

Introduction
*Leadership, Ideology and Crowds in the Roman Empire
of the 4th Century AD*

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Since the time of Augustus the emperor stood at the apex of the political and social hierarchy. In theory he had power of unprecedented scope, he symbolized Rome's might, and in important respects he was even thought to embody the empire by his contemporaries. After the third century, marked by crisis and anxiety, the empire recovered by reorganizing the administrative and military system and by creating a sustainable imperial rule which was able to deal with external and internal menaces as well as with societal and cultural change such as the growing impact of Christianity. The 'New Empire' was a fresh beginning yet anchored in existing traditions. In this new Roman Empire emperors had to establish societal support in order to create sustainable imperial leadership and to re-articulate imperial ideology, especially in the light of the growing dominance of Christianity as the religion of the empire.

The late Roman Empire was an autocratic state and the emperor was a monarch in the true sense of the word. However, no emperor rules alone. Although a late Roman emperor had in principle unmatched power and coercive force ("Macht" according to Weberian terminology), an emperor could only transform his power into successful rule ("Herrschaft") by the legitimacy of his rule in the sociological sense of this notion. The power and legitimacy of any ruler and leader, including that of the emperor of the late Roman Empire, is constructed and negotiated in discourse with those over whom he governs, and the military and administrative apparatus on which he is dependent. Societal consensus of an emperor's rule was based upon the fundamental belief that

1 The term is derived from Barnes 1982 who chose it in homage to Edward Gibbon. The latter spoke of "a new empire" founded by Diocletian (ed. Bury, 383).

his reign depended on public opinion and upon an emperor's ongoing ability to gain and sustain the commitment and loyalty of his subjects. The way in which a sovereign encounters his subjects and organizes consensus is critical for the success or failure of his rule. Societal consensus was not readily reached in the vast Roman Empire with its diverse populations and its great economic, social and cultural differences, and was therefore a constant process of communication and negotiation.² An emperor had to engage with several widely diverging groups (e. g. the military, the administrative elite, the economic elite, local notables, the Church, regional groups) to win their support in order to enhance and uphold his rule. Roman emperors and leaders in general were actively involved to bond themselves with their subjects and various interest groups, a process in which the one emperor succeeded better than the other.

Leaders are not born: they are made or make themselves. However, enduring and stable rule was not only created from the top down but also from the bottom up. The various groups the emperor interacted with exerted influence in their turn on constructing and framing his rule. Roman emperors were expected to have certain traits and qualities. However, even possessing the required characteristics was no guarantee of good leadership.³ Leaders need to be actively involved in molding the communal identity of "who we are" and must be able to relate to their subjects.

Although late Roman emperors were in theory omnipotent, their reigns were not uncontested and their position was not inviolable. In particular, their control of the military was vulnerable. The emperors, often military men who led many campaigns during their reigns, invested heavily in a good relationship with both rank-and-file and officers. Not only was the army vital to their military success and therefore their prestige and acceptance as ruler, in most cases they also owed their imperial position to "election" by the army.⁴ The loyalty of common soldiers could be won and retained by both material benefits and symbolic rituals. High-ranking and ambitious officers often formed the most serious threat to an emperor's position. For that reason emperors surrounded themselves with loyal, trustworthy generals, and in order to avert the ever-present danger of usurpation by prominent and popular generals emperors had a variety of strategies at their disposal, including material rewards, enhancement of status by granting the consulship or promotion to senatorial status, relocation from one command to another, dismissal, exile and even elimination.⁵ There were usurpations in the fourth century, as the cases of Magnentius, Procopius and Magnus Maximus show,

2 See Ando 2000, esp. part 2. On consensus and "Kaiserakzeptanz" see also Flaig 1992.

3 Wallace-Hadrill 1981; Fears 1981.

4 In the acclamation ceremony the army acted as a sort of people's assembly (Pabst 1997, 9 ff.). The influence of the army is nicely illustrated by the account by Amm. Marc. (26.2.2–10) of Valentinian's inauguration as Augustus. When the new emperor was ready to address his troops, the soldiers unanimously demanded that the new emperor appointed a co-Augustus. Valentinian could only consent to this bottom-up request.

5 See now Lee 2015.

but there were no attempts to overthrow imperial rule as an institution.⁶ The emperor was clearly part of the indisputable order of things.

The latter, however, did not imply that the fourth-century emperor and the subjects stood in close contact with one another. Especially from the end of the century onward, when the emperors stopped campaigning, imperial accessibility was far from self-evident anymore. Honorius and Arcadius left the military campaigns to their generals and remained themselves within the comfort of their palace. This fundamentally changed the dynamics of late-antique imperial rule: from rulers who spent long periods of their reigns moving about the empire at the head of their armies and only settling temporarily at imperial residences distributed all over the empire (Trier, Ravenna, Milan, Serdica, Constantinople, Antioch and other sites), emperors now became static figures who hardly left the security of their palaces in Rome and Ravenna in the west and Constantinople in the east. The emperor was not anymore as easily accessible for his subjects as had been the case in the early empire (or at least that was the impression given). The ideal of the *princeps civilis* as constructed by Augustus, although still presented in official imperial propaganda, was a far cry from the late Roman world where the emperor was *dominus noster* living in a *sacrum palatium*.

With Constantine imperial autocracy entered a radical new phase with the rapid Christianization of the Roman world in combination with the emperor's association with and support of Christianity. The transformation of the late Roman world into a Christian empire created the complicated issue of redefining the relationship between secular power, spiritual authority, moral legitimacy and societal consensus. While in the polytheistic early empire the Roman emperor was considered as part of the divine, in Late Antiquity his godly status was gradually redefined to correspond with Christian cosmology. Empire and monarchy became associated and connected with Christian monotheism ("one God, one emperor, one empire"). Eusebius was the first to present the emperor, Constantine in this case, as God's representative on earth and a copy of God's perfection.⁷ In spite of the criticism of other church leaders, such as John Chrysostom,⁸ the new Christian political ideology sacralised Roman monarchy and made the emperor a sacred creature who ruled on earth in the name of God.

Constantine was called the *koinos episkopos* by Eusebius,⁹ thereby inter alia characterizing the emperor's close association with the Church and their leaders, the bishops. Before the fourth century, bishops, as leaders of Christian communities, had remained largely invisible.¹⁰ Their main tasks had always concerned the pastoral care of their own

6 On usurpations in Late Antiquity see Szidat 2010.

7 Drake 2015.

8 Drake 2015, 296–299.

9 Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 1.44.

10 On the bishop in late antiquity see e.g. Brown 1992, *passim*; Rebillard and Sotinel 1998; Liebeschuetz 2001, 137–168 (Ch. 4 "The Rise of the Bishop"); Rapp 2005; Lizzi Testa 2009; Brown 2012, *passim*; Gwynn 2012a.

groups, involving primarily teaching and preaching, spiritual guidance, the ministry of prayer, care of the liturgical duties, and the maintenance of the (orthodox) faith. Administration of justice by means of the episcopal court, the responsibility for the social welfare of his flock, charity, and the care of travelers and strangers were other important episcopal responsibilities. In short, bishops were responsible for all matters concerning their community, clergy, and church. In combination with their spiritual and religious authority bishops in late antiquity were able to create, as “lovers of the poor,” a substantial power base in their cities. Consequently, bishops developed into local patrons and leaders in secular business, especially when traditional local elites became less inclined to carry the heavy financial burden that local magistracies or membership in local councils entailed.

Privileges granted by Constantine and his successors to bishops, the presence of bishops at the court, and the increasing wealth of the Church added significantly to the development of the episcopal influence in urban affairs and increasingly made them the equals of the traditional local elite – the social class from which many of them came – in the cities of the late Roman Empire.¹¹ A bishop’s status and influence were substantially enhanced by the fact that he was not rich (or not supposed to be), that he could operate outside the traditional civic power structure, and that he had a large support group, i. e. his own Christian community, in particular the lower and middling classes, and that unlike secular officials he exercised his authority for life. Most importantly, he had moral authority and the sanctity of his office added considerably to his power and influence. The leadership of a bishop in late antique cities could be a stable factor amidst the complexities of urban life. A bishop’s duties and civic patronage as an urban leader could be manifold and varied: dealing with food shortages, acting as a judge, interceding on behalf of the urban community with the imperial authorities at the local and provincial levels and even at the imperial court itself. Some bishops gained (or appropriated) an empire-wide authority and mediated on behalf of the Christian faith in imperial affairs. The increasing authority of Christian bishops in urban society, as well as the empire as a whole in some cases, gave a new dimension to the dynamics of power relationships in the fourth century and beyond. For secular leaders the influence of ecclesiastical authorities became a force to reckon with but also offered opportunities, such as exerting influence through church leaders.

11 On the relationship between Constantine and church leaders, see Drake 2000.

Aim and method

This book focuses on the functioning of leadership in the period of the Tetrarchs to Theodosius and fits with recent diachronic analyses of leadership in the fourth century. Yet, whereas either emperors or bishops are central to the majority of these studies, our volume starts from the idea that the imperial and ecclesiastical administrations became interdependent in this period and thus presents an integrated approach of imperial and religious leadership.¹² As the spread of ideology plays a key role in creating societal consensus and thus in wielding power successfully, the volume analyses both types of leadership from an ideological angle.¹³ It examines the communicative strategies employed by emperors and bishops through analyzing the ideological messages that were disseminated by a variety of media: coins, architectural monuments, literary and legal texts. The central question of this volume is how, in a period in which an important shift took place in the power balance between church and state, emperors and bishops made use of ideology to bind people to them and thus to interact with their ‘crowds’, whether they be the inhabitants of the city of Rome or Constantinople, the subjects of the empire at large or the members of the various religious communities.

This volume not only fills gaps when it comes to addressing different types of leadership and the central role of ideology, it furthermore combines longitudinal analyses focussing on the fourth century as a whole and case studies dealing with a specific emperor or bishop, thereby linking up the macro and micro level. In addition, the approach of ‘systematic medium analysis’ forms the methodological framework for our examination of the different media. Recent research has demonstrated the necessity of analyzing the different ancient media such as coinage, monuments and literature into their own context and medial discourse before combining them. In other words, specific local and medial traditions should be taken into account while analyzing the sources. By analyzing the coins, monuments and texts within their own context and medial discourse instead of ‘cherry-picking’ examples, the contributors to this volume,

- 12 As for imperial leadership in the fourth century, see for instance Burgersdijk and Ross 2018; Omissi 2018; Wienand 2015; McEvoy 2013; Leppin 1996. On religious leadership in the fourth century and beyond see for example Dunn 2015; Fear, Fernández Ubiña and Marcos 2013; Rapp 2005; Rebillard and Sotinel 1998. On specific fourth-century emperors, see e. g. Barnes 1982; Lenski 2002; Leppin 2003; Barceló 2004; Maraval 2013; Teitler 2017. On specific fourth-century bishops, see for instance McLynn 1994; Gwynn 2012b. For integrated approaches of imperial and religious leadership in the reign of one particular fourth-century emperor, see Barnes 1981 and 1993; Drake 2000.
- 13 On ideology and imperial power, see Flaig 1992; Ando 2000; Kolb 2001; Pfeilschifter 2013. Following Thompson, we define ideology as ‘the ways in which the meaning constructed and conveyed by symbolic forms serves, in particular circumstances, to establish and sustain structured social relations from which some individuals and groups benefit more than others, and which some individuals and groups have an interest in preserving while others may seek to contest.’ See Thompson 1990, 294 and Manders 2012, 27.

who are specialists on different types of sources, demonstrate how these sources allow for ideological differentiation and diverse messages to different types of audiences.

Another methodological notion that is central to our book is the combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches. Traditional research on literary sources has mostly examined the perspective of the upper layers of Roman society (emperors, elites and army) as these are usually at the centre of the texts. In recent years, research on other types of sources, for instance coins and panegyrics, has shown some interest in a larger group of the population, as the concept of 'audience' received more attention. While not denying the value of top-down models, several contributions such as those of Magalhães and Sággy deliberately include the perspective of Roman society's lower strata and therefore combine top-down and bottom-up approaches. Leadership, Roman or other, cannot function without the acceptance of all levels of society, thus including the people.

The contributions of the volume are presented partly in a general chronological order, and partly thematically. This choice is guided by the interconnectedness of the contributions which made a thematic presentation in separate sections less obvious. Some general points are to be made before briefly introducing the individual contributions. Some authors deal with long term and general issues of the fourth century linked to imperial and religious leadership and ideology, while others zoom in on more specific subjects such as individual leaders and particular media. Furthermore, the contributions present insights into issues of imperial and religious leadership both at local and central level and demonstrate that these levels were inextricably linked even though we often tend to treat them as separate levels of interaction and communication. Similarly, all contributions offer glimpses of both senders and receivers of messages, again both at central and local level.

In the first contribution of the volume, Verena Jaeschke focuses on the expressions of imperial ideology through the building of the tetrarchic imperial residences. She demonstrates that the architecture of these residences offered the emperors' possibilities to visually communicate their imperial power and the new tetrarchic concept of rule. By systematically comparing the architectural layout of principal imperial residences throughout the empire, Jaeschke is able to distinguish a set of characteristics that define these residences and that sent out a message of imperial equality among the tetrarchs.

The article by Adrastos Omissi combines elements of local initiative and expressions of loyalty and imperial reception, as he examines the creators of the fourth-century panegyrics. While most scholars so far have mainly discussed the imperial perspective and the emperor as the receiving party of the panegyrics, Omissi is interested in the identity of the orators and their motivation to compose their speeches. For the orators, panegyrics provided an excellent opportunity to speak on behalf of their communities to the emperor. In this way they could not only flatter the emperor and his imperial leadership and seek imperial attention for local issues, but could also take it

as a moment to present themselves as highly skilled individuals, demonstrating their abilities for a possible career in the imperial administration.

Erika Manders offers an in-depth medium analysis, as she merges both the imperial and local perspective in her examination of an exceptional series of coins minted under Maximinus Daia by the three cities Antioch, Alexandria and Nicomedia. By iconographically placing these coins within a larger numismatic context, both chronologically and geographically, Manders steps away from the traditional interpretation of these coins as reactions to the rise of Christianity. Instead, she links these coins to both Maximinus' legitimization of power as well as local civic autonomy.

Legal sources allow for precious insights both into the world of those who issued legislation, in particular the emperor, as well as of those who were at the receiving end of the laws. Elisabeth Hermann-Otto and John Curran investigate the terminology and wording used in the legal sources to communicate with the inhabitants of the Roman world, be they the general group of subjects or targeted at specific groups. In her close reading of the *Codex Theodosianus*, Hermann-Otto analyses the social legislation of the emperor Constantine the Great. She demonstrates that by the employment of rhetorical strategies and the deliberate inclusion of moralizing elements in the laws, the emperor attempted not only to direct his subjects' behavior, but also to create a strong(er) legal basis for the functioning of his empire, which was further developed by his successors. She shows that Constantine's legislation was not merely an expression of imperial rhetoric and propaganda, but that it was directly connected to the realities of life in the empire. Curran connects both modern and ancient perspectives on one particular religious group within the Roman Empire, i. e. the Jewish community. He calls for a re-examination of the use of terminology, law-making and discussions surrounding the Jewish communities in Late Antiquity. Curran's reassessment demonstrates how emperors and their lawyers were influenced by ideological notions about Jews, although these were most often ambivalent and could differ from emperor to emperor.

Different types of leadership, especially that of emperors and church leaders, underwent considerable changes in the fourth century. An understanding of these changes can be gained by in-depth analyses of the ancient sources but also by application of modern theoretical notions and models. Especially in the field of sociology an extensive body of theoretical models has been developed for understanding modern leadership. Both Gerda de Kleijn and Marianne Sághy took up the challenge to try and incorporate modern theoretical notions into their contributions. De Kleijn attempts to shed light on emperors in the mid-fourth century with a particular focus on Constantius II, by testing the applicability of modern theoretical concepts such as models of transformational and transactional leadership. By way of her case study on Constantius II, De Kleijn confronts modern theoretical notions of personal and positional power as well as the so-called warrior model of autocracy with classical criteria of good leadership as these have emerged from the ancient sources. Hereby, she demonstrates the additional value of the application of modern sociological theory onto ancient

leadership. Sághy zooms in on the bishop as a rising type of leadership in the fourth century. Her contribution presents a central ecclesiastical perspective, as she traces the ways in which in Rome the famous fourth-century bishop Damasus made the martyrs available and accessible to pious crowds. Sághy sees the application of modern notions of crowd behaviour onto Rome's *populus sanctus* as a valuable additional instrument for understanding the ecclesiastical leadership of Damasus.

Carmen Cvetković continues our search for understanding religious leadership in her presentation of a case study of the fourth-century bishop Niceta of Remesiana, who traveled to Nola where he spoke on behalf of the Illyrian pro-Nicene churches. Cvetković shows how Paulinus of Nola, our most important ancient source for Niceta, builds an image of Niceta as a man with important spiritual qualities. Niceta could be considered a church politician who would be appealing to his local church community as well as influential within the transregional network of churches in the fourth century.

Julio Cesar Magalhães de Oliveira takes his readers to Late Roman North Africa, where he offers a local and regional perspective of religious power. By way of several case studies in the mid-fourth and late fourth century and focusing on outbreaks of violence and reasons for popular engagement, he analyzes how episcopal leaders could mobilize or demobilize their religious crowds. Magalhães de Oliveira shows how the application of modern theoretical concepts and notions such as 'collective action' and 'dynamics of contention' can be a fruitful tool for understanding the ancient source material.

Martijn Icks, in examining literary sources, illustrates how images of 'hiding' or 'visible' emperors were a major concern for late antique orators and authors. Visibility, a key element of accessibility, remained an important marker of 'good' rulership for late antique emperors. Whereas Icks concentrates on the general images of (in)accessible emperors, Meaghan McEvoy zooms in on the emperor Arcadius and his (in)visibility in the city of Constantinople. Although in modern literature this emperor is often portrayed as hiding from his subjects and mostly 'palace-bound', McEvoy, by way of a reassessment of the literary sources, comes to the conclusion that Arcadius appeared on many more public occasions in Constantinople, both in secular and religious contexts, than so far has been acknowledged. This emperor should therefore not be seen as 'palace-bound', but more as 'Constantinople-bound'.

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