Pietas Augusta*: CIL VIII 1473 = CIL VIII 15522 = Saastamoinen 126 = CIL VIII 15543 = CIL VIII 15246e = CIL VIII 26493 = Dougga 30 = AE 1904, 120. *Victoria Germanica*: CIL VIII 1483 = CIL VIII 15505 = CIL VIII 26546 = CIL VIII 26639 = CIL VIII 26650 = Saastamoinen 444 = ILAfr 527 = Dougga 39 = Dougga-01, p 51 = AE 1997, 1654 = AE 2003, 2013 = AE 2005, 1686 = AE 2007, 1741. *Concordia Augusta*: CIL VIII 26466.

³⁴⁰ Lepcis Magna is not included here given the city's preference for only the title *felicissimus*; a point to which we shall return below. *Gightis*: CIL VIII 22715. *Cirta*: CIL VIII 19495 = IALg-02-01, 566; CIL VIII 6944 (p. 1847) = IALg-02-01, 473; CIL VIII 6969 (p. 1847) = IALg-02-01, 537; CIL VIII 6998 (p. 1847) = IALg-02-01, 563; CIL VIII 7000 = CIL VIII 19418 = IALg-02-01, 569 = Saastamoinen 407 = AntAfr-2007-86; CIL VIII 10304 = ILS 471; CIL VIII 10305. *Bulla Regia*: BCTH-1953-57. *Cuicul*: IALg-02-03, 7806 = Saastamoinen 341 = AE 1911, 106; IALg-02-03, 07805 = Saastamoinen 340. *Hippo Regius*: AE 1958, 142 = AE 1959, +187. *Mactar*: BCTH-1951/52-196 = BCTH-1953-46 = Hygiae p. 65 = Epigraphica-2002-94 = AE 1955, +49 = AE 1955, +54 = AE 1957, 54 = AE 2002, 1667; BCTH-1946/49-371 = Saastamoinen 377 = AE 1949, 47; CIL VIII 11801 = ILS 458. *Sicca Veneria*: CIL VIII 15857. *Rusicade*: CIL VIII 7961 = IALg-02-01, 7 = ILS 3074 = Louvre 22; CIL VIII 7970 = IALg-02-01, 18 = Louvre 95; CIL VIII 7972 = IALg-02-01, 19. *Thibilis*: AE 1895, 83. *Thubursicum Numidarum*: CIL VIII 23993; IALg-01, 1260. *Sitifis*: AE 1951, 37. *Thamugadi*: CIL VIII 17871 = AE 1985, 881c; CIL VIII 2437 = CIL VIII 17940 = AE 1985, 881a; BCTH-1932/33-195 = Saastamoinen 333 = AE 1894, 44; AE 1985, 881b = AE 1987, +1074 = AE 1988, +1125. *Uchi Maius*: Uchi-02, 40 = Posters p. 119 = AE 2000, 1733 = AE 2007, +1718.

While some influence from the court may be assumed, a fully top-down, one-sidedly centrist approach passes over a number of important inconsistencies and ambiguities. Firstly, it suggests that there was a singular Severan conception of *fortitudo* or *felicitas*. Yet Severan sources paint a very fragmented image. *Fortitudo* is perhaps the easiest to contextualise. Even when not taking into account Severus' successful military campaigns to become emperor, his position like that of all emperors leaned heavily on military support and the ideological importance of imperial bravery and victory.³⁴⁶ The personified *virtus* is regularly depicted on Severan coinage and some 23% of all Severan *denarii* depict Victoria on the reverse, suggesting that martial themes retained their ideological importance under Septimius Severus.³⁴⁷ Yet it is striking to note that neither the title *fortissimus* nor the virtue *fortitudo* appear on Severan coinage. It could be argued that Victoria, *virtus* and *fortitudo* are related concepts and all served to give expression to a general idea of imperial triumph and martial success. Even so, it is interesting to note that where Severan coinage stressed Victoria and *virtus*, provincial epigraphy stressed *fortitudo*. Though Noreña speaks of "ideological convergence"³⁴⁸, these three concepts remain separate in our epigraphical sources and were apparently not interchangeable for ancient audiences. Victoria Augusta gains no particular prominence under the Severans and *virtus* is nearly non-existent in the Severan dedications of North Africa, in contrast with *fortitudo*.³⁴⁹ It should also be noted that the Severans did not differ in this regard from other emperors before them, whose martial virtues are also consistently propagated on coinage, in statuary form and in literary texts without, however, receiving the same enthusiastic reception in provincial epigraphy.

More ambivalent in meaning is *felicitas*. This quality is usually associated with good fortune, prosperity and happiness, with a clear implication of divine favour.³⁵⁰ Republican sources also highlight a more militaristic interpretation of *felicitas*, as the kind of 'battlefield luck' that was an important attribute of the ideal general.³⁵¹ This militaristic interpretation was retained in imperial times, though as part of the wider notion of *felicitas* as an ideal of imperial prosperity or *Kaiserglück*.³⁵² *Felicitas* appears in Severan literature and on Severan coinage, but both of these media highlight slightly different interpretations of the concept. The sources are vague on why the emperor should identify with this quality in particular. Cassius Dio describes the spectacular *adventus* of Septimius Severus in Rome in the year 193, where "the crowd chafed in its eagerness to see him and to hear him say something, as if he had been somehow changed by his good fortune (*tyche*)".³⁵³ The term *tyche* is not a direct translation of *felicitas*, but it could be argued that the

³⁴⁶ For the emperor's ideological role as military leader, see Hekster 2007.

³⁴⁷ Noreña 2011a: 235, 262; Rowan 2012: 44.

³⁴⁸ Noreña 2011a: 235.

³⁴⁹ The sole exception seems to be a triumphal arch set up by a local benefactor from Cirta, whose dedication makes mention of a statue to *Virtus domini nostri*, in this case Caracalla. See CIL VIII 7095 = CIL VIII 19435 = ILAlg-02-01, 675 = ILS 2933 = AntAfr-2007-88 = Saastamoinen 463; CIL VIII 7096 = ILAlg-02-01, 676 = Saastamoinen 464; CIL VIII 7097 = ILAlg-02-01, 677 = Saastamoinen 465; CIL VIII 7098 = CIL VIII 19436 = ILAlg-02-01, 678 = Saastamoinen 466.

³⁵⁰ Erckell 1952: 50–54.

³⁵¹ Cicero, *De imperio Cn. Pompei*, 28; the most famous example being the *felicitas* of Sulla: Plutarch, *Sulla*, 34.2; Velleius Paterculus, 2.27.5; Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*, 22.12. For the equally militaristic role of *felicitas* in Livy, see Wistrand 1987: 15–26.

³⁵² Erckell 1952: 43–128; Manders 2012: 193, 196.

³⁵³ Cassius Dio, 75.1.5, translation Cary 1927; see also Langford 2013: 56.

concept is nevertheless closely related in meaning as a state of good fortune, success and divine favour.³⁵⁴ The praise of fortunateness was current before Severus: Cassius Dio notes that he and his senatorial colleagues hailed Commodus as “of all men most fortunate” (πάντων εὐτυχέστατος).³⁵⁵ Septimius Severus himself seems to have associated his rise with divine favour in his autobiography, which is referred to by a number of ancient authors, including Cassius Dio, Herodian, the author(s) of the *Historia Augusta* and Aurelius Victor.³⁵⁶ Herodian notes that the work was filled with dreams, portents and omens: “Severus has given an account of many of them himself in his autobiography and by his public dedications of statues”.³⁵⁷ *Felicitas* is not mentioned by name, but the literary sources seem to suggest that the emperor placed a personal emphasis on the divine favour he enjoyed, traditionally strongly associated with *felicitas*. Again it can be noted that Septimius stood in a long line of emperors who also emphasized their close connection to the gods and divine right to rule.³⁵⁸ If the Severan court placed much emphasis on *felicitas* in the sense of divine support, we would expect to find some trace of this on the many coin types bearing images of deities, particularly those of the emperor’s chosen deities Liber Pater and Hercules. Yet allusions to divine *felicitas* are sparse.³⁵⁹ This suggests that *felicitas* may perhaps have held further meaning for the court beyond divine protection in the strict sense of the word.

A closer look at the Severan *felicitas*-types reveals a different interpretation. Despite the prominence of the quality in Severan epigraphy, there is no great numerical difference in the *felicitas*-coinage of Severus and that of his immediate predecessors, Marcus Aurelius and Commodus.³⁶⁰ But there is a striking difference to be found in the designs and obverses of the *felicitas*-type. Several Severan coin types in both silver and gold associate *felicitas* with Victoria or other images of military success, though similar coins were minted under Marcus Aurelius and Commodus.³⁶¹ Far more prominent are the *felicitas*-types with a dynastic intent. Both Caracalla and Geta are regularly depicted on the obverse with a personified Felicitas on the reverse in silver and gold coinage. Severan coinage also depicts the imperial family – alone or in ‘group portraits’ – with legends noting FELICITAS PUBLICA, FELICITAS TEMPORUM and FELICITAS SAECULI.³⁶² The dynastic intent of such messages is clear: the secured succession of Septimius Severus (as opposed to his

³⁵⁴ As argued by Langford 2013: 66.

³⁵⁵ Cassius Dio, 73.20.2.

³⁵⁶ Cassius Dio, 75.7.3; Herodian, 2.9.4; *Historia Augusta*, ‘Severus’, 3.2, *Albinus* 7.1; *Pescennius Niger* 4.1.; Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus*, 20.22.

³⁵⁷ Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire*, 2.9.4; translation Whittaker 1969.

³⁵⁸ Rowan 2012: 11–14.

³⁵⁹ *Felicitas* does appear in the legends of several Isis- and Fortuna-types. *Fortuna*: RIC IV Septimius Severus 154, 552, 553, 554 (*denarius, aureus*), 854, 875 (*as, dupondius*), 876 (*as, dupondius*). *Isis*: RIC IV Septimius Severus 577 (silver and gold), 645 (silver and gold), 865 (bronze). The goddess has been identified as Isis by Mattingly, though Rowan has recently questioned that interpretation, arguing that an identification with Fortuna is more likely, see Rowan 2011: 252–253.

³⁶⁰ Based on the coinage database in Noreña 2011: 334–345. For Marcus Aurelius, bronze coins with *felicitas*-designs make up 3,3% of the total bronze coinage; for silver 4,8%. Under Commodus, *felicitas* appears on 5% of the bronze and 7,2% of the silver coinage. For Septimius Severus, 6,5% of the bronze and 6,5% of the silver coinage.

³⁶¹ See (among others) RIC III Marcus Aurelius 1325, 1326, 1327, 1328; RIC III Commodus 552, 555, 181, 530; RIC IV Septimius Severus 138, 144A–B, 165A–C, 516.

³⁶² See for example RIC IV Septimius Severus 159, 175, 181, 629; RIC IV Caracalla 14, 18, 34, 35, 127; RIC IV Geta 1, 2, 8, 9A, 9B, 22, 29, 69A, 69B, 94, 95, 97.

predecessor Commodus) which was to lead to a prosperous golden age. Literary sources – which in all cases post-date Septimius Severus – remain silent about this dynastic aspect of *felicitas*, perhaps as a consequence of the negative reputation of Caracalla's reign. This literary silence highlights the lack of a singular 'message' sent from the court and the plurality of images, messages and media. The divergent readings of Severan *felicitas* – divine favour, battlefield success, continuous prosperity – were certainly not in opposition to one another. They shifted in meaning for different audiences, including the senatorial elite, (military) officials and provincial elites. The Severan court may have propagated or preferred specific ideological concepts but, as Severan *felicitas* suggests, different ideological readings were always possible.

In the previous chapter we saw the prevalence of virtuous language among the higher ranks of the imperial administration. The context of that discussion was limited to communication within the administrative network, but naturally imperial agents did not operate in a vacuum. Through petitions, justice, socialising and a variety of other situations, imperial administrators of various ranks interacted with provincials on a regular basis. Noreña suggests that governors played an important role in the transmission of ideological values, but adds that evidence for such a thesis is scarce.³⁶³ North African epigraphy may in fact offer a rare example of an administrator leaving his mark on local epigraphic traditions, in the form of Quintus Anicius Faustus. Faustus was likely a *homo novus* within the Severan administration, who became commander of Legio III Augusta and was possibly at the head of the newly created province of Numidia between 197 and 201.³⁶⁴ Even if Faustus was never officially made governor of Numidia, he held an influential position. Already under Caligula, all military affairs of Africa Proconsularis were placed in the hands of the legate of Legio III Augusta, who acted independently from the governor of Africa Proconsularis and in some respects may have acted as the *de facto* governor of the Numidian frontier region, even though matters of the civilian administration officially remained under control of the governor of Africa Proconsularis.³⁶⁵ Faustus also seems to have played an active role in the expansion of the *limes Africanus* under the Septimius Severus.³⁶⁶ Unsurprisingly, this dominant figure in Severan Africa has an equally dominant presence in African epigraphy. Beyond the army camp in Lambaesis, Faustus features prominently in six statue bases and dedicatory plaques from Thamugadi and two building dedications and a statue base from Cuicul.³⁶⁷ One example is the large statue base from the southern edge of the forum of Thamugadi:

³⁶³ Noreña 2011a: 269.

³⁶⁴ Mennen 2011a: 86–89; the exact date of the creation of the province Numidia is a point of dispute and the title *legatus* seems to have also been applied to the Numidian governor, see Thomasson 1996: 176. Faustus is the most well-attested legate in the North African material; for a full overview, see Thomasson 1996: 170–176.

³⁶⁵ Tacitus, *Histories*, 4.48; Cassius Dio 59.20.7. Dio however seems to confuse the division of powers enacted by Caligula with the actual creation of the province Numidia, a Severan development. See Shaw 1983: 142–143, who, however, also emphasises that the civil administration of the Numidian regions remained *de iure* under the control of the governor of Africa Proconsularis.

³⁶⁶ See Guéron 2018: 111ff.

³⁶⁷ *Thamugadi*: CIL VIII 2437 (p. 952) = CIL VIII 17940 = AE 1985, 881a; CIL VIII 2438 = CIL VIII 17941; CIL VIII 17871 = AE 1985, 881c; AE 1985, 881b = AE 1987, +1074 = AE 1988, +1125; BCTH-1932/33-195 = Saastamoinen 333 = AE 1894, 44; CIL VIII 17870 = ILS 446. *Cuicul*: ILS 446-02-03, 7805 = Saastamoinen 340; ILS 446-02-03, 7806 = Saastamoinen 341 = AE 1911, 106; Thomasson 1996: 174, 50ee.

Imp(eratori) Caesari M(arco) Aurelio Antonino Aug(usto) Parthico m[a]ximo trib[uniciae potes]tatis bis proconsuli Imperatoris Caesar[is] L(uci) Septim[i Sev]eri Pi[i Pertinacis Aug(usti)] Arabici Adiabeni Parthici maximi fortis[simi] felic[issim]ique principis filio [[[P(ubli) Septimi Getae nobil(issimi) Caesaris fratri]]] «et Iuliae Aug(ustae) matr(i) cast(rorum) et sen(atus) ac patriae» divi M(arci) [Antonini Pii Germ(anici) Sarm(atici) nepoti divi] Antonini pronep(oti) divi Hadriani abnepot[i divi Traiani Parthici et divi Nervae] abnepoti dedicante Q(uinto) Anicio Fausto [leg(ato) Augg(ustorum) pro praetore consuli am]plissimo pat(rono) col(oniae) et Saevinio Proculo tri[buno laticlavio curatore r(ei) p(ublicae) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum) p(ecunia) p(ublica)]³⁶⁸

“To Imperator Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus Parthicus, the Greatest, holding tribunician powers for the second time, proconsul, son of Imperator Caesar Lucius Septimius Severus Pius Pertinax Augustus Arabicus Adiabenicus Parthicus, the Greatest, most brave and most fortuitous princeps, [[[brother of Publius Septimius Geta, most noble Caesar]]] «and Julia Augusta, mother of the camp and the Senate and the fatherland», grandson of the divine Marcus Antoninus Pius Germanicus Sarmaticus, great-grandson of the divine Antoninus, great-great-grandson of the divine Hadrian, great-great-grandson of the divine Trajan Parthicus and the divine Nerva, dedicated by Quintus Anicius Faustus, *legatus Augusti pro praetore*, most honourable consul, patron of the colony, and Saevinius Proculus, *tribunus laticlavus*, curator of the republic, by decree of the decurions, with public money.”

Faustus’ name appears in the ablative absolute and the inscription, like several others, notes that the dedication was set up and paid for with public funds. The present participle *dedicante* testifies to Faustus’ active involvement in the inception and erection. In the context of imperial religion, Várhelyi has suggested that the inclusion of *dedicante* not only highlights the important role of senators and other high-ranking officials in provincial religious life but also acts as a powerful stamp of approval for the dedication and the dedicatee.³⁶⁹ The same might be suggested for this dedication to the Severan imperial family. Faustus’ dedications were set up over the course of the years 197-200, with the majority falling within the period of Septimius Severus’ seventh year of *tribunica potestas*, dating to the period between the tenth of December 198 and the tenth of the following year. The accents of the inscriptions occasionally shift: although most are dedicated to Severus and both his sons, two dedications – including the one above – are set up in honour of the young Caracalla. In all cases *fortissimus* and *felicissimus* are only associated with Septimius Severus. Their position at the end of Severus’ titulature strongly suggests that they were conceived as titles rather than as general praise. This makes *fortissimus felicissimus* rather different in nature than, for example, a dedication to the *pietas* of Antoninus Pius: although both praise imperial virtue, the former is embedded within an existing structure of officially sanctioned honorifics.

³⁶⁸ CIL VIII 17871 = AE 1985, 881c.

³⁶⁹ Várhelyi 2010: 131.

It is not clear what role Faustus played in these dedications: did he push for the dedications, or was he simply consulted on multiple occasions by the city councils of Thamugadi and Cuicul? Did he intervene in the composition of the text, or was he only actively involved during the dedication ceremony, if at all? Eck has noted that throughout the empire, governors were increasingly consulted on building projects from the second century onwards.³⁷⁰ The common appearance of Faustus in the above dedications may be a reflection of this growing gubernatorial involvement, particularly given the great increase in construction projects across North Africa under the Severans. However, many of the above dedications took the form of statue bases rather than building dedications. Perhaps part of the answer is also tied to Faustus' position as a decorated *homo novus*. It is noteworthy that the spate of dedications by Faustus falls within the early years of his tenure, possibly closely related to his suffect consulship which he held in absentia in late 198 or the first half of 199.³⁷¹ Faustus, the first of the Anicii to reach the consulship and clearly favoured by the emperor, may have displayed his gratitude and elevated position through a flurry of dedicatory activity in important towns in the Numidian region. Regardless of the motivation, it is likely that Faustus (or his staff) had some involvement regarding the final wording of the dedications. The city councils of Thamugadi and Cuicul may have contacted Faustus in order to ask his advice on which honorific formulas were to be employed. A similar dynamic may be at play in the inscriptions of two earlier statue bases dedicated by the legate Caius Iulius Lepidus Tertullus and the city council of Cuicul.³⁷² The bases, set up in 194, appear to predate the rise of the formula *fortissimus felicissimus*: here, Septimius Severus is *optimus fortissimus princeps*. The association between Septimius Severus and *optimus* is exceedingly rare in North African epigraphy and may reflect the hand of Tertullus.³⁷³

Thamugadi and Cuicul are not the only places where Faustus appears in the epigraphic record, though it is not always clear if he was involved in the dedicatory process. A public dedication from Cirta for example is dedicated to Caracalla, Septimius Severus and Faustus, the latter as patron of the colony.³⁷⁴ This text, too, praises Septimius Severus as *fortissimus felicissimus*, but Faustus' involvement in the erection of the dedication remains unclear. Some further nuance is in order: other dedications in which Faustus is recorded as co-dedicator do not feature *fortissimus felicissimus*. Together with the city council of Thamugadi, he dedicated a large equestrian statue base to Caracalla in the forum of that city, possibly in response to Caracalla's elevation as official heir to Septimius Severus in 197.³⁷⁵ The text of the inscription mentions both Caracalla's and Severus' titles though it omits their political offices. The emperor is honoured as *vindex et conditor Romanae disciplinae*, "protector and establisher of Roman discipline". This unique title lays heavy emphasis on Severus' role as a successful military leader. Because of its one-of-a-kind nature it is tempting to read this once again as the influence of Faustus, who as legate at the head of Legio III

³⁷⁰ Eck 2000: 276–277, see also Dondin-Payre 1990: 340–343 on the relationship between the governors and building dedications.

³⁷¹ Thomasson 1996: 176.

³⁷² IALg-02-03, 7803 = AE 1917/18, 70; IALg-02-03, 7804.

³⁷³ See also BCTH-1901-107; CIL VIII 6305 = CIL VIII 19294 = IALg-02-03, 9437 and IALg-02-01, 3394. In each case however, *optimus* is an editorial addition; the two dedications by Tertullus are the only North African dedications to Severus in which the presence of *optimus* is undisputed.

³⁷⁴ CIL VIII 19495 = IALg-02-01, 566.

³⁷⁵ CIL VIII 17870 = ILS 446.

Augusta had an interest in army discipline. Missing from the text are *fortissimus felicissimus*, as they are in other dedications in which Faustus acts as a fellow-dedicator together with a number of city councils.³⁷⁶ An element of choice and variation was evidently involved. Although we may suspect the influence of Faustus in the many dedications including *fortissimus felicissimus*, neither he nor the city councils of North Africa ever applied these honorific titles as strictly as for example the emperor's *cognomina ex virtute*.

Another interesting anomaly comes to the fore in reviewing the appearance of *fortissimus felicissimus* in North African epigraphy. As noted above, the titles do not always appear in unison. Of the 29 inscriptions that employ *felicissimus* (26 of which in unison with *fortissimus*), only 20 name their dedicators. In this group, there is not a single dedication by a private dedicator. For *fortissimus* the situation is not much different: within the pool of 33 dedications that praise the emperor as *fortissimus*, only three were set up by private dedicators, all from Cirta.³⁷⁷ The lack of private dedication featuring *fortissimus felicissimus* is intriguing. Naturally, a considerable number of dedications have survived in a damaged state, and in many cases it is no longer possible to determine the dedicators. However, when reviewing the private dedications of the early Severan era, we find some 15 dedications – ranging from statue bases to building dedications – which include normative language or were erected *pro salute* without mentioning *fortissimus felicissimus*; many others include neither.³⁷⁸ For private dedicators, these titles seem to have been of considerably lesser importance than public dedicators, such as town councils erecting a dedication to the emperor with public funds. Again some nuance is in order: a considerable number of the above private dedicators functioned as priests or magistrates in their communities and were either a member of the city council or had strong ties with its councillors.³⁷⁹ Yet in their capacity as individual dedicators, members of the civic elite seem to make different epigraphic choices as when acting as a collective body. Likewise, we should take location into account: private benefactors operating in communities with relatively few local dedications mentioning *fortissimus felicissimus*, such as Bulla

³⁷⁶ See for example CIL VIII 6048 (a honorary dedication from Arsacal); CIL VIII 18256 = AntAfr-1967-77 = AE 1967, 567; CIL VIII 2527 = 18039; CIL VIII 2528 (dedications from Lambaesis); Saastamoinen 324 = AE 1975, 870 (a building dedication from Tillibari); CRAI 1909, 98 = Thomasson 1996: 172, u (a building dedication from Siaoun).

³⁷⁷ See CIL VIII 6944 = ILAlg-02-01, 473 (set up by the local aedil and benefactor Caius Sittius Flavianus); CIL VIII 6996 = ILAlg-02-01, 562 = AntAfr-2007-86 (set up by the local *triumvir* Marcus Caecilius Natalis); CIL VIII 7000 = CIL VIII 19418 = ILAlg-02-01, 569 = Saastamoinen 407 = AntAfr-2007-86 (a building dedication by the local knight, *triumvir* and benefactor Marcus Seius Maximus).

³⁷⁸ *Bulla Regia*: AE 2004, 1875; AE 2004, 1876; CIL VIII 25515 = ILPBardo 239 = ILTun 1242 = Saastamoinen 326 = Alumnus 80 = AE 1907, 25 (a building dedication set up by testament). *Cuicul*: ILAlg-02-03, 7813 = AfrRom-16-04-2131 = AE 1989, 900. *Mactar*: CIL VIII 23405. *Thamugadi*: CIL VIII 17829 = ILS 434; BCTH-1954-165 = Saastamoinen 416 = AE 1957, 82; CIL VIII 17837 = AE 1888, 28; Epigraphica-1980-93 = AnalEpi p. 119 = AE 1948, +112 = AE 1982, 958 = AE 2009, +1764; BCTH-1941/42-130 = AE 1941, 49 (the inscription contains *fortissimus*, but as a later addition inscribed over the name of Geta after his *damnatio memoriae*). *Thubursicum Numidarum*: BCTH-1941/42-130 = AE 1941, 49; ILAlg-01, 01256 = Saturne-01, p. 369 = Saastamoinen 392. CIL VIII 26547 = ILAfr 528 = Saastamoinen 484; CIL VIII 1482 = CIL VIII 15504 = CIL VIII 26498 = Saturne-01, p. 215 = Dougga 38 = Saastamoinen 318 = ILTun 1400. *Vaga*: CIL VIII 10569 = CIL VIII 14394 = Saastamoinen 325 = AE 2002, +1679. *Dedications by private benefactors without virtues*, see for example: CIL VIII 9352; CIL VIII 9353 = CIL VIII 20985; CIL VIII 10980 = CIL VIII 20983; ILAlg-01, 2087; ILAlg-01, 2088.

³⁷⁹ See for example: AE 2004, 1875 (set up by the *duumvir* Marcus Agrius Ulpius Primanus from Bulla Regia), AE 2004, 1876 (set up by the *duumvir* Quintus Domitius Pudens from Bulla Regia) or LAlg-01, 1256 = Saturne-01, p. 369 = Saastamoinen 392 (a building dedication set up by the *flamen perpetuus* Marcus Fabius Laetus and his wife, from Thubursicum Numidarum).

Regia, would perhaps have been less inclined to include the title in their dedication. Nevertheless, the same pattern repeats itself even in places where prominent local dedications by the city council or Faustus did include the title *fortissimus felicissimus*, such as in Thamugadi.

Where *fortissimus felicissimus* appears, it is almost exclusively in dedications set up by either Quintus Anicius Faustus or various city councils – occasionally in direct conjunction with Faustus.³⁸⁰ This raises a number of interesting questions on the spread of imperial ideology and its influence on local epigraphic traditions. Although we may suspect that Faustus played an important role in disseminating the new ideological currents of the imperial court, city councils could also fall back on other forms of contact with the court, such as official documentation, that was not always readily available to private dedicators. Imperial titles for example are usually included in the dedications by private benefactors, but not always to the same degree, varying from only including regal names to full titles and political offices.³⁸¹ Beyond financial concerns based on the length of the inscription, private dedicators may have also faced uncertainty on what titles to include, or may have felt the inclusion of all but the most important imperial titles to be optional, but not necessary in their dedications. In both scenarios the inclusion of unofficial titles such as *fortissimus felicissimus* would have been a less attractive option. Dedications by the city council on the other hand had a much stronger official aspect, being set up by the representative body of the community with public means in highly visible and prestigious locations. In this scenario, there was conceivably more pressure to include the emperor's full titulature and unofficial-but-sanctioned titles such as *fortissimus felicissimus*. Noreña's thesis of ideological dissemination finds support in the epigraphic material, but to a limited extent. Though Faustus seems to have played a role in the diffusion of *fortissimus felicissimus*, these titles remained at the official level of public dedications. This is not to suggest that the inclusion of *fortissimus felicissimus* in such dedications was of lesser importance or that such dedications had less impact than private dedications. Nevertheless, their influence on epigraphic habits was limited: our group of private dedicators may have associated Septimius Severus with *fortitudo* and *felicitas*, but felt no strong urge to commemorate these imperial virtues in their dedications. Evidently, the public ideological reception of Septimius Severus was different from that of private dedications.

Lepcis Magna was not included in the above discussion, although not for a lack of dedications. Septimius Severus was a native of Lepcis Magna and unsurprisingly the emperor looms large in the epigraphic record of the city. The emperor left his mark on the city in a very tangible sense by granting it *ius Italicum* and initiated a major building program, including the Forum Severianum (featuring a basilica and a temple), a colonnaded street and a large nymphaeum.³⁸² Although the emperor is unlikely to have overseen the minutiae of the building project, Severus' intervention in the urban fabric of the city presented a radical transformation of its monumental core. The Lepcitan elite responded with enthusiasm to the new opportunities presented by the close contacts to the

³⁸⁰ Though it should be noted that not all North African city councils necessarily included *fortissimus felicissimus* in their dedications to Septimius Severus; see for example AE 1991, 1680 (a dedication from Thibaris) or CIL VIII 1481 = CIL VIII 15523 (a dedication from Dougga).

³⁸¹ Compare for example CIL VIII 23405 to CIL VIII 9352.

³⁸² For an extensive description and analysis of the materials, see Ward-Perkins 1993.

imperial court, but not quite in the same way as their African compatriots. Only a single dedication, set up by a Lepcitan centurion of the *cohors urbana* honours Septimius Severus as *fortissimus felicissimus*.³⁸³ The vast majority of Severan dedications only include *felicissimus*.³⁸⁴ I have already argued that normative language could act as a way for dedicators to claim a close relationship with the imperial court. With 'their' emperor in power and imperial money flowing into the city, imperial *felicitas* may well have appeared as a tangible quality to many members of Lepcis' elite. The military success of Septimius Severus' reign was far from ignored in Lepcis: official titles such as *imperator*, *Parthicus* or *Adiabenicus* directly referred to the military victories of the emperor and were duly repeated in Lepcitan epigraphy. But instead of *fortissimus*, such martial qualities appear to have found expression in other honorific titles, such as *invictus* and *propagator imperii*, both of which appear in small number inscriptions.³⁸⁵

Another part of the explanation might be found among the dedicators. As noted, *fortissimus felicissimus* seems to appear mostly in dedications which involved Faustus and/or various city councils. In Lepcis however, neither Faustus nor the city council appear as dedicators. Lepcitan dedicators instead show a relatively wide social variety, including the citizen body as a whole and a number of private dedicators including a centurion, a (possible) local decurion and his son, as well as an imperial procurator. Among the Lepcitan dedicators we also find several *curiae*, a civic institution not to be confused with the local municipal senate.³⁸⁶ The earliest securely dated dedications praising imperial *felicitas* come from a series of statue bases, dedicated to the individual members of the Severan imperial family and most likely placed in an exedra in the southwestern area of the Forum Vetus.³⁸⁷ The four statues were set up by Marcus Calpurnius Geta Attianus and his son Marcus Calpurnius Attianus between 199 and 200. The dedications offer no further information on the dedicators beside their names; given the cost involved in financing the four dedications, the Attiani were however most likely members of the local elite. Shortly after, in 201, Marcus Junius Punicus set up a similar group of four statues in Lepcis' theatre, near the western edge of the orchestra. Punicus, likely of Lepcitan descent on the basis of his cognomen, was an imperial procurator stationed in Thrace and Alexandria. Both sets of dedications share interesting similarities: the dedications to Septimius Severus lack *felicissimus*, *invictus* or any other kind of 'unofficial' honorifics, the dedications to Julia Domna praise her as *coniunx invicti Imperatoris* while

³⁸³ IRT 439.

³⁸⁴ See IRT 435 (dedicated by the 'Septimian' Lepcitans), IRT 433 and 419 (dedicated by Marcus Calpurnius Geta Attianus and his son Marcus Calpurnius Attianus to both Geta and Caracalla), IRT 436 (dedicated by the *curia Matidia*), IRT 434 and 422 (dedicated by the procurator Marcus Iunius Punicus), IRT 420 (dedicated by the *curia Severiana*), IRT 421 (dedicated by the *curia Ulpia*), IRT 426 (a building dedication from the Forum Severianum), IRT 439 (dedicated by the centurion Messius Atticus).

³⁸⁵ *Invictus*: IRT 402, 405, 406; *propagator imperii*: IRT 395, 424. The latter term is played on in a number of Severan coin-types from 202-203, showing the young Caracalla and his wife Plautilla with PROPAGO IMPERI legends. *Propago*, meaning so much as 'tree', 'root' and, by extension 'family line', suggest the continued prosperity of the empire through the Severan dynasty as well as the physical military expansion of the empire's frontiers, see Daguet-Gagey 2004: 189. In Lepcis however, such a conjugal interpretation of *propagator imperii* is lacking.

³⁸⁶ *Curiae* appear across the empire but are particularly prominently attested in North Africa. The African *curiae* were modeled on the division of citizens in Rome into voting units, and were usually instituted when African communities gained the status of *municipium* or *colonia*. Their precise nature and influence within African communities is a point of contention, as will be discussed in chapter four.

³⁸⁷ Kleinwächter 2001: 238 n.1572.

on the dedications to both Geta and Caracalla, Septimius Severus is praised as *felicissimus*. These two sets of dedications by members of the local elite in highly visible and highly prestigious locations associate Septimius Severus only with *felicissimus* in dedications to his sons. Part of the explanation is to be found in the size restriction of the dedications: both dedications to Septimius Severus elaborate on the emperor's titles and offices, while in the dedications to Julia Domna, Caracalla and Geta, the titles of Septimius Severus are shortened to his military victories and the title *pater patriae*. The moral praise of the emperor as *felicissimus* or *invictus* may have functioned as an acceptable stand-in for the full list of the emperor's titles and offices. It is possible that both Punicus and Attianus included *felicissimus* in response to Severan media or to other dedicators propagating the emperor as *felicissimus*. The specific context of *felicissimus* in the dedications – present in dedications to Geta and Caracalla, but absent from dedications to Septimius Severus and Julia Domna – may also suggest an association with a dynastic interpretation of *felicitas*, though in a more indirect manner than the dynastic messages on Severan coinage. Later dedications by the *curiae* and the citizen body of Lepcis may have opted to follow the precedent set by these prominent dedications by members of the local elite.

2.2.1. – Noble and indulgent princes

Beyond *fortissimus felicissimus*, loyalty to the Severans was expressed through other forms of normative language as well. Some of these normative epithets straddle the divide between 'official' and 'unofficial' – to the extent that such a divide existed in antiquity. The clearest example is *nobilissimus*, a title adopted by Geta when he became Caesar in January 198. *Nobilissimus* was an officially-sanctioned title, and therefore falls somewhat outside the scope of this thesis. Yet a short review of *nobilissimus* does suggest something of the normative representation created for the young prince and the ways in which that representation was adopted in the provinces. Geta is the first member of the imperial court to be explicitly associated with *nobilitas* in North African epigraphy; the term does not appear before the Severan era and is exclusively associated with emperors thereafter.³⁸⁸ *Nobilitas* carried implications of political office, cultural education, virtuous behaviour, public eminence and civic commitment; a short-hand for quintessentially aristocratic qualities. The superlative adjective *nobilissimus* occasionally appears as a personal quality, either as a direct reference to the high rank of individual aristocrats or in the wider, more general sense of fame and recognition.³⁸⁹ Why the title was adopted remains uncertain – possibly it was intended to bolster Geta's status as compared to that of his brother Caracalla, who was raised to the rank of *imperator* in the same year.

³⁸⁸ A concise overview incorporating Egyptian papyri: Mitthof 1993: 97–102. For Geta, see Mastino 1981: 155–157.

³⁸⁹ Among the many possible examples from Cicero: *De Haruspicum Responsis* 54, *Pro Caelio* 73, *Post Reditum Ad Quirites* 9; Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae* II.11. Important foreigners, too, could be *nobilissimus*: Caesar, *Bellum Gallico*, I.2; Cicero, *In Catilinam* IV.21. Fundamental on the Republican *nobiles*: Gelzer 1912; Gelzer 1915; for more recent explorations of the debate, see Hill 1969; Brunt 1982; Badel 2005. For Pliny the Younger, cultural attainment is closely related to *nobilitas*: see *Letters* 5.17. For Apuleius, *nobilis* is mostly associated with fame in a broad sense, see *Florida*, 4.2 (about the piper Antigenidas) or 16.10, (about the comedic playwright Philemon; for a more traditional interpretation of *nobilis*, see *Florida* 14.2 (a high-born virgin) or *Apologia* 22.3 (a Theban noble). Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* 9.27 calls the sturgeon a *piscium nobilissimus*.

Official though the title may have been, the inclusion of *nobilissimus* in the provinces is far from universal. A large number of inscriptions dedicated to Geta in the years 198 and 209 do not feature *nobilissimus* among the princes' titles.³⁹⁰ Both Herodian and Cassius Dio remain silent on the subject of Geta's honorific titles, but coinage offers a more promising line of inquiry. Like *fortissimus* and *felicissimus*, *nobilissimus* never appears on imperial coinage despite the title's official nature. Geta is however associated with the virtue of *nobilitas* on a number of coin issues³⁹¹, much more strongly so than either his father or brother.³⁹² The production of *nobilitas*-types ended in 208, right before Geta was elevated to the rank of *Augustus*. It is tempting to see an attempt by the imperial mint to enforce the association between the young prince and *nobilitas*. However, both in number and types, the *nobilitas*-types are far from dominant. Geta is associated with *nobilitas* on only 13 out of 319 known types minted with the prince on the obverse. The *quinarius* and *aureus quinarius* preferred by the mint for this particular type of design were furthermore minted inconsistently and in much smaller numbers than for example the *felicitas*-coin types. The imperial titles of Geta – like those of his father and brother – were communicated through a variety of means, primarily through a range of different official documents. The lack of *nobilissimus* on coinage suggests that different avenues of communication between provinces and centre – be it in the form of media such as coinage or immaterial expressions such as a governor's speech – placed different accents in their communication of imperial ideological values. Although there is the occasional overlap and convergence in message between these various outlets, this is far from a purposeful campaign of persuasion. The spread of *nobilissimus* in North African epigraphy most likely rested on both its official status and its appearance in local dedications by previous dedicators, similar to *fortissimus* *felicissimus*.

It is interesting to note that normative language mostly appears in the form of honorific titles within Severan-era epigraphy in North Africa. Septimius Severus was associated with a number of less prominent titles in the epigraphic record that highlight both his role as victorious commander (akin to *fortissimus*) and his munificent activities. One of the new honorific titles coming to the fore is *propagator imperii* ("propagator of the empire"), a title that was initially used to honour Septimius Severus but occasionally also appears in the plural to honour both Severus and Caracalla.³⁹³ The martial themes of *propagator* are repeated in other militaristic titles, such as *invictissimus*.³⁹⁴ To what extent these titles reflect local choice is difficult to ascertain: only four dedications preserve

³⁹⁰ For a full list, see Mastino 1981: 154–155.

³⁹¹ RIC IV Geta 13a (*aureus, denarius, quinarius*); 13b (*aureus, quinarius*); 32 (*aureus, quinarius*); 48a (*quinarius*); 48B (*quinarius*); 49 (*aureus quinarius, quinarius*); 120 (*as, dupondius*).

³⁹² RIC IV Septimius Severus 320 (*denarius, quinarius*); 596 (*denarius*); RIC IV Caracalla 162 (*quinarius*).

³⁹³ CIL VIII 6969 = ILAlg-02-01, 537 (a dedication by an unknown dedicator from Cirta); CIL VIII 7970 = ILAlg-02-01, 18 = Louvre 95 (a dedication from an unknown dedicator from Rusicade); ILAlg-01, 1255 = Saastamoinen 334 = AE 1917/18, 16 (a dedication by a local priest from Thubursicum Numidarum); ILAlg-02-03, 7813 = AfrRom-16-04-2131 = AE 1989, 900 (a dedication two members of the local elite of Cuicul); AE 1895, 83 (a dedication by an unknown dedicator from Gigthis).

³⁹⁴ Epigraphica-1980-93 = AnalEpi p. 119 = AE 1948, +112 = AE 1982, 958 = AE 2009, 1764 (a dedication by the *curia Commodiana* from Thamugadi). See also the rise in inscriptions dedicated *pro salute victori(i)sque et incolumitate*: BCTH-1951/52-196 = BCTH-1953-46 = Hygiae p. 65 = Epigraphica-2002-94 = AE 1955, +49 = AE 1955, +54 = AE 1957, 54 = AE 2002, 1667 (an altar from Mactar) and possibly CIL VIII 623 (p. 2372) = CIL VIII 11800 = CIL VIII 23411 = AE 1949, +58 (a fragmentary inscription from Mactar).

the names of their dedicators. These include the *curia Commodiana* of Thamugadi, a priest from Thubursicum Numidarum and two members of the local elite of Cuicul. The inclusion of martial themes in dedications may have fitted well with Severan ideology, but it is nevertheless noteworthy that titles such as *propagator imperii* or *invictissimus* were not nearly as ubiquitous as *fortissimus felicissimus*. Unsurprisingly, while the latter appears regularly in dedications set up by Faustus, the former do not. We need not read too much into the disparity: in all cases, Septimius Severus is praised for his martial success and it is unlikely that the preference for *fortissimus felicissimus* over *invictissimus* had a deeper-lying ideological motivation. It does once again suggest the influence of authoritative voices such as that of Faustus on local epigraphic traditions. At the same time, local dedicators may have searched for ways to express the same ideological message in new terms. With the boom in epigraphic texts under the Severans, a certain measure of repetition in the wording of inscriptions inevitably set in. This repetition potentially undermined the value of dedications as sincere expressions of loyalty and consent. Beyond the type of dedication and the specific details of the form – such as the type of statue to choose – dedicators could use new types of normative language as a way of differentiating their contributions from those of others in the civic landscape, thereby displaying their sincere attachment to emperor and empire and publicly presenting themselves as loyal subjects.

Military power was but one part of the equation. Dedications from across North Africa praise Septimius Severus for his *indulgentia*.³⁹⁵ The praise of *indulgentia* is not new: two milestones found near Milev, mentioned earlier in this chapter, note that Antoninus Pius restored the local roads *ex indulgentia*. But while Antoninus Pius is praised for his *indulgentia* as a response to specific act of munificence, the Severan dedications are silent on the motivation behind the praise, the virtue is even occasionally coupled with *fortissimus* in the imperial titulature. *Indulgentia* is also evident in Lepcis Magna, where the virtue appears in dedications across various prominent locations in the city.³⁹⁶ Three were set up by the “Septimian Lepcitans”³⁹⁷, two by the procurator Decimus Clodius Galba who was an imperial agent in the region Theveste and Hippo and responsible for the imperial estates in Flaminia, Aemilia and Liguria³⁹⁸. Like the dedications from elsewhere in Africa, these dedications are vague on the details of imperial munificence. The three public dedications thank the emperors for their outstanding and god-like indulgence (*ob eximiam ac divinam in se indulgentiam*); Galba praises the Severan indulgence as god-like (*ob cael[est]em in se indulgentiam eius*). The communal dedications may have followed as a response to the grant of the *ius Italicum* in 202, though the dedication to Geta dates from years later, in 209.³⁹⁹ Galba’s dedication is equally vague

³⁹⁵ CIL VIII 6996 = IALg-02-01, 562 = AntAfr-2007-86 (a dedication by a member of the local elite from Cirta); CIL VIII 7970 = IALg-02-01, 18 = Louvre 95 (a dedication by an unknown dedicator from Rusicade); CIL VIII 18902 = IALg-02-02, 4663 (a dedication by an unknown dedicator from Thibilis); CIL VIII 18903 = IALg-02-02, 4664 (a dedication from an unknown dedicator from Thibilis); IALg-01, 1301 (a dedication which mentions the *indulgentia* of Septimius Severus, Geta and Caracalla from Thubursicum Numidarum). It should be noted here, however, that in two of the above cases (CIL VIII 6996 and 18902) the inclusion of *indulgentia* results from editorial choices.

³⁹⁶ IRT 423, 441 (Forum Severianum); IRT 393 (Hadrianic Baths); IRT 395 (portico behind the theatre); IRT 424 (the theatre).

³⁹⁷ IRT 393, 423, 441.

³⁹⁸ IRT 395, 424.

³⁹⁹ See Bartoccini 1929: 82 and the commentary of Ward-Perkins 2009, IRT 393.

on the exact nature of the indulgence shown to him, though it may possibly be related to a personal promotion.

The vagueness in evidence across these various dedications is undoubtedly the result of practicalities: presumably the community knew exactly which benefaction was referred to, at least at the point in time when the dedications were erected. Yet the appearance of *indulgentissimus* as part of the emperor's titulature or the praise of god-like indulgence in Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Geta suggest a more conscious effort to present imperial benefactions as a permanent imperial blessing of sorts, rather than a response to individual actions of the emperor. A notion that was of course particularly apt in Lepcis Magna, which could count on continued imperial favour. Just as importantly perhaps, *indulgentia* suggested a close relationship between patron and client. *Indulgentia* derives from family life and the relationship between an (indulging) father and his children.⁴⁰⁰ Cotton has argued that the political use of *indulgentia* leans on its original familial association, with the emperor as benevolent father-figure in stark hierarchical contrast to his provincial 'children'. Whereas imperial coinage generally projects aristocratic virtues of munificence (*liberalitas*) or a general sense of fairness (*aequitas*), it consistently eschews *indulgentia*.⁴⁰¹ The choice for *indulgentia* appears to be a local one, casting imperial munificence in stark hierarchical terms in which provincials assume a submissive position. Although it emphasized the increasing ideological gap between the emperor and his subjects, the familial aspect of *indulgentia* also allowed for a more positive spin. The idea of the emperor as an indulgent father-figure was apt for a promoted official such as Galba, but also served to emphasize the close bond between the city of Lepcis and the imperial court. Note for example that a number of the dedications praising Severan *indulgentia* were set up by the *Lepcitani Septimiani*. This newly-adopted name is in itself an honorific of sorts, suggesting the devotion and loyalty of Lepcis towards its emperor; a message strengthened by the unanimous *Lepcitani*, without mention of the *ordo*, the *populus* or any other of the traditional civic categories appearing in epigraphic texts.

The same close relationship between emperor and city is evident on a statue base from the cella of the temple of Liber Pater in the Forum Vetus, erected by the Lepcitans in 197.⁴⁰² The base lauds the emperor for his virtues as a protector of the world (*conservator orbis*) – the same praise afforded to Augustus and Hadrian, albeit with far more wide-ranging connotations through the addition of *orbis*.

⁴⁰⁰ Cotton 1984. For a more general approach to the 'infantilization' of imperial citizens through benefactions (specifically *alimenta*), see Jongman 2002.

⁴⁰¹ Based on the Roman Imperial Coinage database, *munificentia* seems to appear only once, on RIC III Antoninus Pius 861. *Indulgentia* appears from Hadrian onwards and until the mid-third century, though only on about fifty issues: see for example RIC II Hadrian 212a, 213a-c; RIC II Antoninus Pius 904, 907, 914; RIC III Marcus Aurelius 1493; RIC IV Septimius Severus 80; RIC IV Caracalla 214; 300; RIC V Gallienus 46, 106, 205, 206, 368. *Liberalitas* on the other hand appears on hundreds of issues, either in the legend or in personified form, from Nero until Constantine; see for example: RIC I² Nero 151, 152, 153, 154; RIC II Nerva 56, 57; RIC II Hadrian 131a-c, 132a-c, 216a, c-f; RIC III Antoninus Pius 75a-d, 142, 150, 151, 169a-d; RIC III Marcus Aurelius 166, 167, 318, 319, 320, 568, 597; Commodus 132, 133, 134, 202A-Bd, 300a-b; RIC IV Septimius Severus 18, 81a-b, 275, 276, 277, 279, 399; RIC IV Caracalla 158, 159, 160, 302, 303, 304, 305; RIC IV Elagabalus 352, 353, 354; RIC IV Severus Alexander 147, 149, 150, 204, 205, 206; RIC IV Gordian III 36, 42, 45, 53; RIC IV Trajan Decius 120, 121, 122, 123; RIC V Valerian 164, 165, 166, 167, 168; RIC V Diocletian 469, 470, 471. Although these results are necessarily impressionistic, they nevertheless suggest that *liberalitas* was by far the preferred choice to propagate imperial largesse.

⁴⁰² IRT 387.

Also mentioned are the acts of *pietas* towards the Lepcitans in public and private (*ob publicam et in se privatam pietatem*). *Pietas* may refer to a number of obligations: that of a child to its parent, a citizen to the state, the emperor to his subjects or a mortal to the gods. This semantic range enhances the meaning of the dedication: it can refer to the obliging acts of Septimius-as-emperor towards his subjects, but also hints at the special relationship of Septimius-as-Lepcitan to his *patria*. The differentiation between *publicus* and *privatus* furthermore enhances the sincerity of Septimius' *pietas* towards his native city (suggesting that the emperor went beyond official largesse), and again underlines the personal bond between city and emperor. Lastly, we can point to the dedicators, who are recorded as "the Lepcitans, publicly" (*Lepcitani publice*), a term which in itself underlines the unanimous and communal nature of the dedication. In Lepcis Magna we see a form of communal self-representation through the relationship with the emperor, presenting the city as unanimously devoted to Septimius Severus and being privileged by the court in turn.

Whereas the Lepcitans emphasised the closeness of bonds between the emperor and their city, elsewhere we see normative language employed in a manner that is more reminiscent of the dedications in the forum of Cuicul, discussed earlier in this chapter. There, we saw dedicators opting for a wide variety of virtues that were not directly connected to imperial interventions in the community. In Thamugadi, Lucius Licinius Optatianus paid for statues to Mars and Concordia Augusta, handed out *sportulae* and financed theatrical spectacles in honour of his perpetual priesthood.⁴⁰³ Both statues stood in a prominent location in town, directly in front of the Arch of Trajan which formed one of the main entry-points into the city proper. The inscription on the statue base to Mars names the god as *conservator dominorum nostrorum*, mirroring the praise of (and concern for) martial success found in other Severan dedications. The dedication to Concordia Augusta also features the names and titles of Septimius Severus, his sons (with Geta's name erased) and his wife in the genitive, leaving no doubt as to the association between Concordia and the imperial family. We see a similar concern in Cirta, where two dedicators praise Severan piety. One dedication, set up by the local *triumvir* Caius Settius Flavianus to Fortuna Redux for the well-being of the Severan imperial family, lauds Caracalla and Geta as *piissimi filii*.⁴⁰⁴ The other, set up by the city council of Cirta, lauds Geta as a *piissimus filius* and Caracalla as *sanctissimus*.⁴⁰⁵ With two heirs, one of whom co-emperor with Septimius Severus, the *concordia* of the imperial family and the *pietas* present in their relationships to one another and to the state was an important element of Severan ideology. It received direct visual representation on a number of coin types, but also suffuses the countless depictions of the princes together on Severan coinage.⁴⁰⁶ Praise for imperial *pietas* and *concordia* tied in directly with Severan self-representation and claims to legitimacy as a dynasty. Yet it is easy to see how this imperial ideological theme also had a very tangible quality for provincials after years of civil war following the death of Commodus. Harmony between the two

⁴⁰³ CIL VIII 17829 = ILS 434; CIL VIII 17835.

⁴⁰⁴ CIL VIII 6944 = ILS 434, 473.

⁴⁰⁵ CIL VIII 19493 = ILS 439 = BCTH-1982-175 = AE 1947, +48. See also the fragmentary dedication from Sicca Veneria which lauds Septimius Severus and Caracalla as *[san]ctissimis maxi[misq(ue)] [Imp]eratoribus*, CIL VIII 15869.

⁴⁰⁶ Concordia Augusta: see RIC IV Septimius Severus 330A; RIC IV Caracalla 152; RIC IV Geta 134a-b, 164. Group portraits, see among others: RIC IV Septimius Severus 155a-c; 159, 174, 175, 177a-b, 178aa-ab, 181a-c.

heirs apparent would ensure prosperity and stability for the provincial elites responsible for the above dedications. At the same time, much like the dedications from Cuicul, these dedications are also the product of local politics. Both Optatianus and Flavianus erected their respective statues *ob honorem*, and most likely in fulfilment of vows made before gaining office. The promise of a statue was as much part of the political competition as for example Optatianus' gifts and spectacles. By setting up dedications to Fortuna Redux and Concordia Augusta, both Optatianus and Flavianus not only demonstrated their concern for the continued well-being and prosperity of the imperial family to their fellow-decurions, but also showed that they were willing to expend considerable resources to obtain this blessing. The dedications, although ostensibly concerned with the imperial family, marked both Optatianus and Flavianus out as men of honour and therefore suitable for their respective offices.

2.2.2. – *Virtues in the flesh: the Severan quadrifrons of Lepcis Magna*

Up to this point I have almost exclusively focussed on epigraphic texts. Of course, many of the above inscriptions were to be found on statue bases. Ideological messages in the inscriptions may have been strengthened or expanded upon through images. Most of these statues do not survive; where they do, they can rarely be connected to specific bases. Yet the city of Lepcis Magna offers us a fairly unique opportunity to study a Severan sculptural program in relative detail. The monumental *quadrifrons* was one of the most prominent new additions to the city during the Severan era, placed on the intersection of two major roads in the south-eastern section of the city. The monument was most likely erected by members of the elite of Lepcis Magna, though it is unclear whether it was built with public or private funds. Given the close connection between emperor and city, the Lepcitans responsible for the sculptural program most likely chose themes and imagery that were perceived to be in line with Severan imperial ideology.⁴⁰⁷ Although it is a medium very different from an honorific inscription, I will argue that we can once again clearly see how imperial virtues are adopted and adapted to give expression to local concerns over imperial stability, prosperity and communal self-representation.

The arch contained four exterior friezes running along the top of the monument, as well as a number of reliefs placed on the interior of the supporting pillars. These pieces were joined by decorative sculpture, including putti and vines, captured barbarians and trophies, and pairs of Victories crowning the four passageways of the arch.⁴⁰⁸ It is not my intention to give a detailed account of the compositional techniques employed in these reliefs, nor their full ideological program, both of which have been discussed extensively in a number of studies.⁴⁰⁹ Of interest here is the way in which imperial virtues are given visual form on the monument. The four exterior friezes, each 1,72 meters high and between 6,3 meters and 7,4 meters wide, present Septimius Severus and his family in distinct ceremonial settings. One of the best preserved friezes, originally placed on the north-western side of the monument, shows the imperial family in a triumphal setting with Septimius Severus and his sons riding a triumphal chariot. The scene includes imagery typically associated with

⁴⁰⁷ Rowan 2012: 86.

⁴⁰⁸ *Victories*: Bartoccini 1931: 65–67 fig.36–38. *Barbarians and trophies*: Bartoccini 1931: 62–63 fig.32–34.

⁴⁰⁹ Bartoccini 1931; Townsend 1938; Strocka 1972; Faust 2011; Rowan 2012: 84–99.

the triumph, but also depicts a number of interesting deviations.⁴¹⁰ Among them is a lighthouse, which has prompted debate over the setting of the triumph, with answers ranging from Ostia to Alexandria to Lepcis itself.⁴¹¹

Directly below the emperor, on the front of the triumphal chariot, are depicted Liber Pater and Hercules, garlanding an image of Tyche. The result is an image of an a-historical, eternal Severan triumph put through a provincial filter. The message of imperial triumph and, by extension, *virtus* is further underlined by the possible inclusion of the personified Virtus at the head of a triumphal chariot in a second, and badly damaged, triumphal frieze, located on the south-eastern side of the monument.⁴¹² The same Virtus also appears on the third, southwestern frieze, depicting Septimius Severus and (presumably) Caracalla in a scene of *dextrarum iunctio*, with Geta placed in between. The scene – the focal point of the composition – sends a clear message of imperial *concordia*, visualising the cooperation and harmony at the centre of the imperial family. The inclusion of the deities Hercules, Liber Pater and the Tyche of Lepcis Magna directly behind Severus and his sons links this particular instance of imperial *concordia* directly to the fortunes of the city itself. The scene is flanked by both Julia Domna and Virtus, watching over the *dextrarum iunctio* scene.⁴¹³

The fourth, northeastern frieze shows Julia Domna (and possibly other members of the imperial family) at sacrifice. Though the centre of the frieze is missing, several gods can nonetheless be identified, including Juno, Jupiter and Roma. Their presence further emphasizes the central message of this frieze: Severan *pietas* and the divine favour enjoyed by the new dynasty. The inner reliefs of the arch are of more modest size, but would have been in closer proximity to the ancient viewer. On these interior reliefs, the thematic lines of the friezes are extended. Besides a number of fragments depicting various deities (including Apollo, Diana, Cybele, Aesculapius, Mercurius, Venus and Mars), the imperial family once again is prominently depicted. In one scene Septimius Severus and Caracalla clasp hands, possibly performing libation with their heads covered.⁴¹⁴ The pair will most likely have been offset on the now missing pieces of the panel by Julia Domna and Geta. Hercules and Roma/Virtus stand in the background, possibly joined in the now lost fragments by Liber Pater and Tyche.

⁴¹⁰ Strocka 1972: 165–167.

⁴¹¹ Rowan 2012: 87–88.

⁴¹² Strocka 1972: 155.

⁴¹³ Here and elsewhere on the monument, the female figure in Amazonian costume has been identified as both Virtus and Roma, given the great similarity in iconography, see Strocka 1972: 158 n.3 (who prefers Virtus). Roma would be a suitable figure given the *concordia*-scene of the imperial family. Even if we read the scene as taking place in Lepcis Magna, the figure of Roma may have made sense for a local audience: the cult of Roma had – at least in the first century – a strong presence on the Forum Vetus. However, an identification with Virtus seems more likely for two reasons. Firstly, the figure is represented on level height with Julia Domna, while the patron deities of Lepcis Magna seem to be depicted as statues – though the damage to the relief makes it uncertain whether the deities were indeed placed on pedestals or simply placed in a higher position as a result of the crowded composition of the scene. In either case, the Amazonian figure is represented as separate from the patron deities of the city. Secondly, the figure of Roma is never depicted with a *vexillum*, while the figure in the relief quite clearly seems to hold a standard, making an identification with Virtus (often depicted with a *vexillum*) more likely.

⁴¹⁴ Bartoccini 1931: 73 fig.44; Faust 2011: 115–119.

Directly below this relief, a second relief depicts the sacrifice proper, surrounded by military and togate figures. The imperial family is positioned before a large, classical temple; other panels show Julia Domna in front of another sanctuary and fragments of an Egyptian sanctuary. One suggestion is that the Severans are being depicted at sites meant to invoke actual sanctuaries in the city of Lepcis Magna.⁴¹⁵ If so, the various scenes of sacrifice not only suggested imperial *pietas* but also tied that virtue to tangible sites in the city. Other reliefs depict Julia Domna and Septimius Severus in the guise of Juno and Jupiter, Geta and Caracalla crowned by Victories and attended by a number of deities including Liber Pater, Heracles and Virtus.⁴¹⁶ It has been argued by Faust that the reliefs depict a divine hierarchy, with the intention of once again invoking the close relationship between the imperial family and the city of Lepcis Magna.⁴¹⁷ Lastly, a case can be made that *felicitas* also played a key role in both epigraphy and the sculptural program of the *quadrifrons*. Despite not taking a distinctive form in the monument, *felicitas*, as a multifarious sign of divine favour and military success, suffuses the various scenes. The large number of gods – in particular the patron deities of Lepcis Magna – depicted in conjunction with the imperial family and the friezes filled with a triumphal procession: all point to the divine favour enjoyed by Septimius Severus and the Severan dynasty more generally.

Virtus, *pietas*, *concordia* and perhaps *felicitas* played key roles in the iconography of the *quadrifrons*. There are areas of overlap with the epigraphic record, but to a limited extent. Martial epithets and virtues do appear in Lepcis Magna, but are not of particular prominence in local dedications. Imperial *pietas* played a major role in the dedication set up to Septimius Severus by the Lepcitan, but is otherwise not attested in relation to the emperor. Imperial *concordia* might possibly be attested by a large inscription, found close to the temple on the Severan Forum. It is unclear what deity the temple was dedicated to; the large inscription may have functioned as the building dedication. Only the letters [...]ONCO[...] survive, which has led Ward-Perkins to suggest that the temple may have been dedicated to Concordia Augustorum.⁴¹⁸ Although a very prominent monument within the city, it nevertheless forms an exception: neither the cult of Concordia nor dedications mentioning Severan *concordia* are otherwise attested in the city. In other words, there appears to be a clear discrepancy between the normative language employed in epigraphy and the imperial virtues depicted on the *quadrifrons*. The cause of this discrepancy is partially to be found in the differences between the two media. Triumphal arches – on which the *quadrifrons* appears to be based – were commonly associated with martial imagery. To find this aspect of imperial ideology prominently on display in both the friezes and reliefs, as well as in the more incidental decorations such as Victories and captured barbarians, is therefore unsurprising.

Some of the deviation between epigraphy and monumental iconography may, however, also betray the influence of the Severan court. Although Septimius Severus is unlikely to have interfered directly in the building project – particularly given that the *quadrifrons* seems to have been locally-financed

⁴¹⁵ Faust 2011: 118, 120–122.

⁴¹⁶ Faust 2011: 123–129.

⁴¹⁷ Faust 2011: 128–129; a similar conclusion is reached by Rowan 2012: 98–99.

⁴¹⁸ Ward-Perkins 1993: 53; although Townsend 1938: 515 suggests that the temple may have been dedicated to the Gens Septimia, similar to the large temple newly erected on the Forum Novum of Cuicul.

– it is not inconceivable that the Lepcitan builders sought to align themselves closely with ideological trends current at court for a monument that so prominently celebrated the Severan dynasty. Yet even if the monument sought to align itself with imperial self-representation, it did so through a strongly local filter. Similar mechanisms of representation are at play in for example the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias, which employs imperial portraiture but places it in an overtly Greek context, both through its visual language and through the subject matter of its sculptural program.⁴¹⁹ Throughout the friezes and reliefs of the Lepcitan *quadrifrons*, imperial virtues are exalted but always with the city of Lepcis Magna as a backdrop. The Severan dynasty is placed in close connection to the city through various visual cues, from the Lepcitan patron deities to local sanctuaries and possibly the city's very own lighthouse. Through these visual cues, local and imperial representations merge together, suggesting the prominent place of Lepcis Magna and its elite – who were most likely responsible for the building project – within the empire.

2.2.3. – Caracalla and the later Severans

Caracalla offers a case study of the ideological changes between an emperor and his successor, as well as their effect on provincial epigraphy. Under Caracalla, the honorific *super omnes (retro) principes*, “above all (earlier) emperors” gains sudden traction. Although the title already appeared under Marcus Aurelius, it was strongly associated with Caracalla, appearing in 16 dedications across the province of Numidia, both from a military and civilian context.⁴²⁰ Scheithauer suggests that in many cases the term was a ‘filler’, added after the *damnatio memoriae* of Geta.⁴²¹ Yet precisely for this reason it offers a valuable insight in the epigraphic choices made by provincial dedicators. The title may have been part of a general effort to rehabilitate the emperor's image after the large-scale purge of Geta's followers. Yet like much of the actual practice of the *damnatio*, this was not necessarily a command that was strictly imposed from the centre. As Scheithauer suggests, countless individuals who participated in the *damnatio memoriae* actively contributed in the spread of the title to show their support for the ‘correct’ imperial faction.⁴²² Through adoption of the title, dedicators effectively gave their consent to the legitimacy of Caracalla's coup – although we need not equate such consent with personal opinion.

Caracalla followed in his father's footsteps by being praised for his martial virtues, though in different wording than Septimius Severus. The decurions and citizens of Tamzoura, for example, praise the emperor as *invictissimus ac felicissimus*, a variation on the familiar coupling of *fortissimus* and *felicissimus* current under Septimius Severus.⁴²³ Caracalla is honoured as *invictissimus* by other dedicators across the region as well.⁴²⁴ Both Cassius Dio and Herodian note that Caracalla

⁴¹⁹ Smith 1987; Smith 1988.

⁴²⁰ Scheithauer 1988: 156, 158. For only civic examples in my database, see CIL VIII 6969 = IAlAlg-02-01, 537; CIL VIII 6998 = IAlAlg-02-01, 563; CIL VIII 7000 = CIL VIII 19418 = IAlAlg-02-01, 569 = Saastamoinen 407 = AntAfr-2007-86; CIL VIII 10305.

⁴²¹ Scheithauer 1988: 167.

⁴²² Scheithauer 1988: 167–168.

⁴²³ BCTH-1954-70 = AE 1957, 68.

⁴²⁴ Epigraphica-1980-93 = AnalEpi p 119 = AE 1948, +112 = AE 1982, 958 = AE 2009, +1764 (a dedication to Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Julia Domna by the *curia Commodiana* from Thamugadi); CIL VIII 2368 = CIL VIII 17872 = Timgad 23 = Saastamoinen 381 = AE 1954, 153 = AE 2007, +51 (a dedication to Septimius Severus by the *res publica* of Thamugadi, with a later addition of *invictissimus* after the *damnatio* of Geta); CIL VIII 10305 (a dedication to Caracalla

increasingly presented himself as a new Alexander the Great, which Weinstock relates to the rise of *invictus* as an epithet for the emperor.⁴²⁵ At the same time, we can see *invictissimus* as a natural development from the traction of *fortissimus* under Septimius Severus, particularly when taking into account Caracalla's emphasis on military exploits and the provincial concern with presenting the emperor as *super omnes retro principes*. In any case, *invictissimus* does not appear with the same consistency as *fortissimus*. Despite being strongly associated with Severus, the latter occasionally appears in the altered dedications which followed the *damnatio* in 211: here, *fortissimus* is employed to fill the gaps left by the erasure of Geta.⁴²⁶ In the confusion following the murder and *damnatio* of Geta, dedicators may have grasped back to tried and tested ideological expressions that received semi-official approval under Caracalla's predecessor. The break with the titulature of Septimius Severus is more pronounced in dedications set up to Caracalla as a sole ruler. Only a single dedication to Caracalla from Cirta – CIL VIII 10305, set up by an unknown dedicator – lauds the emperor as *fortissimus*. The inscription contains a number of revealing mistakes in the imperial titulature. Although it mentions the 19th time Caracalla took *tribunicia potestas* in December 215, it makes no mention of his fourth consulship in 213. Likewise, the inscription mistakenly includes *imperator IIII*, an honour that does not appear to have been included among the emperor's official titles. The dedicator seems equally confused in his application of honorific titles. Beyond *fortissimus*, the inscription also praises Caracalla as *felicissimus*, *invictissimus*, *sanctissimus*, *super omnes principes* and *indulgentissimus*. Both ideological change and continuity are at play in this inscription, with the dedicator opting for 'new' honorifics such as *super omnes retro principes* but also using honorifics typical of Septimius Severus. Whether we should read this inscription as an exercise in linguistic caution is a question that must remain unanswered, though the text does once again suggest that the spread of new honorific titles and epithets was far from even across the provinces.

This also holds true for *indulgentia*, which also appears prominently in dedications to Caracalla. Like *super omnes retro principes*, *indulgentia* is usually employed to fill in the erased name and titles of Geta.⁴²⁷ Dedications set up after the *damnatio* however also mention Caracalla's *indulgentia*.⁴²⁸ In these inscriptions, *indulgentia* is often coupled with the phrase *super omnes principes*, further highlighting the exceptional nature of Caracalla's *indulgentia*.⁴²⁹ Given that the instances of *indulgentia* usually appear to fill in the erasures of the *damnatio*, it is unlikely that *indulgentia* here

from Cirta); CIL VIII 10304 = ILS 471 (a dedication to Caracalla from Cirta); CIL VIII 7973 = ILS 471, 20 (a dedication to Caracalla by a member of the local elite of Rusicade); possibly ILS 471, 572 from Cirta, where the editors have included *Invictus* in the imperial titulature.

⁴²⁵ Cassius Dio 77.7.1-9; Herodian 4.8.1-3; Weinstock 1957: 242.

⁴²⁶ See BTH-1932/33-195 = Saastamoinen 333 = AE 1894, 44; CIL VIII 2368 = CIL VIII 17872 = Timgad 23 = Saastamoinen 381 = AE 1954, 153 = AE 2007, +51; CIL VIII 6969 = ILS 439 = ILS 439, 537; CIL VIII 6996 = ILS 439, 562 = AntAfr-2007-86; CIL VIII 6998 = ILS 439, 563.

⁴²⁷ CIL VIII 6969 = ILS 439, 537; CIL VIII 7000 = CIL VIII 19418 = ILS 439, 00569 = Saastamoinen 407 = AntAfr-2007-86; CIL VIII 19493 = ILS 439, 564 = ILS 439 = BTH-1982-175 = AE 1947, +48; BTH-1932/33-195 = Saastamoinen 333 = AE 1894, 44.

⁴²⁸ See the above dedication CIL VIII 10305 from Cirta, or CIL VIII 7095 = CIL VIII 19435 = ILS 439, 675 = ILS 2933 = AntAfr-2007-88 = Saastamoinen 463; IRT 429; CIL VIII 7096 = ILS 439, 676 = Saastamoinen 464; CIL VIII 7097 = ILS 439, 677 = Saastamoinen 465; CIL VIII 7098 = CIL VIII 19436 = ILS 439, 678 = Saastamoinen 466: a series of building dedications set up by the aedil and triumvir of Cirta, Marcus Caecilius Natalis.

⁴²⁹ See also Scheithauer 1988: 165 for an empire-wide view.

refers to specific acts of munificence by the emperor. Some dedications in any case were not adjusted until several years after the *damnatio*.⁴³⁰ The choice for *indulgentia* can be seen in light of the Constitutio Antoniniana of 212, which Imrie has argued formed part of an attempt to rehabilitate the Severan dynasty after the murder of Geta.⁴³¹ With this supreme act of munificence, the praise for Caracalla's *indulgentia* was an obvious alternative for dedicators looking to replace lines of text that were earlier reserved for Geta. Like the phrase *super omnes retro principes*, the association between Caracalla and *indulgentia* again betrays a provincial awareness of the ideological trends current at the court.⁴³²

The precarious nature of Caracalla's reign – at least in the years after the conflict with his brother – strongly comes to the fore in a set of dedications from Cirta, where the local *triumvir* Marcus Caecilius Natalis set up a tetrastyle *aediculum* with four inscriptions.⁴³³ The inscriptions not only record the financing of theatrical spectacles and a triumphal arch, but also the erection of golden statues to *securitas saeculi*, *indulgentia domini nostri* and *virtus domini nostri*. Given the context of Caracalla's reign, the choice for *indulgentia*, *securitas* and *virtus* may well have been made with an eye towards the political and ideological developments within the imperial court. By emphasizing the emperor's military capabilities (in the statue as well as the triumphal arch), his munificence towards his subjects through the Constitutio Antoniniana and the stability he brought after the eradication of the 'enemy' Geta and his supporters, Natalis gave powerful expression to the legitimacy and success of Caracalla's reign. Yet, as with earlier dedications, each of these qualities also highlights common provincial expectations of imperial rule. As I have argued for several cases, these statues were not only expressions of loyalty and consent, but also objects with a local political importance. Natalis had a lengthy career in Cirta, eventually becoming a *duumvir quinquennalis*. It was only during or after his tenure as *quinquennalis* that Natalis fulfilled his obligations: the spectacles, arch and statues were erected *ob honorem aedilitatis et Illvir(atus) et q(uin)q(uennalitatis) rei p(ublicae)*. Although outwardly concerned with Caracalla's virtues and *securitas*, the dedications simultaneously form a commemoration of Natalis' wealth and involvement in local politics, not least because of the precious material of the statues.

The reign of Caracalla provides examples of both discontinuity and continuity compared to his father. Coinage offers an opportunity to gauge if these 'mixed messages' were part of the wider ideological program under Caracalla. Manders has provided decisive evidence for an ideological shift in the coin types after Caracalla's ascension to sole rule.⁴³⁴ The shift is intriguing: whereas coin types depicting personified virtues and military representations play a prominent role in the years of co-rulership with his father, the coin types of Caracalla's years as sole ruler give strong precedence to depictions of a wide range of divinities.⁴³⁵ Rowan likewise argued for a decisive shift towards divine

⁴³⁰ See for example CIL VIII 17829 = ILS 434, re-inscribed in 213.

⁴³¹ Imrie 2018: 113–133, on *indulgentia* see specifically Imrie 2018: 127–130.

⁴³² As also noted by Imrie 2018: 128.

⁴³³ CIL VIII 7095–7098.

⁴³⁴ Manders 2012: 225–252.

⁴³⁵ Manders 2012: 231.

associations on the basis of a study of Severan *denarii*.⁴³⁶ Interestingly, there is little overlap between the coin types and the epigraphic tradition. Instead of a decline in martial or munificent honorifics in the epigraphy, we see the rise of *invictissimus* and *indulgentissimus*. At the same time, the divine associations that form such a strong factor in Caracalla's coinage do not translate to a rise in the number of dedications to imperial *pietas* or epithets such as *felicissimus*. *Fides*, with 4% the most prominent virtue on Caracalla's silver coinage according to Rowan's data, does not appear in any attested dedication within my database. Naturally, we would not expect a direct overlap between numismatics and epigraphy, and the divergence between both types of media undoubtedly reflects the multifaceted nature of imperial ideology, as well as the diffuse ways in which it reached the provinces. Still, the differences between courtly coinage and provincial epigraphy do point to a more fundamental divide. The spread of phrases such as *invictissimus* and *super omnes retro principes*, or the association between Caracalla and *indulgentia*, suggest that provincial audiences were to some extent in touch with changes in imperial self-representation, but were selective in their choices. A possible explanation is that titles such as *invictissimus* and *super omnes retro principes* may have been more easily transmitted by various forms of official documentation and through oratory. The longstanding association between imperial munificence and *indulgentia* also made that virtue an obvious choice for dedicators responding to the Constitutio Antoniniana. The various divine associations on the other hand were conceptually much more diffuse, particularly given the large number of deities involved.⁴³⁷ Caracalla's relationships with the divine may have been important to his provincial subjects, but did not form the motive behind provincial dedications – in the way of for example imperial munificence – nor was it translated into new imperial titles beyond the already existing *Pius Felix*.

Dedications to the later Severans continue trends already evident under Septimius Severus and Caracalla. It is perhaps tempting to search for a clear ideological break between Caracalla and Elagabalus, but Icks has argued that the priest-emperor showed considerable ideological continuity with earlier Severans.⁴³⁸ The title *sacerdos amplissimus deus Invictus Sol Elagabal* appears only once within a civilian context, in a lengthy inscription containing a decree on water distribution from Lamasba.⁴³⁹ A regulatory document rather than an honorific dedication, the official and public nature of the Lamasba-decree may have engendered the inclusion of the title where it is missing in contemporary dedications. This once again suggests knowledge and awareness of ideological trends at the capital, which nevertheless were not felt to be necessary to include in honorific dedications elsewhere. Elagabalus is furthermore honoured as "*felicissimus adque [sic] invictissimus ac super omnes [re]tr[o p]rincipes indulgentissimus*" for his restoration of a road and bridge near Cirta, honorifics that are very similar to those employed for earlier Severan emperors.⁴⁴⁰

Severus Alexander is likewise honoured with fairly traditional honorifics. Martial honorifics only appear in a single dedication; a stark contrast with contemporary military dedications, to which we

⁴³⁶ Rowan 2012: 111–112.

⁴³⁷ Manders 2012: 233–242.

⁴³⁸ Icks 2008; Icks 2011.

⁴³⁹ CIL VIII 4440, see also Shaw 1982.

⁴⁴⁰ CIL VIII 10304 = ILS 471.

will return later.⁴⁴¹ Munificent virtues on the other hand are more abundant. Unsurprisingly, North African provincials continued to respond to the emperor's benefactions and expenditure in the province by praising imperial *indulgentia*.⁴⁴² In Uchi Maius the city council of the nearby *civitas Bencenna* set up a dedication in the city to Concordia Augusta, accompanied by a statue of Concordia Perpetua.⁴⁴³ The dedication was set up after Severus Alexander – who is honoured for his *indulgentia* – bestowed colonial status upon Uchi Maius, thereby elevating and honouring (*lata honorataque*) the city. Imperial *concordia* is here invoked with a double meaning: both to safeguard the tranquillity and harmony at the imperial court (Concordia Augusta) but also, and perhaps more importantly, to safeguard the good relationship between the now-favoured colony of Uchi Maius and the nearby *civitas* of Bencenna (Concordia Perpetua). Once again, imperial ideals serve to give expression to local concerns.

The same can also be said for a victory arch in Dougga, erected in honour of Severus Alexander by the city of Dougga in the years 231/232.⁴⁴⁴ In the dedicatory inscription, the emperor is lauded with the new honorific title *conservator libertatis*. Why Severus Alexander was associated with the title is unknown, yet the existence of the arch and the fact that the city adopted the name *Alexandriana*⁴⁴⁵ may point to a major benefaction towards the city. The title *Liberum* also appears in the official name of the city of Dougga (*municipium Septimium Aurelium Liberum Dougga*) after 205, but disappears when it is granted the status of *colonia*.⁴⁴⁶ *Libertas* again appears in connection to an ambassador to the imperial court who undertook a mission *pro libertate publica*⁴⁴⁷, while the emperor Probus is honoured by the city in 268 as a *conservator dignitas et libertatis*⁴⁴⁸. *Libertas*, the recurring theme in these third-century inscriptions, most likely refers to Dougga's exemption from taxation and other imperial duties as a direct result of the city having become a *municipium* under Septimius Severus in 205.⁴⁴⁹ Under Severus Alexander, an attempt to rescind this favourable status may have been averted, though sometime in the years after the erection of the arch, Dougga nevertheless lost its exemption. The mission to the imperial court, as well as the dedication to Probus, may be read as attempts to (partially) restore the old *libertas* of the city. As with the dedication to Concordia Augusta, both emperors might be honoured as preservers of liberty but this *libertas* has a very specific local meaning. It reflected both a grand normative belief about legitimate power ('emperors should preserve *libertas*') and a more tangible, beneficial status for the local community bestowed by legitimate imperial authority.

⁴⁴¹ CIL VIII 20138 = ILAlg-02-03, 7824 = Saastamoinen 500 = AE 1913, 120 = AE 2012, +49.

⁴⁴² CIL VIII 15447 = Uchi-01-Rug 23 = Uchi-02, 3 = AE 1892, +94 = AE 1908, +264 = AE 1941, +73 = AE 1999, +1846; CIL VIII 26262 = Uchi-01-Rug 22 = Uchi-02, 44 = Saastamoinen 505 = AfrRom-14-03-2349 = AE 1908, 264 = AE 2006, 1688; IRT 41; CIL VIII 15447 = Uchi-01-Rug 23 = Uchi-02, 3 = AE 1892, +94 = AE 1908, +264 = AE 1941, +73 = AE 1999, +1846. See also Saastamoinen 496 = Afrique p. 258 = AE 1966, 593 from Perdices.

⁴⁴³ CIL VIII 15447 = Uchi-01-Rug 23 = Uchi-02, 3 = AE 1892, +94 = AE 1908, +264 = AE 1941, +73 = AE 1999, +1846.

⁴⁴⁴ CIL VIII 1484 (p 938) = CIL VIII 26552 = ILTun 1415 = Dougga 57 = ILS 6796 = Saastamoinen 506; CIL VIII 1485 (p 1494) = CIL VIII 26551 = ILTun 1414 = ILS 483; see also John 2008: 694–696.

⁴⁴⁵ CIL VIII 1487 (p 2616) = CIL VIII 15506 = Dougga 16 = ILTun 1378 = ILS 541; John 2008: 694.

⁴⁴⁶ Lepelley 1997: 105.

⁴⁴⁷ CIL VIII 26582 = ILTun 1424 = Dougga 70 = ILS 9018 = AE 1911, 76 = AE 1957, 255.

⁴⁴⁸ CIL VIII 26561.

⁴⁴⁹ Lepelley 1997; John 2008: 695–696.

2.3. – *A permanent shift? Normative language in the third century*

The Severan dynasty is traditionally considered a turning point in the change from Principate to Dominate. The normative language that we have encountered thus far – usually in the form of honorific titles – seems to confirm this assertion, not only in the rise of *dominus noster* but also in the increasingly autocratic language of the honorifics, praising imperial might, majesty and munificence in superlative terms. In this light, it is interesting to see whether the third-century dedications continue this trend. The North African cities under review have provided us with a generous number of dedications that can be dated to the third century with various degrees of certainty. The nature of the epigraphic material changes in the early third century. Saastamoinen notes that the length of the imperial titulature in building dedications drops dramatically after Caracalla, as complex genealogies and *cognomina* disappear.⁴⁵⁰ Extant honorific inscriptions offer a more nuanced view: genealogies do indeed largely disappear but many *cognomina ex virtute* are retained, while the political offices of the emperor are also usually included.⁴⁵¹ Not all third-century emperors are equally well-attested in the epigraphic record of North African communities. Many dedications are furthermore fragmentary and/or impossible to date precisely. Of the dedications that can be dated (with some measure of precision) to the third century, 86 include some form of normative language or explicit expressions of loyalty in the form of *pro salute*. By far the most commonly used epithets are *invictus* (*Augustus*) and *nobilissimus Caesar*. The former gradually becomes a standard part of the imperial titulature, similar to *Pius* and *Felix*, after Severus Alexander.⁴⁵² With some 59 appearances among a total of 86 dedications across different communities, the title is the most prominent of all third-century honorifics. Only a single dedication from Sufes employs the superlative *invictissimus*; as *invictus* became a standardized element of the imperial titulature, it may have replaced *invictissimus*.⁴⁵³

Nobilissimus is mostly applied to sons and heirs such as Maximus, Philippus the Younger, or Carinus.⁴⁵⁴ The title appears in some 18 dedications across African communities.⁴⁵⁵ Despite the *damnatio* of Geta, *nobilissimus* was quickly rehabilitated and used for the sons of usurpers (Diadumenianus) and Severans (Severus Alexander) alike. The title remained in use throughout the third century for designated successors. Philippus the Younger in particular is well-represented with the title in the epigraphic corpus, the result of the relatively long (in comparison to other mid-third-

⁴⁵⁰ Saastamoinen 2010: 83–85.

⁴⁵¹ See for example: CIL VIII 12522 = ILS 600 (a dedication to Carus); AE 1914, 35 = AE 2013, +110 (a dedication to Gordian III and his wife Tranquillina); AE 1905, 179 (a dedication to Maximinus and his son Maximus); CIL VIII 21952 = ILTun 1724 (a dedication to Philip the Arab and his son Philip II); CIL VIII 7022 = CIL VIII 19420 = ILAlg-02-01, 575 = AE 1959, 69c (a dedication to Trebonianus Gallius); CIL VIII 10317 = CIL VIII 22381 (a dedication to Philip the Arab and his son Philip II); AE 1912, 158 (a dedication to Pupienus, Balbinus and Gordian I); AE 2003, 1972 (a dedication to Maximinus and his son Maximus); CIL VIII 848 = ILPBardo 356 = ILS 498 (a dedication to Gordian III); ILTun 719 = AE 1923, 16 (a dedication to Carus and his son Carinus).

⁴⁵² Hammond 1957: 51.

⁴⁵³ CIL VIII 257 = CIL VIII 11420 (a dedication to an unknown third century emperor by the city council).

⁴⁵⁴ AE 1905, 179; CIL VIII 21952 = ILTun 1724; ILTun 719 = AE 1923, 16; IRT 453; IRT 460.

⁴⁵⁵ AE 1905, 179; CIL VIII 21952 = ILTun 1724; CIL VIII 10317 = CIL VIII 22381; IRT 48; AE 1912, 158; AE 2003, 1972; ILTun 370 = ILPSbeitla 30; BCTH-1894-362; BCTH-1893-159; AE 1981, 899; AE 1981, 893; CIL VIII 2383 = AE 2012, +1912; CIL VIII 2382 = AE 2012, +1912; ILTun 719 = AE 1923, 16; CIL VIII 1220 = ILTun 1225; CIL VIII 5332 = CIL VIII 17486 = ILAlg-01, 247 = ILS 606 = AE 2014, +39; ILAlg-01, 2047; AE 1981, 897.

century emperors) reign of his father Philippus, in which Philippus the Younger was clearly pushed forward as a successor on coinage and – presumably – other media.⁴⁵⁶ Like all honorific titles, *invictus* and *nobilissimus* helped to shape and reinforce ideas on imperial power at a local level. But in both cases, the titles were also increasingly part of the fixed canon of imperial titles, based on existing traditions first put in place by the Severan emperors. This makes their value as a window on provincial attitudes increasingly limited the further we move into the third century.

The phrase *pro salute* remains a common expression of loyalty to the reigning emperor throughout the third-century epigraphy, although in considerably smaller numbers than in the late second and early third century.⁴⁵⁷ Imperial well-being remained a concern of both civic institutions and private dedicators: the city council and people of Uchi Maius erected a triumphal arch to Gordian III which was dedicated *pro salute*; on a more modest scale, the priest and equestrian Quintus Arellius Optatianus from Mactar erected a dedication to Magna Mater for the *salus* of Probus.⁴⁵⁸ Despite the numerical reduction, there is a strong sense of continuity in its appearance on building dedications and in honorific inscriptions.

The same sense of continuity is also present in honorific epithets regularly applied to emperors: *fortissimus* and *indulgentia*. Martial themes appear in three dedications that include *fortissimus*, always in superlative form and in combination with other honorific epithets. A dedication to Gordian III set up by the city council of Thuburbo Maius employs the Severan phrase *fortissimus felicissimus*.⁴⁵⁹ A second dedication to Gordian III from Thysdrus likewise includes the Severan phrasing *fortissi[mo et super omne]s retro principes in[dulgentissimo]*.⁴⁶⁰ It is only under Probus that we see something of a shift in the associations connected to martial virtues. A statue base, set up by city of Dougga and its curator Julius Italicus, couples *fortissimus* with *piissimus* and notes that “that in his age the entire world may flourish” (*saeculo eius universus orbis floreat*), the type of normative language more typically associated with the fourth century.⁴⁶¹ Other references to the emperor’s military prowess are rarer: Maximinus Thrax is lauded as a *conservator orbis* in Lepcis Magna, Carus for his “honour and bravery” (*honori et virtuti*) in Sicca Veneria and a dedication from Sabratha praises either Claudius Gothicus or Probus as a “restorer of the world” (*restitutor[i] orbis*).⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁶ See for example RIC IV Philip 215-217, 219-220, or 223-224, depicting Philippus the Younger on the obverse of his father’s coinage with titles and a radiate crown.

⁴⁵⁷ CIL VIII 23400 = ILPBardo 100 = ILTun 538 = ILCV +364 = CCCA-05, 79 = AE 1892, 18 = AE 1955, +49; BCTH-1954-120; CIL VIII 10620 = CIL VIII 15521 = CIL VIII 15246a-b = CIL VIII 26559 = Saastamoinen 586 = ILTun 1416 = Dougga 62; CIL VIII 26264 = Uchi-01-Rug 27 = Uchi-01-Ugh 13 = Uchi-02, 50 = Saastamoinen 553. In the following dedications, the *pro salute* is wholly the emendation of the editors: CIL VIII 100 = CIL VIII 11228 = Saastamoinen 599; CIL VIII 7022 = CIL VIII 19420 = ILaig-02-01, 575 = AE 1959, 69c; ILTun 719 = AE 1923, 16; CIL VIII 26246 = Uchi-01-Rug 28 = Uchi-02, 14; ILaig-01, 2047.

⁴⁵⁸ 26264 = Uchi-01-Rug 27 = Uchi-01-Ugh 13 = Uchi-02, 50 = Saastamoinen 553; CIL VIII 23400 = ILPBardo 100 = ILTun 538 = ILCV +364 = CCCA-05, 79 = AE 1892, 18 = AE 1955, +49.

⁴⁵⁹ CIL VIII 848 = ILPBardo 356 = ILS 498.

⁴⁶⁰ ILTun 110 = AE 1942/43, 40.

⁴⁶¹ CIL VIII 26560.

⁴⁶² IRT 452; CIL VIII 1626 = CIL VIII 15829 = ILS 3798; IRT 51. For the latter, see also the badly damaged inscription IRT 508 from Lepcis Magna.

Munificent honorifics are rarer than martial virtues, undoubtedly because of the curtailed financial benefactions and building activity of third-century emperors in the African provinces. Nevertheless, imperial *indulgentia* appears in several dedications. Beyond the aforementioned dedication to Gordian III, another dedication from Thysdrus mentions imperial *indulgentia* in the context of a restored aqueduct.⁴⁶³ The building project was undertaken *ex indulgentia principis*, though the damaged plaque fails to mention which emperor. A panel from Sabratha meanwhile praises an *indulgentissimo [principi]*.⁴⁶⁴ At least one of these dedications can be tentatively connected to an imperial act of munificence, though in the two other cases the context is unclear. Virtues vaguely related to munificence, prosperity and good rule also make their appearance. The aqueduct-inscription from Thysdrus not only mentions imperial *indulgentia* but also lauds the *felix saeculum* in which the dedication was set up. A milestone from Sufes thanks Maximinus and Maximus “for their unflagging foresight” (*pro sua infatigabili (p)rovidentia*) in restoring a bridge.⁴⁶⁵ An inscription set up by the city of Uchi Maius under Gordian III may have been dedicated to Pietas Augusta, but the dedication is incomplete.⁴⁶⁶

Of course, these dedications offer only an impressionistic sketch of the developments of normative language within epigraphy during the third century. Yet the sheer variety of inscriptions from communities across North Africa suggests that normative language was still an important form of legitimation and that provincials continued to consent to these claims by repeating them in their dedications. Unlike the *fortissimus felicissimus* of Septimius Severus or the *invictissimus* and *super omnes retro principes* of Caracalla, there are no new honorifics which are consistently applied to particular emperors. What we do see, however, is that emperors well into the third century were honoured with honorifics and epithets that were introduced or popularized under the Severans. *Invictus* and *nobilissimus*, followed in lesser numbers by *fortitudo*, *super omnes retro principes*, *indulgentia* and *felicitas* remained a common form of praise for reigning emperors. Although there was a stronger emphasis on martial honorifics, there appear to have been no major shifts in normative language until the late third century, at least on the basis of our limited evidence.

It is tempting to read the conservatism of the epigraphic record as a reflection of both the political chaos in the centre of power during large periods of the third century, and the relative peace of North Africa in that same period. While provincials kept erecting dedications, continuing and reinforcing existing epigraphic trends, the relatively short reigns of many emperors may have made the implementation of distinct ideological programs difficult. Again, coinage offers context and nuance. Manders has convincingly shown that third-century emperors were as much interested in propagating a variety of imperial virtues and general ‘benefits’ of imperial rule on their coinage as their second-century forebears.⁴⁶⁷ Differences in output and types furthermore suggest that the mints of individual emperors made considered choices in what images to project; choices that often differed from those of the Severan mint masters. The key virtues that Manders traces on third-

⁴⁶³ CIL VIII 51 = ILS 5777 = Saastamoinen 654 = AE 1947, +138 = AE 2008, +1611.

⁴⁶⁴ IRT 85, though the dating is insecure.

⁴⁶⁵ AE 2003, 1972.

⁴⁶⁶ CIL VIII 26246 = Uchi-01-Rug 28 = Uchi-02, 14.

⁴⁶⁷ In general see, Manders 2012: 155–220 with corroborating graphs on 159, 161, 190, 194, 202, 207, 213.

century coinage, however, make few appearances in North African epigraphy. Standard imperial virtues such as *providentia*, *liberalitas*, *virtus*, *pietas* and *aequitas* appear consistently across third-century coinage, but are mostly absent from dedications. Again there is some room for nuance: *virtus* and *liberalitas* do strongly overlap with *fortissimus/invictus* and *indulgentia*, respectively. A few third-century coin types even bear the legend VIRTUS INVICT AUG, or variations thereof.⁴⁶⁸ *Virtus* is occasionally found in African epigraphy, most prominently in a number of dedications to Honos and Virtus Augusta.⁴⁶⁹ These dedications suggest that *virtus* was mostly considered a deified virtue of imperial power rather than as a personal quality of the emperor. The difference in wording is more pronounced in the case of *liberalitas/indulgentia*. Yet as argued above, this can be read as a reflection of the clear differences in rank and hierarchy between the imperial court on the one hand and provincial dedicators on the other; whereas *liberalitas* was an aristocratic virtue of generosity, *indulgentia* suggested fatherly authority and superiority.

Manders also charts the prominence of coin types mentioning beneficial concepts and conditions that ostensibly originated from just imperial rule, including *pax*, *felicitas*, *securitas* and *salus*. Here we might see clearer examples of overlap between imperial coinage and provincial epigraphy. As noted earlier, dedicators kept erecting dedications for the well-being of the emperor throughout the third century. Although the *salus* on imperial coinage and the *pro salute* of the dedications are closely related concepts, it should be noted that the imperial coinage refers to the *salus* of the empire as a whole, while dedicators employed the phrase *pro salute* with specific reference to individual emperors. Furthermore, as noted earlier in this chapter, *pro salute* and similar expressions of loyalty were part of a much older epigraphic tradition in existence well before the third century. The same can be said for *felicitas*, which seems rather a continuation of earlier epigraphic practices than a response to new ideological currents. *Pax* and *securitas*, finally, do not appear to be attested at all among the cities included in this study.

My point here is not that these qualities were ignored or unimportant to provincial audiences; *pax*, *securitas*, and *felicitas* had propagandistic value exactly because they were desirable concepts in times of political chaos. Dedicators evidently felt little need to express this desire in their honorific dedications, either out of caution given the sometimes rapidly shifting political situation in Rome or because the formulaic format of the honorific inscription was not considered suitable for this purpose. Another possible explanation may be found in the lack of contact with governors and other officials. Unlike the Severan period or the tetrarchy⁴⁷⁰, third-century legates and governors rarely appear as (fellow-)dedicators in inscriptions. Among my data, which includes only dedications with honorifics and virtues, there are only two instances of third-century officials acting as dedicators, both only employing the official honorific title *invictus*.⁴⁷¹ Compare this to the Severan legate

⁴⁶⁸ Manders 2012: 176–177.

⁴⁶⁹ See for example CIL VIII 302 = NDEAmaedara 6 = Haidra-5, 1 = AE 1999, 1782; CIL VIII 6951 = ILAlg-02-01, 482; CIL VIII 7094-7098.

⁴⁷⁰ For governors as dedicators under the tetrarchy, see for example Valerius Florus (CIL VIII 2345-2347), Valerius Antoninus (CIL VIII 5526 = CIL VIII 18860 = ILAlg-02-02, 4672 = ILS 651 = AE 1895, 80; ILAlg-02-02, 4671) or Valerius Concordius (ILAlg-02-03, 7859 = Saastamoinen 631 = AE 1920, 15).

⁴⁷¹ CIL VIII 7002 = ILAlg-02-01, 576 = ILS 607; ILAlg-02-01, 24.

Quintus Anicius Faustus, or such fourth-century governors as Valerius Paulus, who praises Constantine as a *triumphator omnium gentium* and a *domitor universaru[m] factionum*.⁴⁷²

The explanation for this lack of administrative intervention is difficult to ascertain. There was no shortage of public dedications in the third century: some 36 of the 86 dedications in the database record that they were set up with public funds by local city councils. The real number is likely higher, since many inscriptions are damaged and their dedicators are now impossible to ascertain; not to mention the dedications that did not survive. If Noreña's thesis that governors and other officials helped in the spread of ideological claims to imperial legitimacy, this system may have either partially broken down or changed form in the third century. Perhaps the Severan era is the true aberration here: the incredibly active Quintus Anicius Faustus not only helped spread new honorifics and epithets but also foreshadowed the intensified presence of the imperial bureaucracy in the fourth century, when we see a similar bloom of honorific and virtuous epithets.

2.4. – In praise of late antique monarchs

Late antique dedications from North Africa are both numerous and employ a far wider lexicon of praise. This expanded use of normative language has not gone unnoticed. The appearance of virtues in fourth-century dedications has been the subject of detailed study in several articles.⁴⁷³ My reading of the material here will not offer a radical departure from the general conclusions drawn by Kotula, Chastagnol or Salomies. Nevertheless, this chapter would not be complete without the inclusion of epigraphic material from the fourth century, albeit in a slightly more condensed form than that from the second and third century. The first changes towards a new style of normative language are apparent in the dedications to Carus and Probus from the late 270s and early 280s, cited earlier. Whereas earlier third-century dedications retained many features of the Severan era, normative language slowly starts to incorporate a wider number of terms and concepts. The move to a more expansive normative language does not constitute a clean break with the past: many of the same honorifics, virtues and more general expressions of loyalty are retained. Rather, they are accompanied by new and varied terms that give voice to new normative beliefs on legitimate imperial power.

The years of the tetrarchy – from its first foundation in 293 to its final collapse in 324, coincided with a flurry of epigraphic activity in North Africa. Some 67 dedications from 24 communities were set up in honour of the various emperors within the tetrarchic system.⁴⁷⁴ In these dedications there is

⁴⁷² CIL VIII 7006 = IAlg-02-01, 582 = ILS 688 = Saastamoinen 679.

⁴⁷³ See for example Kotula 1985; Chastagnol 1988; Salomies 1994; Salomies 2000.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ammaedara*: ILTun 461 = ILPBardo 35 = Saastamoinen 665 = Haidra-05, 224 = AE 1927, 29; CIL VIII 308 (p.1198) = D 6786 = Haidra-05, 7; *Bulla Regia*: CIL VIII 25520 = ILPBardo 244 = D 9358 = Saastamoinen 622 = AE 1907, 24; *Calama*: CIL VIII 5333a-e = CIL VIII 17487 = CIL VIII 17520i = IAlg-01, 250 = IAlg-01, 297 = Saastamoinen 623 = AE 2012, +1902; *Carthage*: AE 1934, 31; *Cirta*: CIL VIII 7005 (p.1847) = IAlg-02-01, 584; CIL VIII 10301 = CIL VIII 22366; CIL VIII 7003 = IAlg-02-01, 579; CIL VIII 10265; *Cuicul*: AE 2000, 1799; AE 1992, 1885; IAlg-02-03, 7860; IAlg-02-03, 7862; IAlg-02-03, 7869; IAlg-02-03, 7856; ZPE-43-185 = AE 1982, 963 = AE 2001, +2065; IAlg-02-03, 7865 = AfrRom-16-04-2134; IAlg-02-03, 7858 = AE 1916, 18; IAlg-02-03, 7861; IAlg-02-03, 7863; IAlg-02-03, 7864 = AfrRom-16-04-2133; IAlg-02-03, 7867; *Dougga*: CIL VIII 1488 (p.2616) = CIL VIII 15507 = CIL VIII 26574a = IAlfr 513 = Saastamoinen 613; CIL VIII

a considerable level of continuity, not least because of the retention of a number of older honorific titles among the imperial titulature. Within the tetrarchic system, *nobilissimus* was retained as an official honorific title for the two Caesars while the title *invictus* was mostly – but not exclusively⁴⁷⁵ – limited to the two Augusti. Unsurprisingly, we find both titles as fixed elements in the vast majority of dedications.⁴⁷⁶ As with their third-century predecessors, the continuous repetition of these titles will undoubtedly have played its ideological part in reinforcing shared beliefs on legitimate power, continuously underlining the great nobility (*nobilitas*) and martial success (*invictus*) of the tetrarchs. Yet, as argued earlier, both titles are of limited use for the purposes of this thesis.

Two major new developments typify the use of late antique normative language in epigraphy. Firstly, we see praise for the dawning of a new ‘golden age’. The first attested North African use of this type of temporal praise comes from an inscription from Zarai, dedicated to Maximinus Thrax.⁴⁷⁷ Yet it is only in the late third century that temporal praise becomes a more standard feature of North African epigraphy. The same argument I employed for *pro salute* holds in this case as well: although not a reference to the personal qualities of either emperor, the presentation of the reign of Diocletian and Maximian as an exceptionally happy age is a clear expression of the legitimacy of their dual reign. A number of dedications from different communities record this new, prosperous age in florid prose.⁴⁷⁸ Two dedications explicitly mention restoration works, and in general the phrase appears to be strongly represented on building dedications.⁴⁷⁹ In Madauros a building

1489 = CIL VIII 26562 = ILTun 1497 = ILAfr 531 = Saastamoinen 632 = Dougga 134 = CCCA-05, 87 = AE 1941, 158; CIL VIII 15516a (p.2616) = ILPBardo 227 = ILTun 1380 = Saastamoinen 672; CIL VIII 26472 = Dougga 139 = Saastamoinen 673 = AE 1902, 5 = AE 1904, +121; CIL VIII 26563 = Dougga 19; CIL VIII 26566 = Dougga 21 = AE 1908, 165 = Aounallah-2016, p.252; CIL VIII 26567 = CIL VIII 26573 = ILAfr 532 = AE 1907, 161 = AE 1908, 66 = AE 2016, +1901 = Aounallah-2016, p.254; AE 1907, 161; *Lepcis Magna*: IRT 468; IRT 466; IRT 464; IRT 465; *Mactar*: CIL VIII 21962 = ILTun 1726; CIL VIII 624 = CIL VIII 11782 = AE 1946, +62 = AE 1946, 119; *Madauros*: ILAlg-01, 2048 = Saastamoinen 617; *Milev*: ILAlg-02-03, 8540; CIL VIII 10329 = CIL VIII 22394; *Sicca Veneria*: CIL VIII 22188 = ILTun 1733 = BCTH-1932/33-246; CIL VIII 22187 = ILTun 1733 = AE 1949, +256; *Sitiffs*: CIL VIII 8474 (p.1920); CIL VIII 10367; Saastamoinen 661 = AE 1928, 39 = AE 1949, 258 = AE 1992, 1908; *Sufes*: Saastamoinen 629 = AE 1992, 1763 = AE 2003, +1889; *Sufetula*: ILPSbeitla 230; CIL VIII 232 (p.926, 2354) = CIL VIII 11326 = ILPSbeitla 32 = Saastamoinen 669; *Tacape*: CIL VIII 21916 = ILPBardo 474 = ZPE-149-250; *Thamugadi*: CIL VIII 22318; CIL VIII 17882; BCTH-1951/52-232; BCTH-1907-274 = Saastamoinen 662; *Theveste*: CIL VIII 1862; CIL VIII 10958; CIL VIII 10959; ILAlg-01, 3947; ILAlg-01, 3948; ILAlg-01, 3949; *Thibilis*: CIL VIII 18904 = ILAlg-02-02, 4670; CIL VIII 22276; ILAlg-02-02, 4671; *Thubursicum Numidarum*: ILAlg-01, 1272; ILAlg-01, 1228 = D 9357b = AE 1904, 5; ILAlg-01, 1241 = Saastamoinen 628 = AE 1914, 243 = AE 1915, +67; *Thysdrus*: CIL VIII 22852; *Uchi Maius*: CIL VIII 26266 = Uchi-01-Rug 31 = Uchi-02, 64; *Vaga*: CIL VIII 14401 = ILAfr 441 = AE 1920, 26; *Zama Regia*: CIL VIII 16457.

⁴⁷⁵ See the damaged inscription CIL VIII 16457, where all members of the tetrarchy may have been honoured as *invictus*: “[*Magnis et Invictis*] dddd(ominis) nnnn(ostris)”.

⁴⁷⁶ For *nobilissimus*, see for example: BCTH-1907-274 = Saastamoinen 662; IRT 466; CIL VIII 1489 = CIL VIII 26562 = ILTun 1497 = ILAfr 531 = Saastamoinen 632 = Dougga 134 = CCCA-05, 87 = AE 1941, 158; CIL VIII 624 = CIL VIII 11782 = AE 1946, +62 = AE 1946, 119. For *invictus*, see for example: CIL VIII 232 (p.926, 2354) = CIL VIII 11326 = ILPSbeitla 32 = Saastamoinen 669; ZPE-43-185 = AE 1982, 963 = AE 2001, +2065; CIL VIII 26472 = Dougga 139 = Saastamoinen 673 = AE 1902, 5 = AE 1904, +121.

⁴⁷⁷ CIL VIII 4515.

⁴⁷⁸ CIL VIII 624 = CIL VIII 11782 = AE 1946, +62 = AE 1946, 119; CIL VIII 5333a-e = CIL VIII 17487 = CIL VIII 17520i = ILAlg-01, 250 = ILAlg-01, 297 = Saastamoinen 623 = AE 2012, +1902; CIL VIII 14401 = ILAfr 441 = AE 1920, 26; ILAlg-01, 2048 = Saastamoinen 617; ILTun 461 = ILPBardo 35 = Saastamoinen 665 = Haidra-05, 224 = AE 1927, 29.

⁴⁷⁹ CIL VIII 5333a-e = CIL VIII 17487 = CIL VIII 17520i = ILAlg-01, 250 = ILAlg-01, 297 = Saastamoinen 623 = AE 2012, +1902; ILAlg-01, 2048 = Saastamoinen 617. On the phrase on building dedications, see Saastamoinen 2010: 93–97.

dedication was set up “in the most prosperous age of our lords Diocletian and Maximian, Augusti” (*beatissimo saeculo dd(ominorum) nn(ostrorum) [[Diocletiani]] et [[Maximiani]] Augg(ustorum)*) while a building dedication from Ammaedara records the new *florentissimum saeculum* under the tetrarchs.⁴⁸⁰ The fact that this phrasing is attested in Madauros, Mactar, Calama, Vaga and Ammaedara suggests that we are not dealing simply with an isolated rhetorical flourish, but rather with a more wide-spread ideological notion. Saastamoinen points to an interesting correlation between a dedication from Mactar and two from Mididi, which are all dedicated “in the most felicitous age of our lords” (*felicissimo saeculo dominorum nostrorum*) and were set up with involvement from Titus Claudius Aurelius Aristobulus, governor of Africa from 290 to 294.⁴⁸¹ Saastamoinen’s suggestion that the identical appearances of the phrases in two different communities betrays the influence of Aristobulus fits well with similar cases of gubernatorial influence we have seen from the second and early third century. Other dedications also bear the marks of involvement by imperial officials. The inscription from Madauros cited above was dedicated by Caius Macrinus Sossianus, legate of Numidia under Aristobulus, while a damaged dedication from Vaga may have referred to the involvement of proconsul Lucius Aelius Helvius Dionysius.⁴⁸² The appearance of officials in these dedications has a prosaic explanation: late antique governors were required to restore damaged buildings and carry out new building projects where necessary with public funds.⁴⁸³ Yet this also meant that governors and other officials could have greater influence on the wording of building dedications. Possibly, governors such as Aristobulus helped reinforce an epigraphic trend that later also appeared in privately-funded dedications.⁴⁸⁴

A second trend that first comes to the fore under the tetrarchy is a greater variety in the normative language employed towards emperors. Some are variations on older virtues and honorifics. Given the rise in prominence of martial epithets in the third century, it is for example not surprising to find several dedications praising imperial *fortitudo*. Diocletian and Maximian are honoured by the governor of Numidia as “most brave and most pious” (*fortissimi et piissimi*) as well as “pacifiers of the world” (*pacatores orbis*), while a dedication set up by the *res publica* of Cuicul honours Constantius I as “best and most brave” (*optimus fortissimusque*) and a statue base from Lepcis Magna praises Constantius I and Galerius as “bravest and most unconquerable emperors” (*fortissimi et invictissimi imperatores*).⁴⁸⁵ Other familiar qualities regained a new importance, as appears to be the case with *pietas*. The title *Pius* is not among the official titles of Diocletian on coin legends and appears to have been inconsistently applied in epigraphy.⁴⁸⁶ This perhaps left room for *pietas* as a

⁴⁸⁰ IAlg-01, 2048 = Saastamoinen 617; ITun 461 = ILPBardo 35 = Saastamoinen 665 = Haidra-05, 224 = AE 1927, 29.

⁴⁸¹ Saastamoinen 2010: 95; CIL VIII 608, CIL VIII 11774; CIL VIII 624 = CIL VIII 11782 = AE 1946, +62 = AE 1946, 119. On these and similar phrases as imperial propaganda, see generally Kotula 1985.

⁴⁸² See IAlg-01, 2048 = Saastamoinen 617; CIL VIII 14401 = ILAfr 441 = AE 1920, 26.

⁴⁸³ Lepelley 1996: 217–218; Slootjes 2006: 77–84.

⁴⁸⁴ Such as for example CIL VIII 5333a-e = CIL VIII 17487 = CIL VIII 17520i = IAlg-01, 250 = IAlg-01, 297 = Saastamoinen 623 = AE 1912, +1902, and possibly the badly damaged ITun 461 = ILPBardo 35 = Saastamoinen 665 = Haidra-05, 224 = AE 1927, 29.

⁴⁸⁵ CIL VIII 7003 = IAlg-02-01, 579; IAlg-02-03, 7862; IRT 462.

⁴⁸⁶ It does not appear among the official imperial titulature of Diocletian or Maximian: see Kienast 1996: 266–269, 272–275. In North African epigraphy too, the title is common but not consistently. See for example: CIL VIII 1550 (p.1499) = CIL VIII 15552 = Saastamoinen 66; CIL VIII 309 = CIL VIII 11532 = D 5649 = Saastamoinen 634 = Haidra-05, 8; AfrRom-19-521 = Saastamoinen 678 = AE 1966, 600; CIL VIII 501 = Saastamoinen 627.

distinct virtue to be included in dedications. Two prominent examples are a set of two dedications to Galerius and Constantius, set up by the city of Dougga in 295. The large inscriptions, which were most likely accompanied by statues, were possibly part of a larger monument to the tetrarchy.⁴⁸⁷ Both inscriptions were dedicated “to the most brave and most noble Caesar, exceptional in virtue and in piety” (*fortissimo ac nobilissimo Caesari, virtute etiam ac pietate praecipuo*).⁴⁸⁸ Similar to *pietas*, other virtues that dominated imperial media for centuries but were hardly represented in the epigraphic record become more common from the tetrarchy onwards. One prominent example is the aforementioned building dedication from Mactar set up by the legate Sossianus, which presents imperial *providentia* and *virtus* as the source of societal renewal (*[q]uorum virt[ute et provi]dentia omnia in melius refo[rmantur]*). A building dedication set up with involvement of the governor Valerius Concordius in Cuicul was put up “in the most clement times” (*clementissimis temporibus*) of Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius and Galerius, while a building dedication set up by an unknown dedicator from Sitifis directly praises the four emperors as *clementissimi principes*.⁴⁸⁹

As with the honorific phrases praising the glorious spirit of the times, we may possibly suspect the hand of imperial officials in the spread of a more elaborate, virtue-laden normative language. The types of virtues praised closely match those present in other imperial media under the tetrarchy.⁴⁹⁰ Some even directly record the involvement of imperial officials, mostly in the case of building activities or restoration works. Others, such as the statuary inscriptions from Dougga and Cuicul, do not appear to have been set up with direct involvement from the governor. Although imperial officials may have given a strong impulse to the adoption of a new type of normative language, these civic dedications suggest that it had a receptive audience. Whether this superlative style of honorifics is a reflection of genuine provincial enthusiasm for the new imperial regime or rather of the dire state of affairs in the late third and early fourth century, is ultimately a question that can’t be answered conclusively.⁴⁹¹ More important here is that these honorifics point to a new conception of imperial authority that saw imperial virtues as immanent rather than as expressed through deeds. Whereas in the second century emperors might be honoured for their *indulgentia* on the basis of specific benefactions, honorific praise now seems detached from actual imperial actions. The virtues of the tetrarchs suffused their reign to the point of it being a *felicissimum saeculum* or a *clementissimum tempus*.

In rare cases the normative language employed seems to refer to current events. Prime examples are two statues bases dedicated to Maxentius, set up by a governor of Tripolitania and an *agens*

⁴⁸⁷ Lepelley 1981: 219.

⁴⁸⁸ CIL 26566 = Dougga 21 = AE 1908, 165 = Aounallah-2016, p.252; CIL VIII 26567 = CIL VIII 26573 = ILAfr 532 = AE 1907, 161 = AE 1908, 66 = AE 2016, +1901 = Aounallah-2016, p.254.

⁴⁸⁹ ILAlg-02-03, 7859 = Saastamoinen 631 = AE 1920, 15; Saastamoinen 661 = AE 1928, 39 = AE 1949, 258 = AE 1992, 1908.

⁴⁹⁰ Kolb 2001: 56–57.

⁴⁹¹ A point of contention for Saastamoinen, who argues against the positive impressions of Lepelley and Warmington (cited in Saastamoinen 2010: 95).

vices praefectorum praetorio in Lepcis Magna.⁴⁹² Though in control of large swaths of Italy and North Africa, Maxentius was never officially recognized as part of the tetrarchy. As loyalists to the regime, the governor Volusius Donatianus and the *agens vices* Valerius Alexander erected two statues in Maxentius' honour, possibly to contribute to the legitimacy of Maxentius' claim to power in the region. The normative language used in both dedications is identical and clearly inspired by the titles of the tetrarchy, for example through the inclusion of *invictus Augustus*. The inscription is dedicated "To the most indulgent emperor, who is moreover a restorer of freedom and most victorious" (*indulgentissimo ac libertatis restitutori victoriosissimoque imperatori*).⁴⁹³ The latter two titles most likely refer to Maxentius' defeat of Galerius in 307. The praise for *indulgentia* in this context is more puzzling, given that it does not appear to be attested in contemporary dedications and it barely attested for the fourth century in general.⁴⁹⁴ Tantillo and Bigi suggest the tentative possibility that Galerius may have planned fiscal reforms to tighten administrative finances, which may have stripped Lepcis Magna of its *ius Italicum*.⁴⁹⁵ If this hypothesis is correct, Donatianus' and Alexander's choice of normative language appears to have been carefully worded to reflect court ideology, presenting Maxentius not only as a successful military leader but also as a protector of African privileges. A similar case is in evidence in Cirta, where the usurper (between 308 and 310) Domitius Alexander is hailed by two governors as a "restorer of public liberty and one who extends the entire human race and the name of Rome" (*restituto[ri] publicae libe[r]tatis ac propagatori totius generis human[i] nominisque Romani*).⁴⁹⁶

We see a continued use of increasingly florid normative language and the heavy involvement of imperial officials with the reign of Constantine, first as co-emperor with Licinius and later as sole ruler. The martial themes present under the tetrarchy appear throughout. We might point to the continued epigraphic presence of the standard imperial title *Invictus*, which Constantine officially carried until 324, when it was abandoned in favour of *Victor*.⁴⁹⁷ More interesting are the manifold variations on this theme. Under Constantine, the city of Cirta was made capital of the province of Numidia and renamed after the emperor. As a result, the city not only came to host the governors of the province but also saw a flurry of dedicatory activity by imperial officials. One statue base, erected by the governor Valerius Paulus between 314 and 315, was dedicated "to the triumphant victor over all peoples and tamer of all factions, who, by his happy victory, illumined with new light the freedom obscured by the darkness of servitude, our lord, Flavius Valerius Constantinus"

⁴⁹² There is some discussion on the nature of the *agens vices praefectorum praetorio*: Arnheim sees it as interchangeable with the title *vicarius*, while Noethlichs argues that the *agens vices* represented the first stage of a developing imperial office, which eventually transformed into the *vicarius*. Hence there is also debate on the exact nature of the rank and responsibilities of the *agens vices* in relationship to *praesides*; I have focused here on the rank of Dracontius and (below) Valerius Alexander, rather than on their offices; see Arnheim 1970: 593–603; Noethlichs 1982: 74–76; Slootjes 2015: 179–182.

⁴⁹³ IRT 464; for its counterpart see IRT 465.

⁴⁹⁴ With the exception of a dedication to Julian from Thamguadi: CIL VIII 2387 = ILulian 175 = AE 1949, +134.

⁴⁹⁵ Tantillo and Bigi 2010: 43.

⁴⁹⁶ CIL VIII 7004 (p.1848) = CIL VIII 7067 = CIL VIII 19419 = ILAlg-02-01, 580 = D 674 (p.171).

⁴⁹⁷ See for example CIL VIII 1016; CIL VIII 7005 (p.1847) = ILAlg-02-01, 584; CIL VIII 7006 (p.1847) = ILAlg-02-01, 582 = D 688 = Saastamoinen 679; CIL 7007 (p.1847) = ILAlg-02-01, 583; CIL VIII 7008 = ILAlg-02-01, 585; CIL VIII 8476 = CIL VIII 20346; CIL VIII 8477 (p.1920) = D 695. For the change to *Victor* and later *Victor ac Triumphator*, see Lenski 2016: 38, 42–43.

(*triumphatori omnium gentium ac domitori universaru[m factionum qu]i libertatem tenebris servitutis oppressam sua felici vi[ctoria? nova] luce inluminavit [d(omino)] n(ostro) Flavio Valerio Constant[ino]*); the same honorific formulae were copied in a second, contemporary dedication by an unknown *rationalis*.⁴⁹⁸ Another *rationalis* praises Constantine as a *restitutor libertatis* and a *conservator totius orbis*, while a third *rationalis* hails the emperor as “triumphant victor over all peoples and founder of peace, outstanding in virtue, fortune and piety” (*[triumphatori omnium gentium] et fun[dato]ri [pacis? v]irtute felici[t]at[e pie]tate praestanti*).⁴⁹⁹ As a last example, we might point to the governor Iallius Antiochus, who lauds Constantine as “perpetual author of security and liberty” (*perpetuae securitatis ac libertatis auctori*).⁵⁰⁰ Cirta was by no means the only place where Constantinian officials used increasingly florid language to praise their emperor. In Dougga, for example, a legate erected a statue, its base possibly inscribed “to the emperor of divine virtue, extinguisher of the faction of the tyrant, and victor, defender of his provinces and of the cities” (*[divi]nae virtutis [principi? extinctori? ty]rannicae factionis et v[ictori? defensori? pro]vinciarum suarum atque urb[ium?]*).⁵⁰¹ Not all dedications by Constantinian officials are of the same florid nature⁵⁰² but the above examples nevertheless highlight a general trend towards increasingly varied honorific formulae.

It is interesting to compare the above dedications with those erected by provincial dedicators. Although privately-financed statues to the emperors became increasingly rare in the fourth century, civic institutions throughout North Africa continued to erect them with public funds. Interestingly, the majority of statue bases set up with public funds do not follow the florid style noted above. The majority of statue bases dedicated to Constantine, like those set up by the cities of Thamugadi and Cuicul, only included official honorific titles such as *Invictus*.⁵⁰³ A small number, however, do employ more elaborate honorific formulae that come close to the type of normative language employed in the dedications by imperial officials. A base set up by the city of Uchi Maius was dedicated “to the lord of triumph and freedom, and our restorer of the well-being of the people and the state by his unconquered efforts” (*[Do]mino triumphi libertatis et nostro restitutori invictis laboribus suis privatorum et publicae salutis*).⁵⁰⁴ Although it makes no mention of personal virtues, the honorific intent of the dedication is clear. The Uchi Maius inscription almost certainly directly postdates Constantine’s victory over Maxentius.⁵⁰⁵ Perhaps the city council felt the need to respond to the moment of political upheaval through an emphatic statement of loyalty to Constantine, for which additional honorific formulae were employed. On the basis of the Uchi Maius dedication it may be tempting to hypothesize that North African communities responded to such moments of crisis with a greater emphasis on normative language, yet the small number of bases employing the florid style suggest otherwise. The only other example is a base set up by the city of Thamugadi, which also

⁴⁹⁸ CIL VIII 7006 (p.1847) = ILaig-02-01, 582 = D 688 = Saastamoinen 679, translation LSA-2230 (G. de Bruyn); CIL VIII 7007 (p.1847) = ILaig-02-01, 583.

⁴⁹⁹ CIL VIII 7010 (p.1847) = ILaig-02-01, 581 = D 69; CIL VIII 7008 = ILaig-02-01, 585, translation LSA-2232 (G. de Bruyn).

⁵⁰⁰ CIL VIII 7005 (p.1847) = ILaig-02-01, 584.

⁵⁰¹ AfrRom-15-01-126 = AE 2003, 2014 = AE 2007, +1718, translation LSA-92 (U. Gehr).

⁵⁰² See for example CIL VIII 18905 = ILaig-02-02, 4673 = AE 1890, 21; CIL VIII 8476 = CIL VIII 20346;

⁵⁰³ BCTH-1906-214 = BCTH-1932/33-196; ILaig-02-03, 07867a.

⁵⁰⁴ CIL VIII 15451 (p.2595) = D 690 = Uchi-01-Rug 32 = Uchi-02, 53, translation LSA-1173 (G. de Bruyn).

⁵⁰⁵ Lepelley 1981: 234.

employed elaborate formulae to honour Constantine. The emperor is praised as “great in virtue, exceptional in piety, always and everywhere victor” (*virtute magno pietate praecipuo [se]mper et ubiqu[e] victori*).⁵⁰⁶ Unfortunately, the dating of the Thamugadi base is far from certain, with the lack of the title *Invictus* possibly pointing to a far later date in Constantine’s reign. The dedications from Uchi Maius and Thamugadi may betray the influence of a normative language as propagated by imperial officials across the African provinces. Yet this normative language did not become a fixed element of local epigraphic traditions throughout North Africa as a whole, with many communities preferring to stay close to official honorific titles such as *Invictus* or (*Triumphator ac*) *Victor*.

With the end of the reign of Constantine, the epigraphic material moves further and further away from this study’s focus on the second and third century. The epigraphic record of Lepcis Magna offers a condensed overview of developments in the later fourth century, when the city saw a spurt in dedicatory activity. The new centre for imperial dedications was the Forum Severianum, although a number of statues were still erected in old prestigious locations such as the Forum Vetus and the theatre, or thoroughfares such as the Punic Market or the street running between the Chalcidium and the Hadrianic Baths. The political landscape of Lepcis changed dramatically with the administrative reforms of Diocletian, when Lepcis became part of the newly formed province of Tripolitania and may have acted as its capital. The presence of a governor in the city cannot be proven with certainty, but is usually presumed on the basis of the large amounts of dedications to governors and other high-ranking officials.⁵⁰⁷ Unsurprisingly, these officials also constitute an important group of dedicators in Lepcis Magna. Two prominent examples are the statue bases set up in the northern portico of the Forum Severianum and dedicated to Valentinian I and Valens by an *agens vices* named Antonius Dracontius.⁵⁰⁸ The two emperors are honoured in an elaborate honorific formula: “to (those) equally godlike in justice and piety and perpetual founders of Roman good fortune, our lords Valentinian and Valens, most victorious emperors and Augusti of the whole world” (*iustitia pariter ac pietate caelestibus adq(ue) Romanae felicitatis perpetuis fundatoribus d(ominis) n(nostris) Valentiniano et Valenti uictoriosissimis principibus ac totius orbis Aug(ustis)*).⁵⁰⁹ The same Antonius Dracontius erected two highly similar dedications on the forum of Sabratha.⁵¹⁰ The presence of a governor and his staff not only provided a new pool of dedicators, but also made Lepcis an interesting stage for men like Antonius Dracontius to be noticed by superiors. The new political status of Lepcis also coincided with a dramatic change in local epigraphic traditions. Although the fortunes of various political institutions of Lepcis such as the *curiae* and the *ordo* may have waxed and waned, the civic body responsible for public dedications – presumably still the city council – did not identify itself as such in imperial dedications.⁵¹¹ Instead, local epigraphic tradition shifts to an ever greater emphasis on unity and unanimity, with the majority of public dedications

⁵⁰⁶ CIL VIII 2386 = CIL VIII 17885.

⁵⁰⁷ Mattingly 1995: 171–173, 181–182.

⁵⁰⁸ IRT 472, 473.

⁵⁰⁹ IRT 472, translation Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009.

⁵¹⁰ IRT 57, 58.

⁵¹¹ The sole exception seems to be IRT 477, a dedication to Theodosius I where the dedicators are clearly referred to as *ordo Lepcimag(nensis)*.

to emperors set up in name of the *Lepcitani*.⁵¹² As in other communities in North Africa, the honorifics included in the dedications set up by the Lepcitans tend to stay close to official imperial titulature, with an emphasis on martial themes. Theodosius I is lauded as a “propagator of the Roman world” (*propagatori Rom[ani] orbis*) in the east portico of the Forum Severianum; Arcadius is praised as a “a peace-making consul throughout the world” (*toto orbe pacifico consuli*), as well as with the title “victor and triumphator” (*victori ac triumphatori*) in the southern portico of the same forum; Valens, Gratian and Valentinian are honoured for their good fortune as well as their universal victory (*vigente fortuna dominorum principumq(ue); ubiq(ue) vincentium*) while Honorius is solely honoured with the title “victor and triumphator” (*victori ac triumphatori*).⁵¹³ When personal virtues and non-martial honorifics appear in dedications set up by the Lepcitan community, governors are often involved, such as in the case of IRT 471 (*pietas, iustitia*) or IRT 468 (*clementia*).

Across this chapter we have seen a slew of examples of provincial dedicators, across four centuries of imperial rule, making choices in their normative language that differed from the precedent set in imperial media. At the same time, however, we also saw examples of honorific inscriptions that closely followed courtly ideological trends. Throughout this chapter, the involvement of imperial officials was suggested as a possible explanation. These officials on occasion acted either as dedicators in their own right, or as ideological brokers between the court and the African communities in the spread of normative language. A separate argument throughout this chapter pointed to the often highly-localized context of normative language, pointing as much to local concerns about imperial rule as to they do to expressions of imperial ideology from centre of power. The following chapter will see these two arguments merge as we turn to the dedications erected in honour of imperial officials, in which local concerns gain a new and acute dimension.

⁵¹² The latest dateable use of ‘Lepcitani Septimiani’ seems to be on a statue base to Gallienus, dated to 267; see IRT 457.

⁵¹³ IRT 477, 478, 475, 479.