

INTRODUCTION

CIVIL WARS IN GREEK AND ROMAN ANTIQUITY: CONTEXTUALISING DISINTEGRATION AND REINTEGRATION

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Civil wars have, at all times, been among the most serious catastrophes that can befall a community. The reason for this is that social disintegration is an inevitable aspect of civil strife. Although earthquakes, floods, crop failure and epidemics may also claim countless victims, the usual strategies employed to tackle the different contingencies in such situations do not, as a rule, challenge the internal cohesion of the community affected. In the case of external war, on the other hand, most people tend to lay the blame for their suffering primarily on the enemy, and conflicts between states may sometimes even strengthen social cohesion. This kind of coping mechanism, however, does not work for internal violence. Instead, such bloodshed rather tends to strengthen the divisions and enmities that constitute the root causes of strife. In this way, they pose a stronger and greater threat to the cohesion and foundations of a particular society than natural disasters or external attacks. In the case of civil war, resolution thus requires particular efforts, as the disintegration that has preceded it must, if possible, be reversed, the community must be restabilized, legitimate rule must be established and anarchy and the development of failed states must be avoided.¹ This process is made more difficult not least by the fact that those who have profited from the conflict are not necessarily interested in the social reintegration of those who have been defeated. Moreover, unwillingness to participate in reconciliation together with a desire for vengeance² can be important factors that guarantee the internal cohesion of the individual factions and give meaning to them; to renounce these aims in order to procure peace for society as a whole is often difficult.³

For this reason, it is obvious that an engagement with the civil wars of antiquity is of relevance to historians. It is not only the patterns of disintegration and escalation that allow us to draw conclusions regarding the causes and circumstances of the disputes; through the approaches taken towards the re-establishment of peace, insights can also be gained from the preventative measures and attempts at resolution that are attested. At the same time, the strategies implemented to

* I would like to thank Wolfgang HAVENER, Johannes WIENAND and Christian WITSCHER for helpful suggestions.

1 Cf. FEARON 2004.

2 Cf. GEHRKE 1987; RUCH 2013.

3 Cf. VEIT/SCHLICHTER 2011.

achieve peace and reintegration also inevitably indicate how the phenomena were conceptualized by the political actors involved. This is the case because successful methods of establishing peace must be socially plausible; as a result of this, we are able to draw conclusions regarding the predominant thought patterns and the general political and social conditions by way of the strategies of disintegration and reintegration and attempts to prevent (renewed) escalation as well as by the choices made regarding the propagation and staging of these attempts. In other words, in the context of a civil war, the rules by which a society exists in conjunction with the ruling structures and those underlying them become particularly clear.

In the context of an introduction to a publication that is concerned with a comparative, diachronic examination of ancient civil wars and that covers several centuries, it is necessary to turn briefly to the problem of definition. What does the term ‘civil war’ actually mean when it is used here and throughout the volume? It is more difficult to answer this question than it may at first appear.⁴ We must provide criteria that allow a meaningful classification if a comparative examination of different phenomena, which occur in different historical contexts, is to have any heuristic value at all. Quantitative approaches that focus particularly on the duration of fighting and on the number of participants are not only fundamentally problematic but also simply unsuitable in the context of antiquity, as the sources often do not allow us to make the relevant assertions. Likewise, the supposedly easy option, namely to use a very broad definition of ‘civil war’ that would include any violent dispute within a political system⁵ and that would largely treat *bellum civile* as synonymous with *bellum internum*, is hardly viable upon closer consideration. One problem lies in the fact that it is not always as easy to distinguish between internal and external conflict as it may at first seem.⁶ How would one classify a situation, for example, in which a Greek aristocrat makes use of the help of external powers in order to establish a *tyrannis* with violent means in his home polis? What if an internal conflict were to turn into a war between two states? What if, conversely, international tensions were to provide the preconditions for internal outbreaks of violence?

In addition to this, the term ‘state’ is fundamentally problematic in a pre-modern context, a fact which has often been discussed.⁷ In the present context the problem does not concern the applicability of the concept to antiquity as much as the question of differentiating between a community and a citizenry. How is it possible to determine membership without relying on individuals’ self-assignment to these groups? This is relevant, for example, when we are dealing with a war of secession: for some, such a conflict is a legitimate fight for freedom, for others it

4 Cf. (from a politological perspective) WALDMANN 1998, SAMBANIS 2004, ARMITAGE 2009 and the papers collected in NEWMAN/DEROUEN 2014. See also TASLER/KEHNE 1999.

5 Cf. KALYVAS 2007: 416: “When domestic political conflict takes the form of military confrontation or armed combat we speak of civil war”.

6 However, the Romans had different lexical methods of denoting different types of conflicts, cf. ROSENBERGER 1992.

7 See, for example, WALTER 1998.

is an illegitimate revolt and a breach of peace. The tendency of our sources to view a conflict, at least implicitly, from the perspective of one of the parties involved makes an analysis significantly more difficult. This is illustrated, for example, by the fact that the Romans tended to dismiss those who rebelled against their rule as *latrones* or λησταιί, i.e. ‘robbers’, instead of acknowledging them as enemies in war (*hostes*) in the legal sense.⁸

In addition to these fundamental problems of definition and differentiation there is a further, no less important issue. The definition of civil war as an internal conflict is so general that it lacks terminological accuracy. It is hardly sensible to simply label every instance of violent unrest, coup, revolution and pogrom as ‘civil war’. How can this problem be solved? There are two approaches possible in order to formulate criteria by which a civil war can be distinguished more clearly from other forms of internal violence, and these approaches can be combined.

The first and obvious point is the military component. A civil war is a war. Both sides act violently, unlike, for example, in the case of a pogrom or of genocide, in which the victims are not usually considered members of the group and are not classed as being of equal status but are instead considered to be outsiders. A civil war conflict may be asymmetric, but both sides have hierarchies and leaders. In this way, it has at least rudimentary forms of organization and, because of this, requires the existence of structures, which either exist before the beginning of the civil war or are created afterwards. Thus, not every rebellion is a civil war, but has the potential to become one.

It is, however, more difficult to say whether the degree to which the populace is mobilized has any significance. Given what has been discussed so far, though, it would appear entirely possible to include those conflicts in the category of civil war in which most people are merely spectators or victims. The particular context is what appears to be decisive here; if a society is largely unarmed, the number of directly involved participants to be mobilized at short notice is likely, as a rule, to be significantly lower than in the opposite case.⁹ Furthermore, it is clear that, unlike in the case of a large territorial state such as the *Imperium Romanum*, a higher percentage of the population was directly involved in conflicts as a matter of course in the case of *Anwesenheitsgesellschaften* (‘presence societies’), such as smaller Greek poleis, simply because of the lower number of citizens and the relatively confined space. The smaller the community affected the less chance one had of remaining neutral. Nevertheless, not every war, and not every civil war, is necessarily a case of total war.

The second and decisive criterion is the fact that the participants must be ‘citizens’ in the wider sense of the word, that is, members of the same group. One

8 Cf. *Dig.* 50.16.118 (Sex. Pomponius): *Hostes hi sunt, qui nobis aut quibus nos publice bellum decrevimus: ceteri latrones aut praedones sunt.* Flavius Josephus uses ληστής and στασιαστής almost synonymously: τὸ δὲ στασιῶδες καὶ ληστρικόν (*Bell. Iud.* 2.511). Those who were found guilty of committing *seditio* were often crucified (*Dig.* 48.19.38) – just think, for example, of the two ‘robbers’ that were executed together with Jesus (*Mark* 15.27).

9 Cf. ZIMMERMANN 2007.

may object that this definition strains the term ‘citizen’, a term which, in any case, is not without its problems. However, the important point is that one constituent characteristic of a civil war is that people who are (under normal circumstances) social, legal or political equals, or at least share similar status, become mortal enemies. People who were previously considered members of the same group must now be excluded explicitly, encountering whatever cruel consequences exclusion might create. Civil war is, therefore, an extreme form of social disintegration. Violence is directed against people who (up until that time) had shared the same status, people who (it must be stressed) had up until then been considered members of the community, *subjectively* if not always objectively, and not outsiders. The question of whether one is waging a fratricidal war or not is, therefore, not least a question of one’s perspective. The historian must assess and decide according to each individual case whether these circumstances prevail in each given instance.

Thus, the working definition of civil war underlying the contributions collected in this volume is as follows: civil war is a violent conflict between at least two armed parties, both of which, as a rule, have a structure that is at least paramilitary; furthermore, it is necessary for at least one of the parties in the conflict to see the enemy principally as (former) members of the same group, i.e. they themselves consider the war to be an internal affair. If this definition, then, is applied, the attempts at usurpation, for example, by Roman generals between the 1st and 5th centuries CE can, despite the objections of some scholars, by all means be classified as civil war if they resulted in military disputes among Roman armies.¹⁰ This is the case because there is nothing that argues against the idea that, for a long time, members of the imperial army considered themselves to be members of the same group, despite an increasing regionalization of recruitment structures. It is only during the course of Late Antiquity that separate identities may have formed, especially, of course, among federated troops (*foederati*).¹¹

It is true that, following this approach, many *staseis* in Greek poleis should also be termed civil war.¹² The term itself, after all, refers to the near ‘static’ aspect of these conflicts, namely the fact that they often extend over a period of time; the divisions within communities of citizens that occasionally manifested themselves through outbreaks of violence could persist for generations as a *basso continuo*. This, in turn, was a good prerequisite for the development of informal structures and hierarchies which, for their part, allowed intermittent violence to change into proper military conflicts. However, it is clear that not every instance of *stasis* was a civil war. On the one hand, the nature of the violence connected to these divisions often tended to be structural rather than physical, and on the other hand, *staseis* were often intermittent outbursts and, in this regard, to all appearances

10 Still important is HARTMANN 1982 (focusing on the usurpers of the 3rd century CE); cf. JOHNE 2008. See also the papers by Matthias HAAKE and Martijn ICKS in the present volume.

11 Cf. STICKLER 2007.

12 Cf. LEGON 1966; RUSCHENBUSCH 1978; STE. CROIX 1981; LINTOTT 1982; GEHRKE 1985; WOLPERT 2002; HANSEN 2004; SCHMITZ 2014: 95–110.

resembled pogroms.¹³ Appian, for example, writing in the 2nd century CE, made a fundamental distinction between *stasis* and war. When Sulla marched on Rome for the first time in 88 BCE and engaged the Marians in what was to all intents and purposes a battle, this fight, according to Appian, could no longer be termed *stasis* but was practically a *polemos*:¹⁴

καὶ γίνεταί τις ἀγῶν ἐχθρῶν, ὄδε πρῶτος ἐν Ῥώμῃ, οὐχ ὑπὸ εἰκόνι στάσεως ἔτι, ἀλλὰ ἀπροφασίστως ὑπὸ σάλπιγγι καὶ σημείοις, πολέμου νόμῳ.

And here a battle took place between the contending parties, the first that was fought in Rome with trumpet and signal under the rules of war, and not at all in the likeness of a faction fight.

Given the nature and extent of our sources, it is often impossible to establish with certainty whether a given instance of *stasis* can be considered a civil war according to our understanding of the term. Both situations are, however, clearly connected through the appearance of social disintegration and, in most cases, through that of violence towards fellow citizens.

Precisely because the enemies in these conflicts were not ‘the others’, it was necessary to give special justification for violence against them. Mutilation, robbery, arson, killing; none of these, as a rule, required any particular efforts of justification if terror and violence were directed against outsiders. External wars were usually relatively easy to justify,¹⁵ and there were times and places in which even piracy was not considered fundamentally dishonorable.¹⁶ However, attacks on one’s own people, perhaps friends and relatives, represented a serious breach of taboo. In order to lend legitimacy to such a breach, it was necessary that the blame for the crime should be laid on the enemy alone. This turned civil war into a breach of peace, a form of treason and a sacrilege punishable by death. It is admittedly the case that, in antiquity, the victor had the power over the life of the enemy whom he had defeated; he could kill or enslave him if he so desired. But for the reasons given above, participants in a civil war, especially the leaders of the opposing parties, had less chance of being spared, for the most part, especially if the victors believed that they needed a scapegoat.

If one takes the breaching of a taboo – by disturbing internal peace and by renouncing, at least for a time, any alliance with one’s peers – as the lowest common denominator of those conflicts which are the focus of the present volume, certain questions arise as a consequence. First, it may be assumed that, as a rule,

13 Some useful examples include the events leading to the establishing of Agathocles’ tyranny over Syracuse in 317 BCE (Diod. 19.6–8) and, less well known, the mass murder that occurred in the small city of Hypata in 177 BCE, when around 80 people were slaughtered on their return (Liv. 41.25.1–4).

14 App. *civ.* 1.7.58; trans. White; cf. App. *civ.* 1.7.55.

15 On the Roman concept of *bellum iustum* see RAMPAZZO 2005.

16 Cf. Hom. *Od.* 3.105f. Thucydides tells us that piracy was considered to be an honorable deed in some Greek communities leading up to his own time: δηλοῦσι δὲ τῶν τε ἠπειρωτῶν τινὲς ἔτι καὶ νῦν, οἷς κόσμος καλῶς τοῦτο δρᾶν, καὶ οἱ παλαιοὶ τῶν ποιητῶν τῆς πύστεις τῶν καταπλεόντων πανταχοῦ ὁμοίως ἐρωτῶντες εἰ λησταὶ εἰσιν, ὡς οὔτε ὄν πυνθάνονται ἀπαξιούντων τὸ ἔργον, οἷς τε ἐπιμελὲς εἶη εἰδέναι οὐκ ὀνειδιζόντων (Thuk. 1.5.2).

certain structures underlie the escalation of violence and that these structures make some citizens consider a civil war to be the only, albeit extreme, way out of a situation which is perceived as unbearable; is it possible for us to identify these structures? Second, it may be supposed that the need to justify oneself was particularly strong during and after a civil war, given that one's own deeds were also fundamentally reprehensible; what were the strategies employed in this context? Third, after the end of violence, a way had to be found to enable the reintegration of society, especially if it did not seem possible to physically remove all enemies; how was this made possible? All three aspects – escalation, justification and reintegration – required communicative acts. It was thanks to the ensuing tendency to publicly display and demonstrate one's own position that the title 'Performing Civil War' was given to a conference which was co-organized by the Collaborative Research Center *The Dynamics of Ritual* (University of Heidelberg) and the Center of Excellence *Cultural Foundations of Integration* (University of Konstanz) and which took place in Schloss Reisenburg near Günzburg in October 2011. It was from this conference that the present volume, focusing on the performative, ritualistic, and communicative contexts of disintegration and reintegration, arose.

The emphasis of the contributions collected in what follows lies on approximately six centuries of Roman history between the late Republic and the reign of Justinian. However, as it is difficult to understand Roman civil wars without considering the Greek east of the empire, the Greek world is not left unconsidered. The four contributions that deal with Hellas are intended, not least, to highlight more clearly the features peculiar to the *bella civilia* in the *Imperium Romanum*. On the one hand, this is because the internal conflicts in the Roman Empire took place in a large territorial state and not in a polis, the dimensions of which were, as a rule, manageable. Consequently, the conditions of communication differed fundamentally, and the question of 'flight or fight?' required different answers in this context.¹⁷ On the other hand, and above all, the issue underlying all Roman civil wars from the time of Augustus at the latest was, ultimately, to procure or preserve monarchy.¹⁸

The civil wars between 49 and 29 BCE not only marked the violent transition from the rule of the nobility in the old *res publica* to the Augustan principate, they also played a central role in the establishment of the new order and, for this reason, they played a constant role in the discourse of imperial times.¹⁹ A significant factor in the legitimization of Augustus's exceptional position, which flew in the face of the republican tradition, was the claim to have doused the flames of the civil wars and to have thus established internal peace.²⁰ This is what the phrase *pax Augusta* primarily referred to, rather than the absence of external conflicts.²¹

17 Cf. HIRSCHMANN 1986 (from a sociological perspective).

18 Cf. JOHNE 2008, SZIDAT 2010 and FLAIG 2011.

19 Cf. GOTTER 2011; AMBÜHL 2015.

20 *Res gest. div. Aug.* 34.1.

21 Cf. RUBIN 1984.

For this reason, too, guaranteeing internal peace became the central and non-negotiable prerequisite for all successors of the first *princeps* in order for their rule to be accepted.²² This was of decisive importance as the ‘constitutional’ position of the Roman emperors always remained questionable and as their position constantly required renewed justification in a context which was characterized by antimonarchic reflexes and which as a matter of principle suspected any ruler of being a tyrant.²³

It is true that, in actual fact, imperial rule quickly became accepted as inevitable. Nevertheless, it remained the case that, for the reasons outlined above, each usurpation undermined the *princeps*’ legitimacy even when he prevailed, because he had not maintained internal peace. This also applied, of course, to usurpers who were ultimately successful, such as Vespasian and Septimius Severus.²⁴ While a relatively quick reintegration and stabilization of affairs successfully took place after the two Years of the Four Emperors in 69 and 193 CE, a number of thoroughly active emperors failed in this task during the 3rd century because of a change in general conditions. It was only Diocletian and Constantine who, after a long period of fighting, largely succeeded in stabilizing the imperial monarchy and bringing internal peace to the empire, even if this was not fully achieved and only temporary.²⁵

For the danger had not been averted permanently. In the 5th century, endless civil wars, which no one was able to control, led to a decline in imperial authority and finally to the disintegration of the Western Roman Empire.²⁶ Meanwhile, in the east, the now ostentatiously Christian empire was permanently established, and thus stabilized, in the virtually impregnable stronghold of Constantinople. As the *plebs* (δῆμος) of the metropolis could lend significant support to the *Augustus* but could likewise also represent an existential threat to him,²⁷ communication in the hippodrome became even more important for the preservation of internal peace in Late Antiquity than in earlier periods. This is particularly, and repeatedly, apparent in connection with circus riots, especially in the years 512 and 532 CE.²⁸ Attempts by rebellious generals to usurp the emperor’s power, however, only became a threat again after the end of antiquity.

The developments of which I have just given a rough sketch form the framework for the articles brought together here. All of them have in common that they deal with discourses, practices and ‘stagings’ in connection with the explanation, justification, execution, avoidance or resolution of internal conflicts. The events themselves, which can, in any case, often only be reconstructed in part, with the exception of the Roman civil wars at the end of the Republic, are not the focus. Instead, attention is turned to the offers of communication made by participants

22 On the principate as a ‘system of acceptance’ see FLAIG 2011.

23 Cf. BÖRM 2015.

24 On this, see the article by Matthias HAAKE in this volume.

25 Cf. SZIDAT 2010; WIENAND 2015.

26 Cf. BÖRM 2013.

27 Cf. PFEILSCHIFTER 2013 and BELL 2013.

28 Cf. GREATREX 1997, WHITBY 1999 and MEIER 2007.

during and after the conflicts. When one's own actions and position had been achieved through a victory, how was it possible to legitimize and stabilize them despite their bloody and unlawful roots? How could the reintegration of society be achieved following a conflict? The focus of attention is, therefore, also on the reception of these phenomena in antiquity, in addition to their public stagings. It is, therefore, by no means a coincidence that several contributions attempt to focus on the role of rituals and their modifications in this context.

Thus, in the first of the four contributions on Greek history, Hans-Joachim GEHRKE turns to the classical and Hellenistic periods and connects "the institutionalization of the *gymnasium* that was completed primarily in the Hellenistic period"²⁹ with the attempt to preserve the precarious unity of the poleis, to curb the 'anger' of the younger men, which was considered a cause of discord, and thus, ultimately, to work towards preventing *stasis*. Therefore, the aim was "to include the younger generation in the polis, to socialize it appropriately and to produce citizens". This was to be done by means of appropriate *paideia*, which viewed body and mind as inseparable.

Following this, Benjamin GRAY's contribution illustrates that this form of 'gymnastic' prevention did not always succeed in avoiding *staseis*. Proceeding from the epigraphical evidence, he considers 'stagings' that were supposed to facilitate the establishment of peace in the poleis after the termination of bloodshed. Thus, a famous inscription from Nakone, which probably dates to the early Hellenistic period, is evidence for a public, symbolic reconciliation of the leading protagonists of both factions after an instance of *stasis*. An earlier citizenship oath from Dikaia also served this purpose. On the other hand, basing his view on Xenophon, GRAY ascertains that 'performances' which were dependent on the particular context can be observed in connection with *stasis*: "The same civic rituals and scripts could encourage political stability in some contexts, but aggressive factionalism in others".

The reception of an armed internal conflict in one of the most important Hellenistic historiographic sources, Polybius's *Histories*, is the focus of Boris DREYER's contribution. Polybius calls the Mercenary War after the First Punic War *stasis*³⁰ and gives a fascinating description of this state of affairs, clearly referring to Thucydides' famous "pathology of *stasis*".³¹ Regardless of whether one is inclined to follow Polybius's definition of *stasis* in this instance, it is above all his general remarks on *stasis* that are worthy of note, as the hubris and avarice of political leaders are identified as the cause of the trouble. DREYER is able to demonstrate that Polybius viewed Rome's internal unity as the decisive advantage in its struggle against Carthage for hegemony.

Henning BÖRM's contribution discusses the consequences of this Roman hegemony for the late Hellenistic poleis. By the middle of the 2nd century BCE at the latest, most Greek communities had lost much of their scope for action when it

29 On the *gymnasium* in Hellenistic times see KAH/SCHOLZ 2007.

30 Pol. I.66.10, I.67.2, I.67.5.

31 Cf. PRICE 2001: 6–66.

came to external politics. All eyes were by now on Rome. Sulla and Pompey had once again demonstrated Rome's invincibility to the Greeks when, soon after Caesar's death, the east became the battlefield of the civil war between his murderers and the *triumviri*. Now Romans were fighting Romans and the outcome was uncertain. Local conflicts appear to have escalated in this situation. *Staseis* occurred in numerous poleis, and there were significant differences between the ways in which Caesar's murderers and Caesar's adherents treated those who were considered to be members of the opposing party.

In the next contribution, Federico SANTANGELO examines a very similar circumstance. However, his focus is not on Greek but on Italian communities during the late republican civil wars; since the *bellum sociale* these communities had generally acquired the civil rights of Roman citizenship. It is true that these towns tried primarily to maneuver their way through those dangerous times unharmed, but "one should not think that the choices of the cities happened in an ideological vacuum It is not uncommon to see some cities taking very emphatic and forceful political decisions in this period". SANTANGELO argues that after the end of the fighting, it was this circumstance, in particular, that caused several communities to find themselves in the unpleasant situation of having sided openly and unambiguously with those that had ultimately been defeated. This posed problems for the communities in question as well as for the victors.

In the end, Caesar's supporter Octavian prevailed. The way in which he dealt with his victory is the focus of Wolfgang HAVENER's contribution. The *divi filius* held a three-day triumph in 29 BCE. Arguing against commonly held assumptions, HAVENER argues that Octavian did, by all means, celebrate a triumph for the civil war victory against Mark Antony on the second day, and that the triumph over Egypt was not celebrated until the third day. In the late Republic, triumphs over Romans who had been defeated in *bella civilia* were considered distasteful, but they were entirely possible. By publicly staging his victory, the future *princeps* not only marked the end of the lawless civil war period but also began the process of reintegration, which culminated in his position as monarch over the *res publica* which facilitated a legal basis, and in the propagation of the *pax Augusta*.

It is true that a new civil war was already looming after Augustus's death in 14 CE.³² However, it was not until decades later that military means once again decided the question of who was to hold power: in the first Year of the Four Emperors³³ following Nero's death the *arcanum imperii* was divulged allowing emperors to be elevated by the frontier armies far from Rome.³⁴ In the fighting between the Vitellians and the Flavians, who were ultimately victorious, the Capitol

32 Velleius Paterculus, being a contemporary of the events, claims that the Roman legions on Rhine and Danube demanded a new leader (*dux*), a new order (*status*) and a new *res publica*. According to him, the only thing missing was a person willing to lead them into battle *contra rem publicam* (Vell. Pat. 2.125.1f.). Cf. Tac. *ann.* 1.16–44; Cass. Dio 57.4f.

33 Cf. MORGAN 2006.

34 *Finis Neronis ut laetus primo gaudentium impetu fuerat, ita varios motus animorum non modo in urbe apud patres aut populum aut urbanum militem, sed omnes legiones ducesque conciverat, evulgato imperii arcano posse principem alibi quam Romae fieri* (Tac. *hist.* 1.4.2).

also went up in flames; these are the events with which Alexander HEINEMANN's contribution deals. According to him, the decision made by Vespasian's followers to occupy the Capitol made little military sense. Instead, like the reference to Jupiter, which was emphasized retrospectively, it was symbolic and was intended to present Vitellius's enemies as defenders of the *res publica*. The Flavians intended to demonstrate their legitimacy to the Roman public, not least by way of the reconstruction of the Capitoline temple. Domitian, who had played a minor role in the events of December 69 CE, later stressed this reference in his self-representation, for example, through the cult of Iuppiter Custos.

In this context, the assessment of a usurper and the question of justifying the civil war that had become unavoidable as a result of his elevation depended significantly on whether his efforts were ultimately successful, as Martijn ICKS also emphasizes in his contribution. Put briefly, the victory justified the means. As part of a diachronic comparison, ICKS analyses the reports about the proclamation as emperor of three of these 'good' pretenders, namely Vespasian, Septimius Severus and Julian. In doing so, he identifies acclamation by a Roman army and (provisional) *recusatio imperii* as the two decisive elements that are given in biographies and historiography as justifying an act of usurpation.³⁵ It was not until Late Antiquity that the question of whether the emperor's elevation had been carried out in a 'formally correct' way gained greater relevance.³⁶

In this context, the question of justification became increasingly relevant. The reason was that the era of the *pax Augusta* had come to an end, at the latest once imperial rule rapidly became more unstable after the end of the Severan dynasty, which had already been plagued by growing problems. The numerous usurpations and civil wars in the 'long 3rd century' are the subject of Matthias HAAKE's contribution. There is plenty of evidence for the self-representation and external perception of Constantius II's civil war victories, and HAAKE uses these as a starting point to examine the developments from the second Year of the Four Emperors (193 CE) onwards, using Septimius Severus, Aurelian and Constantine I as examples, and argues that the emphasis on imperial victory was of central importance. Moreover, Severus's victories over Roman citizens had a 'Janus-like' character because they were both the starting point of his rule as well as a flaw in his accomplishments. HAAKE argues that he was strongly concerned with camouflage, whereas Aurelian staged not only his victories but also his *clementia* in order to enable a reintegration of the empire, which was threatened by collapse. Finally, Constantine broke new ground, by declaring amongst other things that his rival Maxentius was a *tyrannus* in 312 CE and thus retrospectively denying the latter as much legitimacy as possible.

35 On the *recusatio imperii* see HUTTNER 2004. Although HUTTNER is correct in distinguishing a 'staged' *recusatio* from a 'consequent' *recusatio* (HUTTNER 2004: 16), one must not forget that they were *both* 'staged'. In fact, no man could be forced to become Roman emperor. Thus a 'failed' *recusatio* was just as much a ritual as a 'successful' one.

36 Cf. TRAMPEDACH 2005 and SZIDAT 2013.

The fact that Constantine had the decapitated head of his defeated enemy publicly displayed and defiled forms the starting point for Troels Myrup KRISTENSEN's contribution: what significance did publicly staged violence assume in connection with Roman civil wars, and were the different forms of violence chosen deliberately? The presentation of the decapitated head, in particular, already served as a symbol of victory before 312 CE; KRISTENSEN is right to emphasize "the immense rhetorical and symbolic power of decapitation" and presents the hypothesis that the fundamental purpose of this particular kind of violence was to legitimize an individual's rule.

The *bellum civile* between Constantius II and his cousin Julian, imminent in the autumn of 361 CE, was avoided owing to the sudden death of the *senior Augustus*; but when Julian arrived at the eastern court in Constantinople, he had to deal with representatives of an élite who had supported his enemy. Considering the inauguration speech of his new *consul* Claudius Mamertinus at New Year's Day 362, in particular, and the numismatic evidence, Johannes WIENAND analyses the communicative strategy of the new monocrat in the first months of his reign as sole *Augustus*. WIENAND comes to the conclusion that in the early post-conflict period Julian did not try to win his cousin's former followers over for his own purposes, as could be expected. Rather, a comparably wide segment of the administrative élite of the East was branded responsible for the conflict. Julian thus intended to display his qualities as a 'law's avenger' and 'defender of Roman liberty', but the approach was not entirely conducive to reintegration.

The face of emperors and pretenders plays an important role in Marco MATTHEIS's contribution. Following a ruler's proclamation, portraits of him were sent to the most important towns, which then had to side with either the sender's opponents or his followers by accepting or rejecting the portrait. MATTHEIS interprets this custom as a ritual and makes it his starting point for more general considerations regarding the significance of ritual in the context of late Roman civil wars.³⁷ The custom made neutrality impossible, as there was no third option available; one either declared oneself for or against a particular candidate. According to MATTHEIS, these instances of staging were fundamental channels through which rulers were able to make their acceptance by the populace visible in the case of success. In this way, they were able to underline their claim that they ruled legitimately and to justify the civil war for which they were in part responsible.

But it was not just the *civitates* that were important addressees of a ruler's communication. Following the previous contributions, Peter BELL considers another group, namely the 'circus factions', the importance of which with regard to the preservation of imperial power in Constantinople was to exceed that of the *palatini* in the further course of Late Antiquity.³⁸ He stresses the fact that the *factiones* were heterogeneous with regard to their social, legal and ethnic background and that they played an important role in the stabilization of the imperial position. They had powerful and even imperial patrons, and in BELL's view, throughout

37 Cf. MATTHEIS 2014.

38 Cf. WHITBY 1999. On acclamations in Late Antiquity see WIEMER 2013.

most of Late Antiquity, they usually helped to prevent sedition rather than causing it. But if the court did not succeed in using the rivalries and conflicts between the Greens and the Blues to its advantage, this could lead to a dangerous public delegitimization of the government, a factor which in 602 and 610 CE contributed significantly to the fall of two emperors.

Finally, Johannes WIENAND's discussion of an exceptional specimen of a sestertius minted under the emperor Maximinus Thrax³⁹ forms an epilogue. After the overturn of the emperor in 238 CE, someone reworked the coin in such a way that it showed the unpleasant fate of the ruler whose decapitated head was paraded through Rome on a lance. This impressive case of a *damnatio memoriae* presents rare evidence for the way in which the images and interpretive patterns emerging from civil war and civil war victory were received and transformed by the populace affected. As such, the coin is a fitting conclusion for the present volume on the cover of which it is depicted.

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39 Cf. BÖRM 2008, HAEGEMANS 2010 and DEPPMEYER 2013.

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