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Maintaining Loyalty, Declaring Continuity, Legitimizing Power

Ludi Saeculares of Septimius Severus
as a Manifestation of the Golden Age

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 3

CONTENTS 4

NOTE ON REFERENCES 7

1. INTRODUCTION 8
  1.1. Crisis and Change 8
  1.2. Question and Methods 14
  1.3. Tools for Remembering: The Evidence 20
    1.3.1. Memoria 20
    1.3.2. The Inscription 22
    1.3.3. Literature 24
    1.3.4. Numismatic Evidence 30
  1.4. Severus, the Ludi and the Studies 32
    1.4.1. The Ludi Saeculares 32
    1.4.2. The Severan Period 34
    1.4.3. Identity 37

2. ORGANIZING THE LUDI SAECULARES 39
  2.1. Funding the Festivals 39
    2.1.1. Troubles and Tensions – Severus and the Senate 42
  2.2. Purification of the Holy Grounds 49

3. THE OPENING NIGHT AND DAY 55
  3.1. The Rituals of the First Night 55
    3.1.1. Towards a Happy Destiny – Sacrifice to Moirae 57
    3.1.2. The Witness of the Vestal Virgins 59
    3.1.3. Pacifying the Gods: The Sellisternium of the Matrons 63
  3.2. Rites of the Opening Day: The God and His Servant 69
    3.2.1. Juppiter - a God and His Changing Fortunes 70
4. DAY TWO: WOMEN TAKE THE STAGE

4.1. The Second Night: A ‘Prelude’?
4.2. The Second Day: Celebrating Juno
   4.2.1. Mother(s) of the Golden Age
   4.2.2. Towards Imperial Concordia
   4.2.3. The Vestals stand Still
   4.2.4. The Ludi Honorarii for the True Romans


5.1. The Third Night, a Night of Abundance
   5.1.1. Nocturnal Goddess of the Golden Age
   5.1.2. Food and Imperial Paternalism
   5.1.3. The Guardians of Storage
5.2. The Third Day: Final Sacrifices
   5.2.1. Apollo, the God of Many Roles
   5.2.2. Diana, the Goddess of Many Roles
   5.2.3. Written in the Stars: Severus and Astrology

6. THE CLOSING ACTS: THE CARMEN SAECULARE AND THE TROJAN GAMES

6.1. Carmen Saeculare
   6.1.1. The Severan Poem and its Performers
   6.1.2. Opening Verses: Enter Apollo and Diana
   6.1.3. The New Leaders of the Golden Era
   6.1.4. Cities, Shores, Golden Fields
      6.1.4.1. Italia, Mistress of the World?
      6.1.4.2. The Granary of the Empire
   6.1.5. Blessings for the Army
6.2. The Trojan Games
6.3. The Audience of the Ludi Saeculares

7. CONCLUSION
NOTE ON REFERENCES

As this study is dealing with ancient history, it should be pointed out that one of the most important sources for this work, the history of Cassius Dio, is a rather problematic case considering the system of reference. The older, standard Boissevain edition uses one system when referring to Dio. However, the later Loeb edition by Earnest Cary is a slightly different case. In translating Dio’s history, Cary carried out further editing, and consequently created a new reference system while preserving the Boissevain numbering. This sometimes creates a slight confusion when referring to Dio, as both editions are still used today. Therefore, it should be noted that in this study I refer to the Loeb edition and follow Cary’s system.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Crisis and Change

The often idealized era of Roman history, the reign of the “good” Antonine rulers during the second century, eventually came to halt with the death of emperor Marcus Aurelius in AD 180. Little later, in AD 190’s, a civil war broke out. Septimius Severus, commander of the Pannonian legions, rose to power, crushing both of his main opponents, Pescennius Niger and Clodius Albinus. The fact that an emperor took control by means of a civil war was an extraordinary event for the Romans of the period, as there had not been a Roman civil war for over a hundred years. After the war of AD 69, “the year of the four emperors”, which saw the birth of the Flavian dynasty, major civil disturbances had been very much absent.

Lucius Septimius Severus, born in Lepcis Magna in North Africa in AD 145, acted as a governor of the Pannonia during the last phase of the Antonine era. Severus took power after the reign of Commodus (AD 180—192) and two short-lived emperors Pertinax and Didius Julianus. Supported by Rhine and Danube legions he marched to Rome in AD 193 – before that he had formed an alliance with Clodius Albinus, commander of Roman troops in Britain. When Severus was near the capital most of the troops there decided to support him – most likely contacted by Severus before he entered the city – and eventually the senate named Severus emperor. Didius Julianus was murdered. After entering the city, Severus secured his own position by replacing the powerful praetorian guard with his own supporters. This was, however, followed by a civil war against Pescennius Niger, commander of the Roman troops in Syria. The war was over in AD 194, when the army of Severus won the last troops of Niger and the usurper himself was killed in Antioch (although the city of Byzantium, which remained loyal to Niger, was only captured in AD 196). After the victory, Septimius Severus made a brief campaign in the east, invading northern Mesopotamia with some success.

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1 Pannonia was a Roman province, bounded north and east by Danube, locating in an area now belonging to western Hungary, eastern Austria, northern Croatia, north-western Serbia, Slovenia, western Slovakia and northern Bosnia-Herzegovina.


4 War against Niger: Birley, pp. 108—120.
Year AD 195 was a crucial one for the birth of the Severan dynasty. At that time, Severus’ son Caracalla was appointed to the rank of Caesar, making him the successor of his father. Another civil war broke out, as the appointment went against the agreement established between Severus and his former ally, Clodius Albinus, who was supposed to be the successor. Albinus declared himself emperor, but was not backed by enough legions; he was defeated in Lugdunum, Gaul, and killed in AD 197. After his victory, Severus briefly returned to Rome where he had 64 senators arrested for being too sympathetic towards Albinus; it is claimed that 29 of them were executed. The last phase of the civil wars was now over and Severus’ position was much more secure.\(^5\)

The internal struggles of the empire during the late second century were for many Romans a shocking experience; this is at least what the contemporary historians express in their writings. Apparently, the period right before Severus, when Commodus (the son of Marcus Aurelius) was emperor, was already filled with problems.\(^6\) According to Cassius Dio, writing as a contemporary witness, something went badly wrong at the end of the second century. He describes the period after emperor Marcus Aurelius’ death (in AD 180) as:

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\text{περὶ οὖν ἡδη ῥητέον, ἀπὸ χρυσῆς τε βασιλείας}
\text{ἐξ σιδηράς καὶ κατιομένην τῶν τε πραγμάτων}
\text{τοῖς τότε Ρωμαίοις καὶ ἡμῖν νῦν καταπέσοισις}
\text{τῆς ἱστορίας.}\]

These rather pessimistic lines indicate that for Dio, something remarkable was happening during his own lifetime. What is more, he does not make note, in his history, that things became normalized after Commodus. On the contrary, civil war broke out, and after Commodus’ reign Septimius Severus took power. For Dio, there was a break between the past and present in AD 180, and the age of Severus belongs to the beginning of a new (worse) era, even if Dio is not entirely hostile towards Severus.

The same kind of thoughts can be found in the texts of another early third century writer, Herodian. His choice of subject indicates that he perceives the period following Marcus Aurelius’ death as special. In fact, as his work on the reign of Aurelius is remarkably short, this might be interpreted as a hint that this “good” emperor was included in his account for just one purpose: to show the reader

\(^5\) War against Albinus: Birley, pp. 121—128.
\(^6\) Cass. Dio 72.1.1; Herod. 1.3.1—3; HA Comm. 15.5.
\(^7\) Cass. Dio 72.36.4: “This matter must be our next topic; for our history now descends from kingdom of gold to one of iron and rust, as affairs did for the Romans of that day” (transl. Earnest Cary).
the difference between the troubled times of Commodus (and the Severans) and the good days of Marcus Aurelius. As Herodian writes about the period:

"εἰ γοῦν τις παραβάλλων πάντα τὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ Σεβαστοῦ χρόνον, ἡ δὲ Ῥωμαίων δυναστεία μετέπεσεν ἐξ μνημοσύνην, οὐκ ἂν εὑροί έπειτα περί ποι διακοσίων μέχρι τῶν Μάρκου καιρόν οὕτε βασιλείων οὕτως ἐπιλήσθησαν διαδοχάς οὕτε πολέμων ἐμφαλίσαν τε καὶ ἄνων τούτων ήμεισσήν καὶ έν πολλοῖς βαρβάροις, τυφλοῖς ἑρωιδῶν καὶ ἀέρων θηρών τυράννων τοι καὶ βασιλέων βίους παραδόξους πρότερον ή σπανίως ή μηδ' ὅλως μνημονεύθεντάς." 8

Pessimism is clearly present in his account: wars, destruction, disturbances, and tyrants. While he might have intended to entertain his readers with descriptions of these troubles, it is difficult to believe that he, and his audience, did not experience these things, given the accuracy of his words. Although a wish to entertain his readers is probably one reason why he highlights these troubles, it is also hard to believe that his words did not base on anything he and his audience had experienced. After all, he was writing a history of his own time. Even with all its possible exaggeration, Herodian’s history from its own part strengthens the idea of the “age of rust” that, for Dio, begun in 180. 9

Pessimism towards one’s own time was thus quite a common phenomenon in Roman literature. However, it may be suggested that the early third century was seen in an especially gloomy light by contemporary writers. First of all, even if there several writers of the early imperial period complained about the decline culture, politics and ethics, the nature of the complaints seems to be somewhat different from those in early third century literature which lamented decay in all sections of public life. Another point to be remembered is that the second century, up until the reign of Commodus, was a period when Roman self-reliance was probably higher than it had ever been. Troubles began only at the end of that century, first with military catastrophes suffered by Marcus Aurelius, followed by the troublesome reign of Commodus. Later, with the break out of civil war which saw the rise to power of the Severan dynasty, a general pessimism probably spread into

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8 Herod. 1.1.4: "A comparative survey of the period of about two hundred years from Augustus – the point at which the regime became a monarchy – to the age of Marcus would reveal no such similar succession of reigns, variety of fortunes in both civil and foreign wars, disturbances among the provincial populations and destruction of the cities in both Roman territory and many barbarian countries. There have never been such earthquakes and plagues, or tyrants and emperors with such unexpected careers, which were rarely if ever recorded before” (transl. C.R. Whittaker).
9 See also Herod. 2.10.3, where he states (using the imagined speech of Septimius Severus) that up until Marcus’ reign (Aurelius), the empire was ruled with dignity and was looked upon with awe, until it all changed under Commodus.
society. Even if the Gibbonian views of the decline of the empire from this point onwards are somewhat over-simplified, it nevertheless seems that at least the members of the upper class saw their own age as a critical period for Rome. Of course, whether these events can be claimed “crisis” or not is a different question; the answer probably depends on what we mean by the word “crisis”. Today many scholars argue that there was no real crisis during the early third century, however, the idea that some kind of a major change occurred back then has not been disputed.

When Septimius Severus became emperor, he tried to secure his power by various means; he not only crushed his opponents by military force, but also wanted to create a public image of himself as a man who had brought peace and who had restored and renewed the empire after the hard times of civil struggles. One of the most noteworthy expressions of his propaganda was his grand building programme for the capital, the most remarkable one conducted in the capital since the days of Augustus. The restored ancient buildings, as well as the completely new ones, were a concrete message about how the new emperor had brought prosperity to Rome. Another remarkable event for the new emperor occurred in AD 204, when Severus celebrated the extremely rare religious festival, the *ludi saeculares*.

In order to understand the importance of the *ludi saeculares* for Severus, one ought to first appreciate their uniqueness—after all, the games consisted of a ceremony that was only supposed to be celebrated once in about a hundred years. The games had already been held in the republican

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11 In his classic study, Edward Gibbon considered the Second Century of imperial Rome as more or less the best period mankind had ever witnessed, and although he does give some credit to Septimius Severus as well, still considers the new emperor as the “principal author of the decline of the Roman Empire”. Gibbon, Edward, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Wordsworth, Hertfordshire 1998, pp. 65—66, 106.


period, in 249 BCE and again in 146 BCE.\textsuperscript{15} It seems that their purpose was to celebrate the passing of an era, or an “age” (\textit{saeculum}).\textsuperscript{16} However, it looks certain that when Augustus, after a break of about 130 years, organized the next celebrations in 17 BCE, the festival had a completely new look compared to the republican games.\textsuperscript{17} The Augustan rituals began on the night of May 31st and lasted for three nights and days. The fearful gods of the underworld, Dis and Proserpina, who had been the main deities of the secular games in the republican period, were replaced by a number of new gods and goddesses: Moirae (Fates), Eileithyia and Terra Mater. All of them were Greek deities and received a sacrifice according to the Greek rite\textsuperscript{18} in the nocturnal rites on the Campus Martius.\textsuperscript{19} Daytime rituals included offerings to more the traditional Roman gods Juppiter Optimus Maximus, Juno Regina, Apollo and Diana. These daytime celebrations took place mainly on the Capitoline hill, but on the last day, the ritual was performed on the Palatine hill. The festivals also included purificationary rites (\textit{sellisternium}) performed by 110 married women, and a hymn that was sung by 27 boys and girls (\textit{Carmen Saeculare}). It could be claimed that the games of the imperial period seem to follow the Augustan model quite closely, despite the fact the Augustan games and the Severan games in AD 204 are the only occasions on which we have a good deal of evidence left: an inscription containing the program of the festival, erected on the Campus Martius, survives from both festivals.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{15} Liv. 7.2; per. 49. Festivals of 249 CE are the first occasion that we can be quite sure of, although ancient authors report that there were three games before those: in 509 BCE (Cens. 17.10; Plut. \textit{Publ.} 21; Val.Max. 2.4; Zos. 2.1—3), 449 BCE (Cens. 17.10) and 348 BCE (Cens. 17.10; Zos. 2.1—3). For questions of chronology, see Appendix 3.

\textsuperscript{16} The idea of “ages” or “eras” in history was quite common in antiquity – in Greek, Etruscan, as well as in Roman culture. Censorinus deals with both Greek and Etruscan views (Cens. 17.1—5). It seems, however, that Roman view was influenced especially by Etruscans – at least in the late republican period. See Hall, John F., \textit{The Saeculum Novum of Augustus and its Etruscan Antecedents}. In \textit{ANRW} II.16.3 (1986), pp. 2567—2569. The idea of \textit{saeculum} is based on cyclic theories of time, which were very common thoughts in the ancient world. Lots of research has been carried out on the subject, the classic study being Eliade, Mircea, \textit{Le Mythe de l´eternel retour: archétypes et répétition}. Editions Gallimard, Paris 1949.

\textsuperscript{17} Beard, Mary, North, John & Price, Simon, \textit{Religions of Rome. Vol. 1: A History}. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999, pp. 201—206. It should be noticed, however, that even if the nature of the Augustan games changed compared to the republican ones, some elements of imperial celebration probably came from the earlier tradition, like the wooden theatres without seats and the chorus of 27 girls and boys. Poe, Joe Park, “The Secular Games, the Aventine, and the Pomerium”. In \textit{Cl. Ant.} 3 (1984), pp. 64—65.

\textsuperscript{18} Greek rite was, in fact, a very Roman way of sacrificing. It seems that the concept of the Greek rite was created in Rome, when the Romans wanted to underline the Greek nature of some rituals. See Scheid, John, ‘Graeco Ritu: a typically Roman way of honouring the gods’. In \textit{HSCP} 97 (1995), pp. 15—31.

\textsuperscript{19} All these Greek deities were previously without a cult in the Roman state. Feeney, Denis, ‘Ludi Saeculares and Carmen Saeculare’. In Ando, Clifford (ed.), \textit{Roman Religion}. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2003, pp. 107—108.

\textsuperscript{20} The next celebrations were organized by Claudius in 47 AD, only 64 years after Augustus (mentioned in Tac. \textit{Ann.} 11.11) to celebrate the 800\textsuperscript{th} birthday of Rome. It seems that, for the emperor, the proper way of celebrating the birthday was to use the rituals of \textit{ludi saeculares} as they were supposed to celebrate a new age. In 88 Domitian organized the games again, about (but not exactly) a hundred years after Augustus. Domitian games are better known because of the coinage that depicts the Domitian rituals; for a study, see Sobocinski, Melanie Grunow, ‘Visualizing Ceremony: The Design and Audience of the \textit{Ludi Saeculares} Coinage of Domitian’. In \textit{AJA} 110.4 (2006), pp. 581—602. After Domitian Antoninus Plus in 148 followed the games of Claudius and again celebrated the birthday of Rome (Aur. \textit{Vict.}
The most important detail to understand about the nature of the games, however, is that from the time of Augustus onwards, the *ludi saeculares* were a religious ritual that celebrated the beginning of a so called Golden Age. The concept of a Golden Age was often connected to that of a decadence created by civil wars, for example. This can especially be seen in the Roman literature of the Augustan period. The “proper moral values of old” were seen as central to the Golden Age. According to Horace, for example, the two main reasons for the civil wars were the neglect of the gods and the adultery of married women. As Roman women behaved immorally, their sons were not properly educated. As a result, when they grew up, they become bad soldiers and bad citizens. The problem increased with every generation, and the only way to stop this evil process was to both return to the proper ways of worshipping the gods, and create a moral reform. These ideas became the central policy for Augustus when he established his rule after the civil war. The theme of Augustan *ludi saeculares* was to celebrate the moral rebirth of Rome and thus the new Golden Age. In that sense, the *ludi saeculares* were, in Roman tradition, the beginning of a new, better era, in comparison with the turmoil of the civil war that had just ended.

It can easily be noticed that the situation for Septimius Severus was very similar to that of Augustus, as he too was an emperor who had gained power by fighting against other Romans. Moreover, memories of the Augustan civil wars appear to have still been alive in the early third century, (no doubt because of the own civil war experiences of people of that time) and were considered as warnings of what might happen if things went wrong again. In addition, it seems that the *ludi* of both Augustus and Septimius Severus celebrated a victory over Parthians, as Augustus had regained the military standards that were lost in the catastrophic military operations of Crassus in 53 BCE (apparently Augustus did this more by means of diplomacy than conquests). Severus conducted rather successful military operations in the east a few years before his *ludi* and it is probably not a coincidence that in AD 204 a special coinage issue was struck to celebrate the

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*Caes. 15). For the list of the imperial games, see Pighi, G.B., *De ludi saecularibus populi Romani Quiritum libri sex* (2nd edition). Verlag P. Schippers N.V., Amsterdam 1965. pp. 102—103; see also Appendix 3.

21 Liebeschuetz, John, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion*. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1979, pp. 90—94. This question will be dealt more closely in Chapter 3.


23 At least demonstrated by vivid descriptions by Cassius Dio of the civil wars, fought during the last decade of the Roman republic, as well as the policies of Septimius Severus.
Parthian victory.\textsuperscript{24} It is thus very easy to notice how important an occasion the \textit{ludi saeculares} were for Septimius Severus. This rare ritual gave him the opportunity to present himself as a bringer of a Golden Age after the turmoil of the civil war alongside a successful campaign in Parthia. By doing this, he was also able to identify himself with the first emperor of Rome, Augustus.\textsuperscript{25}

\textbf{1.2. Question and Methods}

The \textit{ludi saeculares} of AD 204, organized by Severus, are the subject of my study. My purpose is to find out how Septimius Severus used the \textit{ludi} to legitimize his power in the new situation; that is, his rise to power by means of a civil war and as his establishment of a new dynasty. To be more specific, my aim is to examine which messages he conveyed through the means of these celebrations and how he consequently justified his power following the civil wars. This study will examine the ideas and values employed and brought forth by Severus through the means of the celebrations as he created and reformed an "imagined community". As we shall see, the \textit{ludi saeculares} can be seen by its nature as an identity-defining ritual, a manifestation of a new age, which symbolizes the values of the Roman commonwealth. I will concentrate on these values.\textsuperscript{26}

My study focuses on the ritual. The theoretical starting-point of my research is the idea of a ritual as a process that builds collective identity (\textit{communitas}) by means of representation. This means that, different people or groups taking part in a ritual can symbolically represent a much bigger group; they create feelings of collective identity and loyalty, and in some cases, even affection. In addition, it is frequent that a person (or a group) representing the \textit{communitas} is one possessing the “power to protect”, as Jan Koster has noticed. To achieve this quality, a person must regain a certain mystical authority which separates her/him from his audience, making her/him an object that takes the person apart from the full familiarity. This mystical authority is created in rituals.\textsuperscript{27} On the other


\textsuperscript{25} As was the case with Augustus, there is also a lot of resemblance with Severans and the Flavian dynasty; the Flavians were also outsiders who took power by the means of civil war, propagated by a grand building programme in the capital – and held \textit{ludi saeculares} in 88, following the example of Augustus (see Chapter 3.2.1 for Flavians).

\textsuperscript{26} It should be stressed that my study is not supposed to be a line by line commentary of the inscription containing the programme; instead, I concentrate on the “key points” of the programme of the \textit{ludi saeculares} used in building and strengthening the Severan dynasty.

\textsuperscript{27} Koster, Jan, ‘Ritual performances and the politics of identity. On the functions and uses of ritual’. In \textit{JHP} 4.2 (2003), pp. 223—225. As Koster mentions, the object that symbolizes a larger group does not have to be a person or a group, but can also be a visual symbol (cross, crescent, star of David, swastika, hammer-and-sickle, corporate logo and so on).
hand, ritual activities were (and are) important for the community as they represent a sort of mythical starting point. Rituals generally tend to situate themselves at “point zero”, as Jorgen Sorensen has put it; they operate at the turning point of the community, reducing things to their potentiality. They are therefore seen as a certain “beginning” for those who participate in it.  

Taking these aspects into consideration, *ludi saeculares* are seen in this study as a “point zero”, a starting (or turning) point for the community, beginning of a Golden Age, which defines the nature and identity of the *communitas*. Against this background, the rituals of the games will be analyzed; I will deal with them in the order in which they appear in the inscription, from the organization of the games (which is also described in the record), to the final rituals. In the context of my study, it is essential to understand that even if I deal with a religious ritual, my main focus is not primarily on the religious history of ancient Rome; I am not studying the role of *ludi saeculares* in the Roman religion. Instead, I study the games as a mirror for Roman society in the early third century. For my research the games with such a unique character and a central role in the Severan propaganda portrait the political and social vision of Septimius Severus; they are a message that contains the image of a Roman society that the new emperor wanted to highlight. In my research, these games of unique character and central role in Severan propaganda, are regarded as portraying Septimium Severus’ political and social visions. They provided an image of Roman society which the new emperor wished to highlight.

The Severan *ludi saeculares* were part of a long tradition of games: by the year AD 204 they had already been celebrated at least six times. Augustan and Claudian games had been recorded in inscriptions in a similar manner as the Severan games were, and it is very probable that other games were as well. The tradition of the games was thus well known and therefore the rituals recorded were very similar (but not identical, as we shall see). Indeed, perhaps the most important idea that can be connected to the Roman religious rites was traditionalism, as indicated by the inscriptions. The way to legitimate rituals as “real” or “genuine” was not so much based on theological dogmas, but rather on the claim that the way they were celebrated was part of a long tradition. However, in my opinion, the “meaning”, or to be more precise, the manner in which the contemporary audience interpreted the rituals, was not the same throughout the centuries despite the similarities in the

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celebrations. I suggest that, on the contrary, even a ritual which remained similar in terms of its performance could be interpreted differently during the different times.  

If we look at the Roman calendar, for example, we see a lot of religious festivals that were celebrated every year – much more often than ludi saeculares. However, it seems that even in these cases there was room for new interpretations. This occurred because there was no main narrative thread, a “grand story”, in Roman religion that could link the festivals together and provide fixed “meanings” for these occasions. In other words, a religious ritual which was performed in a very similar manner throughout the centuries, probably had a very different significance for a peasant in archaic Rome and for someone living in the urban capital centuries later. In the scope of my study, it is essential to notice the certain uniqueness of the rituals, and their close relation with their own time, as well as the values of the period. As a consequence, when we evaluate the significance of a religious festival – and especially in the case of an extremely rare celebration as ludi saeculares – we must always examine the contemporary social and political context as well.

One very characteristic feature for Roman state religion, in comparison to Christianity, for example, is that it was not built around theology. There were apparently no holy texts giving clear answers to religious problems (as Christians had); in other words, there appears to be no strict religious dogmas. Even a clergy was lacking. There were priests, but their duty was mainly to perform and organize the religious rites and celebrations that were ordered by politicians, usually by the senate. It is important to remember that politics and religion could not really be separated in Roman society – religious festivals were civic festivals as well. As a consequence, even if the celebration did have an official meaning of some sort, in practice, the significance of the ritual altered very much in different times, because of changing social or political situation. There are writings from Classical antiquity which could be considered as “theological”, such as Cicero’s De divinatione and De

33 A similar view is given by David Cannadine, for example, in his article about the rituals of the British monarchy. As Cannadine writes: “So, in order to rediscover the “meaning” of royal ritual…it is necessary to relate it to the specific social, political, economic and cultural milieu within which it was performed. With ceremonial, as with political theory, the very act of locating the occasion or the text in its appropriate context is not merely to provide the historical background, but actually to begin the process of interpretation”. Cannadine, David, ‘The Context, Performance and Meaning of the Ritual: The British Monarchy and the ‘Invention of Tradition’, c. 1820—1077’. In Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, Terence (eds.), The Invention of Tradition. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1983, p. 105.
34 Beard, North & Price, pp. 27—30; 54—67; 101—118; 125—40.
natura deorum, but these are first and foremost philosophical texts. The traditional cultic system, on the other hand, continued for centuries despite the philosophers’ discussions. The central aspect of Roman religion was ritual action, and especially sacrifice. The lack of a theological system in sacrifice is especially noteworthy; for example, the question of the position of the gods in ritual was perhaps dealt with in philosophical discussions, but it probably never affected the performance of the ritual itself. This differs from Christianity, as Christians emphasize theology and dogma over ritual.  

As previously mentioned, the ludi saeculares were traditionally considered as a celebration marking a transition from an old period to a new Golden Age. It is probable that this idea was very relevant for the Severan games, as the civil war had only recently finished. In this sense, the ludi saeculares of AD 204 were indeed a manifestation of new, peaceful era (as was the case for the Augustan games in 17 BCE). At the same time, the games consisted of a grand-scale purificatory ritual, during which the community left the gloomy period of the civil war behind. In other words, the games were closely connected to a period of crisis. It has been claimed that it is often during ages of anxiety that communities start to evaluate, re-evaluate, and even invent, some very fundamental questions, like those of one’s identity. As Kobena Mercker notes, identity becomes a problem only when something previously considered as stable begins to change as a result of uncertainty and suspicion.  

Rome was indeed, sociologically, a very fragile construction, which was constantly at risk of collapsing into chaos (such as a civil war). Avoiding such social anarchy thus required an ongoing reproduction of Roman identity. As the ludi saeculares were a ritual so closely related to the occurrence of a major crisis (the civil war), it accordingly seems that they dealt more with the communitas’ identity than the more regular rituals did.

The question of identity is a complicated one. It can be described as an abstract concept associated with the loyalty of an individual to a larger group, based on cultural, national, political, sexual or

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35 The nature of Roman religion and the centrality of ritual, especially sacrifice, is well presented in Gradel, pp. 1—26.
other similar grounds. In his classic study, Benedict Anderson considered states as imagined communities. They are imagined since most of the people belonging to a society do not personally meet or even know most of the people belonging to the same community, yet consider themselves as members of the same commonwealth and associate themselves with it. Therefore the cohesion of the community needs common stories and symbols to which the members can associate themselves. In this sense, national culture is a discourse, a way of constructing significances to which one can identify. These significances can be found in the stories, memories and pictures concerning the nation. One important function of the aforementioned rituals is to create and sometimes even invent these traditions: as Eric Hobsbawm noted, it is a very common practice to use old materials, like ancient customs, for novel purposes. Rituals are a prime example of this process: in modern societies rituals are created, for example, around festival pavilions, structures for display of flags, temples for offerings, processions, gun salutes, government delegations in honour of the festival, oratory and so on. The process of inventing tradition occurs especially when a society goes through a rapid transformation or destruction of old social patterns; essentially, when a society goes through major change.

Obviously, studies such as those of Anderson and Hobsbawm are mostly related to modern nationalism, not ancient history. However, from my point of view, they are useful tools for the ancient historian as well. Even if strictly speaking, nationalism, as a concept, belongs to the modern era, the idea of togetherness and the importance of rituals to strengthen the community are not just modern phenomena. Cultural identities can be traced to the ancient world as well, and one of these identities was probably that of Romanness (Romanitas). For example, G. Woolf defines Romanness as membership to a political and religious community holding common values and mores (which means customs, morality and way of life). Of course, this does not mean that it was the only, or necessarily even the most important, identity for the ordinary people of the empire. An individual could include her/himself in many categories, like an ethnic, age, gender, social, work, or religious group. Moreover, identity is never fixed but constantly changing, and affected by historical

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39 Anderson, Benedict, Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (Revised Edition). Verso, London 1983. It should be stressed that for Anderson, the fact that national cultures are imagined does not mean that they are not real. It could be argued that even if national cultures are perhaps sometimes based on a historical or traditional myth, they are nevertheless a social reality.
41 Woolf, G., ‘Becoming Roman, staying Greek: culture, identity and the civilizing process in the Roman East’. In PCPS 40 (1994), p. 120.
42 Huskinson, Janet, ‘Looking for Identity and Power’. In Huskinson, Janet (ed.), Experiencing Rome. Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire. Routledge, London 2000, pp. 10—11. According to Huskinson, it is sometimes claimed that some forms of identity, such as ethnicity and gender, are determined by non-negotiable factors, like
events, other cultures and so on. However, it could be argued that one of the cornerstones of Roman identity was religion, and especially the accurate performance of the ritual; it constituted a vital component of Romanness, linking the past with the present and future (by means of traditionalism that was connected with ritual action, as discussed above).

Another important concept connected to the games is the question of power. The ludi were celebrated by a man who had become the emperor only quite recently, and most importantly, by the means of war. This indicates that the reign of Septimius Severus was probably a remarkable break in continuity for many contemporaries. Therefore the ludi saeculares, as a unique and grandiose event for the contemporary audience, was for the emperor a chance to manifest his power and legitimize his rule. It should be remembered that even if Severus had been in power for over ten years by AD 204, he had been very much absent from the capital. Before spending a few years in the city of Rome between AD 204—207, he only had been present in the capital for about twelve months at a time. He was therefore probably still a somewhat unfamiliar figure for the senatorial and other upper classes of the city of Rome, which was still the most influential social class of the empire. This means that there remained a need for Severus to legitimize his power in the capital itself.

David Beetham has described legitimacy as a multi-dimensional concept, containing three distinct levels: power, rules and consent. Power should conform to established rules; the rules should be able to be justified by reference to beliefs shared by both dominate and subordinate and, finally, there should be evidence of consent by the subordinate to the particular power relation. Even if the study of Beetham deals principally with modern social science, I find it a useful tool for my study as well. As Beetham himself mentions, this approach sees the concept of legitimation related to biology; on the other hand, this “essentialist” view has been challenged by more relative view. In relation to Roman history and culture, it seems that, for example, gender was a concept that was constructed by one’s situation or behaviour, not only by biology. It should also be remembered that due to the lack of evidence, Roman identity can properly be studied mainly from the viewpoint of an emperor and the literate elite. However, since the emperor was the single most important symbol uniting the culturally heterogeneous empire, the meanings and values that were propagated from the very top of society were probably at least very important, if not the only way for people to identify themselves as Romans.

45 Severus in Rome before 204: see Birley, p. 169. For the role of the audience of Severan ludi saeculares see chapter 6.3.
power relations and the different ways those relations are organized. Power relations, on the other hand, are central as a concept for my study.

1.3. Tools for Remembering: The Evidence

1.3.1. Memoria

The main sources for my study is the inscription describing the rituals of *ludi saeculares* of AD 204, the literature of the early third century (the most important being the works of the historians of this period) and the coinage of Septimius Severus. All three “groups” provide their own kind of problems, however. When using them as a source, one has to ask how they can be used: to which kind of questions different types of evidence can provide answers. However, before analyzing the different types of sources more closely, the concept of *memoria* should first be understood, as one of the main functions of the different kinds of evidence we are dealing with here was precisely to preserve something in the (public) memory.

*Memoria* was a concept of extreme importance in Roman political life. When, for example, a person received public honours and statues, his (or sometimes her) virtues were emphasized for the whole community – it became his/her public *memoria*. Members of the aristocratic families kept the *memoria* of their ancestors alive by means of grand scale memorials as well as extravagant public funerals. From the late republican period onwards, many Roman noble families were very rich, but lacked political power as it had been concentrated in the hands of a few individuals. As a result, the wealthiest families displayed their wealth in commemorating their ancestors, hoping to strengthen their own political position this way.

The importance of memory for a community is not uniquely a Roman phenomenon. Every culture has its own ways of remembering. This means that memory has a shape, space and a cultural significance which differs from one culture to another; *memoria* is closely connected to each

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47 Beetham, p. 5.
society’s own way of explaining its identity.\textsuperscript{50} However, it may be suggested that the relationship existing between \textit{memoria} and the Roman \textit{communitas} was somewhat special, perhaps even exceptional. The extreme importance of the memory for Roman society can be noticed in “almost every aspect of their existence”, as Alain Gowing mentioned. \textit{Memoria} was present in celebrations for the dead, in oratory and law, in art, on buildings and in literature. As Gowing explains, for the Romans, memory of the past defined the present.\textsuperscript{51} The central role of \textit{memoria} for the Roman community, which was present from at least the republican period, continued throughout the imperial era, and was to be recognized during the Severan period as well. This is most strikingly demonstrated by the incident which occurred between Severus’ sons Caracalla and Geta. After Severus’ death, Caracalla murdered his brother (and co-ruler) and declared a \textit{damnatio memoriae} upon him. The act meant removing Geta's names and images from public places and monuments (see figure 1).\textsuperscript{52} In practice, Caracalla’s policy was an attempt to control public memory – after all, \textit{memoria} was not just about remembering, but also about choosing what to remember and what to forget.\textsuperscript{53}

![Fig. 1. Damnatio memoriae in practice. A relief from the arch of the bankers (arcus argentariorum) in Rome, originally depicting both princes, Geta and Caracalla, sacrificing together. After Geta’s death, his figure was completely removed from his brother’s left side.](image)

\textsuperscript{50} Flower, pp. 6—7.


\textsuperscript{53} Flower, pp. 6—7.
The main tools for preserving public memoria are texts. The word “text” is not employed here just to refer to written sources, such as literature, but also to refer to more physical evidence as well. One example from the Severan period is the vast building program, conducted in the capital during the first years of the third century by Septimius Severus. The major renewal of the city was not carried out only practical purposes, such as restoring parts of the city destroyed in the great fire which took place during Commodus' reign or other damaged buildings; it was also an attempt to portray Severus as the restorer of the state, the bringer of peace after uneasy times. As the restored and new buildings carried the name of the one who had conducted the works - in this case Septimius Severus - they also consist of texts preserving the name of the emperor and his importance in public memoria. As a result, I will also occasionally refer to the building project; however, the main “text” I deal with is the inscription recording the games, the works of contemporary historians, and the coinage of Septimius Severus. To these three sources, I now turn.

1.3.2. The Inscription

Although partly fragmented, the Severan inscription describing the rituals of the ludi saeculares is the most thorough report of any single Roman religious festival, as it provides quite detailed information. The inscription was erected after the festival on the Campus Martius, one of the most holy places in the city of Rome. It was the same place where the record of the Augustan games had been erected in 17 BCE, and it is very likely that other emperors who had celebrated the ludi saeculares had done the same, although almost nothing remains in the records regarding other games than the Augustan and Severan ones.

The importance of the Campus Martius for the Romans can be found in the accounts of many writers, such as Livy, Plutarch and Dionysios of Halicarnassus. Strabo, a Greek geographer writing during the Augustan period, describes the Campus Martius as a perfect place for all kinds of

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55 Recorded in CIL 6 32326—32335; Pighi 1965, pp. 140—175 (reproduced here in Appendix 1).
56 There are just a few fragments remaining from the inscription of the Claudian ludi saeculares, but nothing else from other occasions. However, it is very likely that at least Domitian followed the Augustan example of erecting an inscription on the Campus Martius, as he apparently followed the Augustan model extremely closely in all possible ways, suggested on the basis of the numismatic evidence celebrating the games of AD 88.
57 The field was, according to the legend, once owned by the last king of Rome, Tarquinius Superbus, and after his expulsion, became property of the state. See e.g. Liv. 2.5; Plut. Publ. 8. The version of Dionysios of Halicarnassus (5.13) is slightly different.
spectacles but also as a magnificent site because of its temples, other buildings and natural surroundings. The development of the field had already begun in the republican era, and the process was continued by the emperors until the mid-third century at least. According to the sources, the last emperor conducting a remarkable monumental development on the Campus Martius was Alexander Severus (who ruled between AD 222-235).

The presence of the inscription on the Campus Martius is in itself a significant feature. The rituals are often performed at historical (real or mythological) sites or monuments, places considered as important for the community. These sacred spaces are thus central stages for ceremonies creating and strengthening the idea of a communitas. In addition, the locations in which the inscriptions stood were also a matter of importance. In his famous study, Maurice Halbwachs noticed how “society needs to find landmarks.” Basically this means that the more illustrious the place of these landmarks is, the more prestige and significance for the communitas the landmark has. In the case of my study, the celebration which took place as part of the ludi saeculares was indeed conducted on the most holy grounds of the city of Rome – the Campus Martius, the Capitoline and the Palatine hills. Accordingly, the inscription was also erected in one of the most important sacred spaces of the city.

The function of the inscription was not just to record the program of the games, but to preserve their memory. Indeed, inscriptions were probably one of the most effective ways of keeping things considered as important in the memory of the communitas. Through their words, the inscriptions visually communicated to the readers. This was obvious to those who were able to read and understand how epigraphy worked; to understand that this was how the emperor informed his subjects about imperial decisions, for example. This was not, however, the only way in which inscriptions passed on messages. Their physical presence was an important matter as well. The

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58 Strabo 5.3.8.
59 HA Alex. 26.7 describes how Alexander Severus began constructing the Basilica Alexandriana, a building “one hundred feet broad and one thousand long and so constructed that its weight rested wholly on columns” (passage translated by David Magie). For the development of the Campus Martius in Roman history, see Wiseman, T.P., ‘Campus Martius’. In LTUR vol. 1, pp. 220—226.
60 Koster, pp. 216—217.
61 Halbwachs, Maurice, On Collective Memory. University of Chicago Press, Chigaco 1992, pp. 222—223. See also Assmann, Jan, Religion and Cultural Memory. Ten Studies. Stanford University Press, Stanford 2006, pp. 8—9. Assmann goes further than Halbwachs when analyzing collective memory. According to Assmann, Halbwachs did not want to go as far as analyzing the symbolic and cultural frameworks, but would rather stay in “living memory” instead of tradition; the latter, he wanted to avoid, even contradicting it with the memory. Assmann, however, has underlined the significance of tradition for cultural memory.
sheer size of the records of the Severan *ludi saeculares*, for example, must have been an impressive sight on the Campus Martius. The sizes and shapes of the inscriptions, their beauty and clarity, the clear lines of the letters they contained, and other aesthetic aspects, were all important ways of conveying messages. In combination with their surroundings (in this case the Campus Martius), and in relation to the architectural and topographic contexts of the city, inscriptions were part of the history and tradition of the *communitas*, and, as such, were an effective way of preserving collective memory.\(^{63}\)

It could thus be argued that some novelties appearing in Septimius Severus' program, in comparison to earlier game records, were connected to a will to preserve the memory of those “new” actions. These are details of major importance. One example is the inclusion of the empress Julia Domna, who played an important role in the Severan inscription in comparison to Livia, Augustus' wife, who is missing in the earlier record altogether. This omission does not necessarily mean that Livia was not part of the games; in fact, considering her important role in Augustan propaganda it is very possible that she was. However, for Septimius Severus, the role of the empress was important enough to be preserved in the *memoria* of the games.

### 1.3.3. Literature

There are two contemporary historians writing during the early third century, Cassius Dio and Herodian. In addition, the later text of *Historia Augusta* covers the Severan period as well. Many other writers, such as Philostratus and Tertullian, are, of course, interesting contemporary witnesses. As mentioned above, a ritual should be seen in the context of its own time, and contemporary writers help us understand this very context, even if their texts do not directly deal with the subject of *ludi saeculares*.

The most important written source is the work of Cassius Dio. Born in Nicaea (Bithynia) around AD 165, he held many high offices during the Severan dynasty. He was already senator under Commodus, and became consul for the first time under Septimius Severus. Subsequently, he held

various offices in Asia, Pannonia and Africa, until he became consul for the second time under Alexander Severus in AD 229.\textsuperscript{64}

Dio’s extensive Roman history, covering the period from the foundation of the city to Severus Alexander, was probably written between AD 220—31.\textsuperscript{65} Dio is often considered as somewhat unreliable and uncritical; Fergus Millar describes him as a writer who did not bother making any deep interpretations or analyses, but just reported single events one after another. Millar also criticizes Dio’s inability to notice or make interpretations of the great historical turning points of his own time.\textsuperscript{66} For my study, however, Dio is a very important source. Not only was he a contemporary writer, which makes his descriptions of the Severan age a reliable source (although his history of the Severan period is mostly known through excerpts and epitomes), but it appears that he was also situated at the very heart of the empire during the reign of Septimius Severus. For example, much has been debated about Dio’s involvement in the ”circle of Julia Domna” (a group of philosophers and other intellectuals apparently working in the empress' patronage). Regardless of whether this group existed or not,\textsuperscript{67} it seems quite clear that Dio benefited of direct contact with the imperial family, during the reign of Septimius Severus at least. He does mention this himself in his history. In fact, throughout his history of the Severan period, Dio demonstrates his possession of firsthand knowledge of the imperial happenings and his familiarity with contemporary sophists associated with the Julia Domna, regardless of whether this “circle” existed or not.\textsuperscript{68}

Cassius Dio's attitude towards Septimius Severus appears unclear. He expresses dislike towards many aspects of Severan rule, but he nevertheless supports it in many other instances. On frequent occasions in his history, Dio in fact often follows Severan propaganda in quite an uncritical manner. For example, his description of Septimius' penetration of the city with his armies during the civil war is much more favourable than that of other writers, such as, Herodian and the \textit{Historia Augusta}. Many other examples of this kind also exist.\textsuperscript{69} These positive attitudes were, in truth, necessary, as

\textsuperscript{64} For the career of Dio, see Millar, Fergus, \textit{A Study of Cassius Dio}. Oxford University Press, Oxford 1964, pp. 1—27; Birley, pp. 203—204.
\textsuperscript{65} Birley, pp. 203—204.
\textsuperscript{66} Millar, pp. 118; 171.
\textsuperscript{67} Julia Domna, as a philosopher, and her circle are mentioned in Philostr. \textit{VS} 622 and \textit{VA} 1.3.
Dio held high offices and operated with many Severan emperors. Too fierce attacks upon the ruler would have been unwise for a man in his position.\textsuperscript{70}

All in all, regardless of whether Dio's stories on Roman history were true or false, they still reflect the values of a high-ranking official, and are thus valuable sources. Dio was a writer who strongly identified himself with Rome,\textsuperscript{71} even if his “Romanness” is a debated issue. The traditional view follows Fergus Millar, who claims that Dio represents, \textit{par excellence}, the new Greco-Roman nobility which essentially consisted of the Romanized Greek-speaking elite, and held a unified worldview in the Hellenized empire. The revisionist view, on the other hand, claims that while the elite of the Greek speaking world had accepted Roman rule, it nevertheless remained mostly Greek in the construction of its identity. According to Swain, “culturally and spiritually there is no need to think that he was anything else than a Greek”.\textsuperscript{72}

However, it seems clear that Cassius Dio also embraces the values of the senatorial class of the Roman empire, and as such can be considered a Roman. He was, after all, a senator of the second (or possibly even third) generation and clearly identifies himself to that group. His Greek cultural background can be seen in many parts of his writings, but his opinions and attitudes are nevertheless very typical of a rather conservative Roman senator.\textsuperscript{73}

The Greek-speaking senators such as Dio were no longer rare occurrences in the capital by the early third century. A policy encouraging the unification of aristocrats from different parts of the empire by granting them offices in the senate had already begun during the reign of Augustus. As a result, the number of provincial senators increased, especially in the later part of the first century. From that point onwards, the amount of the senators coming from outside Italy grew steadily. During the age of Vespasian and his sons, Titus and Domitian, the majority of senators (about three-quarters) were from Italy, but the number of those coming abroad was growing. This trend continued in the Antonine era, and under Trajan and Hadrian the amount of provincials in the senate had risen to about fifty percent.\textsuperscript{74} Even if the first non-Italian senators came mainly from the western parts of the

\textsuperscript{70} For the political views of Cassius Dio, see Schettino, M. T., ‘Conscience de la crise, utopie et perspectives reformatrices à l’époque des Sévères’. In \textit{Latomus} 67.4 (2008), pp. 990—997.
\textsuperscript{71} Millar, pp. 190—191.
\textsuperscript{73} De Blois, L., ‘Volk und Soldaten bei Cassius Dio’. In \textit{ANRW} II.34.3 (1997), p. 2655.
\textsuperscript{74} Potter, pp. 68—69.
empire (Gaul and Spain for example), the number of high officials from Greek-speaking provinces started to rise slowly. Trajan and Hadrian, especially, began recruiting members of the senate from the east, but it was Septimius Severus who finally allowed the Egyptians to also hold senatorial offices. It has been suggested that, in Dio’s days, the amount of easterners in the senate amounted to about a quarter of the overall number.

As Alan Gowing notes, the audience to whom Dio wrote was in fact probably the Greek-speaking nobility who came to the capital from the eastern part of the empire to work in the senate. His book could therefore be read as a handbook; an introduction to Roman values and customs. In other words, it was a guide to Roman identity. I also adopt this idea in my research and I will hence occasionally evaluate Dio’s writings in this light. To understand Dio’s values is a way to find out the values of Roman upper class of the early third century more generally, an important aspect to know while researching the imperial policy of the period.

The other main contemporary historian, Herodian, is a much less known figure. Even if Herodian himself claims to be an eye-witness of some events in AD 192, his descriptions seem rather copied from Cassius Dio’s. It is most likely that he composed his history around year AD 250, possibly during the reign of Philip the Arab or Decius. Herodian is usually considered as a lower-ranking official from Greek (or other Greek-speaking parts of the empire), although there is not much evidence for these suggestions either. Nevertheless, his lack of interest in the actions of the senate seems to indicate that he himself was not a part of the senatorial order.

As a historian, Herodian is even more criticized than Dio; Anthony Birley calls him “careless, ignorant and deceitful, a self-conscious stylist who wanted to write a rattling good yarn and happily adjusted the facts to achieve readability and excitement”. More recent research on Herodian is nevertheless a little more positive. As David Potter writes, Herodian, despite his shortcomings, does give an account of an interested contemporary writer and a reasonable chronological sense.

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75 Birley, p. 38; Bowman, Alan K., ‘Egypt from Septimius Severus to the Death of Constantine’. In CAH XII, p. 315.
78 Sidebottom 2007, pp. 76—77.
79 Birley, p. 204.
80 Potter, p. 232.
Indeed, when we are dealing with Severan dynasty, Herodian is an interesting observer. He gives some balance to Cassius Dio, who followed the events of the Severan period from the very core of the empire. In fact, Herodian, as an outsider compared to Cassius Dio, is a useful source when studying Greekness as well. Recent studies have shown that Herodian considered Rome as some kind of “alien monarchy”. When he describes Roman practices he (possibly deliberately) tries to show them as foreign customs. This is an attitude very much absent in the texts of Cassius Dio. Earlier research suggests that Herodian's habit of explaining very common Roman things to his readers is a sign that he was writing for a lower-class audience. More recent studies have, however, considered these habits as a “game” in which the Greek audience could pretend it knew nothing about Rome. From this point of view, we can then consider Dio as a “true Roman” historian and Herodian perhaps more as an “observer from the outside”. This, alongside his account of the life of Alexander Severus (of whom Dio does not say much and of which the Historia Augusta gives much false information) is perhaps the most valuable aspect of Herodian’s work.

The third main literary source for the Severan period is the Historia Augusta. This collection of emperor biographies and accounts on major usurpers, has generated much heated discussion among historians. Most of the scholars presently seem to agree that the Historia are the product of a single author, writing in the late fourth century. In other words, they were not written by a writer contemporary with the Severans. As a result, their function in this study is different to that of Dio’s and Herodian's works. The Historia Augusta do not inform us about the attitudes or values of the early third-century; instead, they are occasionally used to check various details about the Severan period. Using Historia Augusta as a source is some kind of a challenge, as many of the biographies are generally considered as unreliable sources, filled with fiction and false information. However, some biographies of the collection are known as more reliable than the others, and the book covering the reign of Septimius Severus (and his follower Caracalla as well) is considered as one of the "better ones". In the context of the other Severan rulers' biographies, the history of Elagabalus is most complicated: the first part seems to be more reliable than the second half. The

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81 Sidebottom 2007, p. 81; Gabriele, Marasco, 'Erodiano e la Crisi dell’Impero’. In ANRW II.34.4 (1998), pp. 2908—2910.
82 Apparently, the author of the Historia Augusta used many sources. The biography itself mentions Marius Maximus (probably a contemporary historian to Septimius Severus), the memoirs of the emperor, Herodian, and two almost completely unknown authors Aelius Maurus, and Aelius Junius Cordus. Cassius Dio is not mentioned in the Historia Augusta as a source for Severus, but it is very likely that he was. See Platnauer, Maurice, The Life and Reign of the Emperor Lucius Septimius Severus. Greenwood Press Publishers, Westport 1970 (originally published in 1918), pp. 17—18.
biography of Alexander Severus, on the other hand, is usually dismissed as fictive. This is unfortunate since the period of Alexander was only very sparsely covered by Cassius Dio.\(^84\)

Returning to *ludi saeculares*, it is interesting to note that even if Dio is by far our most important literary source for the Severan period, he does not mention the Severan *ludi saeculares* at all. He only records Septimius Severus' grand celebrations of AD 202 in honour of the tenth anniversary of his power.\(^85\) Herodian does, however, describe the games and his text gives the reader the impression that he was present in person.\(^86\) The *Historia Augusta* does not mention the games either nor does the author of Severus' biography give a very detailed account of the period either.\(^87\) Dio's silence could be explained by the omission of the passage by his epitomizer; Dio's coverage of the Severan period is only fully preserved for the years AD 217—218. The rest of the history is constructed from epitomes and excerpts.\(^88\) I would nevertheless suggest that Dio also had other reasons to be silent, or at least cynical, towards the games, and this would explain his silence.

Other contemporary writers, other than historians, are naturally also of interest. During the Severan reign, Greek prose literature was prominent. Many noteworthy authors, like Galen, Aelian, and Athenaeus wrote during this period. Perhaps the most important of the many Greek writers in the early third century was Flavius Philostratus. He was a Roman citizen and had connections with the court of the Severans. He seems to have been educated with the princes Caracalla and Geta.\(^89\) The relationship of Philostratus with imperial policy is an interesting topic. For example, one of his major works, *Heroicus*, is sometimes seen as a reflection of the hero-cult that Caracalla wanted to highlight.\(^90\) Of further importance is the claim that the writer belonged to the so called circle of the empress Julia Domna, who, according to Philostratus, admired all kinds of rhetorical speech.\(^91\) However, the existence of the circle is nowadays mostly disputed. Cassius Dio does mention that Julia Domna turned to philosophy and spent time with sophists, but there is otherwise very little

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\(^85\) Cass. Dio 77.1.

\(^86\) Herod. 3.8.10.

\(^87\) Birley, p. 160.

\(^88\) Birley, p 160, 204.


\(^90\) Whitmarsh, p. 36.

\(^91\) Philostr. VA 1.3.1.
evidence.\textsuperscript{92} It seems clear that Philostratus’ texts, or those of any other Greek writer, cannot be taken as direct reflections of imperial policy (even if they sometimes agree with imperial policy and propaganda). They instead dealt with topics such as Greek cultural identity and its relationship with both universalism and Roman power.\textsuperscript{93} As contemporary writers Philostratus and other Greeks are, nevertheless, of value for studies covering the early third century.

The main Latin authors of the period were probably the jurists: Callistratus, Claudius Tryphoninus, Arrius Menander, Licinius Rufus, Julius Paulus, and perhaps most famously, Domitius Ulpianus.\textsuperscript{94} The Latin Christian authors, Tertullian and Minucius Felix, are also interesting contemporary sources, but otherwise the Greek authors are dominant during this period. One (almost) contemporary Latin writer should nevertheless also be mentioned. In AD 238, Censorinus, a Roman scholar, gave his friend a book which he had written about birthdays named the \textit{De die natali liber}, as a birthday present. The book contains much information on birthdays, from proper birthday rituals to the questions regarding the nature of the universe. It also covers the brief history of \textit{ludi saeculares} as understood in the early third century. Even if Censorinus’ account on this subject is fairly short, it is nevertheless an extremely important piece of evidence concerning the perceptions of the \textit{ludi saeculares} an individual living during this period held.

\textbf{1.3.4. Numismatic Evidence}

The third main source to be used during a study of the Severan period is coinage. It is particularly important for research on the reign of Alexander Severus, as Dio does not extensively record the deeds of the last Severan ruler; Herodian is basically the only proper written account for the years AD 222—235. The coins are naturally also important for the earlier Severan period. Using coinage does nevertheless offer some challenges and questions which need to be taken into consideration.


\textsuperscript{93} Whitmarsh, pp. 49—51.

\textsuperscript{94} The Severan period as a whole is so rich on legal documents that it might even be called a “golden age of the jurists”. For details, see Coriat, Jean-Pierre, \textit{Le Prince Législateur. La Technique Législative des Sèvères et les Méthodes de Création du Droit Impérial à la Fin du Principat}. École Francaise de Rome 1997, pp. 23—67.
When using coins as a source for imperial policy, a question should be first asked: can the coins be considered as vehicles for imperial propaganda at all? One possible problem arises regarding who authorized the themes seen on the coins. It is true that the question is sometimes more complicated that it seems. Zeev Rubin noted two occasions, during the Severan period, in which contradictions between the coinage and other imperial policies can be found. In AD 195, Septimius Severus refused to accept the title of *Parthicus* to honour his victory over the Parthians. However, during the same year, some coins on which this title appears can be found, although they disappear later. A year earlier, some coins were issued in the eastern provinces in honour of Septimius Severus, but oddly these coins were made in the part of the empire controlled by Percennius Niger, a rival of Severus’ for the crown. It thus appears that Severus had no full control over the coinage struck in the area he himself controlled.95

The explanation on these two occasions is probably that the local authorities struck coins sometimes by their own judgment, and that the emperor did not always have the last word on the subject. However, as Rubin also admits, during times of peace, emperors had a tighter grasp on officials in different parts of the empire, and the two aforementioned examples from the Severan period happened precisely during the civil disturbances between Septimius Severus and his opponents. The period I am dealing with here is an age when Septimius Severus had already stabilized his power and was already able to build his image through the empire without too serious internal disturbances. Accordingly, I regard coins as a tool for the emperor to spread message about the values and ideas central to him to a larger audience in the empire. In fact, it seems that the coins were the most effective way for a ruler to spread messages he considered important to all corners of the empire.96 It could be argued that during the reign of Septimius Severus, the role of the coinage in spreading imperial propaganda was exceptionally important, as it has often been suggested that Severus had to increase the amount of coins in circulation; this was necessary to pay off the soldiers for their support. On the other hand, there are reports that the reign of Severus ended with a surplus in the treasury, which means that lots of coinage was out of circulation again. It is, moreover, very likely that lots of funds for soldiers’ pay rises came from confiscations made by Severus. This would mean that there was less need for new coinage.97

95 Rubin, pp. 13—14.
Another major question that has been discussed among scholars is how valuable coinage was as a vehicle for imperial propaganda. It has sometimes been argued that the messages seen on coins were very conventional; therefore it is possible that those messages were lost for most of the coin users as the same subjects kept appearing from centuries to centuries. However, there is no good reason to think that emperors did not try to connect with the population through coinage. Coins were a tool for strengthening traditionalism; as Marietta Horster noted, the emphasis on tradition and traditional values were an integral part of imperial (post-Augustan) coinage. By sticking with highly conservative subjects, rulers could claim to be part of the great Roman tradition. In that sense, coinage was also a way to strengthen public memoria. Regarding the big question of who was responsible for the symbols and subjects struck in coinage, I agree with Susann Sowers Lusnia’s conclusion that the emperor participated in the process of deciding which titles, portraits and reverse types were included on the coinage, even if it is not always clear who ultimately made the “official” decision. The coins were issued in the name of the emperor, and were an extremely important way of communication between the ruler and his subjects, spreading the messages the rulers considered important and, by these means, legitimizing the rule of the emperor.

1.4. Severus, the *Ludi* and the Studies

1.4.1. The *Ludi Saeculares*

Even if the Augustan *ludi saeculares* have been reasonably well covered in modern studies, the same cannot be said about the Severan games. Even if the games are touched upon in many studies, they are seldom dealt with as a “unique” ritual; they are usually just seen as a similar occasion to the Augustan games. Alison Cooley, for example, deals quite a lot with the Severan *ludi* in her recent article, however, she uses the games and their similarity with the Augustan ones as a proof how “Augustan” emperor Septimius Severus was. I agree with her claim that Severus wanted to act as the new Augustus, and I also agree that organizing the games was one way for Severus to

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100 Miles, pp. 43—44.

connect himself with the Augustan tradition. However, compared to many earlier studies, I would like to see the Severan games considered as more of an entity of their own, and not so much as a “copy” of the Augustan ludi. First, the Severan games (or, to be more precise, the inscription recording the program) did present innovations and modifications in comparison to the Augustan games. These might have been minor, but were still interesting ones, if we remember the importance of memoria in the Roman world; there had to be a reason why these were recorded in the inscription in AD 204. Also, the context of the games should be remembered. My point of view is that a ritual is always tied to the time and place it is performed in; the ritual was a set of practices and ideas that were connected with day-to-day political, social and cultural issues.102 The people of Severan period lived in a very different world to the people of the Augustan age.

Charmaine Gorrie demonstrated in her article, that there was a close connection with the Severan ludi saeculares and his building policy, as one of the important targets of the program was to build an impressive platform for the games. The ludi saeculares, moreover, were used to demonstrate the new grandiose look of the city, created by the emperor. Gorrie also showed the importance of the relationship between the relationship between empress Julia Domna’s building patronage and her role in the Severan ludi saeculares. The studies of Gorrie are valuable in the sense that they deal with the Severan ludi for their own worth, that is, not only as part of the tradition created by Augustus.103 Among other studies dealing with the Severan ludi, G.B. Pighi’s De ludi saecularibus populi Romani Quiritum libri sex (1965) is the most important work on the Secular Games, and a valuable tool for studies of the subject. However, it is first and foremost a collection of sources of the games through the centuries.

Obviously, the research on the Augustan Secular Games has some importance for my research as well, since it was Augustus who, after all, apparently “created” (partly at least) the imperial tradition of the ludi saeculares.104 A very detailed study on the Augustan games, including a commentary of the inscription, is provided by Bärbel Schnegg-Köhler with her Die augusteischen Säkularspiele (2002). In her study, Schnegg-Köhler, to mention just a few subjects, discusses the inscription, deals with the questions of topography, the priestly group of quindecimviri sacris faciundis and the relationship of the Augustan games to earlier tradition. However, most of the modern research on the Augustan ludi saeculares only considers the games as a part of bigger

103 Gorrie 2004, pp. 61—72.
104 See Beard, North & Price, pp. 202—203.
questions, especially those related to the so-called Augustan cultural programme. Paul Zanker, for example, saw the games as a certain culmination of the Augustan building programme, that symbolized the ideology of a new Golden Age.\textsuperscript{105} and Karl Galinsky has also saw them as a manifestation of the traditional and conservative values that Augustus wished to put forward in his policy. As Galinsky writes about the Secular Games, “[they] should not be taken out of the context into which they were carefully integrated. They did not celebrate the advent of millennial, passive bliss but took place only after one of the cornerstones of the Augustan program, the legislation on marriage and morals, had been passed in 18 BCE.”\textsuperscript{106} My opinion on the Severan games is identical: the Severan games should not be taken out of their context either, but should be evaluated against the general political situation of the early third century.

\textbf{1.4.2. The Severan period}

The basic starting-point for any research dealing with the reign of Septimius Severus is the biography of the emperor, written by Anthony Birley. As valuable as it is as an introduction to the reign of Severus, its main argument that Septimius Severus was a very “African” emperor\textsuperscript{107} is widely challenged. According to T.D. Barnes, for example, the proportions of modern research characterising Septimius Severus as a Punic, or claiming that there was a certain Punic inspiration behind his policy, are wrong. Both gentes from which the family of Septimius Severus came, the Fulvii and the Septimii of his home town Lepcis Magna, were not of Punic but of Italian origin.\textsuperscript{108} The interest shown by Severus in the cult of Serapis, a god who had a magnificent temple in Alexandria and which Severus visited, has also sometimes considered as a proof of the Africanness of the emperor. This is also disputed; interest in Serapis was also shown by some of the earlier emperors–Vespasian, for example, who was hardly an African.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{106}Galinsky, p. 100. \\
\textsuperscript{107}Birley, pp. 1—46 for the “African” background of Severus. \\
\textsuperscript{108}Barnes, T.D., ‘The Family and Career of Septimius Severus’. In \textit{Historia} 16 (1967), pp. 94—95. It should also be noted that Severus’ birthplace Lepcis Magna, even with its Punic origins, had culturally been Roman long before Severus; there seem to be no lasting traces of “Punic” practices and culture in the city in the first century. In addition, Severus received a traditional Hellenistic education, studying both in Rome and Athens and he had, according to the contemporary sources, a passion for classical culture as well as a respect towards Roman traditions despite his “boorish” manners, as Cassius Dio describes. \\
Moreover, there is a famous family portrait remaining which displays Septimius Severus, empress Julia Domna and the two princes, Caracalla and Geta (whose face was removed when his memorialisation was abolished following his murder by Caracalla who became sole emperor), and which does show Septimius Severus as much darker-skinned than the rest of his family. This is, however, not necessarily evidence for his Africanness. A plausible explanation could be that, as it was quite common to paint males as much darker-skinned than women in Roman art, the difference between colour of the skin was related to gender more than ethnicity. Besides, none of the main literary sources describe Septimius Severus as an especially “African” emperor. When Cassius Dio describes about Severus, he does not mention his African origins at all. Herodian is silent on the subject as well. The Historia Augusta describes him as a native of Africa, but emphasizes his Roman roots by reporting that his ancestors were Roman knights before Roman citizenship became universal. A Byzantine chronicler Ioannes Malalas, writing in the sixth century, called Severus dark-skinned, but he also mentions that the emperor had a long nose, which does not seem to be true according to his remaining marble busts.

It should be noted, however, that the question of Septimius Severus’ “Africanness” is not completely forgotten subject in modern research. In his recent study, Achim Lichtenberger deals with the subject very thoroughly and with an extremely wide range of evidence. While he remains cautious over Septimius Severus’ African identity, he does nevertheless conclude that Hercules and Liber Pater, two gods of major importance for Severus and his family, had not completely lost their Punic roots by the early third century, and notices the existence of some African tendencies in other areas as well (especially in Severan coinage). While I found these claims plausible, I do not think they are enough to consider Severus as an “African” emperor (and nor does Lichtenberger either but, as mentioned, he remains cautious).

Regarding other research on the period of Septimius Severus, David Potter’s Roman Empire at Bay (2004) is probably the best introduction to the Severan age, covering the period from AD 180 to AD


11 Mal. Chron. 12.18 (291). However, the heirs of the emperor, Caracalla, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, can be considered more clearly as Syrian emperors. They represented the noble Syrian family of Emesa, which was connected to the dynasty by empress Julia Domna, Septimius Severus’ wife.

Potter sees the emperor’s changing role as one of the most important features which eventually changed the Roman empire, and claims that the process started precisely during the late second/early third century. According to Potter, Severus’ changes of Marcus Aurelius’ policy, which was to find balance between the different powerful groups of the empire, demonstrated “deliberate insecurity” on part of Severus. Septimius Severus could leave occasionally a lot of power to officials he knew he could trust, but made it clear that he could easily remove and even destroy servants who proved to be untrustworthy. This is considered by Potter a new idea of imperial rule which replaced the one of Marcus Aurelius’ and other Antonines. Potter’s opinion is my starting-point as well.¹¹³

Women, in the Severan period, played important roles in many aspects: religion, culture, as well as political life. Barbara Levick’s monograph, *Julia Domna. Syrian Empress* (2007) covering the life of empress Julia Domna is very valuable for all studies concentrating on Severan dynasty. In her book, Levick depicts the role Julia Domna from many points of view, especially emphasizing her role as a mother in the imperial family, and the propaganda that was employed to promote her. She also deals with the empress’ role in the intellectual field of the early third century, especially in the so-called circle of hers, mentioned above.

*Severan Culture*, an excellent recent collection of articles edited by Simon Swain, Stephen Harrison and Jas Elsner (2007), covers a wide area of Roman culture in the Severan period, but in terms of religion, the book concentrates mainly on Christianity and the philosophy of the Severan era. This is, to some point, understandable. The first truly remarkable Christian writers can be traced to the early third century (especially Tertullian), and philosophy has always been considered as an important subject for the period, particularly because of the prominent position of the so called Greek second sophistic movement in the early third century.¹¹⁴ In addition, Christianity might have perhaps been gaining more attention from the very top of the empire during this period; Eusebius claims that Severus conducted a persecution against the Christian churches, and that because of the harsh policy some Christians even suspected that the coming of the Antichrist was near.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Potter, pp. 578—579.

¹¹⁴ The concept of second sophistic was used by Philostratus in the early third century; he refered to the intellectuals acting after the “first” sophistics of Greece with this term (from the late the fifth century CE on). Otherwise, he is not very precise in his separation between the “first” and “second” group of philosophers. Anderson, Graham, *The second sophistic: a cultural phenomenon in the Roman empire*. Routledge, London 1993, pp. 13—21.

¹¹⁵ Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 6.1.; 6.7—8. The claim of a serious persecution during this period is very questionable, and even if there probably were some incidents during the early phase of the Severan dynasty (reigns of Septimius Severus and Caracalla), the latter part was apparently very peaceful for the Christians. Dal Covolo, Enrico, ‘I Severi e il cristianesimo’. In Dal Covolo, Enrico & Rinaldi, Giancarlo (eds.), *Gli Imperatori Severi*. LAS, Roma 1999, pp. 189—
result, traditional Roman religion in the early third century is perhaps a slightly overlooked subject compared to Christianity, mystery cults (like the cult of Mithra) or new ideas in philosophy. However, my point is that, even if state religion did not overcome dramatic and significant changes during the early third century, it does not mean that it had become irrelevant or meaningless. The lack of “innovations” in traditional Roman religion was a result of its very nature: the centrality of traditionalism in the sacrifices and other rituals. Despite this stability, it was a living religion which continuously adopted new ideas and significances among the people in whose society it was practiced. When the society changed, its religion changed with it.

1.4.3. Identity

As previously explained, my research deals with the concept of identity. As I argue, the ludi saeculares were an occasion which shaped and modified the idea of Romanness. Among scholars on Roman identity, Romanitas was for a long time a very little covered subject. The situation started to change in the 1990s, and after that, a number of interesting studies can be found. Much of the research focuses not just on Roman identity, but rather on different “sub-identities” in the Roman empire such as provinces and different provincial peoples, identities of social classes, gender and so on. On the other hand, if we look strictly at Roman identity, most of the research has concentrated on the question of citizenship.\(^{116}\) In fact, a large part of the studies seems to consider citizenship as practically the only way to define Romanness. However, two major exceptions must be mentioned here – the works of Andrew Wallace-Hadrill and Emma Dench.

In his Rome's Cultural Revolution, published in 2008, Wallace-Hadrill argues that the manner in which Roman identity was understood dramatically changed during the reign of Augustus. From that period on, Roman identity was no longer expressed through actions such as voting, but rather through cultural symbols. These cultural markers became relevant for defining Roman identity because citizenship, the traditional way of understanding Romanness, began to spread through the Mediterranean world. Therefore new ways to identify oneself as a Roman were needed; to separate

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the idea of Romanness from the concept of mere citizenship which was becoming a more common phenomena than in republican period.\textsuperscript{117}

Another study of extreme importance in the field of Roman identity is \textit{Romulus' Asylum} by Emma Dench (2005). In her research, she underlines the multiple sides of Roman identity: according to her, Roman identity was a combination of many ideas and influences, such as Greek and Italian. She emphasizes that complexity was a central concept for \textit{Romanitas}, and that in different periods of Roman history, different aspects from these ideas were highlighted.\textsuperscript{118} Dench’s arguments have been extremely important for my study, as it is precisely my aim to find out which ideas of the many possible ones were highlighted in the Severan \textit{ludi saeculares}, taking the background of the Severan policy and the general situation of the early third century into consideration.

In addition, there are many studies dealing a more specific subject, but at the same time making important observations about the nature of Roman identity. One good example are the studies about the questions of gender in the Roman empire. Craig A. Williams demonstrated the major importance of “proper” gender roles as part of Roman identity: as he explains, a true Roman knew the concepts of \textit{virtus} and \textit{imperium}. The first one pointed out to moral virtues - for Roman men, for example, this meant avoiding overtly feminine ideas, such as excessive softness. Moreover, for a good Roman, self-control was an essential quality. \textit{Imperium}, on the other hand, signified a man’s dominant position; a proper Roman needed to control women – as well as foreign peoples.\textsuperscript{119}

In addition to research dealing with the theories of the identity (such as that of Benedict Anderson, mentioned above), Janet Huskinson’s study in a collection of articles \textit{Experiencing Rome. Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire} (2000, edited by Huskinson as well) is still relevant and very useful for any study dealing with Roman identity, as it covers the question and problems of the concept of identity and applies it to the Roman world. Identity is indeed a complicated phenomenon, and it is all too easy to approach the identity of a “foreign culture” such as ancient Rome from the viewpoints of our own period.

2. ORGANIZING THE LUDI SAECULARES

I now turn to the inscription that was erected on the Campus Martius to commemorate the ludi saeculares of Septimius Severus; accordingly, this chapter covers the very first part of the source, which describes the preparation and organization of the games. A major part of the text deals with the interaction between Septimius Severus (and his sons), the priestly group of quindecimviri sacris faciundis and the senate. The first part of the inscription also records the purification of the holy places, including not only Capitoline and Palatine hills, as was the case in the Augustan inscription, but also Tarentum (on the Campus Martius), in which the nocturnal rituals were held.

As explained in the previous chapter, the additions and novelties found in the Severan inscription compared to the earlier ones should probably be seen as significant details. The “new” messages were, this way, preserved in public memory by adding them to the “traditional” programme given by Augustus. In other words, there were new ideas and features Severus wanted to commemorate, although it should also be noted that it is impossible to say for sure, if the Severan “novelties” were completely new; after all, the Augustan games are the only ones we have an inscription of (the Claudian fragment from the games of AD 47 is a very small piece, and it is impossible to make strong suggestions based on that). However, we do have plenty of numismatic evidence describing the rituals of the Domitian ludi saeculares (in AD 88), and at least it seems to portray the games in a similar manner as those of Augustus. This would strengthen the claim that the novelties in the Severan inscription were indeed new details.

2.1. Funding the Festivals

The first part of the Severan inscription is very different to the Augustan one, giving quite a detailed description about organizing the games; in the Augustan record, this part is very short and does not contain nearly as much information as the Severan one. According to the Severan inscription, preparation had already begun a year before the actual event, when the priests of quindecimviri sacris faciundis asked the senate to organize the games with public funds. The leader of the quindecimviri, Manilius Fuscus,120 spoke in the senate and referred the Sibylline Books to the

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120 Manilius Fuscus: PIR² M137; Pighi, comm. lud. sept. I 6. When referring to the inscription containing the records of the ludi saeculares I will use Pighi’s edition. The inscription can also be found in CIL 6 32326—32335 and Appendix I. The contents of the Severan inscription is also given in Hülsen, C., ‘Neue fragmente der acta ludorum saecularium
senators. He mentioned that according to the Books, the changing of an era (saeculum) should be celebrated by giving thanks to the divinities for the blessings of the previous saeculum so that the following era would be happy too. After that, the senate asked Septimius Severus and his sons, Caracalla and Geta, to give their permission for the games and to allow the finance of the event to come from the public treasury.  

As the inscription presents, it is not the money but rather the permission to use public funds for the games that was granted by the emperor and his sons. By the early third century the situation was apparently that the emperors had easy access to the public funds, however, the official separation between the emperor’s public and private money was still made, and this practice is evident in the record. There are other contemporary examples as well. When describing the Augustan building programme, Cassius Dio reports how he had difficulties to separate the public expenses from those of Augustus when he examined the period. Moreover, when describing his own times, he comments about the building policy of Septimius Severus in a rather disapproving way, how the emperor used to add his own names to repaired buildings, as if he had paid for the buildings from his own pocket. These examples seem to imply that the idea of the separation between the emperor’s money and public funds was still an issue in Dio’s own period.

In addition, the inscription also describes how, before the games, there were some restrictions for the mourning periods for women, and how the quindecimviri gave tools to the people for a ritual purification (to be carried out at home). The incense that was given to the people was apparently supposed to be burnt in homes before the festival. The quindecimviri also received symbolic offerings from the people (first-fruits) and purified the central places of worship (which were the Capitoline and Palatine hills). This was done during the Augustan festival as well, but the Severan
inscription also records the purification of Tarentum in the Campus Martius by the chief of the quindecimviri. This detail is missing from the Augustan record altogether.127

The names of the members in the of quindecimviri sacris faciundis priestly group are recorded in the first part of the inscription as well. The members of the priestly college appearing in the inscription are Aiacius Modestus, Atulenus Rufinus, Cassius Pius Marcellinus, Cocceius Vibianus, Crescens Calpurnianus, Fabius Magnus, Fulvius Fuscus Granianus, C. Fulvius Plautianus (also the praetorian prefect), Gargilius Antiquus, Manilius Fuscus, Nonius Arrius Mucianus, Ofilius Macedo, Pollienus Auspex, Pompeius Rusonianus, Saevinius Proculus, Salvius Tuscus, Venidius Rufus, Vetina Mamertinus and Ulpius Soter; Septimius Severus himself as well as Caracalla and Geta were also members of the group. In addition, four more appeared in the inscription, but these names cannot be reconstructed from the fragments. The magistri of the group were Manilius Fuscus and Pompeius Rusonianus.128

The composition of the quindecimviri is examined in various studies. It seems that the college of fifteen did consist mostly of Africans and easterners. Birley has suggested that out of twenty-six priests mentioned in various parts of the inscription only two were probably of Italian origin; the number of Africans was perhaps nine.129 It is interesting that the great number of Africans seems to be exceptional compared to the other priestly colleges,130 and does differ with the composition of the senate. Keith Hopkins has suggested that during the Severan period over half of the senators were provincials (outside Italy), and of the provincials, about 57 percent were of eastern origin and 26 percent of African origin.131 This would indicate that the Africans belonging to the quindecimviri during the Severan period were much better represented compared to the senate. It would perhaps indicate that the quindecimviri group was manned with trusted men of Septimius Severus on purpose, and the purpose being the ludi saeculares. After all, the quindecimviri had a major responsibility in organizing the games.132

127 Pighi, comm. lud. sept. II.1.—III.24.
128 The names are provided in Pighi, pp. 240—241.
129 Birley, p. 160.
132 As Severus himself came from Northern Africa, it is quite natural that he knew the upper class of the region fairly well, and was able to find allies from there; this is probably the primary reason for the inclusion of so many Africans in the quindecimviri – not their "Africanness" as such.
However, perhaps the most interesting aspect, in the first part of the inscription, is the relationship between Septimius Severus and the senate. To understand the acts between these two, it is necessary to first give a wider picture about the relationship between Septimius Severus and the senators, as well as how this relationship developed from the beginning of Severus’ reign; this helps us to understand the different roles of the senate and the emperor portrayed in the inscription.

2.1.1. Troubles and Tensions – Severus and the Senate

In Roman state religion, the senate traditionally made the most important decisions; the priests, on the other hand, took care of those decisions, although the role of the emperor as a religious leader grew during the imperial period. Accordingly, in the Augustan inscription, the emperor officially has no central place in organizing the games (as Augustus is acting as an ordinary quindecimvir). The Severan inscription, however, presents a different picture: the senate, after accepting the proposal of the quindecimveri to organize the games, asked the emperor and his sons to lead the ceremony. The role of the emperor is not as the leader of the quindecimviri (as the leader of the priests was during that time Manilius Fuscus). The emperor and his sons, however, held a leading role in the inscription – as the organizers, or perhaps more appropriate, the “providers;” maybe even “patrons” granting the senate the permission to proceed with organizing the ludi saeculares with public funds.

The relations between Severus and the Roman senate have often been described as troublesome – especially because of the purges Severus made a couple of years after he rose to power in AD 193. However, in the very beginning of his reign he had a somewhat more conciliatory attitude towards the senate. Cassius Dio, a historian as well as a senator of the period, claims (rather sarcastically) how Severus, addressing the senate for the first time as an emperor, made promises “such as the good emperors of the old have given, that he would not put any senator to death, yet (later) was first to violate this law instead of keeping it”. Herodian also has a somewhat cynical attitude. He reports that even if Severus managed to convince most senators about his good intentions, some of the

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more experienced members of the senate were concerned about the emperor’s character – and they were eventually right with their bad feelings.\textsuperscript{134}

The goodwill that Severus showed towards the senate in the very beginning of his reign could be explained by his will to highlight the similarities of his own rule and that of Marcus Aurelius, the emperor who was remembered as an ideal ruler. As a fairly unknown figure in Rome, Severus had to show the senate his good intentions, and the oath he gave (not to execute senators) had been a tradition for the new emperors since the reign of Nerva. As an outsider (after all, Septimius Severus was a usurper outside the traditional ruling circles of Rome), it was essential for him to assure the nobility in Rome that his \textit{auctoritas} would be similar to Marcus Aurelius’, who had handled the senate kindly, made alliances with the leading men of Rome by means of marriages, and apparently succeeded to get very large part of Roman society behind himself.\textsuperscript{135}

However, Dio explains that Severus did many things the senators disliked, especially when he used the strength of his army to preserve safety more than the goodwill of his associates.\textsuperscript{136} The claim that Severus relied on his army could be read as an indication that the emperor made decisions himself rather than in co-operation with the senate. In fact, it seems that Severus, in Dio’s account, actually acted as a tyrant. From the classical, Aristotelian, point of view, one of the main marks of a tyrant was that his reliance on armed forces for security. Moreover, it was typical for a tyrant to use foreign troops, not citizens, to protect himself.\textsuperscript{137} Accordingly, Dio recorded that many senators disapproved of Severus’ opening of the imperial bodyguard for people outside Italy, Spain, Macedonia and Noricum; those places with “more respectable people with simpler habits”. According to Dio, it became apparent that Severus “incidentally ruined the youth of Italy who turned to bad habits such as brigandage and gladiator fighting, and that now the city was full of no-good soldiers, with savage appearance, terrifying speech and crude conversation”.\textsuperscript{138} Even if citizenship is not mentioned precisely, in Dio’s eyes, these new praetorians were foreigners, even barbarians; thus Septimius Severus was acting in a tyrannical way.

This passage from Dio can be read as an extremely serious critique on Severus. The question of tyranny was, of course, very old and was dealt with again and again by the ancient writers.

\textsuperscript{134} Cass. Dio 74.2.1—2.; Herod. 2.14.3—4.
\textsuperscript{135} Moran, Jonathan C., ‘Severus and Traditional \textit{Auctoritas}’. In In Dal Covolo, Enrico & Rinaldi, Giancarlo (eds.), \textit{Gli Imperatori Severi}. LAS, Roma 1999, pp. 31—37.
\textsuperscript{136} Cass. Dio 75.2.1—3.
\textsuperscript{138} Cass. Dio 75.2.4—6 (translated by Earnest Cary).
Discussions about tyrants and tyranny can be found from very early Greek texts, such as poems from the 6th century CE, and later in many genres of literature – for example in the history of Herodotus, where the author’s aim was probably to show the superiority of a (democratic) Greek polis compared to the barbarians and the tyrannies of some of the Greek city-states. This is also case in the fragments of Democritus who considered “poverty in democracy more desirable than well-being in tyranny,” and in the texts of many other Greek and Roman philosophers who tried to find out the ideal model of government. Moreover, in Roman historical tradition one of the most important stories concerning the birth of the Roman republic was the expulsion of the tyrant Tarquiniius Superbus, the last king of Rome. Cassius Dio, who lived in the Greek part of the empire, was well acquainted with the tradition of both Greek and Roman literature and political history; thus his comments about Severus as a ruler look very severe.

The crucial phase in the relationship between Septimius Severus and the senate was the year AD 197, when Severus won the civil war against Clodius Albinus. It is possible that Albinus was a more popular choice among the senators, and a purge had to be made against the senators. Cassius Dio claims that twenty-nine senators were executed; Herodian just mentions that all the prominent senators, and those who were richest, were killed. Historia Augusta even gives a list of names condemned to death, although the authenticity of the list is much debated. There is, however,

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144 Cass. Dio 76.8.4; Herod. 3.8.6—7; HA Sev. 13. Historia Augusta provides 41 names: Mummius Secundinus, Asellius Claudianus, Claudius Rufus, Vitalius Victor, Papius Faustus, Aelius Celsus, Julius Rufus, Lollius Professus, Aurunculeius Cornelianus, Antonius Balbus, Postumius Severus, Sergius Lustralis, Fabius Paulinus, Nonius Gracchus, Masticus Fabianus, Casperius Agrippinus, Céonius Albinus, Claudius Sulphicianus, Memmius Rufinus, Casperius Aemilianus, Cocceius Verus, Eruciis Clarus, Aelius Stilo, Cludius Rufinus, Egnatuleius Honoratus, Petronius Junior, the six Pescennii, Festus, Veratianus, Aurelianus, Materianus, Julianus, and Albinus; the three Cerellii, Macrinus, Faustinianus, and Julianus; Herennius Nepos, Sulpicius Canus, Valerius Catullinus, Novius Rufus, Claudius Arabianus, and Marcius Asellio. In HA Pesc. Nig. 6.4. It is also claimed that Severus put “a countless number” of senators to death.

no reason to doubt the actual purge itself. On this occasion Dio overtly recognizes that the emperor’s actions demonstrate that he did not have the qualities of a good emperor.\footnote{Cass. Dio 76.7.3—4.}

Dio’s attitude could serve to indicate the senators sympathies towards Albinus, but what it betrays more strongly is a criticism of Severus’ brutality Severus towards the senate. In Dio’s view, this marked a break from the tradition of a proper model of a good government. For Dio, it seems that an important part of Romanitas was a system where the emperor showed patience, compassion and respect towards the senate, as is expressed in his descriptions of the “good” emperors of the second century, the Antonines.\footnote{Even if Dio’s account of Antoninus Pius is almost completely lost, his stories of Trajan, Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius give a good picture. For Dio, Trajan was an emperor who honoured good men and treated the senate with dignity. Hadrian, despite some bad qualities, helped in all most important issues from the senate. Dio does not say much about the relationship between the senate and Marcus Aurelius, but paints a picture of an honest, modest emperor, who listened to his teachers and treated everybody with respect. Cass. Dio on Trajan: 68.6.3—4; 68.7.3. Hadrian: 69.7.1; Marcus Aurelius: 72.35—36.}

The way Severus acted was against Dio’s idea of harmonious cooperation between ruler and senate. A criticism on part of Dio is also noticeable in his description of the fate of Clodius Albinus. Severus failed to show any clemency \emph{(clementia)} towards even a dead opponent, as he cut off the usurper’s head and sent it to Rome to be exposed. Having mentioned this incident, Dio immediately turns to describing Septimius Severus’ bad qualities which the senators particularly disliked.\footnote{These included his self-made adoption by declaring himself as a son of Marcus Aurelius and his public honours to Commodus and Sulla; to these two I will return shortly. Dio 76.8.1—4.} Dio connects these faults to the Severus’ purge in the senate, as he put 29 senators to death: there was certainly no sign of \emph{clementia} from the behalf of the emperor either.\footnote{Dio 76.8.4.}

The relationship between Septimius Severus and the senate and the lack of imperial \emph{clementia} in Severan policy is an important subject when analyzing the first part of the inscription of the Severan \emph{ludi} that describes the organizing process of the games. The interaction between the emperor and the senators was probably considered as an important part of the memoria of the games, as it appears to be a novelty for the Severan \emph{ludi saeculares}, as already mentioned. The record seems to define this relationship by means of generosity: the senate asks for permission, and the emperor – with his sons – grants it. It is an interesting detail, as generosity apparently had become a central aspect of Roman political life by the Antonine period, but especially under the form of \emph{clementia}. As Melissa Barden Dowling has pointed out, the idea of \emph{clementia} had, by the beginning of the third century, penetrated the whole Roman society. \emph{Clementia} was by its nature considered as a certain “clemency among the equals”; it had become an ethical ideal which included not only the
graciousness of the one who showed mercy, but also the initiative of the suppliant so that the suppliant assumed a significant responsibility for the mercy he received. This lessened the “disability” of the one to whom the mercy was granted, and lessened the sharp distinctions in status.\(^{150}\)

Taking this to consideration, the lack of *clementia* on behalf of Severus described in the history of Cassius Dio is very interesting. By disbanding the idea of *clementia* that had been very dominant in the imperial period before him, Severus also attacked the idea of “equals in clemency”. For example, even if the senators probably feared for their lives when Severus made the purge and put a number of them to death after the civil war, they must also have been shocked for other reason too: the emperor had abandoned the idea that had for long dominated the Roman political life during the reign of the good emperors, especially the Antonines (excluding Commodus, the last emperor of the Antonine dynasty).\(^{151}\)

Another example regarding Severus’ lack of *clementia* towards the senate can be seen in the emperor’s habit of honouring some controversial figures of Roman history, both recent and distant ones. One of the most famous decisions by Septimius Severus was to adopt himself as a son of Marcus Aurelius. The reason for this was obviously to attempt to create continuity between the Antonine rulers and himself. This action was widely disliked by the senators, but what they especially disapproved of was the praise Severus gave to Commodus, son of Marcus Aurelius, his new “brother”, as Commodus’ reign was still very much remembered with horror by many senators.\(^{152}\) Moreover, in his speeches, Severus praised the cruelty of Sulla, Marius and Augustus.\(^{153}\) Severus’ admiration towards the latter was obviously very deep, as there are many


\(^{151}\) It interesting to note the use of *clementia* in Clodius Albinus’ propaganda, as the concept appears on coinage issued by him (*BMC* 5 pp. 64—65, nos. 269—270). Albinus apparently attempted to use a very familiar concept to Roman political life during the imperial period, and it could support the stories about the senators’ goodwill towards Albinus. On the other hand, it should also be noted that Septimius Severus’ ignoring of the senate and, occasionally, his hostility towards it, does not mean that all the administrative power of the senate was declining. On a practical level, Severus’ administration was quite traditional, and senators still held all the most important administrative offices and governorships. In the legal sense, the reign of Septimius Severus did not mean more autocratic government in every-day politics and administration; he was mostly following the practice already created during the time of Augustus, and he maintained the prominent role of the senatorial class. Campbell, Brian, ‘The Severan Dynasty’. In *CAH XII*, pp. 11—12.

\(^{152}\) Cass. Dio 75.7; *HA Sev.* 11.3—5, 12.7—9.

\(^{153}\) Cass. Dio 76.8.1.
examples how Severus wanted to appear as a new Augustus, but Sulla is an interesting case as well.

Lucius Cornelius Sulla had been a prominent politician during the early first century CE, when he led the victorious side in the civil war and created a new legislative programme which put power in the hands of the senate. The legacy of Sulla certainly was not good among the senators. Only fragments remain of Cassius Dio’s account on the period of Sulla, but we do have enough text to understand that Sulla was seen as a cruel tyrant by the historian. Although Dio gives Sulla some credit for his initial policy, he concludes that, after gaining power, he omitted “acts which he had censured in other persons while he still was weak and many others even more outrageous”. Basically Cassius Dio’s criticism of Sulla is a warning example of what absolute power could do to a man, and how assistants with bad intentions could do to a leader. One of the horrors for Dio was the fear Sulla created among the senators, who consequently lived in uncertainty regarding their fate as killings in Rome and outside the city continued. One could perhaps see an analogy between Sulla and Septimius Severus in Dio’s writings, since both rulers, the emperor and his republican hero, began their reign with modesty but then suddenly turned out to be much worse (even if Dio does not attack Severus as strongly as Sulla). Moreover, Sulla’s case indicates that the tradition of earlier civil wars was alive in the late second and early third century. For example Appian, writing approximately 50 years before the Severan Dynasty, described the war between Caesar and Pompey the Great vividly, describing how civil war resulted in murder after murder, crime after crime, and how no virtues such as law, politics or patriotism, could stop the shameful violence carried out by the prominent men of the period.

The writers of the early third century who had experienced a civil war themselves perhaps felt that they were living in an exceptional time which could be compared not only with the wars of Caesar and Pompey, but with those of Sulla and Marius as well. The exceptional nature of earlier civil wars can be found in many parts of Dio’s history, for example when he describes the battles between Caesar and Pompey the great; for Dio, the struggle when the Romans fought each other, was a fight.

155 There is a wide range of research on Sulla – see, for example, Keaveney, Arthur, Sulla: the Last Republican (2nd edition). Routledge, London 2005.
157 App.B.Civ. 1. 60.
Yet unparalleled in history.\textsuperscript{158} Even if Dio here describes the war that was fought over 200 years ago, it is easy to see that, for him, the civil wars in general were disastrous events. Thus Septimius Severus’ praise of Sulla, who symbolized tyranny and other horrors of civil war, must have been quite unpleasant for the senators, who themselves lived in a post-civil war period.

How, then, should the first part of the inscription containing the actions between Septimius Severus and the senate be understood? Considering the general policy of Severus, discussed above, it seems that the function of the inscription is to point out the dependence of the senate on the goodwill of the emperor (and his sons). Despite the fact that the emperor traditionally did not officially have a big role in organizing the games (at least as demonstrated by the Augustan inscription), is in this case absolutely essential for the celebrations. The senate must turn to him for his generous permission. On the other hand, the inscription does not highlight the relationship of the emperor and the senate as “generosity among the equals”, but rather as a relationship between a patron and his “clients”. The message the inscription sends about the relationship between Septimius Severus and the senate could perhaps be seen as an analogy to the so-called Palazzo Sacchetti Relief from the Severan period (fig. 2). The relief describes a group of senators in audience with the emperor, his sons Caracalla and Geta, and a couple of the emperor’s councillors. Septimius Severus is making a gesture with his hand, possibly presenting the new consuls. It is very interesting, as Niels Hannestad notes, that Septimius Severus is sitting on the old magisterial symbol of authority, the \textit{stella curulis}, and that the senators stand below the emperor. As such, it is a reminder that the senators were not equals with Severus and his sons; when the emperor was \textit{primus inter pares} he was supposed to stand among equals.\textsuperscript{159} The relief – and, as I suggest, the beginning of the inscription as well – perhaps authorizes the ideology of the new, more autocratic regime and its prominent position in Roman political life.

\textsuperscript{158} For example, in 41.60 Dio describes the battle between the Romans (in 48 BCE) as a true ”epic”, with many incredible, almost supernatural things occurring during the fighting.

\textsuperscript{159} Hannestad, Niels, \textit{Roman Art and Imperial Policy}. Aarhus University Press, Aarhus 1988, p. 268.
2.2. Purification of the Holy Grounds

When proceeding further with the inscription, we can find a description of the purification of the areas where the games were held (Capitoline and Palatine hills). It is an interesting detail that Tarentum is included in the Severan inscription as it is missing from the Augustan record, as already noted. The purification of the other main places was, however, included in the Augustan inscription.¹

The purified grounds, like the two hills, received a lot of attention before the Severus’ games as a part of his grand building policy of the capital. The Palatine hill, especially, was heavily repaired, built and re-built. The constructions on the hill had been very badly damaged in the great fire during the reign of Commodus, as many ancient authors, both contemporary and later, reported.² The improvements were thus made partly out of necessity. However, as necessary as the repairing of the area was, it still gave Severus an excellent opportunity to show his restoration of the state in a very concrete manner. For example, the palace of Domitian was repaired and a new bath complex was constructed. In addition, the imperial Palace was expanded towards the Circus Maximus and a

¹ For the location of Tarentum in the city of Rome, see Map 1.
² For example Cass. Dio 72.24; Gal. 13.362; Oros. 7.16.3.
large nymphaeum, called the Septizodium, was built to make a screen on the south-east side of the hill. Overall, the new constructions of the Palatine hill were an impressive sight.\textsuperscript{162}

Another area that received lot of attention was the area around Via Sacra, a road that connects the Capitoline and the Palatine hills.\textsuperscript{163} It was extensively rebuilt before the games, as the road was very important for the ceremonies; during the last day of the festivals the participants walked in procession from the Palatine to the Capitoline by that very route.\textsuperscript{164} The improvements on that area included the aedes Vestae, one of the most important shrines of the city and the Atrium of the Vestals. As we shall see, the Vestals had an important role in the Severan \textit{ludi saeculares} as well. In the centre of the Forum, an equestrian statue of Severus stood, and right before the rise to the Capitoline hill, stood the triumphal arch of Septimius Severus, constructed only a year before the \textit{ludi saeculares} (fig. 3).\textsuperscript{165} The significance of the arch for the \textit{ludi} is demonstrated by its addition to the records of the games as well: the inscription states how the procession of the Secular games proceeded \textit{per [via]m sacram forumque Romanu[m] arcum Seve[ri et Antoni]ni Aug[…].}\textsuperscript{166}

The arch was situated in such a manner that it stood in a symmetrical relation with the arches of Tiberius and Augustus, thus symbolically connecting the new era to the past. Moreover, the positioning of the Severan triumphal arch in the Forum could also be seen as a symbol of the hierarchy of power. It was situated very close to \textit{rostra Augusti}, a place of great historical significance; the republican \textit{rostra} had originally been a platform for the speakers as well a place in which military trophies were exhibited. It was, however, later replaced by a new one, built by Julius Caesar and extended by Augustus. This was probably a way for Severus to associate himself with the first emperor, by placing his arch near the Augustan structures. In addition, the arch also stood right next to the \textit{curia}, the house of the senate. As the Severan monument stood towards the house of the senators, it was also a warning to the senate which had occasionally shown some opposition towards the decisions of the emperor. The arch, by its presence, reminded the members of the senate about who the master of Rome really was.\textsuperscript{167}

\textsuperscript{162} Gorrie 2002, pp. 472—473.
\textsuperscript{163} See Map 2.
\textsuperscript{164} Gorrie 2002, pp. 470—471.
\textsuperscript{165} Gorrie 2002, pp. 468—470.
\textsuperscript{166} Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va 71—73.
Among other improvements, the case of the temple of Vespasian is especially noteworthy; it was situated by the Via Sacra, very near the Severan arch. The procession would thus pass there when moving from the Palatine to the Capitoline. Severus had restored this temple too, which gave him an opportunity to make a connection between himself and the Flavians – an important connection, as the Flavians were also a new dynasty which took control by the means of civil war and acted as restorers of Rome after the internal struggles.\footnote{Gorrie 2002, pp. 471—472. For the Flavian dynasty and its rise to power, see Mellor, Ronald, ‘The New Aristocracy of Power’. In Boyle, A.J. and Dominik, W.J. (eds.), \textit{Flavian Rome. Culture, Image, Text}. Brill, Leiden 2003, pp. 69—101.}

As noted above, Cassius Dio’s statement about Severus claiming that he had paid for the buildings himself shows how important the new or repaired temples and other public constructions were for the new dynasty. They were a tool to preserve the memory of the patron, the emperor, and to demonstrate his goodwill and generosity. As the inscription of the \textit{ludi saeculares} also mentions the purification of places containing many new and repaired buildings, it possibly reminded those who observed the inscription about these magnificent areas in the city, places full of new and repaired public buildings carrying Severus’ name. At the same time, it perhaps reminded those who saw it about the emperor’s connection to these important areas, the most holy places of Rome, and his position as a master who had improved these sacred grounds so vastly.

The Severan inscription also records the purification of Tarentum, at the Campus Martius. Tarentum was the spot in which the nocturnal rituals of the games were held.\footnote{Tarentum has sometimes been called Terentum as well – see Schnegg-Köhler, pp. 186—200 for discussion. I have used the term Tarentum in this study, as this seems to be the case in most modern studies.} Compared to the

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{arch_of_septimius_severus.jpg}
\caption{Fig. 3. Denarius, struck in 202/203, depicting a front view of the arch of Septimius Severus. \textit{RIC} 4.1 no. 259 (Septimius Severus).}
\end{figure}
Augustan inscription, this seems to be an innovation, as the Augustan source only mentions the purification of the places used in daytime rituals. It seems that most of the buildings erected in Tarentum before the games were temporary structures, contrary to those that stood on the Palatine hill, for example. These included the wooden theatres where performances were held every night after the sacrifices. Despite the fact that they were temporary buildings, it does not mean that they were not impressive for those who saw them; on the contrary, they were most likely very decorated and beautiful.

The larger field of the Campus Martius, where Tarentum was situated, had become one of the most remarkable places in the city by the time Severus came to reign. As Strabo, writing in the early first century, records:

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\text{καὶ γὰρ Πομπήιος καὶ οἱ θεός Καίσαρ καὶ οἱ Σεβαστοὶ καὶ οἱ τούτῳ παίδες καὶ οἱ φίλοι καὶ γυνὴ καὶ άδελφη πάσαν ὑπερβαλόντο σπουδὴν καὶ δισάνην εἰς τὰς κατασκευάς: τούτων δὲ τὰ πλεῖστα οἱ Μάρτιος ἔχει κάμπος πρὸς τῇ φύσει προσαλβόν καὶ τὸν ἐκ τῆς προνοιας κόσμον.}
\[
\text{καὶ γὰρ τὸ μέγεθος τοῦ πεδίου θαυμαστὸν ἄριστος καὶ τὰς ἀρματοδρομίας καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ἱππασίαν ἀκόλουθον παρέχον τῷ τοσοῦτον πλήθει τὸν σφαιρὰ καὶ θρίκω καὶ παλαίστρα γομναξομένων: καὶ τὰ περικείμενα ἔργα καὶ τὸ ἔδαφος ποιάζον δὴ ἔτους καὶ τῶν λόφων στεφάνα τῶν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ποταμοῦ μέχρι τοῦ ρείθρου σκηνογραφικὴν ὅπως ἐπιδεικνύειται δυσαπάλλακτον παρέχον τὴν θέαν. πλησίων δέ ἔστι τοῦ πεδίου τούτου καὶ ἄλλο πεδίον καὶ στοαι κύκλω παμπληθείς καὶ ἀλή καὶ θέατρα τρία καὶ ἀμφιθέατρον καὶ ναοὶ πολυτελεῖς καὶ συνεχεις ἀλλήλως, ὦς πάρεργον ἄν δοξαίην ἀποφαίνειν τὴν ἄλλην πόλιν, διόπερ ἑροπρεπέστατον νομίσαντες τούτων τὸ πόλον καὶ τὰ τῶν ἑπιφανεστάτων μνήματα ἐνταθὰ κατασκευάσαι ἀνδρῶν καὶ γυναικῶν.}
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170 Pighi, comm. Iud. quint. 30—33, which mentions the Aventine hill as well.
172 Strabo 5.3.8: “Pompey, the Deified Caesar, Augustus, his sons and friends, and wife and sister, have outdone all others in their zeal for buildings and in the expense incurred. The Campus Martius contains most of these, and thus, in addition to its natural beauty, it has received still further adornment as the result of foresight. Indeed, the size of the Campus is remarkable, since it affords space at the same time and without interference, not only for the chariot-races and every other equestrian exercise, but also for all that multitude of people who exercise themselves by ball-playing, hoop-trundling, and wrestling; and the works of art situated around the Campus Martius, and the ground, which is covered with grass throughout the year, and the crowns of those hills that are above the river and extend as far as its bed, which present to the eye the appearance of a stage-painting — all this, I say, affords a spectacle that one can hardly draw away from. And near this campus is there is another campus, with colonnades round about it in very great numbers, and sacred precincts, and three theatres, and an amphitheatre, and very costly temples, in close succession to one another, giving you the impression that they are trying, as it were, to declare the rest of the city a mere accessory. For this reason, in the belief that this place was holiest of all, the Romans have erected in it the tombs of their most illustrious men and women” (transl. Horace Leonard Jones). For the development of Campus Martius from the early period to the late empire, see Wiseman, pp. 220—224.
The Campus Martius was not only filled with temples and other important sites. It was also connected with one of the most important stories about Rome’s mythical past: the overthrow of the last king of Rome, Tarquinius Superbus. According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Tarquinius took the field for his personal use and planted it with crops. Livy, on the other hand, reports what happened to the crops after the king had been expelled from the city. According to him, the field was dedicated to Mars, the crops were cut and thrown into the Tiber. This was done as it would have been a sacrilege to consume it. It could be argued that the Campus Martius was a space of crucial importance for the birth of the Roman republic, and in that sense for Roman identity too by the connection to the story of the expelled tyrant.

It is, of course, hard to say if stories as ancient as this one had any real significance for the people of the early third century. However, the legend of the Campus Martius and the last king’s crops were at least known in the early imperial period by Juvenal (writing in the late first or early second century), who described how a worshipper of Isis would crawl naked “across the field of Tarquinius Superbus”. The story was also known by grammarian Servius Maurus Honoratus, who wrote a commentary on Virgil’s Aeneas as late as the late fourth century. In his ninth book, he describes how the field was granted to the king pro honore and how it was cultivated with crops. In that sense, there is no reason to suggest that the story about the Campus Martius, as the traditional spot of “king’s crops”, was not known in the Severan period.

The Campus Martius was thus traditionally known as a “place of rebirth” for the Roman communitas, which is an important detail. Moreover, if we take a closer look at the records of the Severan games, we might even find a slight connection between the ludi saeculares and the old story about the Campus Martius as a field of crops: the food offerings from the people are described in the inscription. Even if the record is quite fragmentary at this point it does indicate that the priests received some fruits (fruges) from the new harvest as a symbolic offering. This was apparently done at the same time as the purification of Tarentum. The people also received incense from the priests for private purifications. The offerings given by the people symbolize the traditional themes of the ludi saeculares as a manifestation of a Golden Age: fertility, wealth and the overall well-being of the communitas. It is also possible to note that the people of Rome were “tied” to the

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174 Liv. 2.5.2. See also Plut. Publ. 8.1.
175 Juv. 6.522—526.
177 Pighi, comm. lud. sept. III 14.
rituals at this point by interaction: that is, by means of food offerings (from the people) and incense (to the people).

The inclusion of the people – the audience of the ritual – in the celebration is important, both for the actual games to succeed, and for the emperor to bring his message forth. We shall see in the later chapters that the audience was considered as one of the central parts of the ritual by the organizers – without them, the celebration would not be complete. Moreover, the fact that the incense was supposed to be burnt in homes, by the families, should perhaps also be seen as noteworthy, for it was a family that was another main theme of the celebrations – as I shall argue, the celebration was used to encourage people to evaluate their position in the empire, as a part of the *communitas*, and their relationship to the rulers by means of family values.
3. THE OPENING NIGHT AND DAY

In this chapter, I will go further with the program of the games, as recorded in the inscription. The focus will therefore move from the part which describes the organization of the games to the ceremonies of the first night and day. First, in accordance with the inscription, a description will be given regarding what happened during the first night of the games. Then, I will more closely evaluate the different aspects of those rituals. Second, my study will proceed to the first daytime rituals, dealing with them in a similar manner.

As explained in the introduction, the main interests of this study are religious rituals and their relations to political and social life. Accordingly, my basic assumption shall be kept in mind: the rituals, the different details included in them, and their significance for the audience are connected to the political, cultural, and social contexts of their own period. In other words, the rituals do not have a fixed “meaning” but are always connected to the values and ideas of the period in which they are conducted. This approach means that we must not only focus on the rituals themselves, but occasionally also give a wider picture on the different gods, rituals and groups taking part in the games. Examining their role during the early third century precisely can help us to understood their role in the inscription and the significance of their inclusion. This principle obviously applies to the following chapters of my study as well.

3.1. The Rituals of the First Night

The first rituals were conducted during the night, between the 31st of May and the 1st of June, in Tarentum (where all the nocturnal rituals were held in other nights of the festival as well). Before the actual sacrifices, an opening prayer was conducted. The prayer was given by Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Geta, with the rest of the quindecimviri members (cum ceteris XVuiris s.f., as the inscription indicates). Unfortunately, this part of the inscription is very fragmented. However, it does indicate that the two senior Vestal Virgins, Numisia Maximilla and Terentia Flavola, were also present when the prayer was performed.\(^{178}\) This seems to be a Severan novelty, as the Augustan inscription does not mention the Vestals taking part of the celebration in 17 BCE, and the extensive numismatic sources we have for Domitian’s games do not show Vestals either. It is, of course,

\(^{178}\) Pighi, comm. lud. sept. III 26—36.
possible that the Vestals were present in the previous festivals too – if we compare the inscriptions we notice that the Severan record is much more detailed than the Augustan one, for example, and this could indicate that the role of the Vestals in the earlier games was simply left out of the inscription.\textsuperscript{179} However, even if this was the case, it should also be noted that the role of the Vestals was nevertheless considered in AD 204 as a very important detail of the ritual, as their presence was included in the inscription despite their absence from the previous records. In other words, it seems that their role was recorded (apparently) for the first time in the history of the \textit{ludi saeculares} preserved in the public \textit{memoria}.

After the opening ceremonies, the emperor sacrificed to the Greek goddesses Moirae; the victims consisted of nine female lambs and nine she-goats. This part of the inscription is quite fragmented as well, but the ritual seems to follow the Augustan example quite closely (lambs and she-goats are mentioned in the Augustan inscription; moreover, one of Domitian’s coins show an image of the sacrifice of a goat and a sheep/she-goat at Tarentum). At the same time, the emperor gave a prayer in which he asked for blessings for the Roman people, the \textit{quindecimviri} and for himself, his house and his family (\textit{p. R. Q., XVuirum collegio, mihi, domui, familiae}).\textsuperscript{180} After the sacrifices to the Moirae, the programme continued with theatrical performances that were conducted in a wooden theatre without seats. The first night was concluded by a \textit{sellisternium} to honour the goddesses Juno and Diana; it was celebrated by 110 Roman matrons, with among them the empress Julia Domna acting as their leader.\textsuperscript{181}

The rituals of the first night raise many questions. Who were the goddesses Moirae to whom the sacrifices were made, and what was their role in the ritual? Why were the Vestals involved in the opening prayer, as they seem not to appear in the records of the earlier \textit{ludi saeculares}? And, finally, what is the role of the \textit{sellisternium} of the Roman mothers in the games, and what was the significance of that ritual for Septimius Severus? I will focus on these questions now.

\textsuperscript{179} See Hänninen, p. 101 for discussion.
\textsuperscript{180} Pighi, comm. lud. sept. III 38—56; see also Pighi, comm. lud. quint. 92—93 (Augustan sacrifice) and \textit{RIC} 2 no. 381 (Domitian).
\textsuperscript{181} Pighi, comm. lud. sept. III 59—60, 60—64; cf. the Augustan inscription in Pighi, comm. lud. quint. 100—102.
3.1.1. Towards a Happy Destiny – Sacrifice to Moirae

The Moirae, to whom the first sacrifices were made, was the common name for the three Greek goddesses of destiny; the individual names being Clotho, Atropos and Lachesis. All of them had a function of their own. Clotho spun the thread of life for the souls of those who were born in the world; Atropos, on the other hand, cut the thread of life of a person, when he/she was about to die – apparently this was preordained. The duty for Lachesis was to apportion, for each soul, the important events and circumstances which would affect and shape that person’s course of life. It seems that the goddesses were quite significant deities in the Greek world, as they not only appear in Greek literature from the earliest times of Homer until the last Hellenistic period, but were also worshipped in many Greek cities. This was the case under the Roman empire as well, since Pausanias, a Greek writer who lived during the Antonine era, records that the Moirae had sanctuaries at Olympia, Corinth, Sparta and Thebes.

The Romans also knew the three goddesses of destiny; they were called the Parcae, or the Fata (sometimes other names were also used, such as Tria Fata, Tres Fortunae, Tres Parcae, or Tres Fatae). Despite the different names and some differences that the Parcae and the Fata might have had in archaic Rome, the later Romans apparently considered these two as the same. For the Romans, the names of the three different goddesses were Nona for the first, Decima for the second and Morta or Parca for the third, as Aulus Gellius (citing Varro) records. The names seem to indicate that they were closely connected with birth; Nona and Decima (’ninth” and ”tenth”) refer to children born following nine or ten months of gestation, and name Parca is related to Latin word parere – to give birth. However, Gellius also records that sometimes the third goddess was called Morta, which relates to the Greek name Moira. The Roman Fata/Parcae can be found most especially in art and literature. From the time of Catullus and the Augustan poets, the Parcae often appear as goddesses who spin the threads of fate, recite or sing a song of fate, for example, determining life and death of each individual. In Roman coinage, they appear as late as AD 286, when Diocletian issued coins depicting the three goddesses with the text “Fatis Victricibus”.


183 Paus. 2.4.7; 3.11.8; 9.25.4;  5.15.4.

184 Eitrem, S., ‘Moira’. In *RE* 15, 2450—2451.


186 Gell. NA 3.16.9—12.


188 Eitrem, p. 2451. The Diocletian coins: *RIC* 5 nos. 293, 314, 617 (Diocletian).
However, while the Greek Moirae had a great significance for Greek literature and were worshipped in Greek religion, their worship in Roman state religion seems to be quite rare. In fact, the Augustan ludi saeculares was apparently the first occasion in which the Moirae were worshipped that way,\textsuperscript{189} and even after Augustus, there is no evidence of the worshipping the goddesses on the behalf of the state in other occasions than during Secular Games. It is noteworthy that even if the goddesses to whom the emperor dedicated a prayer are described as Moirae in the Augustan inscription, the poem written by Horace for that same occasion (\textit{Carmen Saeculare}) mentions them as the Latin Parcae:

\begin{quote}
\textit{vosque veraces cecinisse, Parcae, quod semel dictum stabilisque rerum terminus servet, bona iam peractis iungite fata.}\textsuperscript{190}
\end{quote}

A new poem was composed for the Severan games and was included in the inscription (see Chapter six for more details). It is partly preserved. The Severan \textit{Carmen} refers to many deities which also appear in the poem of Horace, but it does not mention any goddess of destiny, no Moirae nor Parcae/Fata, although this may be due the fragmentary nature of the inscription. As a sacrifice was reserved for them during the rituals, it seems likely that the part containing the goddesses was once there but is now simply lost.

What can be suggested about the role of the Moirae during the Severan ludi saeculares? One explanation could be that the goddesses in the ludi saeculares were connected to Severus’ marriage laws as children (and their bearing) were an important part of the new moral values supported by the emperor. Septimius Severus’ interest in moral legislation is recorded in many sources; it seems that the emperor was particularly strict on crimes of adultery. Cassius Dio, for example, notices how he punished persons acting unchastely, and the Digesta also records cases in which the emperor gave attention to moral issues regarding, for example, the marriages of the senatorial class. Moreover, during the reign of Severus, the soldiers were allowed to get married – an act which also

\textsuperscript{189} Feeney, pp. 107—108.
\textsuperscript{190} Hor. \textit{Carm. Saec.} 25—29: "You Fates, who truly tell what has once decreed (and may that be preserved by the immovable landmark of our fortunes), add a happy destiny to what has already been fulfilled" (transl. Niall Rudd).
promoted family life.\textsuperscript{191} It is then possible that, during the games, the goddesses of destiny were addressed for protection for children and especially for mothers giving birth.

However, it should also be noted that the \textit{ludi saeculares} marked the changing of the \textit{saeculum}, and the period could be seen as the end of an old age, and the beginning of a new lifespan for the whole \textit{communitas}. Therefore, it could be argued that the prayers made to the Moirae in which requests for happy destinies were placed, were also a request for a fortunate next \textit{saeculum} for the community. The Moirae were not solely deities of childbirth, but were also connected to the whole span of life. As the \textit{ludi saeculares} were an event celebrating the birth of the new era and the rebirth of the community, it perhaps seems more plausible that the role of the Moirae was connected to the protection of the whole \textit{communitas} rather than a more specific group, such as children or women. This idea about the central role of the commonwealth during the first nocturnal rites is somewhat strengthened when we take a closer look at the role of the Vestals in the celebration, and the ritual of \textit{sellisternium}.

\textbf{3.1.2. The Witness of the Vestal Virgins}

The inclusion of the two Vestal Virgins in the inscription is one of the most interesting aspects of the ritual as it seems to be a detail absent from the earlier \textit{ludi saeculares} records, as aforementioned. They appear in the opening prayer, but apparently they are not actually praying; the inscription describes that they are simply present during the opening ritual (\textit{adstantibus uirginibus Vestalibus Numisia Maximilla et Terentia Flavola}).\textsuperscript{192} In other words, they are just witnessing how the emperor, his sons and the \textit{quindecimviri} conducted the prayer; no other details are given in the part of the inscription covering the opening prayer and the sacrifices of the first night (although Vestals appear again in the second day – see Chapter four). So, the question remains, why were they involved in the Severan record, as they seem to be absent from previous festivals? One way to find an explanation is to take a closer look at the position of the Vestals in Severan religious policy as well as in Roman religious life in general.

\textsuperscript{191} Gorrie 2004, p. 62; Garnsey, Peter, ‘Adultery trials and the survival of the \textit{quaestiones} in the Severan age’. In \textit{JRS} 57 (1967), p. 58. For the Severan moral laws in general, see Birley, p. 165 and Gorrie 2004, pp. 61—65.

\textsuperscript{192} Pighi, comm. lud. sept. III 35—36.
The cult of Vesta apparently received quite a lot of attention in the Severan period. In fact, the reign of Severus is sometimes even called a “revival” of the cult. The empress Julia Domna was particularly connected to the Vestal Virgins, due to the fact that she had repaired the temple of Vesta which had been burned down in a great fire during the reign of Commodus.\(^\text{193}\) This incident happened in AD 192, and is reported by Cassius Dio who understood the fire as a portent of Commodus’ death (as the emperor died quite soon after). According to Dio, the fire started at night and destroyed the temple of Peace, spreading in such a way that nearly all state records were destroyed.\(^\text{194}\) Herodian mentions how the fire then swept across the city and destroyed large parts of it, including the temple of Vesta.\(^\text{195}\)

Julia Domna’s devotion to the cult is depicted in the coinage of the period,\(^\text{196}\) and it is even claimed that her involvement with the Vestal Virgins was her way of demonstrating to the public how “Roman” she was\(^\text{197}\) (being of Syrian descent). It should be noticed, though, that imperial women were already involved with the Vestals before the Severans; for example, the empresses of the previous dynasty, the Antonines, had a close relationship with the cult.\(^\text{198}\)

When we evaluate the interest of the imperial policy towards the cult, we must remember how important the Vestals were for Roman religious life and for the city of Rome itself. They were closely connected with the most important stories and myths of Roman history; they even had a role in the story about the birth of Rome. According to the legend, the mother of the founders of the city (Romulus and Remus) was a Vestal Virgin called Rhea Silvia.\(^\text{199}\) Moreover, the institution of the Vestals was believed to be founded by legendary king Numa Pompilius, who was also considered as

\(^{193}\) Levick, pp. 126—127.
\(^{194}\) Cass. Dio 73.24.
\(^{195}\) Herod. 1.14.1.
\(^{196}\) \textit{RIC} 4.1, p. 89; nos. 390—392 (Julia Domna).
\(^{198}\) Lindner McGlannan, Molly, \textit{The Vestal Virgins and their Imperial Patrons: Sculptures and Inscriptions from the Atrium Vestae in the Roman Forum} (unpublished PhD dissertation). University of Michigan 1996, pp. 147—150. The interest towards the cult of Vesta was not only a policy of Septimius Severus, but of his followers as well. It seems that Caracalla, especially, gave it a lot of attention. In AD 214 a coin was struck, showing the emperor sacrificing in front of the temple of Vesta, with two Vestal Virgins, a child and two men wearing togas. The inclusion of children and the Vestals is an interesting detail, perhaps indicating the continuation of the ideas adopted by Septimius Severus, such as moral reforms and family values. A famous act on part of Caracalla was also to execute four Vestal virgins on the basis of unchastity (see Dio 78.16.1—4). The attention towards the Vestal Virgins was continued by Elagabalus, the next Severan emperor, who made an extraordinary act of marrying a Vestal Virgin. His motives behind the marriage are difficult to know. The idea of syncretism might well be the case; his other religious acts at least hint at this. See Levick, p. 149; for the religious policy of Elagabal in general, see Pietrzykowsky, M., ‘Die Religionspolitik des Kaisers Elagabal’, in \textit{ANRW} II.16.3 (1986), pp. 806—1825.
\(^{199}\) Liv. 1.3.1; Dion. Hal. \textit{Ant. Rom.} 1.76.4; Plut. \textit{Rom.} 3.2—3.
the founder of traditional Roman religion. The Vestals’ importance for the city is also highlighted by their duties. For example, they kept the objects considered most sacred in Rome in their temple, especially the palladium, a statue of Minerva; according to the legend it was brought from Troy by Aeneas and thus connected the Romans to their great past. The Vestals also kept the eternal flame, ignis inexcintus, in their temple. The fire was considered as a symbol of their chastity, but it also simultaneously symbolized the stability of the state. If the flame died out, it would be a sign of Vestal unchastity but would also be disastrous for the city. All in all, it could be argued that the Vestal Virgins were synonymous with the continued existence and safety of Rome.

Another important detail that demonstrates the close relationship of the Vestal Virgins and their role as the symbols of Rome was their judicial position. They were both very privileged, but also isolated. Their privileges included making their own testaments and conducting businesses of their own. Apparently, they were also financially independent, as the state granted them a stipend for their services. They were however, at the same time, isolated from normal society. They were no longer part of their families after being taken as Vestals, and they could not belong to the potestas of their father. A Vestal Virgin’s unique juridical position began from the moment when the little girl was chosen as a Vestal and was taken to the temple by the pontifex maximus: she stepped out of Roman citizenry and became a unique legal entity. Given their ritual uniqueness, the Vestals could not identify with any other category in Rome, legally or ritually. Being excluded from all other groups, they became a symbol of the whole society. As Adriane Staples states, the identity of the Vestal Virgins lay only in Romanness.

Due to their importance, the Vestals took part in many Roman religious festivals. Especially the chief priestess, the virgo vestalis maxima, was present in rituals like the parentalia and the fordicidia. The first celebration honoured dead, and the second was held for the fertility of the livestock. However, even if the rites such as those celebrated in the fordicidia can be seen as

200 Liv. 1.20.3—4; Plut. Num. 1.20.3.
201 Palladium: Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 2.66. ff; see also Liv. 26.27.14; Val. Max. 1.4.5.
204 Staples, pp. 143—156.
connected to fertility, it appears that fertility as such was not the primary idea behind the ritual tasks reserved for the Vestals during that celebration. According to Robin Lorsch Wildfang, the primary rites that the Vestals performed in *for dicidia* were connected with purification and storage rites. These two concepts were apparently the two main ideas to which the Vestals’ duties were connected in Roman religion.\(^\text{206}\)

How can the unique status of Vestals in Roman society explain their involvement in Septimius Severus’ *ludi saeculares*? Why did he include the Vestal Virgins in the inscription and thus in the *memoria* of his games? Considering the central role of the Vestals for Rome and Romanness, it seems that their inclusion in the very opening of the *ludi saeculares* could perhaps be seen as a manifestation of Septimius Severus’ special position in Rome. As previously noted, the Vestals were the symbol of the city itself and, of all the priestly groups, they were most connected with Rome. The attention the Vestal Virgins received during the Severan dynasty, both in the *ludi saeculares* and in general could be explained by their special status as the most important symbol of Romanness. In other words, the fact that they were, for example, heavily involved with the stories about the foundation of the city might explain their inclusion in the Secular Games – after all, the *ludi saeculares* were an occasion which not only celebrated the passing of a *saeculum*, but also the rebirth of the city and the new Golden Age of Rome.

It thus seems that their role (both in the actual ritual as well as in the inscription) with the emperor right in the beginning of the festival was a message to the public – for those who witnessed the ritual themselves as well as for those who saw the reports about the rites in the inscription. The connection of the Vestal Virgins with the emperor sent a signal that Rome – with which the Vestals traditionally had such a strong relationship – was now related to the emperor. In fact, as the emperor led the opening prayer (and later the first sacrifices) with the Vestal Virgins present, he also indicated that the Vestals were sort of dependent on him (and on Rome). Septimius Severus, who led the sacrifices, can almost be seen as the head of a family, and other participants, like the Vestals, as other members of his household. This can be observed in the nature of the private cults and their relationship to the public cults of Rome.

In Roman religion, the private cults were usually practiced among families. There are some signs that the family cults were a religious world separate from state cult, in which members of the family could achieve a personal religious experience and a sense of community, which was perhaps impossible for a private person to find in public worship. On the other hand, there were many religious festivals which consisted of both state and private cults. Sometimes, a central ritual was performed in the city and it was accompanied by family rites; on some occasions, the reported rituals were conducted in the home, but there was, most likely, also a corresponding public celebration.\textsuperscript{207}

The private cults were led by the head of the family, the \textit{paterfamilias}. It was his responsibility to maintain the traditional rites of the family and pass them on to his descendants. It is interesting, for example, to note the similarities with the description of Cato the Elder about the ceremonies in the country estates, where the whole household gathered to purify the fields and ask gods to protect the crops and cattle, and the prayer of the emperor in the \textit{ludi saeculares}. The formula of the prayer in this old family ritual was very similar to the one used in the Secular Games, when the emperor, upon sacrificing, gave prayer to the gods to whom the offering was made (the same prayer is present in both the Augustan and the Severan inscriptions). The person who conducted the prayer (the \textit{paterfamilias} or the emperor) asked for blessing for “me, my house, and my household.”\textsuperscript{208} As in the traditional family ritual, those who witnessed the prayer were the other members of the household, in the \textit{ludi saeculares} of AD 204 those “family members” actually were, in the opening ritual, the Vestal Virgins (alongside other officials who witnessed the event).

3.1.3. Pacifying the Gods: The \textit{Sellisternium} of the Matrons

Another ritual which took place in the opening night was the performance of the \textit{sellisternium} for Juno and Diana by 110 Roman matrons. The exact rituals carried out during the \textit{sellisternium} are not described in the inscription; there are just a few lines that indicate the occasion and the presence.

\textsuperscript{207} Beard, North & Price, pp. 49—50. According to Beard, North & Price, the idea of the separation between the nature of public and private cults comes from the thought that Roman religion obeys the same rules and tries to fulfil the same human needs as the religion of our own period; that it is essentially a rather familiar set of institutions. Based on this assumption, many historians have argued that Roman religion must have involved deep personal commitments. As there is little or no sign of this in public cult, it must have been found in the private religion of home and family. However, as they point out, the Roman religious experience could be very different from our own – there is perhaps no need to necessarily find a context (in this case, family) in which to imagine the Romans “religious” experience as similar to our own idea of religiosity.

\textsuperscript{208} Cato agr. 141; cf. Pighi, comm. lud. sept. III 53.
of the empress Julia Domna among the matrons. Apparently, they followed a standard procedure for these kinds of rituals.\footnote{This part of the inscription is, again, very fragmented, but it can be argued from the various other parts of the inscription (Pighi, comm. lud. sept. III 59-60, 64—66).}

The details of the \textit{sellisternium} are not very well known. Even if the ritual is apparently very old, there are, for example, no known cases from the republican era. However, it is very likely that it resembled the \textit{lectisternium} ritual, of which we have at least some information.\footnote{Latte, Kurt, \textit{Römische Religionsgeschichte}. Beck, München 1960, pp. 242—244.} The \textit{lectisternium} was a very old purificationary ritual which probably had its roots in Greece; in Greek religion a quite similar ritual was known as $\theta\alpha\kappa\sigma\gamma\epsilon\upsilon\alpha$.\footnote{For the Greek purificationary rites, see for example, Burkert, Walter, \textit{Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical}. Blackwell, Oxford 1992, pp. 75—84; p. 107 and 213 for $\theta\kappa\sigma\gamma\epsilon\upsilon\alpha$.} The \textit{lectisternium} was already celebrated in republican Rome; the oldest literary record of the ritual occurred as early as 399 CE. According to Livy, Rome suffered a “severe winter”, followed by a “pestilential summer”, which were fatal for both people and animals. The senate ordered the Sibylline Books to be consulted and the \textit{quindecimviri}, who took care of the Books, organized the \textit{lectisternium} for the first time. The celebration honoured Apollo, Latona, Diana, Hercules, Mercury and Neptune. As Livy continues, these gods were propitiated on three couches decked with the most magnificent coverlets that could be obtained, for eight days.\footnote{Liv. 5.13.} It thus seems that the \textit{lectisternium} (and the \textit{sellisternium}) was an expiatory ceremony which included a banquet, during which the images of the gods sat on couches together with the participants.\footnote{See also Hämminen, p. 103.} Contrary to the republican period, \textit{sellisternium} is known to be celebrated in the imperial period – for example, during the reign of Nero, after the great fire (in AD 64), when the Roman matrons held the \textit{sellisternium} after purifying the \textit{cella} of Juno in the temple of the Capitoline triad.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.44.}

In fact, it seems that the \textit{lecisternium/sellisternium} was a celebration connected to Juno from a very early period. Juno had apparently already been honoured for the first time honoured this way in 217 BCE, during the Punic War against Carthage. The main source is Livy, who states how Hannibal marched to Italy, plundered and threatened the city. The dictator Quintus Fabius Maximus then stated that the military catastrophes were a consequence of neglecting the auspices and religious duties; that the gods were displeased and that they had to be placated through ritual. As a result, a \textit{lectisternium}, alongside other rituals, was held for three days under the supervision of the \textit{quindecimviri}. Six couches were reserved: one for Jupiter and Juno, another for Neptune and
Minerva, a third for Mars and Venus, a fourth for Apollo and Diana, a fifth for Vulcan and Vesta, and the sixth for Mercury and Ceres.\footnote{Liv. 22.9—10.}

As the \textit{sellisternium}, during the \textit{ludi saeculares}, was conducted by women, and as the worshipped deities, Juno and Diana, were traditionally connected to childbirth (among their other duties), we may wonder if we are dealing with a rite honouring the two goddesses specifically as the protectors of women. The first interesting detail worth noted is that it was conducted during night time. Women were normally prohibited from nocturnal rites; the only exception was traditionally when the rites were conducted on the behalf of the whole community (\textit{pro populo}).\footnote{Cic. \textit{Leg.} 2.9.21.}

The attitude towards the nocturnal rites was generally on of suspicion in Roman tradition; the most famous example is probably the suppression of the Bacchanalia which already existed in the republican era (186 BCE), as Livy reports.\footnote{Liv. 25.1.6—12. For details, see Beard, North & Price, pp. 91—96.} One major reason behind this suspicion was that night-time rituals were usually associated with magic, and magical practices were not tolerated, at least officially.\footnote{Rives, James B., \textit{`Magus' and its Cognates in Classical Latin"}. In Gordon, Richard L. and Simón, Francisco Marco, \textit{Magical Practice in the Latin West. Papers from the International Conference held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept.—1 Oct. 2005}. Brill, Leiden 2010, pp. 56—57.} The situation remained similar in the imperial period, all the way until the Christian emperors - indeed in AD 364, emperors Valentinian I and Valens banned nocturnal sacrifices and magical practices.\footnote{CTh 9.16.7. In fact, the laws given by Christian emperors against magic were at this point often directed towards the old Roman cults: see Kahlos, Maijastina, \textit{Vettius Agorius Praetextatus. A Senatorial Life in Between}. Acta IRF vol. 26, Institutum Romanum Finlandiae, Rome 2002, pp. 51—53; 83—84.}

The opinions towards night-time rituals in the late second/early third century are demonstrated by one of the earliest Christian writers, Minucius Felix.\footnote{Very little is known of Minucius Felix, but apparently he lived and worked during the latter part of the second century (and possibly still lived during the first years of the third century). Dennis, Holmes V.M., \textit{`The Date of the Octavius"}. In \textit{AJP Vol. 50, No. 2 (1929)}, pp. 185-189. See also introduction to Minucius Felix' \textit{Octavius} by Gerald H. Rendall (Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2003, pp. 304—313).} His work, \textit{Octavius}, contains a dialogue between Caecilius Natalis, a supporter of the traditional Roman religion, and a Christian called Octavius Januarius. When Caecilius criticized Christianity he combined all kind of immorality with the fact that the Christians, according to him, worshipped their god during the night. As he stated:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Alii eos ferunt ipsius antistitis ac sacerdotis colere genitalia et quasi parentis sui adorare naturam:}
\end{quote}
nescio an falsa, certe occultis ac nocturnis sacris
adposita suspicio!221

Felix’ viewpoint was, of course, that of a Christian writer wishing to show his reader how non-Christian arguments eventually lost to Christian ideals; however, there is no real reason to doubt that he was reproducing, in a quite genuine manner, the rather suspicious attitude, of those practising Roman state religion, towards night-time rituals. After all, Minucius Felix was a well-read man who knew traditional culture extremely well.222 Another detail that must be noticed, is the fact that, during the sellisternium, the sacrifice made to Juno and Diana consisted of pigs. Pigs were not common offerings for Juno and Diana; they were used more in expiations and funerary rituals. In the cults of the birth-goddesses, bloodless victims were usually used instead.223 As a result, it seems that, as Marja-Leena Hänninen has concluded, the sacrifice made by women in the ludi saeculares was not made to Juno and Diana as protectors of women, but rather as protectors of the whole community.224

The Sellisternium was thus a purification rite, celebrated on behalf of the whole communitas as a part of the ludi saeculares. In evaluating why they were included in the imperial ludi saeculares in the first place, it is of course possible that the organizers were following earlier tradition (of the republican period). Unfortunately, we do not know enough about the republican festivals to say if this was indeed the case. Moreover, it seems that the roots of the games conducted during the imperial period can be traced to those of Augustus (after all, it seems that Augustus had a good opportunity to modify the program, and he probably did just that – even if some aspect of his games had their roots in the republican tradition, they probably still probably differed substantially from their predecessors).225 As the Severan procedure follows the Augustan example in this part of the programme quite closely, I will first examine the Augustan sellisternium and then compare it with the rituals of the Severan ludi saeculares.

The Secular Games of 17 BCE, as a grand purification ceremony, must be seen against the background of the devastating civil war that before the reign of Augustus. The memory of the war

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221 Min. Fel. Oct. 9.4: “Others say that they actually reverence their private parts of their director and high-priest, and adore his organs as parent of their being. This may be false, but such suspicions naturally attach to their secret and nocturnal rites” (transl. Gerald H. Rendall).
222 See Rendall, p. 304. A classic case of the suspicions towards the nocturnal rituals by the state authorities is the suppression of Bacchanalia, reported in Liv. 25.1.6—12. For details, see Beard, North & Price, pp. 91—96.
223 Hänninen, p. 104; Scheid 2003, p. 81.
224 Hänninen, p. 104.
was still very much alive when Augustus conducted the games, and strongly affected the emperor’s whole cultural policy.\textsuperscript{226} Bearing this in mind, one answer to the question regarding the function of the sellisternium during the 17 BCE games could be connected to the idea of the “mischief of women” as a cause for the civil wars of the late republic. The idea can be found in Roman literary tradition. Many stories are told as an example for proper moral behaviour; and many of these also include women. Four examples, especially, must be noted from the earliest history of Rome, as recorded by Livy. These are the story of the Roman women Horatia and Lucretia, and the two Etruscans, Tanaquil and Tullia.\textsuperscript{227} The civil war itself was also a starting-point for many famous poems of Virgil and Horace. The main problem addressed in the poems was the reason behind the civil war; the texts question why the Romans suffered such a terrible thing.\textsuperscript{228}

It seems that the poets’ answer was that the civil war was a punishment for moral decline; in Christian terms, we could perhaps say that it was almost like a case of “original sin”. The Romans had committed a crime against gods in the past, and the guilt was transmitted to the generation of Virgil, Horace and Augustus. Civil war itself was an offence against the gods, but was at the same time a punishment. But what was the crime then? According to Horace, the two main reasons were neglect of the gods and adultery of married women. As Roman women behaved immorally, their sons were not properly educated. As a result, when they grew up, they became bad soldiers and bad citizens. The problem became worse with every generation, and the only way to stop this evil process was to return to the proper ways of worshipping the gods and to carry out a moral reform.\textsuperscript{229} These ideas thus became Augustus’ central policy when he established his rule after the civil war. The idea of the Augustan ludi saeculares was hence to celebrate especially the moral rebirth of Rome and thus the new Golden Age.\textsuperscript{230}

Returning to the Severan games, we should consider whether the same may be applied to the latter as well. Was the idea that the immorality of married women as a cause for the troubles in the

\textsuperscript{226} As witnessed, for example, in App. B. Civ. 5. 132. 548. The memory of the civil war was important precisely because it seemed to be something Augustus wanted to forget; this was a central aspect of his policies. See Gowing, Alain M., Empire and Memory: The Representation of the Roman Republic in Imperial Era. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005, pp. 17–27. The memory of the civil war was influential in later periods as well — as David Potter has noted, many acts Severus conducted while in power indicate that the history and memory of the civil war of the late republic and early empire were well in his mind. Potter, p. 116.

\textsuperscript{227} Takács, Sarolta A., Vestal Virgins, Sibyls, and Matrons: Women in Roman Religion. University of Texas Press, Austin 2008, pp. 9—10. The accounts of Livy: 1.26 (Horatia); 1.57—60 (Lucretia); 1.34, 1.39, 1.41 (Tanaquil); 1.46—59 (Tullia).


\textsuperscript{229} ibid.

\textsuperscript{230} For Augustan moral reforms in general, see Galinsky, pp. 128—138; for the restoration of religion, pp. 288—312; for ludi saeculares as a celebration for moral reforms, pp. 100—106.
communitas still alive in the early third century? To some extent, the answer to these questions seems to be "yes". The Severan context was very similar to the Augustan one, as Severus had gained power by the means of civil war. Moreover, it is arguable that promoting family life was, for the new regime of Severus, a tool for creating an impression of stability after an uneasy period of internal struggles.\textsuperscript{231} Severan policy, especially Septimius Severus’ moral legislation (and later, Caracalla’s as well), would indeed indicate that this was the case. Furthermore, the idea of proper morals was probably an important part of Roman identity for upper-class Romans during the early third century, as can be read in Cassius Dio’s history.\textsuperscript{232} Some very interesting passages can be found, especially in his descriptions of the reigns of Nero and Elagabalus (the third emperor of the Severan dynasty). Dio represented these individuals as archetypes of bad emperors, and in the eyes, it seems that their most severe crime was their wrong conduct, their “unmanliness” or effeminacy.\textsuperscript{233} He also mocked Julia Domna in one instance, in describing a conversation (which most likely invented himself) between the empress and a British woman. According to Dio, the empress had made some remarks about the free sexual freedom of women in Britain to which the other woman answered that British women fulfilled the demands of the nature in a better way than Roman women did since “we (British) consort openly with the best men, whereas you (Romans) let yourselves be debauched by the vilest”.\textsuperscript{234}

However, the answer might not be so simple. If Julia Domna and the prominent matrons, whose participation was preserved in public memoria by the inscription, symbolized immorality and decadence, this would have consisted of shaming the empress publicly. It is highly unlikely that Septimius Severus, who had until then only been nothing but a usurper and an outsider, and who was attempting to set up a new dynasty, would have benefited if his wife was connected to ideas such as immortality and adultery. After all, not even an Augustan example survives: empress Livia is completely missing from the Augustan inscription, and the names of the matrons who took part in those rituals are not mentioned either, whereas the Severan inscription includes all the names

\textsuperscript{231} Gorrie 2004, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{232} As I have already mentioned (in Chapter one), I here follow the idea that Cassius Dio’s history is an introduction to the "proper" Roman thinking of the senatorial class; a guide for the provincial (Greek-speaking) senators regarding the values and customs of the empire. To be a true Roman, one was required to know the city and be familiar with its buildings, history, religion and culture. Such knowledge could make a foreigner a Roman, but the lack of it could make one less Roman, even if one was an inhabitant of the city. To grant this knowledge was probably one of the main motives behind Dio’s history - see Chapter one for details; see also Hope, Valerie, ‘The City of Rome’. In Huskinson, Janet (ed.), Experiencing Rome. Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire. Routledge, London 2000, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{233} It is very interesting that even if some other authors mention the immoral ways of Nero (Suet. Ner. 28—29; Tac. Ann. 15.37.) this question seems much more important for Cassius Dio. See Gowing, Alan, ‘Cassius Dio on the Reign of Nero’. In ANRW II.34.3 (1997), p. 257. Dio’s account on Elagabalus can be found in his book 80.
\textsuperscript{234} Cass. Dio 77.16.5 (passage translated by Earnest Cary).
(although not at this point, but during the description of the rituals of the second day). Therefore, the purpose of displaying Julia Domna and the matrons in the inscription should probably be found elsewhere; I will return to this question in Chapter four, which deals with the role of various groups of women more closely.

In summary, the rituals of the first night seem to be emphasizing the safety of the *communitas*. The Moirae were prayed to for protection of the new age which was about to begin, the Vestals were present to symbolize the community, and the *sellisternium* of the matrons was held to pacify the gods on behalf of the *communitas*. The emperor and his sons, as well as his wife, were visibly present from the beginning, taking control of the rituals aiming to secure the happiness and the continuity of Rome until the next *saeculum*.

### 3.2. Rites of the Opening Day: the God and His Servant

The first day of the festival was dedicated to Juppiter Optimus Maximus. The Severan inscription seems to quite closely follow the Augustan model. Septimius Severus himself was the central figure, sacrificing a bull to Juppiter and praying to him; not much else is known, as the part of the inscription containing the last part of the program of the first day is extremely fragmented. It seems that the victims were white during the daytime rituals, when the heavenly gods were celebrated, and black in the nocturnal rites, which celebrated the chthonic gods. This was an old custom in Roman religion.\(^{235}\) The formula of the prayer was similar to the prayer conducted during the previous day – the emperor again asked protection for the Roman people, the *quindecimviri*, and for himself, his house, and his household. The sacrifice was conducted in the Capitoline hill, where the temple of Juppiter Optimus Maximus, the supreme god of Rome, was also situated.\(^{236}\)

To understand the significance of the emperor’s sacrifice to Juppiter during the first day of the festival, we must now turn to considering the position of Juppiter Optimus Maximus during the imperial period in general. Despite being the supreme god of Roman pantheon, his role in imperial policy throughout history was far from stable. I will therefore briefly examine the role of the god during the imperial centuries, as well as his importance in imperial policy from Augustus to Severus, then I will return to Septimius Severus and his sacrifice to Juppiter in the *ludi saeculares*.

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\(^{235}\) Scheid 2003, p. 80.

\(^{236}\) Pighi, comm. lud. sept. III 69—85.
3.2.1. Juppiter – a God and His Changing Fortunes

Despite the centrality of Juppiter Optimus Maximus in the Roman pantheon, his importance actually varied in different times during the imperial era. Augustus, for example, favoured gods which best suited his purposes. When Augustus was in power, Juppiter was a neglected figure compared to Apollo and Mars. A concrete example of this new context was the transfer of the Sibylline books from the temple of Juppiter to the temple of Apollo in the Palatium. A dramatic change in the Roman empire occurred in AD 68, when Nero was thrown out of power and committed suicide; the days of the Julio-Claudian dynasty were then over and civil war broke out. Eventually, the following “year of the four emperors” ended with the victory of Vespasian, who established the Flavian dynasty consisting of himself and his two sons, Titus and Domitian.

The Flavian dynasty is sometimes called “bourgeois”. There is some substance behind this claim, as Vespasian came from a family of municipal nobles, and had his roots in the equestrian class. Suetonius reports how Vespasian was chosen to put down rebellions in Judea in late 60’s AD, as it seemed safe to give such a large army to a man with so obscure a family and a name. The Flavian dynasty was a period for restoring peace, confidence and authority in imperial office. Manners of achieving these included, among other things, the successful ending of the Jewish war, stabilizing the provinces and strengthening the administration. The Flavians’ building activity is also noteworthy; the existing temples and other buildings on the Capitolium, the Campus Martius and other central areas in the capital, were repaired and restored, and new buildings were constructed (like the Flavian amphitheatre, the Colosseum). Lots of similarities can thus be found with the Flavians and the Severans – both can be considered as outsiders, both had to restore peace after the civil war as well as legitimize their rule, and both conducted a large building programme in the capital.

Establishing a new dynasty was obviously problematic for the new rulers. For Vespasian, it was not possible to legitimize his power with blood ties to the family of Augustus, which had been the case

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237 Beard, North & Price, p. 201.
238 In AD 69 the empire was ruled first by Galba, then Otho, the Vitellius, and eventually by Vespasian.
240 Suet. Vesp. 4.5.
241 For the Flavian policies of restoration in general, Le Glay, Voisin & Le Bohec, pp. 239—266.
until Nero. The new rule thus needed a new emphasis on divine sanction. As a result, Vespasian gave Jupiter Optimus Maximus a central role in his propaganda. However, even if the importance of Jupiter is noticeable in Vespasian’s propaganda (and Titus’), it was Domitian, especially, who truly made Jupiter the central figure in imperial ideology.\(^{242}\) Domitian’s coinage, which connects Jupiter with warfare, transmitted an interesting message from AD 85 onwards: the emperor served as the “warrior of Jupiter”, acting on behalf of mankind. The coins celebrated the victory over the tribe of Chatti, and depicted the emperor as a warrior who had fought Jupiter’s war, restored the order and repulsed threatening disorder. Domitian’s role was a constant subject in the coinage for the last decade of the reign. The themes complemented each other: Jupiter protected and gave victory to the emperor, and the latter protected the human race.\(^{243}\)

The period of Domitian’s reign was thus central to the so called “Jovian theology”. This is possibly connected to the fact that the evolution of universal monarchy in the Roman world demanded a unifying political mythology. This unity was provided in Rome by worship of the rulers (living and dead) as well as the cult of Jupiter, who was the most prominent of gods and (especially from Domitian’s time onwards) very closely connected to the emperor.\(^{244}\) However, the reign of Trajan was also pivotal. Pliny The Younger, a contemporary writer of Trajan, deals with the relationship between the emperor and Jupiter in his *Panegyricus*. In his text, Trajan was the emperor chosen by Jupiter; his duty was to rule well, to benefit the commonwealth.\(^{245}\)

During the Antonine period, the role of Jupiter stabilized; he appeared frequently in coinage, for example, but in quite an undramatic way. However, it seems that during the reign of Commodus, Jupiter once again received more attention from the emperor. Commodus had no problem in justifying his power; as the son of Marcus Aurelius, his rise to the throne was legitimised by his membership in the Antonine dynasty. Despite this, he seemed to put some new emphasis on the “Jovian theology”, in the style of Domitian and Trajan. The Commodian Jupiter thus again served to highlight the emperor as an intermediate between the god and subjects. The emperor’s responsibility was to take care of the well-being of his subjects, and this time, the themes in the coinage featuring Jupiter appear to propagate a new Golden Age under Commodus.\(^{246}\)


\(^{243}\) Fears, p. 79.

\(^{244}\) See Fears, pp. 7—9 for a more detailed account on “Jovian theology”. The role of the ruler-cult in Roman religion is a complicated subject – not least because of the question of the divinity of living emperors; see Gradel for discussion.

\(^{245}\) Plin. *Pan.* 1.3; 67. See also Fears, pp. 81—82.

\(^{246}\) Fears, pp. 109—112.
3.2.2. The Warrior of the Supreme God

When Septimius Severus took power and established the new dynasty in AD 193, the situation was in many ways similar to that at the beginning of the Flavian period. After the civil war, the power had to be legitimized—after all, there was no chance for Severus to claim power on the basis of his membership to the ruling dynasty (just as it was the case with Vepasian in AD 69).

If the Vespasian background was “bourgeois”, Severus was in no better position. As we noticed, the idea of the emperor as a warrior of Juppiter, whose duty was to rule rightfully and do good for his people, was put forward during the Flavian period precisely (and stabilized during the Antonine era). The beginning of the Severan era apparently underwent a similar process: according to J.R. Fears, Severus also tried to establish the new regime by using Juppiter. He marked his victory over Pescennius Niger by issuing a coin honouring the god who had proclaimed Severus’ election. In the same year (AD 194), another type appeared. It depicted Septimius Severus and Juppiter clasping hands, with Severus wearing military garb and holding a spear. Another coin, presenting Septimius Severus and Juppiter both holding a globe in their clasped hands, conveyed an image of the god and his “warrior servant”. The thunderbolt, Juppiter’s symbol, was also included on the arch of Lepcis Magna, the emperor’s home town. On the arch, the emperor is pictured in a rather peaceful scene, performing a sacrifice and holding a thunderbolt in his hand.247

On the other hand, it should be remembered that Severus’ association with Juppiter was a very traditional one. It is difficult to find a more special relationship between the emperor and the god, as he used the images of the supreme god in a very similar manner as many previous emperors.248 This probably helped him to be part of the tradition, which especially connected him to the Antonine rulers. In the ludi saeculares, this relationship was highlighted and the “Jovian theology” which already existed from the reign of Domitian, was brought forth.

Obtaining an Antonine-like role in his relation to Juppiter, Septimius Severus thus wished to present himself as the “warrior of Juppiter” and as a ruler who would serve Juppiter in guaranteeing the happiness of mankind. In fact, what the emperor’s “warrior” position could indicate is that he was acting as a patronus for the Romans; he was the protector and provider who ensured his people’s

247 Fears, pp. 114—115.
safety. He was thus a patron whose duty in Roman society was traditionally to give benefits, favours and services. This was the system on which Roman society was very much based; the network of social relationships between families (and family members), kins, dependants of all kinds (both inside and outside the household), friends, patrons and clients, and so on.\(^{249}\)

Septimius Severus’ paternal role becomes evident in the *ludi saeculares* inscription when the source describes the sacrifice conducted by the emperor. Following the example given by Augustus, Severus bound the destinies of the city and of himself (and his family) together, acting as a father of the country, the *pater patriae*, the provider of peace and continuity. The concept of *pater patriae* was of course very common in the Roman imperial era. It was a salutation given to persons as a thanks for their great deeds for Rome as early as republican times. Cicero was among those who received the title in 63 BCE (when revealing the Catilinan conspiracy). Julius Caesar and most of the Julio-Claudian emperors received the salutation, and most of the emperors after them were also granted the title by the senate. In fact, it is claimed that the title was nothing more than a perfunctory honour from the first century onwards, part of the normal procedure of the senate recognition of a new emperor.\(^{250}\)

However, this is perhaps not that simple a question. The importance attached to family values changed in imperial policy from time to time, and it is probable that whenever these, proper morals, and similar ideas, were more strongly emphasised, the concept of *pater patriae* also received more substance. It is very likely that in the Severan period, when the imperial policy highlighted the value of families and moral values, people pondered over their relationship to the emperor by means of family values. For example, monuments such as arch of the *argentarii* in Rome – which was probably erected in the same year as the celebration of the Secular Games– described Julia Domna as *mater Augusti nostra et castrorum et senatus et patriae*. Describing an empress as “our mother” probably generated at least some thoughts on family values and of the different roles of the imperial family’s members.\(^{251}\) Such monuments created a common language for the *communitas* for the depiction of the imperial family as the first family in the empire. An interesting parallel can in fact be found with the Hellenistic kingdoms; among the Seleucids family language was also used to describe the roles of the imperial family members. The father-figure, especially, had a central

\(^{249}\) Garnsey, Peter & Saller, Richard, *The Roman Empire. Economy, Society and Culture*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1987, p.148. Seneca, for example, described the system of benefits and services exchange as one which binds human society (Sen. *Ben.* 1.4.2, adapted from Garnsey & Saller).


position in their royal ideology. There were, moreover, other ways of using family terminology; one of the most interesting ones was the description the king and queen as brother and sister – apparently the habit of calling a married couple this way was well attested in classical Greece.  

Fig. 4. Emperor Septimius Severus and empress Julia Domna sacrificing together. Relief, arch of the argentarii in Rome.

The role of the emperor as a father-figure was quite evident when he sacrificed to the heavenly protector of the Rome, Jupiter Optimus Maximus, on behalf of the people and again, in the nocturnal rituals, when he asked for protection for himself, his house and his family. This phenomenon can essentially be interpreted as in a way in which Septimius Severus demonstrated that the people of Rome actually were his family, and that they were under his protection. The family themes continued beyond the first day, though; in fact, they became even more relevant during the second night and day of the ludi saeculares, when 110 Roman respectable matrons, led by the empress Julia Domna herself, took a central role in the celebration. To these rituals I now turn.

4. DAY TWO: WOMEN TAKE THE STAGE

In this chapter, I will proceed to the second night and day of the festivals, dealing with them in a similar manner as with the first rituals – that is, in first describing what the inscription records, and then in analyzing the different details more closely. However, my examination of the second night will be very short as the inscription is extremely fragmented in this part. As a consequence, the main focus in this chapter will be the daytime rituals. The most interesting part of the second day rituals is the role of the women in the programme. Their importance is highlighted, for example, by the fact that the names of the *matronae* taking part in the games are included in the inscription. Accordingly, I shall especially concentrate on the functions of the different female groups that can be found participating in the ritual.

4.1. The Second Night: A “Prelude”?

The details of the second night found on the fragments of the inscription mostly describe some of the rituals taking place after the sacrifices. They were apparently conducted in a similar manner as on the previous night: theatrical games in a theatre without seats, the *ludi latini* in a wooden theatre and, again, the *sellisternia* by matrons in honour of Juno and Diana. However, even if the information is scarce, we do know that the second night was dedicated to goddess Eileithyia as she is mentioned later in the inscription (when covering the rituals of the third day) as one who received sacrifices on the second night. She was the deity worshipped during the second night of the Augustan *ludi saeculares* as well. Moreover, even if we lack the inscription of the Secular Games of Domitian, he most likely followed the Augustan practice, since one of the coins struck to celebrate the games of AD 88 seems to depict a sacrifice to the goddess.

The goddess Eileithyia (sometimes called Ilithyia or Eilithyiae) was of Greek origin. Her position in Greek mythology is explained by Hesiod in his *Theogonia*. According to him, Zeus married Hera and as a result the goddess gave birth to three deities: Hebe, Ares and Eileithyia. In the Greek

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253 Pighi, comm.lud.sept. IV 1—4.
255 *RIC* 2 no. 383 (Domitian) shows the emperor giving a victimless sacrifice – during the earlier, Augustan games the sacrifice to Eileithyia was bloodless (27 sacrificial cakes) – in front of a tripartite structure with a reclining personification of Tiber, as suggested by Sobocinski (p. 585).
256 Hes. *theog.* 921—923.
world, Eileithyia was considered as a goddess of childbirth. The legend had it that she was in assistance when Apollo was born. For Homer, she was the goddess of the pain of birth.\textsuperscript{257} She is mentioned in a less favourable light in the works of Diodorus Siculus, an author from Sicily writing in Greek during the first century CE. He describes how Eileithyia helped Hera in her plot against Zeus by assisting the birth of Eurystheus, who was later king of Argos.\textsuperscript{258}

As was the case with Moirae, it is likely that Eileithyia was not widely worshipped in Roman traditional religion. Apparently, the first time Eileithyia received honours from the Roman state was during the ludi saeculares of Augustus.\textsuperscript{259} Zosimus, a Byzantine historian of a much later period (living in the late fifth/early sixth century), writes about the inclusion of the goddess in the rituals of the Augustan Secular Games. The historian himself held a strong anti-Christian agenda; in his view, the decline the Roman empire experienced during his lifetime resulted from the abandon of traditional state religion. For Zosimus, Constantine and other pro-Christian or Christian emperors were to blame for the troubles.\textsuperscript{260} Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that Zosimus is very interested in the ludi saeculares. As the tradition of the games ceased during the Constantine period, this was for Zosimus another proof that neglecting the ancient rituals led to the decline of the empire.\textsuperscript{261}

As Zosimus records the Sibylline oracle which ordered the games in his history, the goddess Eileithyia appears in the text as:

\[ \text{epi taiz de' Eileithyia orphanastai} \\
\text{paoitokous thenein, dple themies.} \textsuperscript{262} \]

In Rome, Eileithyia was also known as Juno Lucina, as noted by Dionysios of Halicarnassus.\textsuperscript{263} Horace connects Eileithyia (or Ilithyia) to Lucina, and to Genitalis in his Carmen Saeculare:

\[
\text{Rite maturos aperire partus} \\
\text{lenis, Ilithyia, tuere matres,}
\]

\textsuperscript{258} The whole story can be found in Diod. 4.9.
\textsuperscript{259} Feeney, p. 107; for Eileithyia in Rome in general, see Jessen, O., ‘Eileithyia’. In RE 5, 2109.
\textsuperscript{261} Zos. 2.7.
\textsuperscript{262} Zos. 2.6.9—10: “Conciliate the Eleithuai, who bring children to birth, at altars smoking with incense, as is proper” (transl. Ronald T. Ridley).
\textsuperscript{263} Dio. Hal. 4.15.5.
Only a few Roman (Latin) sources mention Eileithyia even after the occasion of the Augustan *ludi saeculares*. However, it can be suggested that the role of Eileithyia did remain as a goddess of childbirth in the third century as well; at least Aelian, who wrote contemporaneously during Septimius Severus’ rule of the empire, described Eileithyia as “Artemis of the child-bed.”

It is very likely that rituals dedicated to her were quite similar in AD 204 as in the Augustan celebration. As a goddess of childbirth, one could suggest that she was celebrated as a protector of mothers, and in this sense the nocturnal rituals were kind of an opening phase for the celebration of Juno on the following day. After all, both deities were connected to the matrons, the respected Roman mothers, and the latter had an extensive role during the second day of the festival, as we shall next see.

### 4.2. The Second Day: Celebrating Juno

According to the inscription, the main deity of the second day was Juno Regina. The goddess received the sacrifice of a white cow by the emperor. The emperor’s sons Caracalla and Geta, and the *quindecimviri*, were also present according to the inscription. The sacrifice was made according to the Greek rite, *immolavit Iunoni Reginae uaccam alb. Graeco Achiuo ritu*, which was similar to a more traditional Roman sacrifice with except that the one who made sacrifice did it bareheaded, not wearing a toga over the head (which was the custom in Roman religion).

One of the novelties in the Severan inscription, in comparison to the earlier records, is the sacrifice to Juppiter Optimus Maximus made during the ceremonies of the second day in AD 204. According to the Severan record, the emperor sacrificed to Juppiter Optimus Maximus after the celebrations

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264 Hor. *carm. saec.* 13—16: “Gentle to bring to light issue In due season, O Ilithyia, protect mothers, Whether thou dost delight to be called Lucina or Genitalis” (transl. Niall Rudd).


266 Ael. *NA* 7.15. Aelian, even though he wrote in Greek, came from Italy, as he was a native of Praeneste. Trapp, Michael Burnley, ‘Aelian’. In *OCD*, pp. 18—19.

267 For the Augustan sacrifices to Eileithyia: Pighi, comm.*lud.quint.* 115—118.

honouring Juno, and held a banquet with the other members of quindecimviri sacris faciundis. After that, he returned to the cella of Juno Regina.²⁶⁹

The celebration was followed by a supplicatio to Juno. It was conducted by the 110 matrons, with the empress Julia Domna among them. Septimius Severus led their prayer to the goddess (apparently this was done in the Augustan games by Marcus Agrippa). The Vestals Numisia Maximilla and Terentia Flavola were also present during the prayer.²⁷⁰ Even if the supplicatio followed the Augustan example, another interesting “innovation” appears in the Severan inscription covering this phase of the festival – the names of the matrons who took part in the rituals were added to the inscription, as mentioned earlier.

Another new feature for the Severan Secular Games, in this part of the inscription, consisted of the emperor’s declaration that the ludi honorarii were to be held after the ludi saeculares. The ludi would, according to the record, include many kinds of events, such as shows in a wooden theatre and in the theatre of Pompeius, as well as musical performances in the odeion (most likely in the Circus Flaminius), spectacles in the Circus Maximus, and beast hunts.²⁷¹ The ludi honorarii were celebrated in the Augustan games at well, but their announcement differs considerably in the Severan record: the ludi mentioned in the Severan inscription present many interesting details missing from the earlier records.

Overall, as can be seen, the women held a central part in the rituals of the second day. Three different “groups” can be created among these women: the empress Julia Domna, the group of 109 matrons, and the two Vestal Virgins. All of them celebrated Juno Regina during the ludi saeculares. Juno herself was one of the most important deities for the Romans from a very early period, although the opinions about her nature differed even among the Roman writers. According to Varro, for example, who wrote in the late republican period, Juno was connected to the earth;²⁷² in fact, it seems likely that her nature changed during the centuries of the republican period.²⁷³ However, it could be said that generally Juno had a major importance for the women of Rome. She was the tutelary goddess of married Roman women and the protector of childbirth. Accordingly, she was a

²⁶⁹ Pighi, comm.lud.sept. IV 4—9.
²⁷¹ Pighi, comm.lud.sept. Va 30—46.
²⁷² Varro, Ling. 5.65.
²⁷³ Hänninen, p. 24; see pp. 23—25 for an account of Juno and her “original” role as seen in the studies of ancient religion. However, as Hänninen mentions, it is perhaps more sensible to accept many aspects in one deity than attempt to find the one and only original function for the goddess.
protector of mothers too. There was nevertheless also a social aspect of marriage connected to Juno. Many examples in Roman literature existing in which the goddess was precisely the protector of legal martial relations. She was this way connected to the idea of fertility as well (through marriage).\textsuperscript{274}

Even if the second day was dedicated to Juno, the sacrifice to Juppiter Optimus Maximus on the same day is a very interesting detail. In the previous chapter, we already examined the role of the supreme god of the Roman pantheon. His role had changed from time to time during the imperial period, and during the Severan age, his relationship with the emperor became very close; the emperor was shown as a representative of Juppiter, who would act on behalf of the protector of the \textit{communitas}.

Combining Juppiter Optimus Maximus and Juno Regina in the records of the second day perhaps highlights the male-female relationship existing between the leading two deities in the Roman traditional religion. Both were included in the Capitoline triad (alongside Minerva), and were apparently considered as the royal couple amongst the Roman gods.\textsuperscript{275} Moreover, one might find a connection with Septimius Severus and Julia Domna, as the idea of the centrality of the ruling couple for the \textit{communitas} was also extended to the emperor and the empress in the records of the games. Some clarifications for this claim might be found in the rituals describing the further events of the second day, and especially in the role of Julia Domna. This is what I will next deal with.

\subsection*{4.2.1. Mother(s) of the Golden Age}

The prayer to Juno began in the inscription in a passage associating the emperor and the empress, the matrons who took part in the prayer, and the senior Vestal Virgins. According to the inscription, Septimius Severus, along with his sons Caracalla and Geta, the \textit{quidecimviri} and apparently also the praetorians, went to the Capitolium on the second day to sacrifice to Juppiter.

\textsuperscript{274} Hänninen, p. 133.
\textsuperscript{275} For the history and development of the Capitoline triad in Roman religion, see e.g. Scheid 2003, p. 159 and Dumézil, Georges, \textit{Idées romaines}. Gallimard, Paris 1979, p. 155.
Many interesting details can be found here. Julia Domna and Septimius Severus are clearly represented as a married couple; Julia is mentioned as the coniunx of Severus (coniugi imp.). The noun was used, for example, in sepulchral inscriptions, but especially in poetry. It is not usually found in more ordinary language (such as in private letters). It is used to describe a wife (sometimes, but not that often, a husband too) in relation to other partner, and is related to the verb coniungere, “to join together”. In other words, it is used to describe a joining in marriage.

Julia Domna’s role, not only as a wife, but also as a mother, is emphasized in the inscription. She was the wife of the emperor, but also the “mother of the camps” (mater castrorum). The title was given to Julia Domna in AD 195. Its purpose was to highlight the close relationship maintained between the new dynasty and the army; after all, during that period, Septimius Severus was in the constantly fighting – Pescennius Niger had recently been defeated, and the military campaigns in the east were about to begin.

The reason for using this particular title however perhaps became more complicated in AD 204. Julia was known as mater caesaris from AD 196 onwards, and in AD 198, she received the title of mater augusti et caesaris. Later, her full title was mater augusti/imperatoris et castrorum et senatus et patriae – mother of the emperor, of the camps, and the senate and the fatherland. Later still, she was also known as mater populi Romani – mother of the Roman people. However, these titles were apparently given to Julia Domna much later, probably after the death of Septimius Severus in AD 211. It is thus somewhat unclear why Julia Domna was described as “Mother of the Camps” in the inscription recording the ludi saeculares, as the title that described as the mother of the augusti et caesaris was also already available.

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276 Pighi, comm.lud.sept. IV 9—10: “Septimius Augustus, with the Vestal Virgins Numisia Maximilla and Terentia Flavola, imparted to Julia Augusta, mother of the camps and wife of the emperor, and to the hundred and nine matrons, who had been convoked....”


279 Kettenhofen, pp. 83—85; Levick, p. 82.

280 Levick, p. 93. The senate had tried to give the honorary title of mater patriae to the empress Livia when Augustus, her husband, died; however, this was not approved by Tiberius. The first empress to actually take the title was Julia Domna, and she was later followed by her relatives, and the future empresses Julia Maesa and Julia Mamaea. The latter was also known as mater universi humani generis. Kosmetatou, E., ‘The Public Image of Julia Mamaea’. In Latomus 61.2 (2002), pp. 411—412.
One possible explanation for her title as *mater castrorum* on this particular occasion could be that it was the most useful title to connect her to the Antonine empresses, and thus to create an impression of continuity from the Antonine to the Severan period. The term *mater castrorum* was first given to Faustina the younger, wife of Marcus Aurelius receiving the title in AD 174 or AD 175 (see fig. 5).\(^{281}\) The relationship to Marcus Aurelius and his dynasty was extremely important for Severus, as is demonstrated by many of his actions. Severus’ most famous deed in this aspect was his self-made adoption by the family of Aurelius, as he declared himself as a son of Marcus Aurelius and the brother of Commodus.\(^{282}\) This was not, however, the only manner in which Septimius Severus likened himself to the *gens Aurelia*, and to the emperor Marcus Aurelius in particular. He, for example, changed the name of his first-born son (Caracalla) to Marcus Aurelius Antoninus,\(^{283}\) and many other of his actions were very similar to Marcus Aurelius’ deeds. Contemporary writers also mention many prodigies and other occasions that can be found from the descriptions of Marcus Aurelius’ reign. Inscriptions, numismatic evidence and portraits also show the similarities between Septimius Severus and his Antonine “father”.\(^{284}\) Taking all this into consideration, it is perhaps not so surprising that Julia Domna was named in a manner connecting her to the Antonine tradition, in the *ludi saeculares*, which was an occasion of extreme importance in the new dynasty’s legitimization of power.


\(^{282}\) He had already started the adoption process in AD 195, proclaiming himself son of Marcus as indicated by epigraphic and numismatic evidence. The actual adoption only took place in AD 197.

\(^{283}\) Herod. 3.10.5; Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 20.30; Eutr. 8.19.2.

\(^{284}\) For Septimius Severus and his identification with the Antonines in his deeds and propaganda, see Baharal, Drora, *Victory of Propaganda. The dynastic aspect of the Imperial propaganda of the Severi: the literary and archaeological evidence AD 194—235*. BAR International Series 657. Tempvs Repratvm, Oxford 1996, pp. 20—42. The idea of Marcus Aurelius and Augustus as role models for the emperors was so powerful that even Elagabalus, when taking power as the third Severan ruler after Septimius Severus and Caracalla, declared that he wanted to be a new Augustus and Marcus Aurelius, if we believe Cassius Dio (79.1.3).
The inscription portrays Julia Domna as the chief of the mothers. The record states that the “wife of the emperor and 109 matrons” were present. As the number of matrons participating in the ritual amounted to 110, Julia Domna was thus included as one of them. The number of the matrons, 110, probably referred to the \textit{saeculum}: it was claimed to be a 110 years long period in the Sibylline books which ordered the games (the passage of the books is preserved in the history of Zosimus).\footnote{Zos. 2.6. The question regarding the “proper” length of a \textit{saeculum} is not that simple, though; for example, it is possible that the part of the Sibylline Books claiming the length as 110 years was an Augustan forgery. See Appendix 3 for details.}

The matrons who took part in the games came from the most prominent ranks of society. Of the 109 women participating in the ceremonies, 91 were the wives of senators, and 18 were the wives of \textit{equites} – the two groups are separated in the inscription, which mentions the wives of senators first.\footnote{Pighi, comm. lud. sept. IV 12—Va 30. See also Birley, p. 160.} It seems that members of the same family could take part in the games, as the daughters of women who took part in the ritual participated in the chorus of children during the last day of the festival.\footnote{Hänninen, p. 99. The chorus of children will be dealt in Chapter seven.} Unfortunately, the more specific background of the matrons cannot be known that well, as the part of the inscription listing the names is extremely fragmented. Only a couple of full names are left and seem to represent provincial rather than Italian families (the amount of provincials in the senatorial class during the Severan period has been estimated as consisting of about 57 percent).\footnote{The names that can be reconstructed more or less completely are Julia Taria Stratonice Laberi, Domitia Flaccilla Ulpi Antonini, Cl. Dryantilla Platonis Corneli Optati, Julia Suemia Vari Marcelli, Caesennia Tusidiana Livi Rogati, Claudia Valentina Aquili Agrestis, Octavia Athenais Flavi Clementis, Sempronia Spoletina Corneli Felicis, Aelia Gemellina Armeni Iuliani and Antonia Tironilla Iuli Maximi. The names and the fragments are collected in Pighi, pp. 241—243. See also Birley, p. 160. The number of provincial senatorials is suggested in Hopkins, p. 200.} A detail of the Severan family’s dynastic aspirations can be traced from the list of

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Sestertius}
\caption{Sestertius depicting Faustina Junior with the epithet \textit{MATRI CASTORVM}. \textit{RIC} 3 no. 1711 (Marcus Aurelius).}
\end{figure}
matrons, as one of the matronae is Julia Soaemias, the niece of empress Julia Domna, and it seems that she led the group of women coming from the class of the equites. A question might be raised regarding this point: why were the names of Julia Domna, Julia Soaemias, and mothers from the senatorial and the equites classes preserved in public memory through the means of inscription? As I argued in previous chapter, the prominent role of women in the inscription was probably not connected to the “Augustan” idea that married women were guilty of creating the civil war (although women did conduct rituals of purification). As Julia Domna was so clearly associated with the matrons, who represented the highest classes of Rome, the reason could be of a much more practical nature: the inscription (and the ritual itself) was a good way to publicly tie Julia Domna to the ruling groups of the empire. It should be remembered that Julia, a Syrian princess from Emesa (a city that no Roman emperor had visited before Septimius Severus, it seems), was an outsider when speak of the highest social circle of the capital. Even if her family in Emesa did have some connections to Rome (the family, for example, apparently received citizenship generations before she was born), it is very probable that her status needed to be strengthened among the ruling classes. Taking this into consideration, the grand rituals of the ludi saeculares were a perfect way to associate her with the senatorial circles, and the inscription ensured that this association was remembered.

Obviously, the most prominent role of all the matrons was reserved to Julia Domna. As the chief of Roman matrons, the empress could be seen as an exemplary mother. Her role as the leader of Roman mothers was her most important one in the ludi saeculares – out of the five times she is mentioned in the inscription, she appears as one of the matronae four times. Numismatic sources also strengthen Julia Domna’s image as a leading Roman mother. Susann Sowers Lusnia, in her article about the coinage dedicated to Julia Domna, found five different “phases” in the types and images employed for the empress. It seems that, especially in the second phase, during the years AD 200—202, the coin images presented an increased emphasis on imperial lineage and its continuity. During that period, Caracalla and Geta were nominated as Augustus and Caesar, and the grand building process in Rome began. Coins were issued for all the members of the imperial

289 Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va 26. Julia Soaemias was the mother of the third emperor of the Severan dynasty, Elagabalus. Her reputation is not very good; she is described as an immoral woman by ancient authors (Cass. Dio 79.6.2; Herod. 5.3.10; HA Heliog. 2.1). However, the stories might reflect the reputation of her son, who became infamous for his obscure sexual behaviour. For Julia Soaemias see Cleve, Robert Lee, Severus Alexander and the Severan Women. University of California, Los Angeles 1982 (unpublished PhD dissertation).
290 For the background of Julia Domna, see Levick, pp. 6—22.
family (Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, Caracalla and Geta, as well as Plautilla, Caracalla’s wife).  

Apparently, there were four different themes emphasized in Julia Domna’s coinage in this period: motherhood, female virtue, domestic harmony with the continuity of the imperial family and, finally, the individual members of the imperial family, especially Caracalla and Geta. The theme of motherhood can be seen in the coinage representing Venus Genetrix, Mater Deum and Ceres Frugifera. Venus was the mother of Aeneas and was traditionally associated with imperial women, and Ceres Frugifera symbolized fertility as well as consisting of an ideal example of motherhood. Mater Deum is another deity often connected to the women of the imperial family. Female virtues were celebrated by pietas and pudicitia – common associations for the imperial women. 

This group of coins is perhaps the most interesting regarding the ludi saeculares; after all, this is the period in which the great building process of the capital started – a process which culminated in AD 204 with the celebration of the ludi saeculares. One of the major themes, domestic harmony and continuity was important during this phase, following the difficulties of Commodian period and the civil wars. The coins in this group also indicated the coming of the new age, celebrated a couple of years later in the games. The types in these coins include Concordia Aeternitas, Aeternitas Imperi and Saeculi Felicitas. Of these three, Concordia Aeternitas and Aeternitas Imperii appear only in this period (years AD 200—202). Concordia can be found in the coins of the empresses in late first century, but only as Concordia Avg/Augusta or just Concordia. 

4.2.2. Towards Imperial Concordia 

In order to even better understand the role of the empress in the ludi saeculares, the concept of Concordia should be examined more closely. The empress was represented in the inscription as a Roman mother, and the wife of the emperor; this celebration of marriage life was closely connected with Concordia, as we shall see. Moreover, there existed other signs of the close relationship between the Concordia and the games. A coin, struck by Septimius Severus, includes the text SAECULARIA SACRA and depicts Septimius Severus sacrificing by altar, with Caracalla and the

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292 ibid. 
goddess *Concordia* present. The scene also includes the personification of Tiber, a harpist and a flute-player, with a temple in the background.\(^{294}\) This coin clearly symbolizes the values Severus wanted to emphasize during his reign: harmony/continuity between the father and the son and respect of the traditional gods, demonstrated by sacrifice in front of the temple at the presence of the goddess and Tiber. Apparently, this type of a coin had never been struck before Septimius Severus.\(^{295}\) The coin essentially describes the Severan age (*saecularia*) – a period that was celebrated in the *ludi saeculares* – as a sacred age, and the deity symbolizing this great period as *Concordia*. The inclusion of Tiber is perhaps a reference to the *ludi saeculares* as well – after all, the nocturnal celebrations were held in Tarentum, by the river.

The concept of *Concordia* was very deeply connected to Roman marriage. It could be said that an ideal Roman marriage was traditionally identified with *Concordia*. A harmonious marriage was made by a balance of forces, of a male and a female. According to the law, it was forbidden for a *paterfamilias* to break a harmonious marriage; proof of *Concordia* in marriage was indicated by the married couple getting on well and thus through an impression of affection.\(^{296}\)

Originally, *Concordia* was a cult of harmonious agreement, which had already been common in Rome during the republican period, and was often connected to the political struggles of the republic.\(^{297}\) It was widely used during the imperial period too, especially in coinage. In numismatic evidence dating from the late second century, it usually celebrates the harmony of the provinces, soldiers or rulers. For example, a coin from AD 161 celebrated the *Concordia* of emperor Marcus Aurelius and his co-ruler Lucius Verus, with the text CONCORDIAE AUGUSTOR(UM), the harmonious rule of the two emperors.\(^{298}\) *Concordia* was also used to celebrate the marriages of the emperors and, was often thus used especially in the coinage of the empresses. In one example from AD 141, empress Faustina can be seen as shaking hands with the emperor Antoninus Pius, surrounded by the text CONCORDIA. The coin was probably celebrating the marriage of the

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\(^{294}\) *RIC* 4.1 no. 816 (Septimius Severus).


\(^{296}\) Treggiari, pp. 251—252.


\(^{298}\) *RIC* 3 nos. 1276—1296 (Marcus Aurelius).
scepsisus with Concordia were often connected with ideas of fertility, continuity and harmony.

Generally, it seems that the importance of Concordia, and especially as an idea of the harmonious relationship between genders, became even more important in the early third century. In visual arts, the harmony between men and women was of particular interest, as emphasis was placed on proper gender roles. This can be seen, for example, in the funerary monuments of the period. The mythological figures, often described in the reliefs, were often presented as male-female protagonists in order to create a certain balance between men and women, and thus celebrating the proper behaviour genders. They can, however, also be seen as a warning example: a woman behaving like a man was considered a freak, an aberration of nature. Moreover, her masculinity endangered the masculinity of males associated to her.

The visual arts were not the only field in which Concordia received attention. It seems that more emphasis was placed on Concordia by the imperial policy of the early third century, including some new aspects that cannot be found from the Concordia-related propaganda of the earlier emperors. This is demonstrated by the numismatic evidence of the period. The coinage connected to Julia Domna is not the only evidence; it seems that the on the whole, during the Severan period, Concordia was more widely used than in the previous periods. Some novelties are also noticeable: in addition to the aforementioned SAECULARIA SACRA, the titles PERPETUA CONCORDIA and CONCORDIA AETERNA were also new types. In addition, CONCORDIA FELIX was also used; this type was not a novelty, but extremely rare – it seems that it had only appeared a couple of times during the Antonine period, to honour Lucilla, the daughter of Marcus Aurelius.

Another feature characteristic of the Severan period was that the text Concordia was increasingly associated to members of the imperial family, and not the goddess herself. It is most interesting that, from the Severan period on, Concordia became associated to imperial marriage more than it had before. During the relatively short period of AD 193—217 (the reigns of Septimius Severus, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius), the goddess appeared on coins with her sons Commodus and Lucilla. The presence of Concordia on these coins indicates a shift in the symbolism of the goddess, from a general concept of harmony to a more specific association with the imperial family.

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299 **RIC 3** no. 381 (Antoninus Pius).
300 The fertility and continuity associated with Concordia is especially noticeable in the symbol of the cornucopia found on the coins celebrating the empress and Concordia. See, for example, **BMC IV** 85 (Faustina II); 333 (Lucilla); 406 (Crispina). For the empresses’ coins during the second century more generally, see Keltanen, pp. 105—147.
302 Zanzarri, pp. 79—80.
Caracalla and Geta), about 20 different types of coins with the title CONCORDIA were produced, although the goddess appeared in only five of them.\(^{303}\) One such example dates from the year AD 201. The coin could be regarded as an example of an ideal family, the imperial family, in which the future emperor Caracalla was depicted on one side, and his parents, emperor Septimius Severus and empress Julia Domna, on the other.\(^{304}\) The harmonious relationship between husband and wife is obvious, and is highlighted by the portrayal of the emperor as the sun and empress as the moon (fig. 6).

The practice of portraying the emperor and the empress together as the sun and the moon (the emperor wearing sun god’s crown and the empress the moon goddess’ crescent) in coinage began in the Severan period.\(^{305}\) Bruno Bleckmann has argued that it demonstrated how the power of the empress was related to the power of the emperor, but also how it was dependent of it.\(^{306}\) In this particular case, however, I would consider the word Concordia as a key to understand the significance of the image as harmony, rather than dependency, which guarantees continuity. As the ideal family (with a very youthful prince, Caracalla, depicted on the other side, perhaps to symbolize the future of the empire) is described under title CONCORDIAE AETERNAE, it seems to me that the coin basically demonstrates how the harmony between husband and wife, a “cosmic couple”, can produce continuity for the whole empire.

\(^{303}\) Zanzarri, p. 117.
\(^{304}\) RIC 4.1, no. 52 (Caracalla).
As the idea of Concordia and a harmonious family life were closely connected, it seems probable that Concordia could – and should – be found in the rituals of the ludi saeculares, as it seems that Severan games were an occasion celebrating Severus’ moral legislation. As we have seen, some examples of Severan moral laws regulated the marriage of senators.307 Both the Severan policy on marriage and public morals, and the senatorial response to the new moral legislation, seemed to follow the Augustan pattern. During his reign, Augustus was opposed by the senate (especially in the early days of his reign) in relation to three major questions: his will to reduce the number of senators, the unexceptional amount of power he received, and, finally, the moral laws directed towards the upper classes in particular.308 The senatorial class apparently remembered the legislation as an unpleasant occasion, even long after Augustus, as is demonstrated by Tacitus’ negative attitude towards the laws of Augustus, for example (even if he wrote perhaps a hundred years after the emperor’s reign).309

The Augustan idea of highlighting family values among the upper classes was apparently something Severus tried to continue in his policy. The senatorial class was, however, very reluctant. He then decided to extend his “family revolution” to the army, as the soldiers were legally allowed to get married while on service (this law was one of the two most important military reforms made by Severus; the other was to increase military pay).310 Apparently, his wish was not only to highlight the relationship between the soldiers and their wives, but the family life of the soldiers in general, as the new law also gave the soldiers’ children the right of inheritance.311 The strong emphasis Severus placed on these laws is an interesting detail, as it is well known that jurists, such as Ulpian,312

307 See page 58. For the Severan moral laws in general, see Birley, p. 165 and Gorrie 2004, pp. 61—65.
309 Tac. Ann. 3.28.
311 Bryant, p. 26. It is interesting that one of the few surviving documents about legal issues during the reign of the third Severan emperor, Elagabalus, deals also with the rights of soldiers’ children; it seems that he granted the same rights to children born from a Roman soldier and a foreign woman as to those born from Roman citizen parents; see Halsberghe, Gaston H., The Cult of Sol Invictus. Leiden, Brill 1972, p. 71. For the imperial administration of the period in general, see De Arrizabalaga y Prado, Leonardo, The Emperor Elagabalus: Fact of Fiction? Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2010, pp. 278—280.
312 Ulpian (Domitius Ulpianus) was a lawyer and an high-ranking official during the Severan period. He served in various high positions under every Severan emperor, and eventually acted as praetorian prefect during the reign of Alexander Severus. He was eventually murdered in AD 223 by mutinying praetorians. His commentaries and works on the Roman laws had already become famous in his own lifetime. Honoré, Tony, ‘Domitius Ulpianus’. In OCD, pp. 492—493.
received an important role in imperial administration during the late second/early third century (David Potter has suggested that the rise of jurists can be connected to the dependence of Commodus and Severus on the *a libellis* to answer their correspondence, and to Caracalla’s lack of interest in detail).\(^3\) As a characteristic feature of Severan culture was the inclusion of jurists in the government in possibly a stronger manner than before, it is perhaps not surprising that the beginning of the “new era” was accompanied by a number of new laws and regulations. Moreover, the jurists’ knowledge of previous Roman laws played a part in the policies of the Severan dynasty. For example, over two-fifths of the *Digesta*, which is one of the most important sources on Roman law and its history, and which records the laws from the early first century BCE until the age of Constantine, come from Ulpian’s writings.\(^4\) This means that Augustan moral laws, among others, were well known by Severan administrators, which perhaps considerably affected the imperial policy.

Considering the importance of marriage and proper morals in Severan policy, it seems quite obvious that the *ludi saeculares* were also an occasion on which this policy could be celebrated. The matrons’ participation is perhaps the clearest evidence of this, as the respected Roman mothers took part in the grand purification ritual on behalf of the whole *communitas*. Their status as Roman mothers was highlighted by the fact that some of them had their own children taking part in the important closing stages of the celebration (see Chapter six).

I would suggest that the idea of *Concordia* could also be found in the whole royal family’s roles in the ritual. Septimius Severus led the sacrifices and placated the gods. More generally, he declared himself as the *pater* of the whole community, as seen in Chapter three. The empress, on the other hand, led the group of respected mothers; her position as a wife and a mother was also emphasized in the inscription. The roles of the imperial couple reflected the Roman concept of *pater familias* and *mater familias* very clearly in the sense that, in Roman discourse, the good *pater familias* was first and foremost a good estate owner, a master, who took care of his household. Accordingly, the good *mater familias* was considered as a woman who was chaste and sexually respectable, married or widowed (but not unmarried).\(^5\) In addition, Caracalla, the future emperor, and his younger brother Geta, were the visible evidence of the blessings of imperial *Concordia*. Praying together for the gods on behalf of the community, they were symbols security and continuation for the empire.

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\(^{3}\) Potter, pp. 158—162.
\(^{4}\) Honoré, p. 493.
\(^{5}\) Saller, Richard P., ‘*Pater Familias, Mater Familias* and the gendered semantics of the Roman household’. In *CPh* 94.2 (1999), p. 196.
Taking all this into consideration, the unique combination of Juppiter and Juno (compared to the earlier games) appearing on the second day, could be explained as an attempt at highlighting the different roles of the emperor and the empress. The special relationship existing between Septimius Severus and Juppiter Optimus Maximus, alongside Julia Domna’s role as the chief of Roman mothers celebrating Juno, can also be seen as a relationship of between husband and wife; the *pater patriae* and the first Roman matron. Both are connected to one individual of the most important couple in the traditional Roman pantheon; Juppiter Optimus Maximus and Juno Regina. In this sense, the importance of marriage for the *communitas* was also highlighted; only from this harmonious co-operation could the success of the commonwealth be guaranteed.

4.2.3. The Vestals stand Still

The third female group alongside the empress and the matrons appearing on the second day was that of the Vestal Virgins. They attended the praying of the matrons and Septimius Severus, although the inscription clarifies that they did not take part in the prayer, but that just were present.\(^\text{316}\) In that sense, their role was similar to the one they played during to the opening prayer, in which they also participated, but in which they first and foremost simply attended.

As already noted, the Vestal Virgins’ participation in Roman religious life can be divided to two different groups: to rites of purification, and their duty as the guardians of the symbolic food storage of Rome. Generally, their role in the rituals of Roman traditional religion was very visible; nine rituals in which the Vestals were involved are known. Of these, six can be considered more or less as rites of purification. They included the New Year rituals of the 1\(^{\text{st}}\) of March, the *Vestalia*, the *Fordicidia*, the rites of the October Horse, the *Parilia* and, finally, the *Argei*.\(^\text{317}\) As the Vestal Virgins were heavily involved in these kind of rites, their participation in the Secular Games could be explained by the fact that the *ludi saeculares* were also a purificationary celebration – at least in the sense that they celebrated the passing of the old era and the coming of the new Golden Age for the Roman *communitas*. Therefore, it could be argued that the inclusion of the Vestal Virgins was probably at least partly connected to their role in many purificationary rites in Roman religion.

\(^\text{316}\) Pighi, comm.lud.sept. IV 9—10.
\(^\text{317}\) Wildfang, p. 22. For the details of the rituals, see Scullard, pp. 85—87; 102—105; 120—121; 149.—150; 193—194.
The question remains, however, of why the Vestals were included in the inscription of AD 204, since this breaks the tradition of the Augustan record. Why was it considered so important to preserve their participation in the memory of the games, even if their presence can be explained by their generally regular role in the purificatory rituals in Roman civic cults? I would suggest that the reasons I gave in Chapter three could be the answer here as well. The Vestal Virgins were a group who symbolized Rome itself; when they accompanied the emperor in the prayer, their connection with the imperial family was demonstrated.

Moreover, what made the Vestals so special in Roman religion was their all-embracing status. As Staples mentions, “at the core of the Vestals’ gender construction was binary opposites. The priestess’ definition arose from correlations such as man to woman, virgin to matron, and wife to daughter. These binary correlations were based on social, cultural, religious, and legal definitions and locked within Rome’s historical framework, that is, in the fabric of its particular historical development”. The Vestals were considered as sacral precisely because of the ambiguity of their status: they both were and were not virgins and matrons. The importance of their position possibly also rose from the ambiguity existing between men and women. As they appeared in the ludi saeculares of the second day, when the Roman matrons participated under the supervision of Septimius Severus and Julia Domna, their role was again to demonstrate the power of the imperial couple, who ruled even the “sphere of ambiguity”, the categories that could not easily be defined.

4.2.4. The Ludi Honorarii for the True Romans

The second day of the festival was perhaps the most crucial moment of the celebration, when the Vestals and the matronae purified the community and thus ended the old saeculum. Perhaps that is why the end of the second day included the declaration that the ludi honorarii, games including different kind of shows, would be celebrated after the actual Secular Games.

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318 Staples, p. 86.
320 In her classic study, Mary Douglas argued that matters considered out of place were also considered as “dirty”, or at least extremely dangerous. Thus, crisis as an “unnatural” period was considered as some kind of inter-state, in which known categories become unclear or “blurred”. See Douglas, Mary, Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo. Routledge, New York 2002.
The combination of entertainment and competitions and religious rituals was a traditional part of the Roman *ludi*. The shows usually took place over several days; in the beginning, they included races around the circus, but later on, events such as animal combats and theatrical performances were added to the programme. The oldest known *ludi* were probably the *ludi Romani* in September and the *ludi plebeii* in November. The first occasion of which we can be quite certain of their performance was from fourth/third century BCE (although they might be even older). Both were held to honour Juppiter Optimus Maximus, and also included several days of shows: apparently the Roman Games took ten days during the late republican era, and by the time of Julius Caesar they lasted fifteen days. The *ludi plebeii* took place over twelve days, of which nine days were dedicated to stage performances, and three to circus games. During the imperial era, the number of days dedicated to the *ludi* increased, and it has been suggested that in the first century 77 days were dedicated to them, and by mid-fourth century, the time allocated to the ludi amounted to as much as 177 days. The games were a major event in the city, open not just to Roman citizens, but also to foreigners and slaves; their importance for the city as a social occasion was remarkable.\(^{321}\)

The *ludi honorarii*, mentioned in the Severan inscription, were celebrated in the Augustan Secular Games as well; they were cited at the very end of the Augustan programme. They consisted of the *ludi Latini* which took place in a wooden theatre on the bank of Tiber, the *ludi Graeci* which happened in the theatre of Pompeius, and the *ludi astici* performed in the Circus Flaminius. The games also included hunting, fighting games, and horse races.\(^{322}\) In the Severan record, the inscription seems to underline the fact that the *ludi honorarii* were provided by Septimius Severus, and his sons Caracalla and Geta. They highlighted the rulers’ central role in organizing the event in a much stronger manner than in the Augustan source. The actual programme of the honorary games was probably very similar to the Augustan one, but, as mentioned earlier, more information is provided in this Severan case. The theatrical performances and their places, for example, are mentioned in much more detail than in the Augustan inscription.

One very interesting detail is the declaration of the beast-hunting. The inscription gives a rather exact description of what kinds of animals were included in the show, and explains how they were provided by the generosity of the emperor and his sons (*munificentia nostra*).\(^{323}\) To understand the importance of this detail, the role of the animals in the imperial propaganda should be explained

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\(^{322}\) See Hänninen, p. 97.

\(^{323}\) Pighi, comm.lud.sept. Va 43.
briefly. In general, it could be claimed that the animals had an important role in imperial propaganda, especially in the triumphal processions. During the republic and early empire, the variety of animals displayed in the victory ceremonies was quite small; elephants were probably most common, or at least, they were well represented in the literature describing the triumphal processions of the earlier period, although horses were apparently quite common as well.\(^{324}\)

The use of more exotic animals, however, became more regular in the later period. The *Historia Augusta* reports how Gordian III (emperor from AD 238 to AD 244) planned a procession of animals including 32 elephants, 10 elks, 10 tigers, 30 leopards, 10 hyenas, 6 hippopotami, 1 rhinoceros, 10 lions, 10 giraffes, 20 wild asses, 40 wild horses amongst others for the celebration of his victory over the Persians.\(^{325}\) Unfortunately, he died before the triumph, and the animals were passed down to his successor, Philip the Arab. Interestingly enough, it seems that these animals were used in the celebration of the 1000\(^{th}\) birthday of Rome (in AD 248), sometimes also considered as *ludi saeculares*:

\[
\ldots quae omnia Philippus ludis saecularibus vel dedit vel occidit. has autem omnes feras mansuetas et praeterea efferatas parabat ad triumphum Persicum. quod votum publicum nihil valuit. nam omnia haec Philippus exhibuit saecularibus ludis et muneribus atque circensibus, cum millesimum annum in consulatu suo et filii sui celebravit.\(^{326}\)
\]

In taking a closer look at the reign of Septimius Severus, one interesting detail in Cassius Dio’s texts regarding the animal shows he witnessed himself, is noteworthy. Although he is unfortunately silent about the Severan *ludi saeculares*, he does mention the celebrations of Septimius Severus’ tenth year of power which he saw in person, and gives a very detailed description of the animals present on that occasion. Dio mentions how:

\[
\text{ἐν ταύταις ταῖς θέασι καὶ σῶς τοῦ Πλατιανοῦ ἐξήκοντα ἁγιοὶ ἐπόλαυσαν ἄλληλοι ὑπὸ παραγγέλματος, ἐσφάγησαν δὲ ἄλλα τε πολλά θηρία καὶ ἐλέφας καὶ κοροκάτας, τὸ δὲ ζώον τότο ' Ἰνδικόν τέ ἐστι, καὶ τότε πρώτον ἐς τὴν Ῥώμην, ὅσα καὶ ἐγώ}
\]

325 *HA Gord. 33.1*. See also Östenberg, p. 165.
326 *HA Gord. 33.1—3*: “All of these Philip presented or slew at the secular games. All these animals, wild, tame, and savage, Gordian intended for a Persian triumph; but his official vow proved of no avail, for Philip presented all of them at the secular games, consisting of both gladiatorial spectacles and races in the Circus, that were celebrated on the thousandth anniversary of the founding of the City, when he and his son were consuls” (transl. David Magie).
The reason for Dio’s interest in these animals is perhaps not only of “scientific” nature: the animals were an important symbol of “the other” in Roman culture, especially in triumphal processions. Wild beasts symbolized Roman control over nature; the victory of (Roman) civilization over wilderness. The display of wild animals in Rome thus gave form to the Roman order of the world. It could be argued that wild beasts, as “the other”, were an emphasis upon Roman identity: of the Romans as a communitas whose duty was to civilize the world by conquering, which was an attitude strongly present in Cassius Dio’s history, for example.

The animals’ roles in triumphal processions could also explain their inclusion in the inscription on the ludi saeculares of AD 204. Septimius Severus and his sons, showed their superiority over “the other” which was represented as a group of wild animals. He controlled the nature and brought order to chaos; just as he brought peace to the empire after the civil war. He had the ability to take control, and as such legitimized his power. On the other hand, the emperor and his sons were also seen as providers of public property, in this case, the beasts for the public games. In other words, they arranged a spectacle for the community.

Moreover, the animals used in public spectacles could also be employed as indicators public wealth, a very important issue in public celebrations like triumphs. Rome’s wealth (obtained through conquering, that is) was paraded in the triumphal processions and served to demonstrate her power.

327 Cass. Dio 77.1.3—4: “At these spectacles sixty wild boars of Plautianus fought together at a signal, and among many other wild beasts that were slain were an elephant and a corocotta. This last animal is an Indian species, and was then introduced into Rome for the first time, so far as I am aware. It has the color of a lioness and tiger combined, and the general appearance of those animals, as also of a dog and fox, curiously blended. The entire receptacle in the amphitheater had been constructed so as to resemble a boat in shape, and was capable of receiving or discharging four hundred beasts at once; and then, as it suddenly fell apart, there came rushing forth bears, lionesses, panthers, lions, ostriches, wild asses, bisons (this is a kind of cattle foreign in species and appearance), so that seven hundred beasts in all, both wild and domesticated, at one and the same time were seen running about and were slaughtered” (transl. Earnest Cary).

328 Östenberg, p. 277. The animals were obviously not the only objects in the triumphal procession which represented the “other” – prisoners of war, statues, paintings, other art objects also demonstrated Roman power.
Even if some war spoils were distributed to allies who had helped Romans to achieve the victory, for example, the main part of the booty was reserved for the city of Rome. The riches taken from the enemy, paraded through the streets in front of the spectators, were intended to demonstrate the common wealth of the very people, the audience.\textsuperscript{329}

Even if the money and other riches were not actually distributed to all those who saw them, they were still, in principal, the property of the Roman people, the \textit{populus Romanus}. Hence, the property that was publicly paraded was, in theory, also subject to civic control. The border between the property of the state and that of the emperor became less clear in the imperial period, and sources indicate that some of the publicly paraded spoils of war did become the emperor’s property. However, the idea of publicly displayed wealth as a communal property, and not that of an individual, remained through the centuries. The idea of a common wealth was in fact an important way for the audience to identify themselves to the Roman \textit{communitas}.\textsuperscript{330}

In addition, the separation of public property and the emperor’s remained quite important, officially at least, and this was also apparently the case during the Severan period (as we saw in Chapter two). Thus, as Severus, Caracalla and Geta showed their generosity towards the public by providing beasts for the games (and organizing the \textit{ludi honorarii} overall), they created a relationship between the community and themselves; they provided a public spectacle, which was “common property”, like the riches that were displayed in the triumphal processions. This means that they provided wealth that was so important for the Roman identity. In other words, I would suggest that the very precise list of animals did not only record the types of beasts included in the \textit{ludi saeculares}, but was also meant to demonstrate the power of the emperor and his sons.

Generally, it could be argued that the period between the second day and third night was the most crucial one for the \textit{ludi saeculares} – and for the whole community. We have already noted that the second day was quite extraordinary in two aspects: the participation of the Roman matrons and the declaration of the \textit{ludi honorarii} were conducted during this point. It could perhaps be argued that this was precisely the moment when the community was “actually” stepping from the old \textit{saeculum} to the new Golden Age, as the purification on behalf of the \textit{communitas} was conducted by the matrons, while the declaration of the \textit{ludi honorarii} was simultaneously made. The latter could be seen as a declaration for celebrating the new age. In this sense, in proceeding to the next chapter to

\textsuperscript{329} Östenberg, pp. 275—276.

\textsuperscript{330} ibid.
discuss the third night and day of the festival, we are, in a way, moving from the old *saeculum* to the new one.
In this chapter, I will proceed to the third and final night and day of the festival, which were dedicated to Tellus, Apollo and Diana. Tellus received the nocturnal sacrifices; Apollo and Diana were celebrated during the daytime rituals. As was the case with the previous chapters, the rituals will first be described, then the questions they raise will be discussed more closely.

The very last rituals of the third day (singing of the *Carmen Saeculare* by young boys and girls), are however, separated and will be dealt with in Chapter seven. This arrangement is due to their very different nature; the sacrifices to Tellus, Apollo and Diana closely follow the pattern of the two earlier days, but the *Carmen Saeculare* can be seen as a separate “closing act” for the whole three-day ritual, rather than being part of the third day rituals only. The most obvious reason for creating a separation between the *Carmen* and the other third day rites is the fact that the poem was not a cult prayer (*precatio*). It should nevertheless be noted that scholars’ opinions differ over how separate the poem was from the other rituals of the third day.  

5.1. The Third Night, Night of Abundance

The third night followed the formula of the previous nights. The worshipped goddess was Terra Mater, to whom the emperor sacrificed a pregnant sow and gave a prayer according to the Greek rite. The prayer followed the same formula as for the previous sacrifices. Princes Caracalla and Geta also took part in the sacrifice, and the *quindecimviri* and praetorian prefect were present as well. The praetorian prefect was in fact present at most of the sacrificial rituals; he usually accompanied the emperor, his sons and the *quindecimviri*. The person in question was Gaius Fulvius Plautianus, a kinsman of emperor Septimius Severus and another native of Lepcis Magna. Over the years, he became a close ally of Severus, and an extremely powerful figure in Rome whose contacts with the imperial family increased when his daughter was married to Caracalla. He eventually became a part of the imperial family to the extent that his name was included in the oaths of loyalty sworn to the emperor and his house every year.

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331 Here I follow, for example, Feeney (p. 115).
332 Pighi, comm. lud. sept. I 5; IV 5, 8; Va 48, 53—54, 74, 77, 92; VIIIa 14.
333 Pighi, comm. lud. sept. I 5; IV 5, 8; Va 48, 53—54, 74, 77, 92; VIIIa 14.
334 Potter, pp. 116—119. For the family of *Fulvii*, see Birley, pp. 220—221. In AD 204 Plautianus was, however, very near to his end: in January 205 he was executed for plotting to kill Caracalla (Potter, p. 119).
The description of the rituals of the third night is very short, but does mention that they were conducted in a similar manner as on the first night, when sacrifices were made to the Moirae.\textsuperscript{335} The empress and the matrons again performed a \textit{sellisternium} for Juno and Diana, as they did during the earlier rituals.\textsuperscript{336}

The third night is perhaps the most interesting one of the three nocturnal rituals. During the previous nights, the goddesses to whom the sacrifices were made were quite unknown, or at least extremely rarely worshipped in Roman traditional religion. However, the case of Terra Mater is slightly different. Contrary to the other nocturnal goddesses, she appeared from time to time in Roman state religion, and especially in the imperial propaganda, although she was known by her Latin name Tellus. To understand the ritual of the \textit{ludi saeculares} dedicated to Terra Mater, we should now more closely evaluate her nature and the different aspects attributed to her.

\subsection*{5.1.1. Nocturnal Goddess of the Golden Age}

Tellus’ nature is explained amongst others, by Ovid. He describes Tellus as the patroness of the place of cultivation, who should not be confused with Ceres, the goddess of the origins of cultivation.\textsuperscript{337} The goddess had no festival named after her in the Roman ritual calendar, but she was included in the ritual of the \textit{fordicidia} in April. The \textit{Fordicidia} was one of the most ancient rituals of Rome, and was celebrated to promote the fertility of the land and flocks. Tellus/Terra Mater was perhaps, in an earlier period, regarded as a spirit living in the farmer’s fields, but was later considered more as an Earth-Mother, like Demeter in Greece.\textsuperscript{338}

Tellus appeared from time to time in state religion during the imperial period.\textsuperscript{339} She was involved in the Augustan \textit{ludi saeculares} and in Horace’s \textit{Carmen Saeculare} on that same occasion; in the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{335} Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va 51.
\item \textsuperscript{336} Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va 52: \textit{Iulia Aug. mater castr}or\textit{um et matronae CVIII sel[iste]rnia haberunt Iunoni ac Dianae.}
\item \textsuperscript{337} Ov. \textit{fast.} 1.657 ff., 671 ff.; 4. 629 ff. According to Augustine (quoting Varro), Tellus was sometimes associated with other deities of the earth, including Magna Mater, as well as Ops, Proserpina and even Vesta. It should be noted, though, that this association gave Augustine, an eager Christian and a critic of traditional religion, a reason to attack Tellus as well, because he could combine the goddess with the “immoral” rituals and worship of Magna Mater. August. \textit{De civ. De.} 7.23—24.
\item \textsuperscript{338} Scullard, p. 102.
\item \textsuperscript{339} For Tellus/Terra Mater in imperial Rome in general, see Gesztelyi, Tamás, ‘Tellus-Terra Mater in der Zeit des Prinzipats’. In \textit{ANRW} II.17.1 (1981), pp. 429—456.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
poem she is connected with the fertility of the earth and cattle.\textsuperscript{340} After Augustus, Hadrian appears to have used her quite a lot in his propaganda (fig. 7). During this period, Tellus was usually attributed to peaceful working in the fields and agriculture in general, as well as to ideas of the Golden Age. The birth of Rome was also connected to her at this time.\textsuperscript{341}

![Fig. 7. Denarius of Hadrian, ca. AD 134-138. On one side the emperor’s head is turned right, and on the other side, TELLVS STABIL is inscribed and Tellus is turned left holding a plough and a rake, corn growing to right. RIC 2 no. 276 (Hadrian).](image)

After Hadrian, Tellus can be found in the coinage of Antoninus Pius, Commodus and Septimius Severus.\textsuperscript{342} The Severan Tellus appears in about AD 200 or AD 201, and is depicted as resting an arm on a globe and holding a cornucopia; on the globe, the four seasons appear, and Autumn holds a basket of fruit.\textsuperscript{343} This is not the only example of Severan Tellus, however, as it seems that she can also be found in the celebrations of the AD 204 \textit{ludi saeculares}. A coin portrays Bacchus and Hercules, gods heavily connected with the imperial family, who apparently also had a very important role in the \textit{ludi saeculares} of AD 204 (see Chapter six). It seems that the coin depicts a sacrifice conducted during the Secular Games, and alongside Bacchus and Hercules stands Septimius Severus, and a goddess identified as Tellus.\textsuperscript{344}

In evaluating the roles of different deities during the \textit{ludi saeculares}, we must remember that the basic interest of my research regards the close connection, and even interaction, existing between

\textsuperscript{340} Hor. \textit{carm. saec.} 29. It is interesting to note that Horace has used the name Tellus, whereas in the inscription she is called Terra Mater.

\textsuperscript{341} Gesztelyi, p. 442—445.

\textsuperscript{342} ibid.

\textsuperscript{343} \textit{RIC} 4.1 no. 758 (Septimius Severus).

\textsuperscript{344} \textit{RIC} 4.1 no. 761 (Septimius Severus), Tellus as a part of the sacrificial scene: Cooley, p. 392. The traditional connection between Tellus and the Golden Age can still be noticed later in AD 248, when the personification of Tellus as a woman sitting on the globe, with a cornucopia, a cob and two children, is accompanied by a text \textit{fecunditas temporum}. It apparently commemorated the 1000\textsuperscript{th} birthday of Rome, celebrated by Philip the Arab (see Gesztelyi, p. 445). For Philip’s games as part of the tradition of the \textit{ludi saeculares}, see Appendix 3.
religious ritual and the period in which it is celebrated. This means that a ritual is never separated from the time and place in which it is conducted. For example, the famous images of fertility, the religious monuments, and the celebrations we know from the Augustan period were created for a reason: they were made to be part of the political and social discourse of the period. Accordingly, in order to evaluate the role of Tellus/Terra Mater in the Secular Games of AD 204 properly, we should consider the social and political situation of the early Severan period. Therefore, we must now briefly turn to discussing some political questions and issues rising at the forefront of Septimius Severus’ reign.

5.1.2. Food and Imperial Paternalism

In examining the Severan period, we must remember that Severus’ reign resulted from a civil war, the first one in Rome for over a hundred years. If we take a closer look at texts describing civil wars in Roman history, it is noticeable that there seems to be a kind of “pattern” in the civil response to these wars – a fear among the people of the city that the capital’s grain supply could be in danger. After all, wars, and especially civil wars, often meant troubles for grain transportation if the key provinces or the supply routes were in unfriendly hands. In addition, food problems were sometimes generated by natural causes, like harvest failures, epidemic diseases, or were generated by corruption among the officials who were responsible for grain distribution. Peter Garnsey has counted 22 cases of food crisis during the imperial era, from Augustus to Septimius Severus. Most of these occurred during the early empire, and, for example, during the civil war in AD 68—70 Rome’s food supply was in danger. During that period, the control of North Africa was crucial, and the situation was the same during the Severan civil wars over a hundred years later. Reports about famine or food shortages become rarer in the second century, but a few cases were mentioned during the reigns of Domitian, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius.

Even if the food shortages of the second century were apparently not extremely bad, it seems that during the reign of Commodus, in AD 189, a very serious food crisis occurred. This was reported

by both Cassius Dio and Herodian. At the same time, the city suffered an epidemic, but the policy of Cleander, a freedman of Commodus, only made things worse, as Herodian notes. In Cassius Dio’s version, the main reason of the famine was also Cleander, but the prefect of the grain supply made things worse, as he tried to get Cleander into troubles (although he reports the pestilence as well). The *Historia Augusta* also claimed that the problems with food supplies had something to do with the officials’ bad policies:

\[Per hanc autem negligetiam, cum et annonam vastarent ii qui tunc rem publicam gerebant, etiam inopia ingens Romae exorta est, cum fruges non deessent.\]

The people’s response to the shortage was, according to the authors, a violent one. Protests against Cleander grew to the point that he sent soldiers to crush the angry crowds. The fighting was so fierce that Herodian even calls it a state of a civil war. The riots were targeted towards Cleander, not Commodus, but for the emperor the situation was threatening as well. Eventually, he had to give in to the demands of the crowd and had Cleander killed. Herodian reports how Commodus was very afraid of the possibility of a new uprising when he entered the city after the riots.

The mass protests broke out in imperial Rome from time to time, but seldom turned to violence. In fact, it was a custom for the emperors to witness the protests in person. It was considered a duty of an emperor to practice the virtue of *civilitas*; that is, to take part in public shows, to enjoy the pleasures of the ordinary people with them. The shows thus created a platform for popular protests as well, although it should be noticed that despite the occasional protests, it was eventually a safe practice for the ruler. The emperor’s participation in the audience was a controlled process which did not usually pose a threat to the regime; as Garnsey points out, it at most reminded the emperor of his obligation to feed the people.

However, the protests of AD 189 seem to be exceptionally fierce. The only reported food riot to which this one could be compared is perhaps the incident of AD 51 when, according to Tacitus, an

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347 Herod. 1.12.2–4.
349 *HA Comm.* 14.1: “And because he was so careless, moreover, a great famine arose in Rome, not because there was any real shortage of crops, but merely because those who then ruled the state were plundering the food supply” (transl. David Magie).
angry mob rounded emperor Claudius in the forum and soldiers had to rescue him (it is claimed that there were food supplies in the city for only 15 days). Even if a famine apparently was avoided in AD 189, it is very likely that people feared it again when civil war broke out a few years later and Septimius Severus took power. After all, as the internal struggles affected the food supply, they also created uncertainty in the people’s minds.

There are signs in literature, as well as in numismatic sources, that Septimius Severus did indeed dedicate a lot of attention to the grain distribution, especially during the first years of his reign. According to the Historia Augusta, when Severus took over the power from his short-lived predecessor Julianus (in AD 193), one of his first acts was to take care of the grain distribution. The same source mentions how Severus fought to secure North Africa, a place central for food supply. Severus sent troops to Africa and to Egypt to prevent the provinces from falling to his enemy, Pescennius Niger, who could then distress Romans by halting the food imports. Later, it is also mentioned that Severus again fought in North Africa, freeing Tripolis by conquering local warmongering tribes. Based on the information given in the Historia Augusta, his actions were successful – the emperor apparently managed to organize the food supply so well that while there was a shortage of grain when he became emperor, there was a surplus to the amount of seven years tribute. In another passage, it is mentioned that there was enough grain not only for the people of the city, but also for the whole populace of Italy for five years.

More examples regarding the importance of grain distribution in Severan policy can be found through numismatic evidence. The image of Annona, a personification of the food supply, regularly appeared on Roman coinage during the years of AD 194—201 (fig. 8). Annona was quite a common figure on coinage throughout the imperial period, and therefore it seems that her appearance does not necessarily indicate famine of even food shortages as such. Her presence was perhaps more of a statement behalf of the emperor that food supplies were being taken care of. In the period between the civil war of AD 69 and the reign of Commodus (AD 180’s), reports of famine become more rare than previously, but the figure of Annona kept appearing on coinage. It may well be that Annona simply manifested the emperor’s general concern for the food supply. However, there is some literary evidence (Historia Augusta) regarding troubles with food in the late

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352 Tac. Ann. 12.43; see also Suet. Claud. 18.2.
353 HA Sev. 8.6.
354 HA Sev. 18.3.
355 HA Sev. 8.4.
356 HA Sev. 23.2.
AD 190’s, as well as numismatic evidence to support the claim. It seems that famine or food shortage raised at least some concern.  

The problem is, though, that Cassius Dio and Herodian do not mention that kind of trouble during this period. Garnsey explains this because of the (low) quality of their history, their patchy and narrowly focused coverage of the civil war period. This may be so, but it also seems possible that the food shortage was somewhat exaggerated by Septimius Severus himself, to help establish his power. As Severus’ life in the Historia Augusta probably drew quite heavily on the emperor’s self-made biography, it is quite likely that the story of the emperor receiving a city with no food but which he saved through his wise policy, came from this very source; at least the tone of the passage would indicate this. Therefore, it seems plausible that the images of Annona appearing during this period were also made to propagate the impression of a caring emperor who kept the grain distribution working, and who showed generosity towards the people of Rome.

Whether there really was there a food shortage or not, we cannot know for sure; however, it is important to note that the internal crisis gave Severus an opportunity to show himself as a “saviour”. Wars were indeed one of the major causes for food shortages and famine in the Roman world, and the city of Rome (and the whole of Italy) was especially dependent on grain

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359 Perhaps one can see some kind of an analogy with Augustus, who, according to Suetonius, claimed that he had “founded Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble” (Suet. Aug. 28.3). The biography of Septimius Severus is mentioned in Aur. Vict. Caes. 20; HA Sev. 3.2; HA Clod. 7.1; Cass. Dio 76.7.3; Herod. 2.9.4.
transportation from the provinces.\footnote{360}{Tacitus, for example, strongly criticized the situation in which the empire has put itself, as he wrote how Italy used to export grain to distant countries, but was by his time, rather cultivating the fields of Africa and Egypt, and was dependent on uncertainty of sea transporting; Tac. Ann. 12.43. For the food supply in Rome see Garnsey 1988, pp. 178—191; 208—217; 231—239; 251—266.}

Egypt had been the most important source of grain from the Augustan reign, when it was brought under the control of Rome. During the same period, the Romans also advanced in North Africa, which became the other province of great importance for food supply. According to some ancient authors, the amount of grain exported from North Africa was enough to supply the city of Rome for eight months.\footnote{361}{Garnsey 1988, 231—232.}

Was the image of the emperor as a type of “saviour” celebrated in the Secular games? The ludi saeculares were, as we have seen, traditionally considered as a celebration of the communitas moving from one age (saeculum) to another. Moreover, the new age was, at least from the time of Augustus onwards, propagated as a Golden Age; a period of peace and prosperity. The most concrete mark of this prosperity for the people of Rome was a secure and functional food supply. Therefore, it is plausible that when Severus legitimized his power after the civil wars, he portrayed himself as a ruler caring for his subjects in creating an image of a ruler leading the community to a Golden Age. As the remarkable event of the ludi saeculares placed the emperor (and his family) in the central role in the new, reborn communitas, it conveyed a message to the audience. Accordingly, in order to understand what this message was, and to understand the role of the emperor in the new age of the community, his public image should be examined. This will shed light on the question of whether the role of the ruler was celebrated in the Secular Games or not.

There is some basis to believe that food supply and distribution indeed were very important factors for Severus when he created his image as a ruler. We have already noted his actions in securing North Africa, a central province for food supply, and the pride he took in this action, as demonstrated by the Historia Augusta (apparently citing the lost biography of Severus). Moreover, numismatic evidence celebrating Annona hints towards this direction. More evidence, however, can be found from literature. The reports on Severus’ distribution of grain and other food supplies to the people of Rome are very interesting. The Historia Augusta describes how the emperor “bestowed upon the Roman people, without cost, a most generous daily allowance of oil in perpetuity”.\footnote{362}{HA Sev. 18.3. Severus Alexander’s biography reports how Alexander Severus carried on Septimius’ policy by restoring the grain and oil distribution to its former status after Elagabalus’ disastrous politics (who had apparently placed a barber, called Claudius, in charge of the distribution of food supplies). As Alexander Severus’ biography is often considered as an unreliable source, it might well be that the writer of the biographies just wanted to make a clear difference between the “bad” emperor Elagabalus and the “wise” Alexander Severus. See HA Alex. 22.2; HA Heliog. 12.1.}
Cassius Dio describes how Severus celebrated the tenth anniversary of his coming to power with a gift to the people of Rome:

\`O δὲ Σεσόμηρος ἐπὶ τῆς δεκαετίας τῆς ἀρχῆς αὐτοῦ ἐδωρήσατο τῷ τε ὀμίλῳ παιντῷ τῷ σιτοδοτημένῳ καὶ τοῖς στρατιώταις τοῖς δορυφόροις ἱσαρθήσαμεν τῶν ἡγεμονίας ἔτεις χρυσοῦς, ἐφ' ὦ καὶ μέγιστον ἡγάλλετο, καὶ γὰρ ὡς ἀληθῶς οὐδεὶς πώποτε τοδῶτον αὐτοῖς ἀθρόισι ἐδωδόκει, ἐς γὰρ τὴν δοριείᾳ ταύτην πεντακισχίλιαι μυρίάδες δραχμῶν ἀναλώθησαν.\(^{363}\)

In this passage, the emperor’s role as a patron showing generosity to his subjects is quite evident. Patronage can be described as a lasting relationship between individuals of unequal wealth or power, which involved the asymmetrical exchange of goods and services. The duty of the patron was to provide essential goods to the client, such as money, food, farming equipment, legal assistance, protection and so on. In return, the patron also received something beneficial, such as labour, political support or social prestige. If the relationship was only economical, or if it was a question of charity in which the relationship was one-sided (that is, only the benefactor was active and beneficiary remained passive), it was not a question of patronage.\(^{364}\) In the studied case, the relationship was not one-sided, but benefitted both sides: it is noteworthy that the right to receive the gold was “tied” to the grain doles. It seems that those (alongside soldiers) who received grain doles from the emperor were “worthy” of receiving money as well; those two groups who maintained a special relationship with the emperor were soldiers and those who were “fed” by the emperor. They were thus almost like children, or at least clients, of Septimius Severus – in other words, the relationship between the emperor and the subjects seems to have been a relationship between a patron and his clients. The people received wealth, and the emperor received social prestige; Septimius Severus was able to present himself as a generous figure who had brought not only peace but also prosperity after the civil war. The number of people entitled to grain distribution in the early third century amounted to about 200 000 according to Dio,\(^ {365}\) so the vast majority of the

\(^{363}\) Cass. Dio 77.1.1: “On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of his coming to power Severus presented to the entire populace that received the grain dole and to the soldiers of the praetorian guard gold pieces equal in number to the years of his reign. He prided himself especially on this largess, and, in fact, no emperor had ever before given so much to the whole population at once; the total amount spent for the purpose was two hundred million sesterces” (transl. Earnest Cary).

\(^{364}\) Garnsey 1988, p. 58.

\(^{365}\) ibid.
habitants of the city did not receive free grain. However, the number was still very impressive, and as an act of generosity it was a significant one.

The same can be said for Septimius Severus’ decision to include oil to the grain doles. Grain had already been distributed for centuries before Severus – the practice began already in republican era, and was continued by Augustus and the later emperors. Soldiers were probably included amongst those to whom grain doles were granted during the reign of Nero. However, it was Septimius Severus who started to distribute oil.

When evaluating the importance of the distribution of food by the emperors, and in this case Septimius Severus particularly, it should be remembered that food was not just for consumption, but was also important cultural symbol. Food was one way to make a difference between “us” and “the other” in the Greco-Roman world. When the ancient authors described the barbarians’ (“the others”) customs, their diet often had an important part in their reports. The writers often created a stereotype of uncivilized barbarians, who were nomadic pastoralists, preferring meat and milk to agricultural products – although there are some different categories for barbarians as well. The most savage people were the inhabitants of Θέρνη for Strabo, the Fenni for Tacitus, and the Huns for Ammianus Marcellinus. The these peoples’ barbarity was demonstrated by their diet and eating-habits.

The products which, on the other hand, signified a civilized world, were of agricultural nature, and consisted not only of grain but also of olive oil. The people living near the Roman empire, or those belonging to it, used the Romans’ tradingmark of civilization: wine and oil. These products symbolized these peoples’ relationship with the superior and civilized Roman culture. Oil, which was a product distributed by Septimius Severus for the first time in Roman history, thus seemed to be a very important mark of civilization. Taking this into consideration, it could be said that food, and the diets of different peoples, were ideological constructs in Roman (and Greek) literature, in

366 The number of people living in the capital during the early third century is difficult to estimate. It is suggested that in the beginning of the imperial era the number of inhabitants amounted to about one million, and it apparently remained so until at least the mid-second century (see Garnsey & Saller, p. 6 & 62). It is possible that the Antonine plague in the mid-second century decreased the number, although this is far from certain – see Bruun 2006, pp. 207—214; Corbier, Mireille, ‘Coinage, Society and Economy’. In CAH XII, p. 398.
367 Garnsey 1988, pp. 236—238. Historia Augusta claims that in 270’s emperor Aurelian started to distribute pork and cheap wine as well: see HA Aurel. 35.2, 48.1.
368 Strabo 4.5.4.
369 Tac. Ger. 31.2.3.
370 Amm. Marc. 31.2.
the sense that they separated the civilized peoples from the barbarians, the outsiders. In other words, this phenomenon created identities. Ancient authors such as Strabo, Ammianus, and many others, used food and consuming habits as tools for creating polarities between peoples and separating different nations from each other. Dietary habits and customs marked peoples’ positions.\textsuperscript{372}

It is far from clear, however, whether oil, being a symbol of one’s superiority over others, or a symbol of the civilized state of the Romans, had any significance to the ordinary people who actually received it or not. However, it should be remembered that the distribution of food itself did have a communal value. As Garnsey points out: “food involves commensality, that is, sharing the table, with companions or sharers of bread. Food assembles and binds together those linked by blood, class, religion and citizenship. Food... stands out as a pointer to distinctions of status, power and wealth, of group-separateness and –belonging, and of cultural differences in general. In other words, the food has not only use as a biological necessity, but is much more”.\textsuperscript{373}

As such, I would suggest that the inclusion of oil strengthened Septimius Severus’ status as a generous father-figure or patron. It bonded Septimius Severus to his subjects, and demonstrated his wealth which helped to legitimize his power during the difficult situation after the civil war. When the emperor succeeded in demonstrating his wealth and his ability to provide something that had not been provided before, he showed the people that he could continue in his role as a bringer of prosperity and peace.

Taking the centrality of the food supply for the Severan ruler-image into consideration, it would seem appropriate that the role of Tellus/Terra Mater, the goddess of cultivation and more generally of agriculture, had an extremely important role in the \textit{ludi saeculares} of AD 204. First of all, if we accept that the Golden Age actually “began” between the second and third day of the festival, as I have suggested, the sacrifice to Tellus/Terra Mater was in fact the first “act” of the new \textit{saeculum}. The Severan coin depicting Tellus in the \textit{ludi saeculares} also hints to her importance in the new Severan Golden Age, as she is the only deity of those worshipped in the nocturnal rites who was portrayed on coinage dedicated to the occasion (at least there are no known examples of coinage dedicated to Eileithyia or Moirae).

\textsuperscript{372} Garnsey 1999, pp. 68—69. For example, as Garnsey notes, one custom very typical to Gauls the (the barbarians) was their preference of butter over oil.
\textsuperscript{373} Garnsey 1999, pp. 6—7.
In addition, the connection existing between the images dedicated to Tellus/Terra Mater in general and the Golden Age celebrated in Secular Games ideology is rather obvious. Images of fertility, such as grain, fruits, herds and so on, which can easily be attributed to the goddess, were also part of the Golden Age imagery in the Augustan period, and it seems that this was also the case during both the republican and the later periods of Rome. This is demonstrated by the coinage of Hadrian, for example (see above, fig. 7). Nevertheless, the most famous case was Augustan imagery, which highlighted the blessings which had come to the communitas: images of plenty, richness and abundance were combined with those of children and the happiness they brought to society. The best known image depicting these subjects is probably the figure of a female goddess on the Ara Pacis, the Altar of Peace, erected in year AD 9 (fig. 9). The deity has been identified as many goddesses: Ceres, Pax, Venus, and Tellus, to mention just a few. Regardless who she has been considered to be, her appearance captures the ideas of fertility and the Golden Age perfectly. As Severus was also keen to show people how well he had taken care of the food supply of the capital, as well as the distribution of food to the people, Tellus as a goddess of harvest probably represented his goodwill, and that his power guaranteed better times.

Fig. 9. The female goddess of fertility in the Augustan altar of peace, sometimes identified as Tellus.

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374 For the Golden Age ideology before Augustus, see Alföldi, Andreas, Redeunt Saturnia Regna. Antiquitas, Reihe 3, Abhandlungen zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte, zur klassischen und provinzial-römischen Archäologie und zur Geschichte des Altertums; Bd. 36. Habelt, Bonn 1997, pp. 33—46.

375 Zanker, pp. 172—179. The fundamental study claiming that the identity of the goddess was Tellus is still Moretti, Giuseppe, Ara Pacis Augustae. La Libreria Dello Stato, Roma 1948. See also Petersen, E., ‘L’ Ara Pacis Augustae’. In RM 9 (1894), pp. 72—228.
5.1.3. The Guardians of the Storage

In examining Septimius Severus’ role in the ludi saeculares, we noted that the Vestal Virgins were involved during the first night and second day of the festivals, and that they were closely connected with the emperor. As it appears that the role, or the image, of the emperor in the ludi was sort of a father-figure, a provider who took care of his subjects and guaranteed the well-being of the communitas, we should also consider whether the role of the Vestals can be connected to this idea too. To establish this connection, the traditional duties of the Vestal Virgins in Roman religious life should be briefly examined.

The traditional Roman state religion rites, in which the Vestals were included, were often dealing with purification. It, however, seems that they nevertheless also had another function. This is at least true for the five out of nine public rituals in which the Vestals took part; these included the Fordicidia, the rites of the October Horse, the Parilia, the Consualia and the Opsconsivia. The Fordicidia was probably one of the most ancient religious ceremonies of Rome. It was celebrated to ensure the fertility of the cattle and the land. The deity worshipped in this occasion was Tellus; she received a sacrifice of pregnant cows – one on the Capitoline hill and one in thirty different parts in the city. The role of the senior Vestal Virgins was to take the unborn calf from the womb of the sacrificed cow and burn it; the ashes were later used in the Parilia. The rituals of the October Horse were also connected to the Parilia; after a horse-race was held, and after the competition, one of the horses was sacrificed. Its tail (and possibly some of its blood as well) was kept by the Vestals, to be used with the ashes in the Parilia.

The Parilia was celebrated the 21st April. It was held for the purification of the flocks, but was also considered as a birthday of Rome. Again, Ovid gives a long description of the rituals; they included the throwing of ashes (of the calf sacrificed in the Fordicidia) and blood (from the October Horse festival), kept by the Vestals, onto burning bean-straws. The Vestalia was a ceremony connected to the bakers and to the milling of grain. It was celebrated on the 9th June. The best source for this occasion is again Ovid, who writes about the festival in his Fasti. Even if he does not describe the actual rites very much, it seems clear that the goddess Vesta was connected to flour and bread,

376 Scullard, p. 102. The main account of the festival is Ov. Fast. 4.629—672.
377 Wildfang, p. 10; Scullard, pp. 193—194.
378 Scullard, pp. 103—105; for Ovid’s account, see Fast. 4.721—862. For other ancient authors on the subject, see Scullard, n. 134.
manufactured from grain.\textsuperscript{379} This was also an occasion (one of the three, it seems) on which the Vestal Virgins made the mola salsa, the ritual purificatory substance. Servius writes that the three senior Vestals collected spelt during the second week of May, then dried, crushed and stored it. From the spelt (with boiled and hard salt added), they made the mola during the festivals of Lupercalia, the Vestalia and on the 13\textsuperscript{th} September.\textsuperscript{380} It was also a duty for the Vestal Virgins to manufacture some kind of brine, the muries. Festus gives quite a detailed account how this was prepared and mentions how it was used in sacrifices.\textsuperscript{381}

The mola and muries, manufactured for ritual purposes by the Vestal Virgins, were stored in the temple of Vesta (aedes Vestae). They were used in rituals connected to purification, but they can also be seen as symbols of the most essential food supplies for Rome. The mola symbolizes type of flour that was used in Rome to bake bread, and the muries recalls the most common Romans preservative. As Wildfang puts it, “the Vestals’ preparation and storage of substances symbolic of these two most basic foodstuffs within the aedes Vestae suggests that one of their religious roles was the assurance of Rome’s finished food supplies and their appropriate storage”.\textsuperscript{382}

Ovid’s records of Roman religious festivals only cover the first half of the year, so the two remaining festivals mentioned above, the Consualia and the Opsconsivia, are less known. We do nevertheless possess the sources of Tertullian, a contemporary of the Severan period who wrote a few lines about the Consualia. It is, however, uncertain whether the festival was actually celebrated in his own time or not, as Tertullian drew much of his material from previous authors. However, the author describes the occasion as follows:

\begin{quote}
Et nunc ara Conso illi in circo demersa est ad primas metas sub terra cum inscriptione eiusmodi: CONSUS CONSILO MARS DUELLO LARES COILLO POTENTES. Sacrificant apud eam nonis Iulis sacerdotes publici, XII. Kalend. Septembres flamen Quirinalis et virgines.\textsuperscript{383}
\end{quote}

Most ancient (and modern) writers agreed that Consus was the god of the storage, and not that of counsel (as a few have suggested). It seems that the Consualia was celebrated to secure the

\textsuperscript{379} Ov. Fast. 6.309—318.
\textsuperscript{380} Serv. Comm. in Verg. Aen. 8.82.
\textsuperscript{381} Fest. p. 152 L.
\textsuperscript{382} Wildfang, pp. 16—17.
\textsuperscript{383} Tert. Spect. 5.7: “And now the altar to Consus is buried under the earth in the circus at the first turning posts with an inscription of this sort: CONSUS CONSILO MARS DUELLO LARES COILLO POTENTES. The public priests sacrifice at this altar on 7 July, and on 21 August the Flamen Quirinalis and the virgins” (adapted from Wildfang).
successful storage of the new harvest, as it was held in August, the period of harvesting for the Romans. The *Opsconsivia* was celebrated a week later. Ops Consiva was probably a goddess of plenty, connected to Consus. It is probable that the feasts mentioned here were thus also connected to each other. Varro mentions that the Vestal Virgins were also involved in the rituals of the *Opsconsivia*.384

The rituals of the Vestals Virgins were thus connected both to the purification and the (symbolic) grain storage of Rome. Their role as priestesses in purificatory rites was probably related to their appearance on the second day of the festival, with the matrons, as we saw. However, I would suggest that their role as guardians of the grain storage was also important in the Severan *ludi saeculares*. As the Vestals attended the emperor in various parts of the celebration, it is possible that Septimius Severus wanted to provide a reminder that the food supply was secured by him, as he was, by these rituals, closely connected to the priestesses associated grain storage. We have already seen that grain had an important role in the policy of Septimius Severus; this can be noticed both in more “practical” policies (like securing the import from North Africa to Rome) as well as on the more symbolic level. In that sense, the role of the Vestals as protectors of the city’s grain storage fit Severus’ general policy perfectly.

If we evaluate the role of the Vestals in the Severan Secular Games, it should be reminded that we cannot be sure of whether the inclusion of the Vestal Virgins in the inscription describing the rituals was an innovation in AD 204 or not. However, this is perhaps not so relevant, although their inclusion in the inscription is. It preserved a record of happenings; it told to the public that the emperor and the Vestals celebrated together and that the Vestals were submitted to his will, as they are shown as passive attendants only (the emperor is doing the prayer, the Vestals are simply present). Even if they were present on two occasions during the festival, they were not reported as praying with Septimius Severus or Julia Domna. The inscription preserving a record of the games shows, that they were only present in the opening prayer (in Tarentum) and during the second day, when Julia Domna and the matrons prayed to Juno on the Capitoline.

The close connection existing between the Vestals and the imperial family seems to have strengthened the idea of emperor as a generous figure who provides people prosperity; a bringer of the new Golden Age, so to speak. If the first part of the inscription, describing how Septimius

Severus’ permission to organize the games was an act of goodwill, the relationship between the emperor and the Vestal Virgins described later in the inscription was perhaps another proof of Septimius Severus’ generosity: some of the most important religious figures of Rome, whose religious duties were closely associated to the city’s grain storage, were practically submitted to the acts of the emperor in the records of the ritual. That indicated that it is the emperor himself (and to some extent the whole imperial family) who was the ultimate guarantee of the storage of Rome. In other words, the inclusion of the Vestal Virgins in the programme was another proof that the emperor was able and ready to take care of the needs of his subjects.

5.2. The Third Day: Final Sacrifices

The third and final day was dedicated to Apollo and Diana. Rituals were conducted in the Augustan manner, by sacrificing bloodless victim (sacrificial cakes) to the deities on the Palatine hill. The inscription describes how Severus, Caracalla, Geta, the quindecimviri and the praetorian prefect advanced to the altar of Apollo on the Palatine. There, they conducted the sacrifice and prayed, first to Apollo, then to Diana. The rituals followed the examples of the previous days closely. After that, however, a unique act for the third day occurred, as the Carmen Saeculare was sung by 27 boys and girls. This was done on the Palatine first, then the officials moved in a procession to the Capitoline, where the hymn was sung again.

As I explained in the beginning of this chapter, even if the children’s Carmen Saeculare was part of the third day rituals, I will deal with it in Chapter six with the rest of the rituals which took place after the main sacrifices of the third and final day.

5.2.1. Apollo, the God of many Roles

Apollo, the god celebrated on the third day of the rituals, had been known in Rome for centuries by the time of the Severan period. Unfortunately, there is not much evidence about how popular his cult was during the third century, but it is very likely that he still was a well known god and held an important part in the Roman pantheon. For example, it is certain that the old festivals of the ludi

\[385\] Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va 52—57.
\[386\] Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va 59—60; 71—75.
Apollinares, a celebration dedicated to the god, was still held in the early third century, and was apparently also a very popular event. This is demonstrated by Tertullian, who wrote about the games in his *De spectaculis* (this was one of his earliest works, probably composed in AD 196 or early in AD 197). Tertullian, as a Christian writer, heavily criticises traditional Roman religion and mentions the games of Apollo; he refers to the origins of different games and tries to demonstrate their close relationship with religion. One target of his attack, among other public festivals, are the so called historical games – for Tertullian, the festivals’ names were proofs of their idolatrous nature, as they were connected to the gods whose names they carry.

Apollo was a god with multiple roles. Similarly to Juppiter, his role and importance varied from time to time. He was a god of Greek origin, but was already worshipped in Rome in the early republic (Livy reports that the god was known even in the regal period). As much as 23 different duties can be attributed to Apollo in the Greco-Roman world. He was connected with youth, music, poetry, the arts as well as prophecy, to mention just a few. In the eastern part of the empire, particularly, Apollo had an important role as the god of oracles, and was sometimes associated there with the traditional god of the Greek (and Roman) pantheon as well. Some oracles of Apollo even spoke of some kind of monotheism, claiming that there was a supreme god who ruled above all other deities. This kind of idea has often been described as henotheism, although the concept itself is a very difficult one, and no universally accepted definition can be found. Hendrik Versnel, for example, has claimed that there are three phenomena which could be considered as henotheism: the exaltation of one god above the others, the *reductio ad unum* of many different divinities, and the assumption by a single god of the role of many others. Another explanation for the concept of henotheism, provided by scholars, is that of a temporary worship of a single god (*contra* monolatry, worshipping one god continuously). Even if the concept is difficult to define, the idea itself was a significant one in the late Roman world, especially among the last supporters of traditional state religion. Perhaps the most famous example is the speech of senator Praetextatus, recorded in Macrobius’ *Saturnalia* in ca. AD 430, where the senator claims that many gods of the Roman world

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390 Liv. 1.56.
were, in fact, aspects of the sun. The list of gods include Apollo, Ares/Mars, Hermes/Mercury, Minerva/Athena, Aesculapius, Heracles/Hercules, and Zeus/Jupiter. It also includes various eastern gods, mystery cults and some lesser gods from the Graeco-Roman tradition. The speech can be seen as a part of the “solar theology”, which grew stronger in the Roman world from the third century onwards.\textsuperscript{394}

During the Roman republican period, Apollo was apparently best known as a healing god, as recorded by the first \textit{le pisternium} in 399 BCE. It is reported that in that year Rome suffered pestilence and therefore Apollo, Latona, Diana, Hercules, Mercury and Neptune were honoured with a celebration.\textsuperscript{395} Apollo also had fixed games in the Roman calendar in the aforementioned \textit{ludi Apollinares} from very early period. When the Romans faced difficulties in the war against Carthage, in the late third century BCE, the games were held for the first time; apparently this was the oracles’ advice. A few years later, a plague occurred, and the games were held again, in order to get help from Apollo. In his history, Livy writes lines of the oracle ordering the games:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Hostes, Romani, si ex agro expellere uoltis, uomicam quae gentium uenit longe, Apollini ouuendos censeo ludos qui quotannis comiter Apollini fiant; cum populus dederit ex publico partem, priuati uti conferant pro se atque suis; iis ludis faciendis praesit praetor is quis ius populo plebeique dabit summum; decemuiri Graeco ritu hostis sacra faciant. Hoc si recte facietis, gaudebitis semper fietque res uestra melior; nam is deum exstinguet perduelles uestros qui uestros campos pascit placide.}\textsuperscript{396}
\end{quote}

There is a description in Livy’s history of the rituals of the \textit{ludi Apollinares} held in 212 BCE. The official responsible for the games was the \textit{praetor urbanus}, who received money and two victims for sacrifice. As in the case of the \textit{ludi saeculares}, the priestly group of the \textit{decemviri sacris faciundis} (later known as the \textit{quindecimviri sacris faciundis}) observed the ritual; they were made


\textsuperscript{395} Liv. 5.13.

\textsuperscript{396} Liv. 25.12: “If you wish, Romans, to drive out enemies, the sore which has come from afar, I propose that a festival be vowed to Apollo, to be observed with good cheer in honor of Apollo every year. When the people shall have given a part of their treasury, private citizens shall contribute on their own behalf and that of their families. In charge of the conduct of that festival shall be the praetor who is then chief judge for the people and the commons. The decemvirs shall offer the victims according to Greek rite. If you will do this rightly you shall forever rejoice, and your state will change for the better. For that god who graciously nurtures your meadows will destroy your enemies” (transl. Frank Gardner Moore).
according to the Greek rite – another similarity with the *ludi saeculares*. An ox was sacrificed to Apollo, a cow to Latona and apparently two she-goats to Diana.\(^{397}\) In addition to the public festival, the people feasted in their own homes as well. Livy stresses that the festivals were held to gain victory in the war, not because of public health (even if Apollo was known in Rome as a healer-god from a very early period). The games became quite popular, and finally they expanded to eight days of celebration during the late republic.\(^{398}\)

The role of Apollo in Rome changed quite dramatically when the imperial period began with the reign of Augustus. There are some traces in the works of ancient authors which would indicate that Apollo was already used by powerful individuals who rose during the last century of the republic;\(^{399}\) in fact, the adversaries of Augustus during the civil war, Brutus and Cassius, associated themselves with Apollo as well.\(^{400}\) However, when Augustus won the civil war and the imperial period began, he adopted the god and gave him a crucial role – and Diana too – in his policy.

Despite Apollo’s many roles, one of the most important in the early imperial period was as god of sun; this seems to be the case in the Augustan *ludi saeculares*, as the opening words of the *Carmen Saeculare* of Horace indicate that:

\[
Phoebe silvarumque potens Diana, \\
lucidum caeli decus, o colendi \\
semper et cultu, date quae precamur \\
tempore sacro. \(^{401}\)
\]

The invocation of the poem describes how the brother (Apollo/Phoebus) shines as the sun and the sister (Diana) as the moon in the night time.\(^{402}\) The idea of Apollo as a Sun-god lived on after Augustus throughout the centuries. For example, Macrobius, an author writing as late as the late fourth/early fifth century, dedicates a long chapter in his *Saturnalia* to Apollo the sun-god. He also writes about the origins of the *ludi Apollinares*.\(^{403}\)

\(^{397}\) Livy claims that the she-goats were offered to Apollo as well, but he is probably mistaken, as a female victim was probably meant for a female deity. Scullard, p. 160.

\(^{398}\) Liv. 25.12. For the sources on the origin of the games, see Scullard, pp. 159—160.

\(^{399}\) For example Plut. *Sull.* 22.3.

\(^{400}\) Galinsky, p. 216.

\(^{401}\) Hor. *Carm. Saec.* 1—4: “O Phoebus, and Diana ruler of the woodlands, radiant glory of the sky, o ye who are to be worshipped, always, and venerated, grant what we pray for, in this sacred season” (transl. Niall Rudd; see also 9—10). Phoebus is another name for Apollo.

\(^{402}\) For the *Carmen Saeculare* (and Apollo and Diana as the sun and the moon in the poem), see Feeney, pp. 109—115.

\(^{403}\) Macr. *Sat.* 1.17 deals with Apollo; the *ludi Apollinares* are described in 1.17.25—30. Macrobius gives quite a lot attention to the origins of Apollo as a sun-god, going back to Plato and other Greek authors.
Apollo and Diana’s roles, as the most important gods in Roman state cult, did not last long after Augustus, however. It has been already noted that Juppiter Optimus Maximus “regained” his central role as supreme god after the Augustan period. In fact, it has sometimes even claimed that the cult of Apollo was, by the early third century, in a state of stagnation; for example, the lack of activity with the Sibylline books (as the cult of Apollo was very much connected to the oracle and the quindecimviri sacris faciundis) is seen as a mark of decline of the cult. This does not, however, necessarily indicate that the cult of Apollo lost its significance; it should be remembered that the lack of innovation or activity in Roman religious life does not automatically mean decline. As explained in Chapter one, Roman religion did not have dogmas or a theology Christianity does, for example. The idea of decline in certain aspects of Roman traditional religion due to a lack of visible activity is only significant from a Christian perspective. It was not necessarily the case for the followers of old state religion.

5.2.2. Diana, the Goddess of Many Roles

Diana, sometimes known by her Greek name Artemis, was Apollo’s counterpart in the ludi saeculares. Similarly to Apollo, she also was a deity of many roles. Most importantly perhaps, she was very regularly called the goddess of the moon. The name Diana is used as a synonym for the moon by Varro, and Cicero counts her as one of the planets. Moreover, poets like Horace and Catullus, regularly use Diana when writing about the moon. However, her appearance as a goddess of hunting was also an important one; as C. Green put it, “when men thought of Diana in relationship to their more personal, daily concerns, in their hunt for love and their need for help or assistance in other pursuits, they approached her as the huntress. This was inevitable, as hunt is, in and of itself, a metaphor for the pursuit of anything one wants or needs.” The moon goddess and

406 For example Catull. 34.16; Cic. Nat. D. 2.68—9, 3.51, 3.58; Verg. Aen. 9.404—5; Hor. Carm. saec. 1—2, 4.6.38, 33—6; Ov. Met. 15.196, Ov. Her. 12.69; Serv. Comm. in Verg. Aen. 4.511. Diana Caelestis, possibly a result of syncretism with the Carthagian moon-goddess, can be found in CIL 5.5765, 8.999, 14.3536.
407 Varro, Ling. 5.68; Cicero, Nat. D. 2.68—9, 3.51, 3.58.
408 Green, C.M.C., Roman Religion and the Cult of Diana at Aricia. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 123. Artemis/Diana as a goddess of hunting was a very popular deity up until late antiquity. For the worship the hunter-goddess in the Roman world, see Poulsen, Brite, ‘The Sanctuaries of the Goddess of the Hunt’. In Fischer-Hansen,
the huntress were, in fact, inseparable; they were two aspects of the same goddess. From this identity came all her other forms that were worshipped: as goddess of culture and civilization, as goddess of roads and paths, of the young ones and their education, of life and death, growth and decay, of both men and women in their disasters.\(^{409}\)

In addition, Diana was considered as a goddess of childbirth. According to Cicero,

\[Diana\ dicta\ quia\ noctu\ quasi\ diem\ efficeret,\ adhibetur\ autem\ ad\ partus,\ quod\ i\ maturescunt\ aut\ septem\ non\ numquam\ aut\ ut\ plerumque\ novem\ lunae\ cursibus,\ qui\ quia\ mensa\ spatia\ conficiunt\ menses\ nominatur.\] \(^{410}\)

In the Severan *Carmen Saeculare*, Diana appears with Apollo, as the whole poem begins with an invocation to both deities.\(^{411}\) Although the role of the poem is further discussed in the next chapter, it should be noted at this point that the poem is remarkably different to the Horace’s *Carmen saeculare* (about the Augustan games), and so there was no need to include those deities in the poem. Indeed, the *Carmen* was in many ways reshaped, and some completely new details were added to it in AD 204. Despite this, Apollo and Diana were still given an extremely important place at the very beginning of the text, and it seems that Severus considered these deities as important. On this basis, it could be suggested that the role of Apollo and Diana was far from “meaningless” in the games.

It is quite obvious that Diana was considered as the goddess of the moon in sacrifices of the third day in the Severan *ludi saeculares*. She appeared as a counterpart to Apollo (following the Augustan example; although it is likely that she took another role when the matrons celebrated the *sellisternium* to honour her with Juno – this could be seen as an example of her multiple roles in Roman society). The goddess of the moon was apparently a deity of some significance for the Severan family. She was, for example sometimes associated with Julia Domna as Diana Lucifera, although this was not a Severan novelty as such: the deity of the moon was already traditionally connected to the empresses before the Severans (alongside Juno Lucina and Luna Lucifera). Even if Luna Lucifera is believed to be most identified with Julia Domna, Diana as a moon-goddess can be

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\(^{409}\) Green, p. 144. For Diana’ different roles , see pp. 117—119.

\(^{410}\) *Cic. Nat.D.* 2.69: “She is invoked at childbirth because the period of gestation is sometimes seven or, as more often, nine revolutions of the moon which, because they complete measured spaces are called months” (transl. H. Rackham).

\(^{411}\) Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va 60. The opening phrases are otherwise very fragmentary.
seen on Domna’s the coinage too (fig. 10). This is, however, not the only connection existing between the moon and the Severan dynasty. For example, when Caracalla was killed by his own soldiers in AD 217, he was on a journey to visit the temples of the moon in the city of Carrhae, in Mesopotamia. The central role of the moon (and the sun) in astrological thinking should not be forgotten either, as Severus’ close relationship with astrology is well known. This question will be dealt with next.

Fig. 10. Julia Domna in aureus, years 198-207. IVLIA AVGVSTA/ DIANA LVCIFERA. RIC 4.1 no. 548 (Julia Domna).

5.2.3. Written in the Stars: Severus and Astrology

A noteworthy aspect of the rituals of the ludi saeculares is the combination of both daytime and nocturnal rituals. Denis Feeney has noticed some very sharp demarcations in the overall ritual of the games. In his article about the Augustan celebration, he mentions ten different pairs that can be found from the program: night/day, without/with civic cult, Greek/Roman, uniconic/iconic, personifications/individuals, un-Olympian/Olympian, chthonic/heavenly, outside/inside the pomerium, plain/hilltop and single/paired sacrifices. Even if all these oppositions possibly did

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412 See Levick, p. 142; see also Keltanen (p.146) for the use of moon-goddess in the coinage of the empresses before Julia Domna (in the Antonine period). For Diana/Artemis and Luna/Selene associated with Julia Domna in Roman iconography, see Mikocki, Tomasz, Sub Specie Deae. Les Impératrices et Princesses Romaines Assimilées à des Déeses. Étude Iconologique. Supplementi 14 alla RdA. Giorgio Bretschneider Editore, Roma 1995, p. 71, 74.

413 HA Car. 6.6.; see also Herod. 4.13.1., who describes the moon goddess as Selene. Even if it is possible that one of the moon gods Caracalla worshipped in Mesopotamia was a male deity, the moon was usually considered as a female goddess in Rome, like Diana or Luna Lucifera. On the other hand, the name or even the gender of the moon deity was perhaps not that important for Caracalla – the eclectic and syncretic attitude of the period probably caused the local gods or goddesses of the moon to be considered as more or less the “same” as Diana.

414 Pomerium was an ancient religious boundary, outside of which auspices could not be taken. Dating back to republican (or even royal) times when it consisted of only a small part of the city centre, it was later extended several times – according to legend, this was done for the first time by King Servius Tullius. After him, the border was

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not have as much significance for the Romans in AD 204 as they may have had in 17 BCE (when the program was apparently at least partly “invented” for Augustus’ purposes), there is no need to think that Feeney’s basic suggestion cannot be applied to the Severan *ludi saeculares* as well: that all these sharp binarisms demonstrated the emperor’s ability to dominate the greatest possible range of religious power.416

It is possible that the daytime/night-time demarcation highlighted the role of the sun and the moon and, more speaking generally, astrological themes in the Secular Games. This could be suggested in the light of Censorinus’ writings, who discusses the different aspects of the ages, such as years, length of life, months, days, hours, calendar and the Secular Games as a mark of a *saeculum*. His book on the subject seems to indicate that that all theories of ages, including ideas behind the Roman *ludi saeculares*, are related to astrology, which explains the harmony in the universe, and on which the different ages are based.417 He also verifies the old idea of the prominent position of the sun in the astrological theories. According to Censorinus,

```italian
Itaque eum, qui stellas ipsas, quibuscum movemur,
permovet, animam nobis dare, qua regamur,
potentissimumque in nos esse moderarique, quando
post conceptionem veniamus in lucem.418
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In the early third century, astrology had a strong position in Roman imperial circles. Bearing in mind Septimius Severus’ personal preferences and beliefs, his interest in astrology is well attested in the written sources – so well, in fact, that Birley called Severus an astrology “addict”.419 Most of the ancient reports come from the *Historia Augusta*, and some of the stories were clearly written with the benefit of hindsight. Moreover, the book often uses stereotypes, satire, and is not too concerned about various “facts”. The stories, however, as exaggerated as they are, are still based on something, and in Severus’ case, at least partially on his own biography. Furthermore, the stories about Severus’ interest in astrology of can also be found in the writings of more reliable historians,

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415 Feeney, p. 107.
416 Feeney, pp. 107—108.
417 In Censorinus’ work especially book 8 deals with astrology.
418 Cens. 8.3: “And so the sun moves the stars by which we are moved in turn; it gives us the spirit by which we are ruled; it is most powerful over us and controls how long after conception we are born” (transl. Holt N. Parker).
such as Cassius Dio. We can therefore consider the *Historia Augusta* as a form of evidence which strengthens the picture of a close relationship between Septimius Severus and astrology.

First of all, the *Historia Augusta* reports how Severus had consulted an astrologer in Africa, before becoming an emperor, and that his future was revealed to him then. As the story goes, Septimius Severus had to swear an oath to the astrologer that he had told the truth about his own origin. When Severus made the oath, the astrologer revealed him glorious future. Perhaps the most famous story about Septimius Severus’ relation with astrology is about his marriage with Julia Domna. Severus’ first wife, Paccia Marciana, died and consequently Severus was looking for a new wife. Julia Domna, a Syrian princess, was a woman whose horoscope predicted that she would marry a king. Severus apparently carried out research on several marriageable women’s horoscopes and chose Julia on this basis. The biographies in the *Historia Augusta* note that Severus was, at this time, only a subject of the emperor (although in a very good position, of course), and so it seems Severus placed a lot of emphasis on astrology in his future career plans.

Another report about his early dealings with astrology occurred, according to the *Historia Augusta*, in Sicily, where he was acting as a proconsul. He there consulted astrologers and seers regarding the happenings of the emperor (then Commodus). Severus was accused for this and was put on trial, but was released because Commodus’ power had already began weaken during that time. Later, when he ruled the empire, he committed a similar act when getting rid of the last supporters of his rival to the throne, Pescennius Niger:

> Multos etiam, quasi Chaldaeos aut vates de sua salute consulissent, interemit, praecipue suspectans unumquemque idoneum imperio, cum ipse parvulos adhuc filios haberet idque dici ab his vel crederet vel audiret, qui sibi augurabantur imperium.

Learning about the destiny of imperial power through astrology was considered as a severe crime. Ulpian, a lawyer and a contemporary writer of Septimius Severus, wrote how those making such

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420 *HA Sev.* 2.8.
421 *HA Sev.* 3.9; *Get.* 3.1; *Sev. Alex.* 5.4.
422 *HA Sev.* 4.3.
423 *HA Sev.* 15.5: ”He put numerous other to death on the charge of having asked Chaldeans or soothsayers how long he was destined to live; and he was especially suspicious of anyone who seemed qualified for the imperial power, for his sons were still very young, and he believed or had heard that this fact was being observed by those who were seeking omens regarding their own prospects to the throne” (transl. David Magie).
inquiries (using astrology) to find out about the emperor’s health ought to receive death penalty or an even more severe punishment. He adds how they should also receive milder punishments for seeking for information on their own life or the life of their relatives.\footnote{Dig. 11.4.3 = Ulp. De off. procons. 7.}

Punishing people for enquiring about the emperor’s reign was not the only sign of Severus’ interest in astrology. When his younger son Geta was born, Severus was astonished that he could not find anything imperial from the horoscope of the young prince.\footnote{HA Get. 2.6—7. The author of the Historia Augusta mentions that Septimius Severus was very proficient in the study of horoscopes, “like most Africans” (although this phrase comes across as a hindsight as well, considering the overall nature of the Historia Augusta).} Moreover, Cassius Dio reports how Septimius Severus had his horoscope painted to the ceiling of the imperial palace. As Dio states about the happenings of the year AD 208, Severus was worried about his sons and the legions. Caracalla and Geta were “changing their modes of life”, and legions were enjoying too much idleness, and because of that, Severus decided to conduct a military operation in Britain. Dio claims that Severus made this decision even if he knew that he would not return alive. This was, says Dio, because the emperor could read it from the ceiling of his court, where the “stars under which he was born” were painted.\footnote{Cass. Dio 77.11. Septimius Severus was not the only emperor of the Severan dynasty who was interested in astronomy. Caracalla was also very keen on the subject. Herodian (4.12.3) reports how Caracalla, during his final years, gathered all the astrologers, prophets and examiners of entrails, and consulted all possible oracles. This was because he was very interested in all things, both profane and divine, but also because he was very suspicious and saw plots against him everywhere.}

Astrology as such was not a new phenomenon in imperial Rome in the early third century. Although it was considered as somewhat dangerous and its use was regulated by laws, Augustus himself had already been very interested in astrology. His follower Tiberius was the first emperor to have, according to sources, a court astrologer, who was called Thrasyllus. Tiberius apparently practiced astrological skills himself, as did Hadrian after him. It seems, however, that Septimius Severus was the first emperor after Augustus to give such great importance to astrology. In addition to the elements mentioned above, he also published the dreams, oracles, omens and the other kind of predictions which indicated his rise to power in his autobiography, and represented them in his public images, both in sculptures and paintings.\footnote{Barton, Tamsyn, Ancient Astrology. Routledge, London 1994, pp. 45—46.}

The growing importance of the sun god (and astrology) is often connected to the rise of the so-called eastern cults, especially attributed to the Severan period. The influence of Julia Domna has
sometimes also been regarded as crucial for eastern influences. The role of the eastern religions during the Severan dynasty was, however, somewhat exaggerated; the Severan rulers, with the exception of Elagabalus, can be seen as quite conservative emperors regarding state cult. The eastern cults did nevertheless expand during this period. They gained more power in the regions in which they already existed, and they spread to countries in which they had not previously been very present. In other words, the growing significance of the eastern cults was not directly connected to imperial policy, but was more like the spirit of the times.

Julia Domna was a member of a family that had a connection to the cult of the sun god El’Gabal, and Severus himself showed interest in the cults of sun. The epithet invictus – related to the god Sol Invictus – was added to coinage depicting Severus and it is claimed that if there was a god in the Roman pantheon to whom Severus associated himself, it was the sun god. Moreover, inscriptions of the early third century seem to indicate that the cult of Sol was indeed spreading in Rome, even if the cult of Sol Invictus had been known in Rome long before Severus. It might be that the sun and the moon were among the oldest deities in Roman religion, going back to the republican and regal era. Nevertheless, the popularity of the cult of Sol Invictus which considerably grew during the first century, was especially spread by soldiers from the east. Other eastern cults that can be found in the city of Rome during the Severan period include, for example, the cults of Cybele and Attis, Isis,

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428 The Sun-god, originally known as Sol Indiges, was an old Italian deity but remained more or less marginal. The importance of the sun-god started to grow in the first century, with the rise of Sol Invictus. Pfeiffer, Mathias, Sol Invictus – Die Ausbreitung orientalischer Religionen im römischen Kaiserreich. Grin Verlag, München 2004, pp. 4—5. Whether the “new” sun-god had any connection to the “old” Sol Indiges is debatable.

429 Gorrie 2004, p. 66—67. As Levick (pp. 124—144) has pointed out, oriental tendencies grew during the Severan era, but they mostly came from below, not from the top of the empire. For Julia Domna’s role in the “orientalizing” process, see Mundle, I., ‘Dea Caelestis in der Religionspolitik des Septimius Severus und Julia Domna’. In Historia 10 (1961), pp. 228—237; Ghedini, F., Giulia Domna tra oriente e occidente. Le fonti archeologiche. L’Erma di Bretschneider, Roma 1984, pp. 136—140. Even the famous incident of introducing the sun-god Elagabal by emperor Elagabalus was perhaps not as radical a policy as some scholars believe (that is, an attempt to bring monotheism to the Roman empire); see Icks, Martijn, ‘Empire of the Sun? Civic Responses to the Rise and Fall of Sol Elagabal in the Roman Empire’. In Hekster, Olivier, Schmidt-Hofner, Sebastian & Witschnel, Christian, Ritual Dynamics and Religious Change in the Roman Empire. Proceedings of the Eight Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Heidelberg, July 5-7, 2007) (Impact of Empire vol. 9). Brill, Leiden 2009, pp. 112—113.

430 Le Glay, Voisin & Le Bohec list five examples of the growing importance of eastern cults: Cybele’s return to favour, the imperial favour towards the cult of Isis and Serapis, the importance of Jupiter Dolichenus in the Severan period, the Mithraic cult and the promotion of local gods connected to the imperial family, like Aziz of Emesa and the two semitic gods, Shadrafa and Milkaashart, whose Latin versions were known as Liber Pater and Hercules, the protectors of Severus’ home city Lepcis Magna. Le Glay, Voisin & Le Bohec, pp. 364—365.

431 Barton, pp. 204—205; Lichtenberger, p. 382.

432 Halsberghe, pp. 26—37. Halsberghe makes a clear separation between the traditional “Roman” cult of the sun and the “alien” eastern cult of Sol Invictus. Some observations by Halsberghe are now somewhat outdated, like his claim that the spread of the cult of Sol Invictus in Rome from second century was due to the fact that the emperors started to consider themselves as Eastern despots, and thus that they saw Sol Invictus as a proper symbol of their power.
Serapis, Atargatis, Christianity, Judaism and Mithraism. Of these, the most important cult concerning the sun, moon and astrology was probably the cult of Mithra. It is reported that Commodus was the first Roman emperor whom we know to have taken part in the cult; according to the *Historia Augusta*, Commodus, when initiated to the mysteries of Mithra, actually killed a man. The Severans were also involved in the cult. During their reign, Rome became the most important place for Mithraism in the western part of the empire, and Mithraic dedications for the safety of the emperors are most numerous in the Severan period. Astrology was an extremely important part of the cult; the iconography of Mithraism is full of astronomical symbols, like zodiacs, and the sun and the moon are especially prominent.

In examining the *ludi saeculares* of AD 204, and bearing in mind the significant role of astrology during this period, it is difficult to say for sure if the people witnessing the games associated the “astrological” solar deities appearing in the celebration with the ruling couple, Septimius Severus and Julia Domna. As we saw in the previous chapter, however, the iconography of the sun and the moon was used to propagate an impression of harmony within the imperial family, the imperial *Concordia*. Perhaps the idea was, hence, not so alien to the audience. After all, the blessing of harmonious imperial family relations for the *communitas* was an idea that was propagated

433 Regarding the various eastern cults in Rome during the second and early third century, see Krill, Richard M., ‘Roman Paganism under the Antonines and Severans’. In *ANRW* II.16.1 (1978), pp. 27—44.

434 The passage goes on to explain that it was common for those initiated to the mysteries of Mithra to pretend that something evil happened and that they did not actually kill anybody: *HA Comm. 9.6*. The story of Commodus in the *Historia Augusta* should be addressed very critically: it is more likely that the *Historia Augusta* tries to portray a “bad” emperor such as Caracalla in as bad a light as possible – after all, even if there are couple stories of Roman human sacrifice from the republican era (Liv. 22.55—57; 22.57.4; Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 83), the practice generally horrified the Romans. During the imperial period, it was considered to be part of magic, a perversion of legitimate animal sacrifice, and typical for uncivilized foreign peoples, not for Romans (Beard, North & Price, pp. 233—234). It is perhaps not a coincidence that an extremely “alien” emperor, Elagabalus, is also recorded by the *Historia Augusta* to have practiced human sacrifice (*HA Heliogab. 8.1*).

435 Krill, p. 38; Le Glay, Voisin & Le Bohec, p. 365.

436 On the other hand, even if Mithraism is full of astral symbols, its “message”, if it can be reconstructed at all, is much more complicated and will not be dealt with here. See, for example, Beck, Roger, *The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire. Mysteries of the Unconquered Sun*. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2006, pp. 30—40 for problems concerning Mithras’ astral iconography. Of the other so called Eastern cults, Serapis especially has often considered as a god of major importance for Septimius Severus. The *Historia Augusta* (*HA Sev. 17.4*) describes the emperor’s interest in this cult. There have even been suggestions that Severus wished to identify himself with Serapis in his portraits. These claims are now quite widely disputed. See Tacács, Sarolta A., *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World*. Brill, Leiden 1995, pp. 115—116; Baharal, Drora, ‘Portraits of the Emperor L. Septimius Severus (193—211 AD) as an Expression of his Propaganda’. In *Latomus* 48 (1989), pp. 579—580.

437 There have been suggestions that the night-sky itself was an important factor in nocturnal religious rituals in the ancient world. Efrosyni Boutsikas, for example, has argued that in the festival of Panathenaia, celebrated in ancient Greece, the night sky and its stars were a crucial part of the ritual held in the Athenian Acropolis. The night-sky provided an astronomically surrounding crucial for the occasion; so, it is possible that this was true in the Roman *ludi saeculares* as well, during the nocturnal celebrations. See Boutsikas, Efrosyni, ‘Astronomical Evidence for the Timing of Panathenaia’. In *AJA* 115.2 (2011), pp. 303—309. See also Boutsikas & Ruggles, Clive, ‘Temples, Stars and Ritual Landscapes: The Potential for Archaeoastronomy in Ancient Greece.’ In *AJA* 115.1 (2011), pp. 55—68.
throughout the festival, especially during the second day, as we saw. Moreover, it seems that the astrological themes were visible to the people of the city (and the audience of the ludi saeculares) on one of the most famous monuments built by Severus, the Septizodium: a grand nymphaeum, which also had a role in the Secular Games.

According to the Historia Augusta, the Septizodium was one of the most striking structures, alongside the baths of Severus, and whose main purpose was to be noticed by those who arrived to the capital from Africa. The author of the Historia Augusta also claims that Severus intended it to function as a new entrance to the imperial palace on the Palatine hill. Apparently, the entrance was never actualized as the prefect of the city placed a statue of Severus in the middle of the complex while the emperor was away.\footnote{HA Sev. 19.5; 24.3.} The Historia Augusta also mention that when Geta was murdered by Caracalla, he was laid in his ancestor’s tomb which had been constructed in the same manner as the Septizodium.\footnote{HA Get. 7.2. There seems to be a confusion by the biographer between the tomb of Hadrian, where the Severan and Antonine emperors were buried, and the Septizodium; see the biography of Geta in the Loeb edition, note 4 (page 45).} Ammianus Marcellinus, writing in the fourth century, describes the Septizodium as a “much frequented spot, where the emperor Marcus Aurelius erected a Nymphaeum of pretentious style.”\footnote{Amm. Marc. 15.7.3. Interestingly enough, Ammianus records that, during the food riots in AD 350’s, the people gathered at the Septizodium to protest against the scarcity of supplies, which was in this case, wine. One could perhaps suggest that, by that time, the Septizodium symbolized the generosity of the emperor and, at the same time, the distribution of food supplies.} The historian probably confuses Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus with each other in his reference. The Septizodium was built during the Severan building process, and was finished in AD 203, just before the ludi of AD 204. As a part of the building project, it had a similar propagandistic value as the new and restored temples, public buildings and so on; to highlight the role of the emperor as the restorer and protector of the empire. Moreover, the Septizodium and the other new monuments were used as stages for the Secular Games, as they were built right next to the spots where the rituals were conducted. In the case of the Septizodium, the spots were the Palatine hill and the Circus Maximus.

It has been estimated that the Septizodium was about 95 meters long, with a depth of 35 meters and a height of about 30 meters.\footnote{For measurements, see Lusnia, Susann, ‘Urban Planning and Sculptural Display in Severan Rome: Reconstructing the Septizodium and Its Role in Dynastic Politics’. In AJA 108 (2004), p. 521.} It had a facade filled with elaborate ornaments and statues. They probably presented the statues of both Severan rulers, but also their predecessors (probably the Antonines), and thus emphasized the continuity of the rulers from the previous dynasty. As Susann Lusnia describes, “it must have been a stunning sight to behold, a monument that forcefully and
ostentatiously proclaimed the presence of the Severans in Rome`. Little is known about the exact appearance of the monument, as virtually nothing of it remains today on the Palatine, but the scholars tend to agree that ideas connected to astrology did have an important part in the monument. The name, Septizodium, probably refers to the seven planetary deities: Sol/Helios/Apollo, Luna/Selene/Diana, Mars, Mercury, Juppiter, Venus, and Saturn. Some scholars have even argued that Septimius Severus and Julia Domna were depicted on the monument as the deities of the sun and the moon, Sol and Luna, but the evidence for this is very scarce. Remains of an Apollo-type figure was found near the foundations of the Septizodium, and thus it is likely that the sun god, among other solar deities, was indeed depicted as a “traditional” Apollo, the one who was worshipped during the *ludi saeculares*.

Interestingly, the number seven was also present in the inscription of the Severan *ludi saeculares*. The very beginning of the record declares that the games in question were the seventh ones. It is a very interesting detail, as Censorinus, an author writing only about thirty years later (in AD 238) mentioned that the Severan games were the eighth ones. It seems that Severus deliberately wanted to “skip” previous games, without counting them as genuine *ludi saeculares*. He most probably counted the Augustan games as the fifth games (the number of the republican games was considered as amounting to four, as recorded by Censorinus), skipping the Claudian games of AD 47, and again considering the games of Domitian (in AD 88) as the sixth ones. Again, in skipping Antoninus Pius’ *ludi* (in AD 148; these are missing in Censorinus’ account as well), he would reach the conclusion that the games of AD 204 were the seventh ones. Perhaps the most obvious explanation of this is that Severus wanted to connect himself to the Augustan tradition strictly and to the Augustan cycle of the games. However, given Septimius Severus’ interest in the astrology, recording the games as the seventh ones could also have some significance, as this would perhaps mark the games as an occasion which was celebrated under the seven planetary deities.

The importance of the Septizodium for the Severan *ludi* can be noticed when we evaluate the site on which it was constructed. It was built in front of the Palatine hill, also right next to the Circus Maximus. The area was an important crossroads, where many vital routes to the city, like Via

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442 Lusnia 2004, p. 541
443 Lusnia 2004, pp. 524—526. Even if we do not know if it was the case with Septizodium, there are other examples representing Septimius Severus with the planetary deities – see Lichtenberger, pp. 260—261.
444 Pighi, comm. lud. sept. I 1: [Commeʃntarium [ludorum saecu]lar[ui]m [septimorum qui facti sunt]…
445 See Appendix 3 for the chronology of the games.
446 Seven was also a number with great significance for the birth and growth of children, as recorded by Censorinus (7.2—5).
Appia, met (that is, between the Circus Maximus and the Palatine hill), and it is very likely that the *ludi saeculares* of AD 204 were born in mind when the Septizodium was built. The audience of the games came from various parts of the empire, including Africa; the site on which the Septizodium stood was a crucial traffic-point for those entering the city. When people came to see the games “no one have ever seen, and will not see again,” the impressive monument right before their eyes must have been an effective way of demonstrating the emperor’s power. Moreover, it also highlighted the close relationship between the emperor and the Palatine. The hill had been an object of extensive construction and repair projects of Severus, and it in many ways symbolized the stability and continuity of Severus’ reign. It should be remembered that the Palatine had been associated with the emperor since the Augustan period. Obviously, the Palatine hill was one of the central places of worship in the *ludi saeculares* as well.

All in all, emperor’s personal interest in astrology as well as the astral subjects on the Septizodium would indicate that Apollo and Diana, as the deities of the sun and the moon, had an important role for Septimius Severus when he manifested his power in the Secular Games. Based on the day/night dichotomy of the celebration, the “all-embracing” status of the imperial couple in the celebrations, and perhaps even small details such as the occurrence of the number seven, it can be believed that the role of Apollo and Diana was not just following the Augustan tradition, but that their significance was based on contemporary ideas as well. The early third century practice of identifying the emperor and the empress as the sun and the moon in imperial propaganda could, from its own part, strengthen this idea.

447 Gorrie, Charmaine, 'The Septizodium of Septimius Severus Revisited: the Monument in Its Historical and Urban Context'. In *Latomus* 60.3 (2001), pp. 662—669; see Map 1 for the area around Septizodium.
448 Herod. 3.8.6.
449 Gorrie 2001, pp. 662—669 (see Map 1); Thomas, Edmund, 'Metaphor and identity in Severan architecture: the Septizodium at Rome between reality and fantasy'. In Swain, Simon, Harrison, Stephen & Elsner, Jas (eds.), *Severan Culture*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, pp. 328—334. In his article, Thomas underlines the African nature of the Septizodium; Thomas does not claim that Septimius Severus was an emperor with an African or Punic program as such, but does consider the aspect of the Septizodium as an example of regionalist tendencies in architecture.
6. THE CLOSING ACTS: THE CARMEN SAECULARE AND THE TROJAN GAMES

This final chapter continues with the programme and concentrates on the final activities described in the inscription of the Severan Secular Games, the Carmen Saeculare and the Trojan games (lusus Troiae). I will first examine the Severan Carmen, analyzing its contents and the messages it was supposed to give the audience. The Carmen is very interesting, especially for two reasons. First, it differs significantly from the, earlier, known Augustan poem (written by Horace). Horace’s poem reflects the Augustan rituals described in the inscription very closely; thus the hymn begins with an invocation to Apollo and Diana and sends prayers to the other gods present in the games: to Juno, Fates, Terra Mater and Eileithyia. Juppiter Optimus Maximus only receives a short mention at the end of the poem. The Augustan Carmen also celebrates the birth of Rome and connects Augustus with its foundation by underlining the link between Aeneas and Augustus. Only fragments of the Severan poem remain, but there is enough evidence to demonstrate that major modifications were made. Second, an interesting detail is that Severan poem is actually included in the inscription itself. This was not the case in the Augustan games – the inscription of the 17 BCE only mentions that Horace composed the poem for the occasion.

The Trojan games were also conducted in the Augustan ludi, and were not, as such, a Severan novelty. The Severan inscription nevertheless provides some unique details considering this occasion. In this chapter, I will provide a brief history of the Trojan games to assist our understanding of their nature and function in Roman society, and so that we may evaluate them as a part of the ludi saeculares more closely. In addition, as these are the final activities of the ludi, the role of the audience in the games is also dealt in this final chapter.

Besides the Carmen Saeculare and the lusus Troiae, one interesting detail is that following the other celebrations, the matrons apparently held a final sellisternium for Juno and Diana. This would have included sacrifices and a feast for the goddesses, led by the empress. This women’s ritual

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450 Hor. carm. saec. 1—12.
451 Hor. carm. saec. 13—28.
452 Hor. carm. saec. 73. This probably reflects the shift of balance from Juppiter to Apollo as the most important God in the reign of Augustus. For Juppiter’s role in the Augustan Carmen, see Putnam, Michael, Horace’s Carmen Saeculare: Ritual Magic and the Poet’s Art. Yale University Press, New Haven 2001, pp. 66—69, 78, 85, 87, 91.
453 Hor. carm. saec.49—52.
454 carmen composuit Q. Hor[ati]us Flaccus. Pighi, comm. lud. quint 149. The author of the Severan Carmen is unknown.
might have been a Severan innovation, as no traces of this ritual can be found in earlier sources, although it should also be remembered that we do not possess inscriptions for the Domitian or Claudian games (the extensive numismatic evidence we have left from the ludi of Domitian does not describe these kinds of rituals, which would indicate that they were, for the first time, included in the inscription during the Severan ludi, but obviously this does not give complete certainty). The passage is short, but very interesting. It is one of the very few sources which indicate women as actual sacrificants in Roman public art or monuments; the literary sources are rather silent about this subject. Generally, the passage is a piece of evidence against the idea of “sacrificial incapacity” of women. As Emily Hemelrijk has pointed out, the less prominent role of women in Roman sacrifice is more the result from the fact that female priests were a minority throughout Roman history, rather than the idea that women were unsuitable for the performance sacrifices.456

6.1. Carmen saeculare

6.1.1. The Severan Poem and its Performers

The Carmen Saeculare of the third day were first performed on the Palatine hill and then on the Capitoline. As for the earlier games, the hymn was sung by 27 girls and 27 boys.457 The children taking part in the Secular Games traditionally had to be patrimi et matrimi – with both parents still living. These children were more desirable for religious duties in Roman traditional religion in general, not just in the ludi saeculares. This was because they were not yet polluted by death and therefore considered as integri; as whole.458

The practice of using 27 children in Roman religious rituals was very old, dating back to the republican period. For example, in 207 BCE reports of a newborn who was the size of a four-year-old child arose. The most frightening factor regarded the uncertainty of whether the child was male or female. As a result, the pontiffs decided that 27 maidens (virgines) should march through the city and sing a hymn. A similar occasion happened in 200 BCE, when portents demonstrated a confusing natural species: a lamb with a pig’s head and a pig with a man’s head. However, the most

terrifying omen was the discovery of two hermaphrodites.\textsuperscript{459} They were dealt with in a same manner as the child seven years earlier – drowned in the sea. Similarly, the Sibylline books ordered 27 maidens to march through the city, to sing a hymn and make an offering to Juno.\textsuperscript{460}

The examples given above of 27 young maidens participating in Roman religious rites are connected with the expiatory ceremonies conducted after bad omens, and it seems plausible that the children’s choir in the \textit{ludi saeculares} was also a purifying element. The omens were part of the tradition of the \textit{ludi saeculares} as well – it was traditionally thought that whenever an age (\textit{saeculum}) was changing, the gods would indicate it with signs. Ancient authors from many periods provide examples. Plutarch, for instance, writing about the situation of the beginning of the first century BCE, the years of the civil disturbances between Sulla and Marius, explains:

\begin{quote}
ka tov Σύλλα πρὸς τὰς ἐπιλιπὲς πράξεις ὀρμήσαντος εἰς τὸ στρατόπεδον, αὐτὸς οἰκονόμων ἐκτελαίνει τὴν ὀλθηρωτάτην ἐκείνην καὶ δακ σύμπαντοι οἱ πόλεμοι τὴν Ρώμην οὐκ ἐξελάμας ἀπεργασαμένην σάσιν, ὡς καὶ τὸ δαιμόνιον αὐτοῦ προεσήμην. πῦρ μὲν γὰρ αὐτόματον ἐκ τὸν τὰ σημεία δοράτων ὑποφέροντον ἀνέλαμψε καὶ καταβέβηθη μόλις, κώρακες δὲ τρεῖς τοὺς νεοσσοὺς εἰς τὴν ὀδὸν προσαγονότες κατέφεραν, τὰ δὲ λείπαν πάλιν εἰς τὴν νεοσσίαν ἀνήγειαν. καὶ μινὸν δὲ ἐν ἱερῷ χροσάν ἀνακείμενον διαφαγόντων μίαν οἱ ζάκοροι πάγη θήλείον λαμβάνουσι, ἢ δὲ ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ πάτῃ τεκούσα πέντε κατανάλωσε τὰ τρία. τὸ δὲ πάντων μέγατον, εἶναι ἀνεφέλου καὶ διαλύθη οὗ τὸ περιέχοντος ἦσσε φωνή σάλπιγγος ὀξῶν ἀποτείνουσα καὶ θρηνόδη φθόγγον, ὅστε πάντας ἐκφορονας γενέσθαι καὶ καταπτέζα διὰ τὸ μέγεθος. Τυρφηνινὸν δὲ οἱ λόγοι μεταβολῆν ἑτέρῳ γένεις ἀπωφαινόταν καὶ μετακόσμης ἀποσημαίνειν τὸ τέρας, εἶναι μὲν γὰρ ὀκτὼ τὰ σύμπαντα γένη, διαφερότα τοὺς βίους καὶ τοὺς ἥθει τὰς ἀλλήλων, ἐκάστῳ δὲ ἀφορίσαθαι χρόνον ἁρμίνων ὑπὸ τὸ θεῦν συμπεραινόμενον ἐνιαυτὸ μεγάλου περίοδοι. καὶ ὅταν αὐτῇ σχῆ δόλος, ἐτέρας ἐνωπισμήνης κινεῖσθαι τι σημείον ἐκ γῆς ἢ οὐρανοῦ θαμάσουν, ὡς δὴλον εἴναι τοῖς περιπονέσσοις τὰ τοιαῦτα καὶ μεμαθηκόσιν εὐθὺς ότι καὶ τρόπους ἄλλους καὶ βίους ἀνθρωποὶ χρώμενοι γεγόνασι, καὶ θεοὶ ἤτον ἢ μᾶλλον τῶν προτέρων μέλοντες, τὰ τε γὰρ ἄλλα φασίν ἐν τῇ τῶν γενὸς ἀμείβεις λαμβάνειν μεγάλας καινοτομίας, καὶ τὴν μαντικὴν ποτὲ μὲν ἀδόξασθαι τῇ τιμῇ καὶ καταγχάνειν ταῖς
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{459} Hermaphrodites, as well as other “unnatural” omens, were perhaps seen as dangerous because they did not fit into any strict categories. According to Mary Douglas’ famous anthropological theory, societies often tend to categorize and give roles to different groups, and the breakage of these categories leads to a certain “inter-state” which is considered as a threat and a crisis. See Douglas, Mary, \textit{Purity and Danger. An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo}. London and Henley 1966. On hermaphrodites in classical antiquity see Brisson, Luc, \textit{Sexual Ambivalence. Androgyny and Hermaphrodites in Greco-Roman Antiquity}. University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 2002.

\textsuperscript{460} Liv. 27.37; Liv. 31.12. In addition, there were two more similar occasions in 119 and 117 BCE; in both cases hermaphrodites were found and again carried to the sea, after which 27 maidens purified the city. \textit{Jul.Obs.} 34; 36.
Censorinus, writing during the Severan period, cites Varro when describing the events in the early (republican) games. He recalls how the *quindecimviri* announced the Tarentine Games (referring to the Secular Games) after many portents occurred, and when “the wall and tower between the Colline and the Esquiline gates were touched by heaven”.\(^{462}\) Even Zosimus, writing in the early sixth century, claims that the *ludi saeculares* of 17 BCE were organized by the emperor because of “some misfortunes” (of which the author does not give a more specific account).\(^ {463}\) Of course, we do not know if Augustus based his celebration on any omen or sign of this kind, but, in any case, Zosimus’ passage indicates that the tradition of perceiving the *ludi saeculares* as an expiatory rite performed after disturbances was still alive in the sixth century when he wrote his work.

The important role of children in the Secular Games can be traced back to the myth of the origin of the *ludi saeculares*, recorded by Valerius Maximus in the first century and later by Zosimus. According to the story, the three children\(^ {464}\) of a peasant called Valesius became ill, and when he

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\(^{461}\) Plut. *Sull.* 7.2—5: “And when Sulla had set out for his camp on unfinished business, he himself kept at home and contrived that most fatal sedition, which wrought Rome more harm than all her wars together had done, as indeed the heavenly powers foreshowed to them. For fire broke forth of its own accord from the staves which supported the ensigns, and was with difficulty extinguished; and three ravens brought their young forth into the street and devoured them, and then carried the remains back again into their nest; and after mice had gnawed consecrated gold in a temple, the keepers caught one of them, a female, in a trap, and in the very trap she brought forth five young ones and ate up three of them. But most important of all, out of a cloudless and clear air there rang out the voice of a trumpet, prolonging a shrill and dismal note, so that all were amazed and terrified at its loudness. The Tuscan wise men declared that the prodigy foretokened a change of conditions and the advent of a new age. For according to them there are eight ages in all, out of a cloudless and clear air there rang out the voice of a trumpet, prolonging a shrill and dismal note, so that all were amazed and terrified at its loudness. The Tuscan wise men declared that the prodigy foretokened a change of conditions and the advent of a new age. For according to them there are eight ages in all, differing from one another in the lives and customs of men, and to each of these God has appointed a definite number of times and seasons, which is completed by the circuit of a great year. And whenever this circuit has run out, and another begins, some wonderful sign is sent from earth or heaven, so that it is at once clear to those who have studied such subjects and are versed in them, that men of other habits and modes of life have come into the world, who are either more or less of concern to the gods than their predecessors were. All things, they say, undergo great changes, as one again succeeds another, and especially the art of divination; at one period it rises in esteem and is successful in its predictions, because manifest and genuine signs are sent forth from the Deity; and again, in another age, it is in small repute, being off-hand, for the most part, and seeking to grasp the future by means of faint and blind senses. Such, at any rate, was the tale told by the wisest of the Tuscan, who were thought to know much more about it than the rest” (transl. Bernadotte Perrin). Apparently, the Etruscan view of the *saeculum* was very influential in the Roman understanding of the passing of the ages; the Tuscan, in the passage of Plutarch, obviously refers to the Etruscans (cf. Cens. 17.5—6). See also Hall, pp. 2567—2569.

\(^{462}\) Cens. 17.5.8 (translated by Holt N. Parker).

\(^{463}\) Zos. 2.4.2.

\(^{464}\) Three children seem to refer to the three days and nights of the rituals. Religious celebrations taking three nights and days in Roman traditional religion were not restricted to the *ludi saeculares*, but can be found in the rituals dedicated to
asked help from the gods they advised him to hold nocturnal sacrifices in Tarentum. After these were conducted, the children got well again. Even if the stories of these two authors are slightly different in their details, they nevertheless contain a similar message. The main theme seems concern survival during a period of crisis: by following the will of the gods (by making purification and sacrifice), Valesius successfully solved his problems and saved his children. The story underlines that by honouring the gods properly, the future of the family (which is here represented by the children) is guaranteed. The sick children who were later healed can be associated, not only to the gens of Valesius (or Valerius), but probably also to Rome itself. Rome’s continuity and safe future was therefore secured by acting in favour of the gods as Valesius did.

The myth was connected to the ludi saeculares in the latter part of Valerius Maximus’ text, where he mentions that Valesius’ example was later replicated by the first consul of Rome, Valerius Publicola. When the last king, Tarquinius Superbus, was expelled from Rome, the city experienced some disturbances. According to Valerius Maximus, Publicola therefore performed sacrifices in a similar manner as Valesius did. The sacrifice is also recorded by Plutarch:

τὸ δ’ ἐξῆς ἔτει πάλιν ὑπάτευε Ποπλικόλας τὸ τέταρτον: ἦν δὲ προσδοκία πολέμου Σαβίνων καὶ Λατίνων συνισταμένων. καὶ τὰς ἁμα δεσιδαιμονία τῆς πόλεως ἤματο: πάσαι γὰρ αἱ κούονται τότε γυναῖκες ἐξέβαλλον ἀνάπηρα, καὶ τέλος οὐδεμία γένεσις ἔσχε. δὴν ἐκ τῶν Ἱβυλλείων ὁ Ποπλικόλας ὑλασάμενος τῷ Ἀιδή καὶ τίνας ἁγώνας πυθοχρήστους ἀναλαβὼν καὶ ταῖς ἐλπίσι πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἥδινα καταστήσας τὴν πόλιν, ἢς τοῖς ἀρ’ ἀνθρώπων φοβεροῖς προσεῖχε. μεγάλη γὰρ ἐφαίνετο κατασκευὴ τῶν πολέμων καὶ σύστασις.


Val. Max. 2.4.5; Zos. 2.1—4. See Appendix 3 for the origin of the games. The connection of the story with the ancient family of the Valerii is an interesting detail. The Valerii were part of the ritual in Augustan times, when two of them, M. Messalla Messalinus and M. Pototus Messalla, were members of the quindecimviri. In the Severan celebrations, no Valerius can be found from the priestly college. Even if most of the noble families from the republican era had died by the first centuries of the imperial rule, we know that at least two members of the gens of Valerius were alive in the early Severan period: L. Valerius Messalla Thrasea Priscus and L. Valerius Messalla. Both are absent from the Severan ludi saeculares, however; other still surviving republican nobility is missing from the records of the games as well. Both Valerii held a consulship during their careers, L. Valerius Messalla Thrasea Priscus in 196 and L. Valerius Messalla in 214. See L’Albo, nos. 510—511.

Plut. Publ. 21.1: “In the following year Publicola was consul again, for the fourth time, when there was expectation of a war with the Sabines and Latins combined. At the same time also a sort of superstitious terror seized upon the city because all the women who were pregnant were delivered of imperfect offspring, and all births were premature. Wherefore, by direction of the Sibylline books, Publicola made propitiatory sacrifices to Pluto, and renewed certain games that had been recommended by Apollo, and after he had thus made the city more careful in its hopes and expectations from the gods, he turned his attention to what it feared from men. For their enemies were plainly making great preparations and a powerful league against them” (transl. Bernadotte Perrin).
The story of Valesius and his children was not part of the rituals recorded in the inscription, but it is possible that the story was performed during the theatrical performances which were conducted during the nights, after the nocturnal sacrifices and prayers. Moreover, the very last part of the inscription very briefly describes an “extra ritual”, including a ritual dance conducted by the empress and the matrons as part of the final sellisternium in honour of Juno and Diana. It might be suggested it had something to do with the myth, as Zosimus’ account of the myth includes closing celebrations such as dancing as for the rituals in the ludi of Valesius. However, as the inscription does not give any such details but just mentions the ritual, it is impossible to say if it was the case or not. The inscription however describes that when the Carmen was performed on the Capitoline hill, it was accompanied by a choral dance. As children had such a prominent part in this phase of the ludi, we might spot a connection with the rituals of the myth of Valesius.

The names of the children who took part in the ludi saeculares before the Severan games are not known. The Augustan inscription, for example, does not mention their names. In the Severan inscription, however, the names of the boys and girls were added, and many of them are known to us as the source from this part is partly preserved. In AD 204 the children in the ludi saeculares came from the same social groups as the 110 matrons who took part in the rituals, as some of the girls were the daughters of these matrons. The inscription describes the members of the choir as pueri senatores, puellae matronae; in other words, the children were the offspring of the highest social class of Rome. This seems to follow the common practice in Roman religion of associating the religious status of children with their social status.

Even if the Carmen found in the Severan inscription is badly fragmented, the surviving lines offer some very interesting details that, as mentioned, differ significantly from the hymn of 17 BCE. It could be claimed that the inclusion of the hymn was an attempt at adding some details which were

468 The final sellisternium: Pighi, comm. lud sept. Va 83—84; children performing the Carmen in Capitoline hill: Va 71—75. The dance as a part of the myth: Zos. 2.2.3.
469 Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va 85—90; see also pp. 243—245. Of the 54 boys and girls (pueri and puellae) we know 24 names. Pueri include Iunius Faustinus, Iulius Crescens, Iulius Cassius Paulinus, Clodius Marcellinus, Aelius Avitus, Opratius Titianus, Flavius Iulius Latronianus, Umblius Maximinus, Claudius Pacatianus, Iulius Satyrus Dryans, Ulpius Attianus, Laberius Pompeianus, Cattius Clementinus, Baebius Marcellinus, Aelius Antipater, Corfinius Felixs and Licinius Aemilianus. Puellae: Manilia Lucana, Rufia Vestina Maxima, Flavia Postuma Varia, Aemilia Iunia Clementina, Flavia Romana, Cornelia Claudia Pia and Domitia Diotima. In addition, a few names are almost (but not completely) preserved.
470 Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va 84. It is noteworthy that matronae seems to indicate to the senatorial rank – see Hänninen, p. 99.
471 Mantle, p. 105.
not part of the traditional Augustan ritual but which most likely were celebrated in the Severan games to public *memoria*. Septimius Severus was keen to imitate Augustus whenever it was possible, and the inscription thus gave him an occasion to follow the path of the first emperor – by following his programme quite closely. The fact that the Augustan inscription did not contain the *Carmen*, however, gave Severus an opportunity to add some innovations of his own; in other words, he could claim that Augustus’ rituals were identical to his own, but he also managed to add some elements important to himself, by including them in the new hymn which the Augustan source lacked.

### 6.1.2. Opening Verses: Enter Apollo and Diana

The first verses of the poem are dedicated to Apollo and Diana. Their roles are clearly as the deities of the sun and moon, as they are named *Phoebe dies, Phoebeia noctes*.472 The first part of the poem contains some very traditional themes. There are verses dedicated to the Sibyl of the Cumae, a fragmented text that mentions Cynthia – an alternative name for Diana – and probably something related to the “Aeneian” tradition, with the name *Ausonia* and the Latins appearing in the text. This part seems to describe the ancient roots of the games: the rituals and the celebrations of the games were, as mentioned, written in the Sibylline books which were consulted by the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis* and were kept in the temple of Apollo on the Palatine hill. Ausonia, on the other hand, was an ancient name for Italy which appears, for example, in the *Aenead* of Virgil; apparently the poem at this point describes the birth of Rome in Ancient Italy, the land of Latins.473

From the little remains of the first part of the poem, it is noticeable that at least Apollo and Diana kept their prominent roles in the *Carmen*; their role was thus similar as in the Augustan hymn. This is quite noteworthy, considering the amount of changes that were otherwise made to the poem. It would indicate that the roles of the gods of the sun and the moon were considered as central for the games of AD 204. As we have already seen in the previous chapter, it is possible that the astrological themes and the sacrifice to these two deities were supposed to highlight the idea of the emperor and the empress as a couple who were able to control the “wholeness”, the complete rituals of the *ludi saeculares*.

472 Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va 60. Phoebe and Phoebeia were alternative names for Apollo and Diana.
473 Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va 60—63. See Verg. *Aen.*, eg. 3.170, 378, 477, 496; 4.236, 349. There are many other examples as well.
6.1.3. The New Leaders of the Golden Era

The middle section of the poem is the worst preserved part of Severan Carmen. However, some interesting details can be found. Perhaps the most noteworthy is the inclusion of the god Bacchus in the text.\(^{474}\) Traditionally, Bacchus was not known to be involved in the games, and is also absent from the Severan inscription recording the rituals (apart from the Carmen). However, it is possible that Bacchus’ role in the games was quite important, as he makes another appearance to honour the ludi saeculares, this time on Severan coinage. On a denarius, struck to celebrate the Secular Games, Bacchus is depicted as standing with Hercules (fig. 11; the other side of the coin shows the portrait of the emperor). Hercules does not feature in the preserved parts of the Carmen, but based on numismatic evidence it is very probable that he was also included in the lost part of the poem.

Fig. 11. A denarius, celebrating the ludi saeculares of 204. Septimius Severus, with Hercules and Liber (Bacchus) on the other side. RIC 4.1, no. 257 (Septimius Severus).

Bacchus (also known as Liber) and Hercules were well known in Rome long before the Severans. Hercules, in particular, was a god of extreme importance for all Antonine rulers, for example (with a possible exception of Marcus Aurelius),\(^{475}\) and Commodus, especially, is reported by ancient authors as having almost been obsessed with the god.\(^{476}\) The emperor also appears as Hercules on Commodian coinage, and statues of Commodus as Hercules has been founded as well.

\(^{474}\) Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va 67: ..auratis fundere campis Bacchum…


\(^{476}\) See Cass. Dio 73.7.2, 73.15.2—6, 73.20.2, 73.22.3; Herod. 1.14.7—9; HA Comm. 8.5, 8.9, 9.2, 10.9, 16.5; HA Car. 5.5. Herodian reports how Commodus changed his name again from Hercules to that of famous, dead gladiator (1.15.7). There is an interesting passage in the Historia Augusta, in the life of Diadumenianus (young son of Macrinus, the short-lived emperor between Caracalla and Elagabalus). According to the writer of the Historia Augusta, it was a poem against Caracalla, composed by an “unknown Greek”: “Commodus wished to possess Hercules' name as his own; that of the great Antonines did not seem noble enough. Nothing of common law, nothing of ruling he knew, hoping indeed
For Septimius Severus, however, Bacchus and Hercules appear to have been most significant as a pair. In addition to the coin celebrating the *ludi saeculares*, Cassius Dio records that Severus used a lot of money to repair old temples and to build new ones, and mentions the temple of Hercules and Bacchus as an example of the new buildings.477

It is sometimes suggested that the attention given to these two gods was a sign of Septimius Severus’ African identity. According to Anthony Birley, the gods received an important position in the *ludi saeculares* of AD 204 because they were the guardian deities of Lepcis Magna, the hometown of the emperor in Northern Africa.478 However, given the context of the Secular Games, I find it hard to believe that Severus would have wanted to highlight his African roots in a highly traditional ritual such as *ludi saeculares*, especially since he is known to be generally quite conservative regarding state cult and its traditional gods. It should be remembered that Bacchus/Liber and Hercules were not only the guardian deities of Lepcis Magna, but also the protectors of the princes, Caracalla and Geta.

We have already seen how Septimius Severus formed a close bond between himself and Juppiter Optimus Maximus, when he took power in AD 190’s; a bond later highlighted during the sacrifices of the *ludi saeculares*.479 At the same time (in AD 196), imperial propaganda started to link Caracalla and Geta with Bacchus/Liber and Hercules, as Juppiter was “reserved” to the emperor.480 Regarding to princes’ role in the Severan Secular Games, it is also noteworthy that the poem was dedicated to “our leaders” (*nostrosque duces*); eventually the children who sung the *Carmen* did not only ask for protection for Septimius Severus, but for other rulers too. This indicates, of course, to

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479 See Chapter three.
480 Fears, p. 115.

Ghedini, Fransesca, *Giulia Domna tra oriente e occidente. Le fonti archeologiche*. L’Erma di Bretschneider, Roma 1984, pp. 70—72. Ghedini discusses the many roles of Bacchus/Liber and Hercules during the Severan reign: as guardians of Lepcis Magna, deities of Caracalla and Geta, and Hercules as a god who still was strongly associated with Commodus: the rehabilitation of Commodus and the declaration by Severus that they were, in fact, brothers, could thus also explain the important role of Hercules in Severan propaganda.
other members of the dynasty who had a visible role in the *ludi*: Caracalla, Geta, and probably Julia Domna as well.

Taking the princes’ role in the games into consideration, I would rather see the role of the two gods as deities guaranteeing continuity. Being associated to the young princes, the deities represented the future of the dynasty and the continuation of the empire through coinage (and in the *Carmen Saeculare* as well). It is therefore quite appropriate that they were included in a hymn that sung by a chorus of noble youngsters, who were a concrete symbol of the golden future of Rome.

6.1.4. Cities, Shores, Golden Fields

In the last part of the poem, new themes (compared to the Augustan *Carmen*) can be found as well. A common subject to these last verses seems to be “geography”. The poem celebrates the cities and the shores of the empire, and Neptunus, the god of the sea who guaranteed the safe sailing of ships. Of the last part I have already referred to god Bacchus and his “golden fields”; in addition, the whole poem ends with a wish of protection to “our leaders” (*nostrosque duces*).\(^{481}\)

In order to evaluate these aspects of the poem, I will now briefly depart from the inscription itself and take a closer look at the relationship existing between Septimius Severus and two areas of major importance: Italy and Carthage. Italy had become an extremely important part of Romanness in imperial ideology, and as we see, it was an almost irreplaceable symbol of Roman self-representation. Carthage, on the other hand, was the centre of Roman Africa, the home province of the emperor as well as a province of extreme importance for Rome’s food supply. These observations can help us understand the message Septimius Severus wished to convey through the final lines of the *Carmen Saeculare*.

6.1.4.1. *Italia*, Mistress of the World?

By the first century, Italy had become one of the central symbols of Romanness. The importance of *Italia* can be found both in literature and in numismatic evidence. The attitude towards Italy as a

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\(^{481}\) Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va, 66—71.
leading province of the empire is evident in the passage of Pliny in his *Naturalis Historia*, written at the end of the first century, as he notes:

\[...si obiter atque in transcurso ad hunc modum dicatur terra omnium terrarum alunna eadem et parens, numine deum electa quae caelum ipsum clarier faceret, sparsa congregaret imperia ritusque molliret et tot populorum discordes ferasque linguas sermonis commercio contraheret ad conloquia et humanitatem homini daret breviterque una cunctarum gentium in toto orbe patria fieret.\]  

For Pliny, Italy was a land of Romans, who brought peace and civilization to the world. The idea contained in Pliny’s text was rooted in Augustan tradition (if not earlier), even if it was written almost a hundred years later than the works of Virgil, for example, or other Augustan writers who celebrated *Italia*. Another example are perhaps the Vestal Virgins: priestesses maintaining a very close relationship to Roman identity, as we have seen, and who were also traditionally connected to Italy. Aulus Gellius, a grammarian writing in the later part of the second century, provides a list of requirements for a girl to be chosen as a Vestal; one of the details he mentions is that the girl’s father must have a residence in Italy.

Italy’s special status can also be noticed when we take a closer look at second century imperial policy. Trajan, for example, introduced the policy of raising poor Italian children for “the legions and assemblies” and required that all the senators should own at least one third of their lands in Italy. Hadrian treated Italy as a special case in comparison to the other provinces, as when he remitted the money he had received for celebrating his triumph. He returned most of the money to Italy, and only a part of it to the provinces.

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482 Plin. *HN* 3.5.39: “nursing and mother of all other lands, chosen by the providence of the gods to make heaven itself more glorious, to unite scattered empires, to make manners gentle, to draw together in converse by community of language the jarring and uncouth tongues of so many nations, to give mankind a civilization, and in a word to become throughout the world the single fatherland of all the races” (transl. H. Rackham).

483 Although the idea of *tota Italia* is much older that the Augustan era, it was during the reign of Augustus that Italy, as an essential concept for Romanness, was truly brought forward. For Augustan writers on Italy, see Dench, pp. 193—217. On the other hand, the certain Italian particularism – the role of the Sabines, Etruscans etc. in constructing Italy – was important idea as well. It seems that these two thoughts, unifying *tota Italia* and the different peoples of it, were actually both present in the imperial ideology that underlined the role of Italy for Roman identity. See Laurence, Ray, ‘Territory, Ethnonyms and Geography’. In Laurence, Ray and Berry, Joanne (eds.), *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire*. Routledge, London 1998, pp. 108—109.

484 Gell. 1.12.8.


486 HA *Hadr.* 6.5.
According to numismatic evidence, the figure of Italia as the mistress of globe had become central for Roman identity (from the imperial viewpoint, at least) from the mid-second century. Before the second century, Italy was traditionally seen as a standing woman-figure with a spectre and a cornucopia, but the globe seems to be an innovation in the period of Antonine rulers (fig. 12). The older types from the late first century, moreover, often described the city of Rome as the mistress of the world, sitting on a globe; it thus seems that the Antonine age, from Antoninus Pius on, unified the images of Rome and Italy as a woman-figure known as Italia. This also seems to underline the centrality of Italy in the whole idea of Romanness during the second century. Italy had become “an essential part of the language of traditionalism and continuity, of the political, republican roots of Roman monarchy and empire, as well as of imperial self-legislation.”

It seems that Rome and Italy, her “own” province, had become in many ways inseparable.

Fig. 12. A denarius by Antoninus Pius. Italia sitting on a globe with spectre and cornucopia, probably from 143. RIC 3 no. 73.

Considering the importance of Italia, the Severan use of Italy on coinage is an interesting question, especially as we can note some slight changes, as indicated by two coins probably originating from the first years of the third century. One is dedicated to Septimius Severus, and the other to Caracalla, but both are basically identical. Both portray Italia as a woman sitting on a globe, holding a cornucopia and a sceptre, surrounded by the text INDULGENTIA AVGG IN ITALIAM. To understand what Severus’ indulgentia towards Italy meant, we must first understand the nature of the concept of indulgentia properly.

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487 Dench, p. 219. Dench deals with the cases of Trajan and Hadrian as well.
488 BMC V 282 (Severus); BMC V 339 (Caracalla).
Indulgentia was a concept possessing a certain paternalistic function; it represented the relationship between the emperor and his subjects, but at the same time, it highlighted the fact that it was indeed the emperor who had the real power to show generosity if he wished. In other words, it demonstrated a certain dependency on part of the subjects. The key to understanding the imperial indulgentia are a series of letters exchanged between Pliny the Younger and Emperor Trajan, written in the early second century. In his letters, Pliny constantly uses the term indulgentia. Generally, it is mostly related with imperial favours. It deals, for example, with appointments to the public offices. Moreover, it is important to notice that indulgentia in Pliny’s letters does not directly deal with money (paid by the emperor, for example), but rather with granting a right to use public funds. This is evident, for example, in a letter where Pliny reports how an ancient bath was ruined in the city of Prusa and how the people wanted to repair it. However, Pliny suggests that the emperor grants them the right to rebuild the whole bath. The point here is that the question is not about the money provided by the emperor, but rather about the people’s right in using public funds. In his answer, Trajan shows indulgentia by granting this right, if it did not require new tax levies or money taken from necessary public services.489

Even if the figure of Italia is similar to the Antonine model, it is quite noteworthy that Septimius Severus’ and Caracalla’s coins do not really celebrate Italy as such, but rather celebrate the blessings of imperial generosity towards Italy. The exact reason for the “blessing” is not certain, but as they are dated to around AD 202, it would make sense that they are simply celebrating the fact that the emperor was now more permanently situated in Rome and, possibly, to the building process that took place at that time.490 However, an interesting element is that a certain hierarchy, in which

489 Plin. Ep. 34. This kind of idea on indulgentia is a recurring theme in Roman literature, as demonstrated, for example, by the exchange of letters between Marcus Cornelius Fronto and the emperor Marcus Aurelius. From their correspondence, traces of the paternalistic flavour of indulgentia can be found, even if the concept is mentioned only a couple of times – the reason is the different nature of their correspondence compared to the letters between Pliny and Trajan; as the letters between Pliny and Trajan are dealing with governmental issues, of which imperial goodwill seems to be a large part, the letters between Fronto and Marcus deal with a more personal level. However, in one letter, written probably in AD 149 or 150, Fronto asks Marcus Aurelius to speak with favour for Saeiuis Pompeianus, a farmer of public revenues in Africa, to the (then) emperor, Antoninus Pius. In his answer Marcus Aurelius promises to do so, and praises “the Lord my father’s indulgent ways” (indulgentia Domini mei). The whole passage clearly draws together the ideas of paternalism, indulgentia and imperial goodwill. Another element which seems to be connected to the concept of indulgentia is giving honours, not only by public offices, but by granting citizenship as well. In one of his letters, Pliny asks Hadrian to grant civil rights of both Alexandria and Rome for Harpocras, his Egyptian physician. Pliny writes to the emperor that he has sent the needed information about Harpocras to the emperor’s freedman, so that Trajan’s “gracious intentions” would not face any obstacles (Plin. Ep. 10.6.3.) For the concept of imperial indulgentia see Cotton, Hannah, ‘The Concept of Indulgentia under Trajan’. In Chiron 14 (1984), pp. 245—266.

490 It has been suggested, for example, that the imperial favour could deal with the war against brigands in Italy that Septimius Severus maybe conducted during that time – see BMC p. cli. Another theory is given by Philip V. Hill, who suggests that indulgentia in this case had something to do with repairing roads in Italy; he dates the coins to AD 205. Hill, Philip V., ‘Notes on the Coinage of Septimius Severus and his Family A.D. 193—217’. In NC 7.4 (1964), p. 178.
Italy is submitted to the will of the emperors (the present and the future ones), is noticeable. Italy is a dependent subject of rulers who show goodwill towards her.

Another instance presenting *Italia* is on a coin dedicated to Geta. It depicts *Italia* as draped, seated on a low seat, and holding vertical sceptre in her right hand and a cornucopia in her left hand. At her feet, there is a draped and seated figure holding cornucopia and another figure, naked to waist, resting one hand on an urn and holding reeds in the other.\(^{491}\) Geta’s coin is even more problematic than Severus’ and Caracalla’. If the figure is indeed Italy, the transformation of the role of the province would be very radical. It would mean that Italy had lost her role as the mistress of the world, since she sits on a seat, not on a globe. This example would seem to strengthen the idea of the changing role of Italy in imperial propaganda.

### 6.1.4.2. The Granary for the Empire

There is at least one another example from the early Severan period of imperial *indulgentia* towards a particular part of the empire. Coinage was issued to celebrate the imperial favours dedicated to Carthage, the central area of the Province of Africa and the second largest city of the western part of the empire (second to Rome only). It should be noted that the African province was also celebrated by Septimius Severus through coinage, yet, this was done in a “traditional manner”, without *indulgentia*, and just portraying Africa as a woman- with a dress symbolizing the province.\(^{492}\)

The coins celebrating imperial *indulgentia* towards Carthage depict *Dea Caelestis* riding on a lion, holding a sceptre and a thunderbolt (fig. 13; there exist slight variations in the goddess’ equipment). The coins were issued for all the main members of the imperial family: Septimius Severus, Julia Domna and Caracalla.\(^{493}\)

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\(^{491}\) *BMC* 5 p. 428 no. 45 (where it has been suggested that the figure is indeed *Italia*).

\(^{492}\) *RIC* 4.1 no. 207. Even if Severus came from Africa and thus honoured his own home province this way, Africa itself appeared many times in the Roman coinage during the imperial period. Coins depicting Africa can be found in the coinage of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Commodus.

\(^{493}\) *RIC* 4.1, nos. 193, 266—267, 759—760, 763 (Septimius Severus); 594 (Julia Domna); 415, 418a, 471 (Caracalla).
Dea Caelestis was patron deity of Carthage, and was identified with Juno by the Romans. She was, according to the stories, persuaded by the Romans to change sides during the Punic war during the republican period. From that point onwards, she was adopted by the Romans, but nevertheless remained a part of the local culture in Carthage even after the wars. The fact that the empress Julia Domna was often connected to the cults of Dea Syria (the Syrian Goddess) and Dea Caelestis (apparently the cult of Dea Caelestis was originally a Syrian cult which had come to North Africa), has been considered as a sign of the fall of Roman religion to “oriental decay”. However, these theories are widely challenged among scholars today. In fact, even if there are some signs that the empress was identified with Dea Caelestis, there is no evidence that Julia Domna herself promoted it. The appearance of Dea Caelestis on coinage rather refers to the region/city of Carthage, just as did the woman on the above coin, which celebrated imperial generosity towards Italy.

As in the case of coins dedicated to imperial generosity towards Italy, the exact reason for the issuing of the coins is not certain, although it is well known that Septimius Severus gave much attention to his home province. His home town, Lepcis Magna, especially, received much attention, and the honours Severus received from that city were remarkable. When Severus visited North Africa in AD 202—203, he oversaw the great building projects in his home town; for example, a new great forum and basilica were ordered to be constructed, the water supply was improved, and

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494 See e.g. Brauer, George C., The Young Emperors. Rome A.D. 193—244. Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York 1967, pp. 26—27. Brauer considers the role of Julia Domna and her relatives as significant for the orientalization of Roman religion (which, according to him, started in the Severan period, although he admits that they were probably unaware of it themselves).

495 There are also a few inscriptions which connect Julia Domna to Diana Caelestis: see CIL 5.5768; 8.999; 14.3536. For a discussion about Dea Caelestis, the imperial family and the Roman religion, see Levick, pp. 133—135.

496 Levick, for example, suggests (p. 133) that the generosity here implies the grant of ius Italicum to Carthage; this may well be the case, but does not exclude other possible messages that Septimius Severus wanted to bring forward.

497 Philostr. V. Soph. 2.20.2.
the circus restored and enlarged. The city was filled with statues and other honours for Septimius Severus and his family (not only Julia Domna, Caracalla and Geta, but also his parents, his grandfather and his first wife Paccia Marciana).  

As the *indulgentia* expressed towards Italy probably do not only demonstrate the emperor’s goodwill of towards the province, but also indicate his control over it, the same understanding can perhaps also be applied to the case of Carthage. The message on the coin depicting Carthage can be read as a reminder, for the Roman public, of how the emperor was the guarantor of North Africa’s security, the province crucial for Rome’s food supply. It demonstrates Septimius Severus’ power (and that of his family) over the region in which most of the grain came. In other words, it demonstrates the important role Septimius Severus, Julia Domna and Caracalla held in the well-being of the community. Their rule ensured that grain ships from Africa kept sailing to Italy.

It is probably no coincidence that all the coins discussed here were apparently struck in the first years of the third century, at about the same time as *ludi saeculares*, as they served to strengthen the imperial family’s image as a provider of security, continuity and stability. The celebration of the “shores and cities” of the empire, and the “golden fields and ships sailing the seas” in the *Carmen Saeculare* of AD 204 possibly once again refer to the emperor and his sons’ guarantee of a food supply with the term “our leaders”, mentioned in the hymn. Ships (and Neptune who protected them) could refer to transportation of grain, the product of the “golden fields of Bacchus”.

On the other hand, “shores and cities” seems to indicate that the *Carmen* does not only celebrate one city (the capital), but rather the whole empire and the role of the emperor related to it. If we compare the poems about the Augustan and the Severan games, it seems that in the *Carmen* of 17 BCE, the role of the emperor was remarkable; and the reason for his importance was that he was so strongly connected with the foundation of the city itself: *queque vos bobus veneratur albis clarus Anchisae Venerisque sanguis, impetret, bellante prior, iacentem lenis in hostem*. However, when the role of the leaders (*duces*) is brought forth in the Severan poem, it seems that the “cities”,

498 For Severus’ activities in North Africa, see Birley, pp. 146—154. Paccia Marciana, Severus’ first wife, is virtually unknown. The only literary source mentioning her is the *Historia Augusta* (*HA Sev. 3.1*), in which it is mentioned that Severus married her but that he does not mention her in his autobiography. Severus did, however, erect statues to her memory after her death (probably around AD 185, after ten years of marriage). Apparently, they had no children, at least Severus does not mention them anywhere, although the *Historia Augusta* reports two daughters (*HA Sev. 8.1*). However, this story is considered as somewhat unreliable. For the little we know about Marciana Paccia, see Birley, p. 52.

499 See eg. Levick, p. 133.

500 Hor. *Carm. Saec.* 49—52.
“shores” and “fields” have the prominence, not the capital, in the case of legitimizing the power of the emperor.

6.1.5. Blessings for the Army

Another Severan innovation was the inclusion of soldiers in the *Carmen Saeculare*; the poem asks for blessings for the military camps of the empire.\(^{501}\) In addition, we have noted that the praetorian prefect was present during some of the sacrifices. In other words, the military also had a role in the *ludi*, at least in comparison to the records of the earlier games. The question thus follows: does this indicate the centrality of the army for Severus, when trying to justify and legitimize his power through the events?

There is no doubt that the emperor’s relation to the soldiers was important for the rulers of the Severan dynasty, especially for Septimius Severus and Caracalla. However, speaking of Septimius Severus as a “military emperor” is an exaggeration. He did not prefer soldiers in his administration nor did he try to militarize any part of the government. He nevertheless raised the soldiers’ pay and gave them some new rights, especially for marriage, but these are hardly unreasonable reforms; the increased military pay was long overdue. Regarding the marriage laws, it should be noted that soldiers had previously formed unofficial “marriages” with women living around the military camps, and that the new law just allowed them to make their relationships official.\(^{502}\)

The inclusion of soldiers in the *Carmen Saeculare* is thus more problematic than it first appears to be. It is true that the army had been an important factor for Severan propaganda, especially during his early years as an emperor,\(^{503}\) but it is likely that Severus wanted to appear as a bringer of Golden Age and peace during the *ludi saeculares*, and less so as a military leader. It should be remembered that one of the main goals of the *ludi saeculares* was to abolish the memory of the civil war, as had been the case with the Augustan ones. The *ludi saeculares* were a great purificatory ritual for the whole community, in which the troubles of the previous generation, including the civil war, were left behind. If their aim was to purge the “pollution” caused by the civil wars, the inclusion of the army, when celebrating the new age, seems rather odd.

\(^{501}\) Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va 69.
\(^{502}\) Campbell, Brian, ‘The Severan Dynasty’. In *CAH XII*, pp. 9—11.
\(^{503}\) For the military subjects in the Severan coinage, see Handy, Markus, *Die Severen und das Heer*. Verlag Antike, Berlin 2009, pp. 232—234.
An answer to this problem may be connected to the changing role of Italy in imperial thought. One of Severus’ most famous decisions of was to extend the imperial bodyguard for people outside Italy, in Spain, Macedonia and Noricum.\textsuperscript{504} The epigraphic evidence of the period seems to strengthen Dio and Herodian’s reports, as they indicate that soldiers honourably discharged from the praetorian guard were, in majority, Italians until the end of the second century, but none of the praetorians who received it during the reign of Severus actually came from Italy.\textsuperscript{505}

For Dio, the decision to replace the Italian praetorians was an outrageous act; according to him, the Roman guard was robbed of “more respectable people with simpler habits”. In doing so Severus “incidentally ruined the youth of Italy”, according to Dio. In describing Severus as a ruler, Dio considered this as one of his greatest mistakes, a decision that some senators found particularly bad. What followed was that the capital was filled with soldiers who were “most savage in appearance, most terrifying in speech and most boorish in conversation”.\textsuperscript{506} On the one hand, Cassius Dio’s negative attitude can perhaps be explained by the fact he felt threatened by this new guard – after all, the Severus’ purge in the senate was surely still in the minds of the senators. On the other hand, it is also possible that Dio simply did not accept the new “nature” of the guard, as it had become a body formed of soldiers from the eastern part of the empire as well as Italians and other westerners. The basis for Dio’s attitude is explained in his Roman history, the role and he gave the Italians in his work.

Some scholars, like L. De Blois, have argued that Italy was “just another province” for Cassius Dio. De Blois suggests, for example, that Dio’s main idea was to highlight the importance of the city of Rome itself, and that the rest of Italy was not special as such; it was just an area in which the capital was situated. Moreover, as he continues, it seems that the socio-political situation in Italy was declining during the Severan era. Its economic importance considerably decreased, it was no longer a country which provided the Roman army the majority of its soldiers, and it was overall a poorly organized administratively by the early Severan period.\textsuperscript{507}

\textsuperscript{504} Cass. Dio 74.2.5; Herod. 2.13.  
\textsuperscript{506} Cass. Dio 74.2.5—6 (transl. by Earnest Cary)  
\textsuperscript{507} De Blois 1998, pp. 3407—3409.
Dio’s arguments regarding Italy’s poor administration and the preference for Rome rather than Italy might be right, yet his history does nevertheless seem to indicate that Italians did have a “special” role in their relation to Rome and to Romanness. When Dio talks about the qualities of true Romans, he seems to emphasize that these qualities essentially belong mostly to Italians by nature. The idea that the Italians were a “chosen people”, or perhaps even “true Romans” (of the past, at least), was an old topos in Roman historiography; the special status of Italy and Italians in the history of Rome can be found in the works of many writers of the imperial era. Dio also followed this idea in his own history. In evaluating the significance of his viewpoint, we must bear the purpose and audience of his work in mind: Dio was probably writing a handbook of Roman identity for the high officials who came from the eastern provinces. Thus, it may be argued that idea about the importance of Italians and Italy was an essential part of the Roman identity for Dio. In this light, the fact that the rulers then built their power on the new, non-Italian guard, and even displayed this new policy in the ludi saeculares, perhaps appears too radical shift for a senatorial traditionalist such as Dio.

6.2. The Trojan Games

Seven days of games followed the rituals, including both stage performances and races. Boys from senatorial families performed in the so called Trojan games (lusus Troiae). The last part of the Severan inscription mentions that after the games, the emperor and Caracalla personally congratulated the young nobles – a detail which was another Severan novelty. The boys who were part of the choir of 27 (but did not take part in the Trojan games) also received honours.

The Trojan games were a contest for young boys of the upper (senatorial) class. The games were apparently a rather rare occasion, but were organized from time to time. We have some information

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508 This is evident especially when Dio describes the civil war periods of the late republic (books 41—43 and 45—51). He emphasizes, on many occasions, that one of the main reasons behind Pompey the Great’s defeat was his possession of more Asian troops, while Caesar used westerners more, especially Italians (and Greeks too). The same attitude can be noticed in his description of the war between Augustus and Marcus Antonius. In these books, Dio emphasizes that being a “true Roman” means being a Roman citizen – and during that point of history Roman citizenship was still quite limited to the Italian peninsula. Dio’s attitude can perhaps be seen as a support for numismatic evidence which, as we saw, indicates that Italy and Rome were in many ways inseparable from the Antonine period on at least.

509 This is most explitly mentioned by Pliny (HN 3.5.39) – see above, chapter 6.1.4.1. – but the same spirit can be found in other ancient texts as well, although their message is often explicit rather than implicit. One example is the description of the battle of Cannae by Silius Italicus; the author describes all the tribes of Italy who are present in this defining moment (Sil. Pun. 8. 356—617).

510 Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va 76.
on games taking place from the first century CE to the third century. The first games we know of are those organized by Sulla and reported by Plutarch. According to the latter, Sulla gathered boys of “good birth” to participate in the games.\textsuperscript{511} It is possible that the games were already celebrated before that occasion, but it seems that they were rather forgotten until Sulla revived them.\textsuperscript{512}

There are more reports about the Trojan games from the reigns of Caesar and Augustus. Caesar organized the \textit{lusus Troiae} in 46 BCE; they were conducted in order to celebrate his triumph and the dedication of the temple of Venus in the Forum.\textsuperscript{513} Cassius Dio writes about the Trojan games held during the Augustan reign, and in his record they are usually connected to the dedication of temples. Obviously, the \textit{ludi saeculares} of 17 BCE are also one of the Augustan occasions.\textsuperscript{514} Later, Caligula and Claudius continued the tradition: Caligula held the games at least three times, including during the funeral of her sister Drusilla,\textsuperscript{515} and Claudius organized them as a part of his own \textit{ludi saeculares}.\textsuperscript{516} After these occasions, however, there appear to be no sources on the Trojan games (which, of course, do not mean that such games were not held) until the Severan Secular Games in AD 204.

A description of the \textit{lusus Troiae} can be found in Virgil’s \textit{Aeneid}. In the contest the participants were divided into two teams, which then fought each other on horseback. Apparently, this “battle” was more like an act, or a show, than a violent contest. The fathers of the young nobles also had an important role as supervisors of the games.\textsuperscript{517} Even if the participants were not literally fighting each other, these games were very rough, as it seems that during the Severan period one of the participants, Calpurnius Piso, was severely injured.\textsuperscript{518} Basically, the \textit{lusus} was a war-ritual reserved to youths of the upper class. The inscription of the Severan \textit{ludi saeculares} indicates that about 30

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\textsuperscript{511} Plut. \textit{Cat. min.} 3.1.  \\
\textsuperscript{512} Weinstock, Stefan, \textit{Divus Julius}. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1971, p. 88.  \\
\textsuperscript{513} Suet. \textit{Caes}. 39. The family of the \textit{Iulii} had a close relationship with Troy, as they claimed that Aeneas, the son of Venus and the Trojan hero who brought the last Trojans to Rome, was their ancestor. It is therefore no surprise that Caesar organized the \textit{lusus Troiae} while celebrating Venus. Accordingly, for Augustus, Aeneas was an important figure throughout his reign. Erskine, Andrew, \textit{Troy between Greece and Rome. Local Tradition and Imperial Power}. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001, pp. 15—20.  \\
\textsuperscript{514} Cass. Dio 51.22.4; 54.26.1. Trojan games of the \textit{ludi saeculares} in 17 BCE: Pighi, comm. lud. quint. 164.  \\
\textsuperscript{515} Cass. Dio 59.7; 59.11; Suet. \textit{Calig}. 18.  \\
\textsuperscript{516} Suet. \textit{Claud}. 21; Suet. \textit{Nero} 7; Tac. \textit{Ann}. 11.11.2.  \\
\textsuperscript{517} Verg. \textit{Aen}. 5.545—602.  \\
\textsuperscript{518} Birley, p. 229. The boy was the son of a consul of the same name, and of Italian descent. It is known that he was injured in the Trojan games, although it is not sure if they were the ones of AD 204 (his name has not preserved in the fragments containing the names of those who took part). \textit{PIR² C} 295; \textit{L’Albo} 111.
\end{flushleft}
young nobles took part in the game, although only 8 names are properly preserved. Of these 8 at least 6 were also members of the choir that performed the *Carmen Saeculare*.\(^{519}\)

It could be argued that the Trojan games were an important occasion on which the young nobles were presented to the community. Suetonius reports that Tiberius took part in Trojan games as a very young child:

\[ \text{Novem natus annos defunctum patrem pro rostris laudavit. Dehinc pubescens Actiaco triumpho currum Augusti comitatus est sinisteriore funali equo, cum Marcellius Octaviae filius dexteriore vehetur. Praesedit et asticis ludis et Troiam circensibus lusit dctor turmae puerorum maiorum.}\(^{520}\)

A similar situation is known from the Claudian *ludi saeculares* in AD 47, when he organized the Trojan games. On this occasion,

\[ \text{…cum puerti nobiles equis ludicrum Troiae inirent interque eos Britannicus imperatore genitus et L. Domitius adoptione mox in imperium et cognomentum Neronis adscitus, favor plebis acrior in Domitium loco praesagii acceptus est.}\(^{521}\)

The *lusus Troiae* were thus a channel for introducing young nobles to political life while presenting them to the audience. In other words, they were visually introduced to the *communitas*. The Trojan games can perhaps be considered as an “image”, a visual spectacle representing the young nobility of the community performing in a combat show in front of the audience.

In his article, Tonio Hölscher dealt with the different aspects of war imagery in Greek and Roman cultures, and their importance for the community. His views could perhaps be applied to the Trojan games as well; after all, the *lusus Troiae* were “images” (as a show) as well as some kind of war-

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\(^{519}\) Cassius Dio also calls the participants children of patricians (43.23.6). The six who took part both in the *lusus* and *carmen* were Iunius Faustinus, Clodius Marcellinus, Opratius Titianus, Claudius Pacatianus, Iulius Satyrus Dryans and Baebius Marcellinus. Two more, Alfius Maximus and Neratius Priscus, took part in the Trojan games as well, but whether they participated in the *carmen* too or not is unknown. All eight were sons of senators. The prosopographic evidence is collected in Pighi, pp. 243—263.

\(^{520}\) Suet. *Tib*. 6.4: “At the age of nine he delivered a eulogy of his dead father from the rostra. Then, just as he was arriving at puberty, he accompanied the chariot of Augustus in his triumph after Actium, riding the left trace-horse, while Marcellus, son of Octavia, rode the one on the right. He presided, too, at the city festival, and took part in the game of Troy during the performances in the circus, leading the band of older boys” (transl. J. C. Rolfe).

\(^{521}\) Tac. *Ann*. 11.11.2: “…when a cavalcade of boys from the great families opened the mimic battle of Troy, among them being the emperor’s son, Britannicus, and Lucius Domitius, — soon to be adopted as heir to the throne and to the designation of Nero, — the livelier applause given by the populace to Domitius was accepted as prophetic” (transl. John Jackson).
ritual (at least symbolically, if not in actual fighting sense), where youngsters performed in a contest between two teams. According to Hölscher, three different manners in the diffusion of military success to the community was achieved in classical antiquity: rituals, monuments and ideological concepts. Rituals included triumphal processions, sacrifices to the gods of victory, organized celebrations, and ceremonial departures and arrivals to and from military campaigns. Moreover, these rituals were very effective in encouraging the emotional participation the people.  

In many cases, the whole *ludi saeculares* included these three elements – it should be remembered that the games probably celebrated the victory over Parthians as well. During the imperial era it was a common practice for emperors to combine many different celebrations in one festival – in other words, the celebrations developed from “specific” feasts in the republican era to more “universal” ones in the imperial period. Monuments, such as Severus’ triumphal arch which glorified his and his sons’ military victory, were part of the ritual, as the celebration was held around the places in which the monuments stood.

As Hölscher moreover explains, Roman war rituals led those who were involved (both as a participant and an attendant) into another world and were thus connected with space, time and community. Hölscher mainly discusses the war rituals shown in artistic monuments, pointing out the reliefs from the arch of Marcus Aurelius. The ritual starts with the departure from Rome, is followed by the purification of the army, a speech of the emperor to his troops, and, finally, by the subjugation of the enemy which demonstrates the emperor’s *clementia* and *justitia*. At the end, the emperor returns to Rome, sacrifices to Juppiter and distributes the money collected as war booty. The Trojan Games, however, connect us to a more concrete kind of ritual, because they were actually conducted in front of people’s eyes. The games perhaps reminded the attendants of the history of Rome (the Trojan myth) and presented the young nobility, the future of the *communitas* to the audience, but in AD 204, also displayed the role of the emperor to the audience. If we understand the games as a visual act, we can perhaps compare the “image” of the Trojan games to the visions on public monuments and the emperor’s role in them.

On Roman monuments depicting wars, the emperor was not often represented in the heat of the battle; physical vigour did not exclusively demonstrate the power and might of the emperor. Rather,

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524 Hölscher, pp. 14—15.
it was the small gestures that were important. Hölscher mentions the famous statues of Augustus at
the Prima Porta and the Via Labicana as examples: the equipment of the statues, such as the
cuirasses and the togas, demonstrate the imperial qualities of *auctoritas, dignitas, virtus* and *pietas*.
The recognizable gestures, such as the raised hand or gestures of sacrifice, had the same kind of
function as the elaborate equipment seen on the statues.\(^{525}\)

The emperor’s gesture was, following the performance of the Trojan games after the occasion, to
congratulate and reward the participants before the public, as is recorded in the inscription of the
*ludi saeculares*.\(^{526}\) It can be considered as a gesture of *indulgentia*, a visible act of paternal
generosity, towards the young nobles. However, we should remember that paternalism of this kind
is not only an expression of goodwill; *indulgentia* is also a reference to the hierarchy of power and
social position of different groups. The action showed that those who received the gesture and the
prizes from Septimius Severus and Caracalla were under their control. Perhaps the emperor and
Caracalla are even acting as the “fathers” of the participators (after all, traditionally the fathers of
the participants supervised the Trojan games, as Virgil notes).\(^{527}\) The message was naturally meant
for the audience witnessing the occasion, but it was also preserved in the inscription standing on the
Campus Martius. Recorded in the monument, it remained in the community’s *memoria*, reminding
the people about the hierarchy existing between the emperor and the upper-class youngsters.

### 6.3. The Audience of the *Ludi Saeculares*

The inscription ends with a list recording the names of the young nobles honoured by Severus and
Caracalla. In the actual games, the *ludi honorarii* followed and closed the celebrations. As noted
earlier, the festival overall consisted of many types of acts – sacrifices, races, theatrical shows,
circus performances and so on. On these occasions, it was not only the central actors, such as
Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, Caracalla or Geta, who had a role; the audience also played an
important part in the celebration. The spectators also took part in the games through their presence:
those who acted, but also those who just observed, were considered to be part of the same
*communitas*, a community that identified itself by means of public spectacles, such as religious rites
and traditions.\(^{528}\)

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525 Hölscher, p. 12.
526 Pighi, comm. lud. sept. Va 76.
528 Östenberg, p. 10.
The role of the audience goes further than this however. The spectacles were occasions of which people had the opportunity to interact with the emperor. In the ludi saeculares, this was probably not the case during the actual sacrifices but might have been during the shows organized after the nocturnal sacrifices, as they probably were more “relaxed” occasions (and probably more popular as well), during which interaction between the emperor and his subjects was possible.

The significance of public shows in Roman political life as defining the relationship between the rulers and the subjects should not be underestimated. Cicero had already mentioned that there were three places in which people could express its wishes: public assemblies, elections, and public games. It was also common, throughout the imperial period and already during the reign of Augustus, for people to make requests to the emperor in public shows. Even if it was not necessary for the emperor to agree to these requests, he was nevertheless obliged to at least listen to the crowd. If the emperor turned the wishes of the people down, he had to have an explanation for his decision. In fact, it is a familiar topos in Roman literature that bad emperors, such as Caligula and Domitian, were described not caring about the opinion of the people. On the other hand, “good” emperors always listened and were always present. Alan Cameron has given three main reasons why the emperor was present at public shows. First, it was essential for constructing imperial power – the magnificent shows strengthened the power of the emperor, and his presence was thus appropriate. Second, the shows were an occasion for the people to protest in the presence of the emperor. Many times the shows eased public pressure during anxious times (after all, the shows were strictly controlled and the emperor was seldom in danger, despite the occasional protests). Third, when the emperor was seen among the people, he acted as a citizen among citizens – fulfilling his role as the “first citizen”.529

It was not uncommon, however, that the shows sometimes led to such major protests against the emperor that drastic measures were needed. For instance, Cassius Dio reports the protests against Commodus (and one of his high officials, Cleander) which took place in the horse-race in AD 189. A choir of children started to shout accusations against Cleander, and soon the crowd followed. The people got what they wanted, as Commodus was so frightened that he had Cleander executed.530

Severus and Clodius Albinus had just begun, and people protested the situation in the horse-race. Dio claims that he witnessed the incident himself, as his friend acted as a consul during that time. According to him, a countless number of people who had come to see the horse-race, suddenly started to clap their hands and shouted how they hoped the civil war would end. It seems that the practice was quite common, but Dio writes about how astonished he was by the fact that so many voices could shout in such disciplined manner, “like a trained chorus”. In fact, Dio was sure it was a case of divine inspiration.\(^{531}\)

Herodian records the situation in AD 193, when Didius Julianus had just become the emperor. From the very beginning of his reign, he appeared as an inadequate ruler, wasting his time on a luxurious lifestyle, feasting and drinking and neglecting the public welfare. First the soldiers, and then the ordinary people, started to oppose him. He was jeered, as Herodian writes, when he came out in public. The writer subsequently explains how the people gathered in the circus to express their opinions.\(^{532}\) Herodian, like Cassius Dio, mentions that the people just went to the circus to demonstrate, but the Historia Augusta report that there actual games were also taking place.\(^{533}\)

Herodian’s role as a writer, as mentioned in the Chapter one, was that of an outside observer. His description is therefore perhaps the most important proof that the display public opinion in the emperor was still quite a common custom in the third century. As one of the main goals of Herodian’s history was to explain “normal” Roman customs to a Greek-speaking audience who was not necessarily familiar with the happenings in the capital, it could be argued that the circus was an important place for public opinion to be expressed. Herodian indeed seems to portray it as a typical Roman custom to his readers.

Moreover, it should be noted that the interaction between audience and performer, in this case Septimius Severus, was essential for the games to be successful, the officials did their best to gather as much audience as possible. In the ludi saeculares, it was an old custom to invite all the people to see the spectacle, “such as they had never witnessed and never would again”, as Suetonius records, mentioning the heralds who invited people to the games of Claudius (in AD 47).\(^{534}\) In AD 88, a coin was struck to celebrate Domitian’s ludi saeculares on, an image of a herald inviting people to see the games was depicted (fig.14).

\(^{531}\) Cass. Dio 76.6.  
\(^{532}\) Herod. 2. 7.1—3.  
\(^{533}\) HA Did. Jul. 4.7.  
\(^{534}\) Suet. Claud. 21.2.
In the Severan period, the audience’s important role was perhaps even more recognized than in the earlier *ludi saeculares*, as demonstrated by the fact that the audience did not limit itself to the inhabitants of the capital alone. Herodian, writing about the organization of the games, explained how the heralds did not only travel through Rome but also through Italy, summoning all attend the games.\(^{535}\) Moreover, it seems that the audience was wider than people from the Italian peninsula. An epitaph commemorating a man who had travelled to Rome from Tripolis to attend in the Severan *ludi saeculares* and had died during his stay in the capital was found in Rome.\(^{536}\)

Perhaps the most important part of the audience were, however, the senators. It is very likely that the messages the ritual contained were directed predominantly to them, as we know that not all Severan decisions were popular in the senate. The purge Severus conducted in the senate after the civil war was probably still in their minds. On the other hand, for Severus, a public display of power was necessary whenever there was a chance. By AD 204, Severus had spent very little time in Italy over the last 40 years.\(^{537}\) Hints of the senatorial attitude towards the games, or, to be more precise, the messages the emperor sent with the games, perhaps come from Cassius Dio’s complete silence regarding the Severan *ludi saeculares*. Of both contemporary historians, only Herodian records the games in his history:

\[\text{εἴδομεν δὲ ἐπ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ θέας τινῶν παντοδαπῶν θεαμάτων ἐν πᾶσι θεάτροις ὁμοίως, ιερουσίας τε καὶ πανηγύριδας ἐπιτελεσθείσας ἐς μυστηρίον ὑπὸν.} \]
\[\text{ἀιώνιος δὲ αὐτὰς ἐκάλουν οἱ τότε, ἀκούσας τριῶν γενεῶν διαδραμοῦσών ἐπιτελέσθαι.} \]
\[\text{κήρυκες} \]

\(^{535}\) Herod. 3.8.10.
\(^{536}\) Gorrie 2002, p. 480, n. 103.
\(^{537}\) Birley, p. 169.
Cassius Dio, on the other hand, was mostly interested in the festivals of AD 202, when Septimius Severus celebrated his tenth year anniversary as an emperor, although he did also mention that all kinds of spectacles were organized to honour Severus’ victories and his return to Rome.\(^{539}\) Dio’s silence could be explained by the fragmented nature of his history, as has only survived in epitomes; it is possible that those who copied his history simply left out the descriptions of the \textit{ludi saeculares}.\(^{540}\) However, there is also another possibility, which might have its roots in the nature of the \textit{ludi saeculares} as a festival celebrating marriage, family life and the new moral laws of Septimius Severus. Cassius Dio accepted the ideas of proper moral behaviour for men and women, and he considered it crucial that the emperor especially should maintain a manly “gender-role” – as he demonstrated in his description of the reign of Nero,\(^{541}\) for example. The senators were, however, apparently not so keen on the moral laws, as we have seen. The Augustan idea of highlighting family values among the upper classes was apparently something that Severus tried to continue in his policy, and it seems that the senatorial class’ response was similar to in Augustan time: very reluctant. This would perhaps explain why Dio, as a senatorial historian, chose to be silent about the great celebrations of the \textit{ludi saeculares}.

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\(^{538}\) Herod. 3.8.10: “In his reign we saw every kind of show exhibited in all the theatres simultaneously, as well as night-long revels celebrated in imitation of the Mysteries. The people of that day called them the Secular Games when they learned that they would be held only once every hundred years. Heralds were sent throughout Rome and Italy bidding all to come and see what they had never seen before and would never see again. It was thus made clear that the amount of time which elapsed between one celebration of the Secular Games and the next far exceeded the total span of any man’s life” (transl. C. R. Whittaker).

\(^{539}\) Cass. Dio 77.1.1.

\(^{540}\) As suggested by Birley, p. 160.

\(^{541}\) Gowing 1997, pp. 2580—2583.
7. CONCLUSION

The Severan celebration of the *ludi saeculares* highlighted the power of the emperor in two ways: through tradition and innovation. In the Severan *ludi*, traditionalism can be found to some extent in the actual program, which quite closely follows the Augustan example; all the major components are left in place. However, the most powerful way to connect the Severan games to tradition was the erection of the inscription on the Campus Martius, alongside other records of the *ludi saeculares*. This act indicated that the Severan games had become a link in a chain of hundreds of years, started by Augustus himself. As the inscription recording the games and preserved them in public *memoria* stood next to the earlier monuments in one of the most important and most holy spaces of the capital, it sent a message to all its onlookers, even to those who could not read. The latter probably understood the remarkable message of traditionalism when they noticed the record standing alongside the older inscriptions.

Many themes of the Severan *ludi* followed the tradition of previous imperial Secular Games. This consisted of the completion of purification rites on behalf of the community, conducted by women during the night time, and sacrifices to the most deities central for the Roman commonwealth in the day-time rituals, and closely followed the Augustan examples. The chorus of children during the last day of the *ludi* symbolized continuity and the beginning of a new, youthful Golden Age for the empire, as was probably also the case in the previous *ludi* (the actual poem was, as we have seen, different, but the use of the chorus was similar on both the Augustan and the Severan occasions). As I argued in the beginning of my work, all rituals are related to the space and time; accordingly, the people who witnessed the occasion understood and gave significances to the rituals according to their own context. On the other hand, this does not make the stability of the practice of sacrifices meaningless - quite on the contrary. The fact that the ways of conduct rituals remained the same through the centuries was a sign of the strength of religion, and binding the games to tradition was crucial for legitimizing Severus’ power. The importance of traditionalism and memory in Rome (for example, in religion) meant that recognizing tradition, and placing oneself in it, indicated that one’s power also conformed to the established rules. This is one of the most important factors in the process of legitimizing one’s power. Moreover, as traditionalism was regarded as one of the core
values in Roman political (and religious) life, the Severan ludi fit with the beliefs shared by society.\footnote{542}

In the beginning my study, I addressed the question of what the messages Severus intended to send through the program of the games might have consisted of; of what the values he wanted to use when strengthening his position as a ruler were. Even if the messages and themes central to him can be understood in evaluating the traditional rituals in the context of the third century, it is still obvious that the novelties in the program are precisely of most interest in this aspect. After all, they can be considered as the most “genuine” Severan ideas, so to speak.

What kind of messages and values have we found? The most important ones seems to be details highlighting the rulers’ family roles, and those were most likely related to the campaign for moral reforms and the promotion of family values. The inclusion of Julia Domna as the leader of the Roman mothers is perhaps one the most striking family themes in the ludi saeculares.

It is a significant feature that her name, as well as the names of all the matronae taking part in the rituals, was included in the inscription. It is therefore highly unlikely that they symbolized the “impure” Roman mothers who were to blame for the troubles of the civil war which was, as we saw, a crucial idea in Augustan policy. In fact, it is highly possible that this idea was indeed part of the Augustan ludi saeculares: after all, the women participating in that ritual were not indicated in the inscription of 17 BCE by their names, and therefore their names would not be associated with such a shameful theme in public memoria. But, as the empress and 109 other upper-class women were included by their names in AD 204, a similar explanation is highly unlikely. A much more probable reason for this is the fact that the inscription associated Julia Domna, a relative newcomer from Syria, to the traditional the ruling classes of Rome, and combined her with other upper class ladies. Moreover, as she clearly acted as the leader of the group, we are in fact dealing with the deployment of power relations between the empress and other leading women in Rome. Julia Domna was not only described as belonging to the upper-class, but as superior to the other members.

\footnote{542} Obviously, Rome was not a system like modern democracy; in practice, the subordinate did not have too many chances to affect to the “shared beliefs”. Therefore, when we talk about “shared beliefs,” we talk more or less about ideas dictated from above.
The second-day celebrations, in particular, emphasize the relationship of the imperial couple. Not only is this quite clearly indicated in the inscription (Julia as the coniux of Septimius Severus), but the inclusion of Jupiter in the program of the second day which was usually dedicated to Juno, also points to this. The king and the queen of the Roman pantheon were celebrated on the same occasion by the emperor and the empress of Rome. The result of the royal marriage was evident in the record, as well as in the actual event, through presence of the royal princes, Caracalla and Geta who were the symbols of the secure future for the empire and the proof of the blessings of harmonious family relations.

Septimius Severus as a “father-figure” can be traced both from the traditional role he played in the celebration of the ludi saeculares and from the novelties in the inscription of AD 204. The prayers conducted by the emperor were similar to the Augustan model, and as such strengthened his position as a father-figure, a pater patriae, for the commonwealth when he prayed for the protection of his household (which basically signified to whole commonwealth). Moreover, the sacrifice to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, in particular, was an act which underlined the paternalistic duties of the emperor: that of acting as a “mediator” between the supreme god of the commonwealth and the people. However, new features also strengthened this picture. One concept which could describe these details is indulgentia, generosity. In the inscription, Severus showed generosity to senate when granting it the permission to celebrate the games and when he congratulated the young nobles taking part in the Trojan games. These were significant acts. As we have noticed, these were gestures of paternal generosity, which were not only indications of goodwill but which also indicated hierarchical positioning.

An even more dramatic act of generosity was performed as the ludi honorarii to be celebrated after the Secular Games, were granted. This brings us to the role of the audience in the games. If we consider the background of the Severan ludi, it is noticeable that the organizers actively attempted to gather as big an audience as possible, and not only from in city, but also from the whole of Italy and probably from the provinces as well. But, what is perhaps of even more importance is that the role of the people witnessing the games can be found in the inscription. This is already evident in the first part of the inscription, describing the moment in which people were “taken” to participate in the games and how they gave symbolic offerings to the quindecimviri and received tools for a purification ritual supposed to be conducted in their homes, that is, in their families. This particular detail was part of the Augustan tradition as well, but the granting of the ludi honorarii is another example of the interaction between the ruler and his subjects, and has much more of a Severan
“flavour”. The major significance of public property such as war-booty for Roman identity should also be remembered: as mentioned earlier, it could even be argued that public wealth of that sort was in fact a way for the people to identify themselves to the Roman *communitas*. The inscription’s description of how Severus declared the *ludi honorarii* and provided the beast-hunt and other shows, was a way of demonstrating that they were displayed to the public as a gift from the emperor, and from that point on they were now “common property”. In other words, the emperor basically provided a common wealth for the people of Rome and by doing this, also provided a tool for his subjects to define themselves as Roman.

The interactions between the ruler and the ruled recorded in the inscription are an important aspect of the confirmation of one’s power. They indicate that the subjects were supposed to consent to this situation. This is one of the crucial preconditions for legitimation of power. However, a more important group than the ordinary people which also had to show content was that of the senators. The description of the interaction between Severus and the senate when the *ludi saeculares* were organized precisely highlights this: the senators submitted willingly (officially at least) to the emperor and his sons’ power. This is the message provided by the inscription, but whether this was “really” the case is another question. Some parts of Cassius Dio’s history (possibly including his complete silence on the *ludi saeculares*) indicate that it was not always. However, what eventually counted was the fact that the power relations remained in public *memoria* after the inscription was erected on the Campus Martius. The record stood alongside the inscriptions of the other *ludi saeculares*, tracing the event back to hundreds of years, and indicating that they were part of the tradition of the *communitas*.

Septimius Severus’ generosity, *indulgentia*, towards his people might also be a reason for the inclusion of the Vestal Virgins in the records of the games. It is, of course, possible that they had been already present in the earlier games as they were traditionally involved in public purifications, which is essentially what the *ludi saeculares* consisted of. However, including their names in the Severan record might have been another message about the emperor’s *indulgentia* towards his subjects. As the Vestals were not only associated to rites of purification but were also associated to the city’s food storage, the emperor demonstrated that this aspect was also under his control. After all, food distribution was one of the central concepts in Severan imperial propaganda (and practical policies as well), as we have seen.
Besides the notions of family values and generosity, the third theme rising from the Severan _ludi saeculares_ is universalism. The _Carmen Saeculare_ is the part of the programme that highlights this aspect the most, and it is also the part of the inscription which departs the most from Augustan tradition. As the poem was missing from the Augustan source altogether, including it to his record was a perfect opportunity for Severus to highlight themes he considered as important. The soldiers’ inclusion and the “shores, cities and fields” embraced universalism; they celebrated the whole empire, not just the city of Rome, and underlined the position of the imperial family as the rulers of this wholeness. This was in fact quite a revolutionary idea, if we consider the great importance of Italy in imperial ideology before the Severans, and in the Antonine policy of co-operation between the emperor, senate and other leading families. Contrary to these themes dominant in the second century, the concept of universalism celebrated in the _ludi saeculares_ of AD 204 indicates the uniqueness of the emperor (and the royal family) and his direct relationship with his subjects. This meant that there was in fact no more space for other users of power. In this sense, the Severan _ludi_ were one of the starting points of the new imperial ideology of “deliberate insecurity”, an idea which did not allow too much secure power for other actors than the emperor.\(^{543}\)

In fact, the position of the imperial couple as the one who can control the whole sphere of the empire can be associated to their images as “cosmic figures” presented on coinage for example. Moreover, in many places, the inscription indicates their “power to protect”. Following Jan Koster’s theory which was discussed in the introduction, this indicates that they were indeed a couple who rose above the ordinary. The _ludi saeculares_ was a ritual which created mystical authority around them, and thus made them the symbols of the whole _communitas_. In other words, the Severan _ludi saeculares_ demonstrated the power of the royal family to those witnessing the celebrations, as well as to those who just saw the record in Campus Martius. The family rose above all others in a hierarchy of power. The magnificent occasion which celebrated the birth of the Golden Age, and which simultaneously defined the concept of Romanness, encouraged subjects to consider their relationship to the top of the empire in family terms and, accordingly, encouraged the people to base its Roman identity on these principles.

\(^{543}\) The idea of “deliberate insecurity”, brought forth by David Potter, was discussed in Chapter one (p. 36).
ABBREVIATIONS

AJA  American Journal of Archaeology
AJP  The American Journal of Philology
Amer. Hist. Rev.  American Historical Review
ANRW  Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung, Berlin 1972-
BAR  British Archaeological Reports
BMC  Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum, ed. H. Mattingly et al., London 1923-
BNP  Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity, ed. by Hubert Canick and Helmuth Schneider, Leiden 2002—2010
CIL  Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. Berlin 1863-
Cl. Ant.  Classical Antiquity
CPh  Classical Philology
GR  Greece & Rome
HSCP  Harvard Studies in Classical Philology
JHP  Journal of Historical Pragmatics
JRS  Journal of Roman Studies
LTUR  Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae, ed. by Margarita Stenby, Rome 1993—2006
MAAR  Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome
NC  The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Royal Numismatic Society
NECJ  New England Classical Journal
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<td>PIR²</td>
<td><em>Prosopographia imperii romani</em>, 2nd edition, Berlin 1933-</td>
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<td>RdA</td>
<td><em>Rivista di Archeologia</em></td>
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<td>Rh. Mus.</td>
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<td><em>Roman Imperial Coinage</em>, ed. by H. Mattingly, E. A. Sydenham et al., London 1923—1994</td>
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<td>RM</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gell.</td>
<td>Aulus Gellius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td><em>Noctes Atticae</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA</td>
<td><em>Historia Augusta</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex. Sev.</td>
<td>Alexander Severus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clod.</td>
<td>Clodius Albinus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comm.</td>
<td>Commodus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diad.</td>
<td>Diadumenianus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gord.</td>
<td>Gordiani Tres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hadr.</td>
<td>Hadrianus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heliogab.</td>
<td>Heliogabalus</td>
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<tr>
<td>M. Ant.</td>
<td>Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (Caracalla)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pes. Nig.</td>
<td>Pescennius Niger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sev.</td>
<td>Severus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Herod.</td>
<td>Herodian</td>
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<td>Hes.</td>
<td>Hesiod</td>
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<td>Theog.</td>
<td><em>Theogonia</em></td>
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<td>Hom.</td>
<td>Homer</td>
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<td>Il.</td>
<td><em>Iliad</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hor.</td>
<td>Horace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carm. saec.</td>
<td><em>Carmen saeculare</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul. Obs.</td>
<td>Julius Obsequens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juv.</td>
<td>Juvenal</td>
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<td>Liv.</td>
<td>Livy</td>
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<td>Per.</td>
<td><em>Periochae</em></td>
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<td>Macrobius</td>
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<td>Sat.</td>
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<td>Mal.</td>
<td>Ioannes Malalas</td>
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<td>Chron.</td>
<td><em>Chronographia</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Min. Fel.</td>
<td>Minucius Felix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td><em>Octavius</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oros.</td>
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<td>Ov.</td>
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<td>Philostr.</td>
<td>Philostratus</td>
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<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>Vita Apollonii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VS</td>
<td>Vita sophistarum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plin.</td>
<td>Pliny (The Elder)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HN</td>
<td>Naturalis historia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plin.</td>
<td>Pliny (The Younger)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ep.</td>
<td>Epistulae</td>
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<td>Pan.</td>
<td>Panegyricus</td>
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<td>Plut.</td>
<td>Plutarch</td>
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<td>Cat. min.</td>
<td>Cato minor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Num.</td>
<td>Numa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publ.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rom.</td>
<td>Romulus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sull.</td>
<td>Sulla</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sen.</td>
<td>Seneca (The Younger)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben.</td>
<td>De beneficiis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serv.</td>
<td>Servius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comm. in Verg. Aen.</td>
<td>Commentarii in Vergilii Aeneidos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sil.</td>
<td>Silius Italicus</td>
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<td>Pun.</td>
<td>Punica</td>
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<td>Strabo</td>
<td>Strabo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suet.</td>
<td>Suetonius</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug.</td>
<td>Augustus</td>
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<td>Caes.</td>
<td>Caesar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calig.</td>
<td>Caligula</td>
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<tr>
<td>Claud.</td>
<td>Claudius</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ner.</td>
<td>Nero</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tib.</td>
<td>Tiberius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vesp.</td>
<td>Vespasianus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tac.</td>
<td>Tacitus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ann.</td>
<td>Annales</td>
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<td>Germania</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tert.</td>
<td>Tertullian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De spect.</td>
<td>De spectaculis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulp.</td>
<td><em>De off. procons.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val. Max.</td>
<td>Valerius Maximus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varro</td>
<td><em>De lingua Latina</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verg.</td>
<td><em>Aeneid</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zos.</td>
<td>Zosimus</td>
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APPENDIX 1

The Inscription commemorating the Ludi Saeculares of AD 204.

Reproduced from Pighi 1965, pp. 140—175 (see also CIL 6 32326—32335).

1 [Comme]ntarium [ludorum saecularium qui facti sunt]
3 [max., p. m.]
4 tr[b. po]testat. XII et
6 [[Caes., C. Plau[iano pr. pr.]] Prid. [ias] in Comitio in Curia Iulia XV[i]r[i] s.f.an[te] sugge-
7 stum a[m]plissimorum con-[]
8 [debet] ritus saecula[rium ad[in]pleri per [eos sollemnita]temque pul[b]ibam, m]onitu uetustis-
11 [jus uindicis] [tem]plum [l]egit: []
13 [jus uindicis] [tem]plum [l]egit: []
15 [max., p. m.,]
17 [max., p. m.,]
19 [max., p. m.,]
21 [max., p. m.,]
23 [max., p. m.,]
25 [max., p. m.,]
II

1 [ ]

2 [ ] a. d. XVII kal. ma[ias de epistula] ab imp. missa act. in haec uerb[a;]


6 [ ] Simul qui[bus] odoribus supplicare matronae debeant statuemus. Valete, c[ollegi]s n[obis]. Pompeius Rusionianus maj[or] leg[it].
184
14 Inde XVuir. m[ ] tribunali ad[sc]en[so] fruges quae a po-
15 pulo plebe m[ ] Pompeius Ru[so]nianus[us] magister Tarentum
16 lustrauit s[ ] lus[tr]andi piandique saecularis sacri
20 rem diuinam[ ] ji possent lustre[tis] pie[tis] purgetis
21 quam optim[e ] [ ][ ][ ][ ] imper[tio et]us mi[h]ique
22 eorum lus[tr] ] jus ius meliusque futi [hunc] locum
23 (VI) lustrari piari purgari ] quod cu m hoc et[ ] o[ptimoque ritu ab omni conta-
24 mination[ ] ]ulisset ad[ ] ji prae au[ ]imo Aug. [[ ]]
25 imperio[ ] M]artias edictum propos[itum est in] haec uerba: [ ]
28 Adia[b Parchic maximi filii, diui Marci Antonini Pii Germanici Sarmatici nep., diui Anto[nini Pio pro[nep. diui Hadriani abnepot., diui Traiani et diui Neruae adnepot. cum ceteris XVuiris [s.] f. dicunt:
29 Ordinem [ ]m prouidentia [ ]cta[ ] com[mun ] a ioc populi
30 Romani [rum ea quae it] [ ] qui prece[ ]o susceptis
33 sacr[ ] ] M]arcelli porticum [ ]
34 tio[ ] deum [ ] rip[ian Tiberis Laurum
35 ci[i ] mura[ ] adstantibus uirginibus Vestalibus]bus Lusisia
36 Ma[ximilla et Terentia Flauola ] [ ]
37 an[ ]
38 Iuppiter [Optime Maxime
39 da[ ] Aug.[ ]
40 po[n. max. ]m motor
41 un[ ] uti uobis
42 in illis libris scriptum est i]mpe-
43 riu[m ] late
44 ta[ ] imperium maiestatemque p. R. Q. duelli domique au-
45 xis et uti huius sacrifici accep-
46 tric[es sitis ]
47 haru[m rerum ergo ]
48 et in[ ] accep-
49 tric[es ]
50 tia[e ]
51 In omn[ ]
52 Moerae! uti u[obis in illis libris scriptorium est ]
53 p. R. Q., XVuirum collegio, mih, domui, familiae
54 additis in[ ] uti huius]
55 sacrifici [acceptrices sitis harum rerum ergo maxte hac agna femina immolanda estote,]
56 fitote uolentes proptiae p. R. Q. Pomi-
57 peius Rus[onianus mag. Vlp]
58 us Soter c[os. desig. ]
59 Seuerus m[ ] cu[i theatrum adiectum]
60 non erat [ ]
61 structi[ ]
62 uem quae [ ]
63 rum arg[ ]
64 haec uerb[a] per-
I uniu[us imp. et] matronis CV[III, quisdenuntianeret, adstantibusNumisia]

10 Maximilla et Terentia Flavia…

11 cremusqu[a]e uti tu imperi[um maiesta][temque p. R. Q. duelli domique aux[tis utique semper Latina[bus et ceteris]


XVuiris s. f, nobis, domibus, familiis. Haec matres familias CX p. R. Q, nuptae, genib[us nixae,]
13 precumur or[am]us obsecramusque. [Supplicauer. ma]tronae Fl. Pollita Manili[ ]ati[l]
Seueri, Rufri[a Cal]
14 pun[ ]i Max[i]mi, Statilia M[axim]a Pu[ ]nia Laeta Enni Marcian[i] Caecili
Ariston, Ve[ ]
15 tu[ ]Att[i]a Pia Tib[i]ri Atti Iuliani [A]ui[i], Lu[ ]el[ia] P[ ]onti
Paulini, Majia[ ]
16 [ ]Majurici, Fufid[i]a D[ ]emeterii, Crepere[i]
17 [ ]Pontia, Paulina[ ]
18 [ ]nis, Cl. Eudaem[ ]
19 [ ]ia Atti Rufi[i]
20 [ ]Festi, Postumia[ ]
21 [ ]a Calpurni Front[i]ni[ ]
22 [ ]ensia Polla Ci[
23 [ ]ali[ ] P[ ]a Cai[ ]iu[ ]

Va (V)
23[ ]illa Valeri Cresc[ei]nts, Vibenn[i]a
24 [ ]i[cu]ni[d], Iulia Taria Strat[o]nice Laber[i] mana[ ]
25 [ ]ia ana Vlpi Pompeian[i, ] Domitia Flaccill[a] Vlpi Antonini
[ ]uellia Caesenni Seruli[ ]
26 [ ]ii, Ta a Cornelia Asiana Nummi Faustiniæa, C[I.D]rantilla Platonis
Corneli Optat[i]
Aquili Agrestis[ ]lia Flauiana Tarroni [ ]
28 [ ]Campani trib., Octavia Athenais Flau Clemintis trib., Sempron[i s]a Spole-
tina Corneli Fel[icis] 
29 [ ]ini primipil., Aelia Gemellina Armeni Iuliani, Antonia Tironilla Iuli Max[i, A]elia
Marciana Cossen[i] 
30 [ ]a eodem more per eadem matronas habita. Item XVuirii s. f. sortit[i]
sunt de praesession[e] ludorum te]sseris in urnam com[missis ]
31 [ ]rus pr, Aiacius Modestus, Ofilius Macedo, Nonius Arriu[ ]s Maria-
[nus, ]Iulius] Pompeius Risonianu[s mag., Vlpius Soter cos. desig., Cassius Pius
Marcellinus q. d., Vetina Mamertinus,]
32 [ ]rnascens Calpurniæa, Sæ[ ]uinus Proculus, Fuluius Grazianus q. Augg., Gargi[i]us Anti-
quus, Manili]us Fuscus, Venendifu[s Rufus cur. aluei Tiberi[s. ]
Tune a[d theatrum igneum in Campo]
33 [proces]serunt ibique ludi]s interfuerunt. E[t e]odem die edictum propositum est]
[iuli, diui Commodi frater,]
timus Seuerus Pius Pert[i]nax Aug. Arabi. Adiab. Parth. max., pont. max.,] trib. pot. XII,
nici Sarm. nepo[tes, diui Antonini Pii pronepotes,]
36 [diui H]adrianian abnepotes, diui Tra<ia>ni Parth. et diui Neruae adnep. cum ceteris XVuiri s. f. di-
cunt: Per]actis ludis [s]ollemnibus III non. iun., ludos honor]arios quoque per [VII dies
adiciemus. Prd. non.
37 [easde]m, item nonarum die et VIII id. eadem, theatris tribus, ligneo, Pompeiano, Od[i]o spe-
t[acula quae s]ul]mus e]dituri lis fr[ ]
38 [dein die] VII idum earundem circensipectacula in Circo Maximo dabimus. [ Ordo mis-
su]um. Missu primo quadrigas singulas e factionibus quattuor ex[h]ebimus: qui uicerit
accipiet HS XXIV n., secundo]
39 [HS VIII n., tertio HS IIII n. Secun]do quoque missu quadrigarum eadem praemia dabuntur. Missu
tertio qui bibam uicerit, [a]ccipiet HS n., secundo HS n., tertio HS n., Quarto missu
desutores cursoresque mittemus: ac-
40 [cipiet] qui uicerit HS VI n., secund. HS II n., tertio HS • n. Post meridie quintu missu bigas
mittemus. Jad. HS X n. seru[t]a pollit[i]atione missus tertii. Se[xto mi]ssu desul-
[tes mittemus: accipiet qui u]-
41 [cerit] HS VI n., secundo HS II n., tertio HS [ • n. Septimo quadrig]las exhibebimus perceptur[i]
primo p[ar[i ac secundo tertioque HJ]S n., ad. is quae] datur[s nos m. I poli]cti sumus. Postqu[am circenses erunt perfecti.]


52 [fil]is et ceteris XVVuir. ludis nocturnis inferuerunt. Iulia Aug. mater castr[or]um et matronae CVIII sel[liste]nia habuerunt Iunoni ac Dianae. III n[on. iun. imp. Se]-


58 [erat ][int q]uas in] [int aqua sp[a]l] [nec [i]alis coronis sumptis in prona]edi apollonis] adscenderunt ibi]e clar[i]siim]i


61 [ ]i]a laurigeri procer[ ] intibus ae[ ]us canimus m[culent] [ i] lince] cantu numina pro[ ] lido pro gentis hon[ ] re[ ]

62 [ ]um uotis]que s[ ]Ausoniis [s] [re] superbo de grege natoru] [i]esrae cos[ ] lynthia mitis adest puer [ ]


79 [ad]em die Iulia Aug. m[ater] castrorum et matronae


82 [secundo actu ex isd]em [fru]gibus d[edera]nt; reliquiae frugum apparitionibus in secundo actu datae erant per praetura. Eadem die Iulia Aug. m[ater] castrorum et matronae


86 [secundo actu ex isd]em [fru]gibus d[edera]nt; reliquiae frugum apparitionibus in secundo actu datae erant per praetura. Eadem die Iulia Aug. m[ater] castrorum et matronae

87 [secundo actu ex isd]em [fru]gibus d[edera]nt; reliquiae frugum apparitionibus in secundo actu datae erant per praetura. Eadem die Iulia Aug. m[ater] castrorum et matronae


89 [secundo actu ex isd]em [fru]gibus d[edera]nt; reliquiae frugum apparitionibus in secundo actu datae erant per praetura. Eadem die Iulia Aug. m[ater] castrorum et matronae

90 [secundo actu ex isd]em [fru]gibus d[edera]nt; reliquiae frugum apparitionibus in secundo actu datae erant per praetura. Eadem die Iulia Aug. m[ater] castrorum et matronae

189
ludos consumman-

91 (VII) [dos processe]runt. In theatro ligneo lud[is] Latin[iis comm]issis, in Odio se tra[n]sulerunt, ibi-
que [lu]dis Graecis commissis, in theatro Pompeian[o] uenerunt, ibi[q]ue lu[dis s]caenicis com-
missis in circo

92 [processerunt. Ibi] Augg. nn. et Get[a Caes. sedil]ibus suis [consederunt ibi]que ludos per-
sp[ect]auerunt. XVuir. autem tribunal praet[ori]um pr.[p]r. st[eterunt in thea]-

VIIIa
Vetin[a Mamerti]nus,
3 [Manilius Fuscus, Cassius Piu]s Marcellinus q. d[esignatu]s, Crescens Calpur[nianus; i]n
theatro [Pompe]-
4 [mu]s pr., Aiaciuss Modes[tus, Ofilius] Macedo, Nonius Arri[us Mucia]nus [ ]
Sarm.
Antonius Pius Au[g.]
Au[g. Arab. A]diab. Par[th. max. f.]
10 [diui M. Antonini Pii Germ. Sarm. n]epot., diui Antonini Pii pr[onep., diui Hadriani a[bnepot., diui]
Traiani [Par]-

VIIIb
1 [lian [ Cassius Pius]
2 [Marcellinus q. d. ]
3 [Vetina Mamertinus]
4 [esi[a]ebornei]
5 [circum uener]
6 so] ex]uiais in puluinari lat]as
7 [id] cus mediis puluin[}

IX
1 [ ]
2 [emi] S]atyrus Dr[
3 [js Regu] [Marcius Vic]
4 [Virius] [Musiar]c, Iunius [Faustinus]
Rosc|ornelianus, Clodius Mar|cellinus

Jrus, Numit|us Asper, Ocratius Titianu|s

jus, Bassaeu|s Janus, Alfius Maximus, Sue|

s Silianus, Cl|audius Pac|atianus, Flau|ce|

Placidus, [Baebius Ma]rcellinus, M|

jomin Ne|ratius Priscu|s

ji Ba |us, Vettius

Licini|eq. R. fil. C|

a. 1 jio [ h. 1 ]ium|
  2 lorem[ 2 lis cons|
  3 ] [ 3 licibus c| 4 post|

c. 1 iri[ d. 1 ]f|
  2 ] [ 2 les|

e. 1 um[ f. 1 ]ne|

g. 1 uae [ h. 1 ]emq|
  2 sm]
APPENDIX 2

The Rituals of the Secular Games in AD 204

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Ritual</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>Night</td>
<td>Opening prayer, a sacrifice and a prayer to Moirae (nine female lambs, nine she-goats, all black); theatrical spectacles, <em>sellisternia</em> by 110 matrons in honour of Juno and Diana.</td>
<td>Campus Martius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Prayer and a sacrifice (a white bull) to Juppiter Optimus Maximus.</td>
<td>Capitoline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1</td>
<td>Night</td>
<td>Prayer and a sacrifice to Eileithyia (27 sacrificial cakes), <em>ludi latini</em> in a wooden theatre. <em>Sellisternia</em> by matrons in honour of Juno and Diana.</td>
<td>Campus Martius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Prayer and a sacrifice (a white cow) to Juno Regina, also a sacrifice to Juppiter Optimus Maximus and a banquet (by the emperor and other <em>quindecemviri</em>). <em>S upplicatio</em> by 110 matrons to Juno Regina.</td>
<td>Capitoline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2</td>
<td>Night</td>
<td>Prayer and a sacrifice (a black pregnant sow) to Terra Mater, theatrical spectacles, <em>sellisternia</em> by 110 matrons in honour of Juno and Diana.</td>
<td>Campus Martius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 3</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Prayer and a sacrifice (27 sacrificial cakes) to Apollo and Diana, <em>Carmen Saeculare</em> by 27 boys and girls, a procession by the officials to Capitoline. <em>Carmen Saeculare</em> repeated.</td>
<td>Palatine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Carmen Saeculare* and a banquet by matrons in honour of Juno and Diana, a sacrifice of pigs and a ritual dance.
APPENDIX 3

The History of the *Ludi Saeculares*

The *ludi saeculares* were an ancient religious institution, believed to be dated from the times when the kings were expelled and the Roman republic was born. We are quite familiar with the manner in which the chronology of the Secular Games was understood during the Severan period, since Roman scholar Censorinus wrote about them in AD 238, just after the reign of Alexander Severus. We also have the myth on which the games were based recorded by two authors, Valerius Maximus and Zosimus. Valerius Maximus included the myth in his book *Facta et dicta memorabilia*, a collection of “memorable” stories from Roman history, which he wrote in the early first century (during the reign of Tiberian). Another version of the story is told by Zosimus, who wrote his Roman history much later (in the late fifth or early sixth century). The story is slightly different to Valerius Maximus’ version.

According to the story recorded by Valerius Maximus, a rich man called Valesius had two sons and a daughter. The children fell sick when Rome was devastated by pestilence. Valesius was advised by the gods to go to Tarentum (or Terentum), to take water from Tiber and to heat it on the altar of Dis and Proserpina. Valesius, who thought that the gods meant the Greek colony of that name (in southern Italy), started his travel with the children; they spent a night by the Tiber, and Valesius took some water from the river, heated it and gave it to his thirsty children. They fell asleep and, by the next morning, were cured. It turned out that the place they were in, a spot on the Campus Martius, was also called Tarentum, and that there was an altar of Dis and Proserpina, buried underground in the same place Valesius had made a fire and heated the water. The gods appeared to the children during their sleep and ordered that black victims should be sacrificed. Valesius did that and held games for three consecutive nights. Valerius Maximus mentions that the example of Valesius was later followed by the first consul of the republic, Valerius Publicola, who took public vows, sacrificed black oxen and held games for three nights.

The details in the records of Zosimus are slightly different. According to him, Valesius’ children fell ill after lightning damaged the sacred grove situated near his house. Valesius and his wife gave

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544 The story about the origins of the *ludi saeculares* is heavily linked with the family of Valerii; for their relationship to the cult of Tarentum, see Aronen, Jaakko, ‘Il culto arcaico nel Tarentum a Roma e la gens Valeria’. In *Arctos* 23 (1989), pp. 19—39.
545 Val. Max. 2.4.5; Plut. *Publ.* 21.
a prayer to Vesta, and offered their own life in exchange for the survival of their children. They
heard a voice advising them to go to Tarentum, to heat some water on the altar of Dis and
Proserpina, and to let the children drink it. Grateful for the help, Valesius sacrificed black victims to
Dis and Proserpina on three succeeding nights. In addition to sacrifices, choral songs and dances
were performed."546

Censorinus’ list of the games from the republican period starts precisely from those of Valerius
Publicola, and were, according to the author, held in 509 BCE (although Censorinus also mentions
that some records date the first games to the year 456 BCE). After that, the second games were
organized in 346 or 344 BCE, the third games in 249 or 236 BCE. For the fourth games three dates
exist: 149, 146 and 126 BCE.547 The reason for this uncertainty may derive from the Augustan age,
when the celebrations were officially held for the fifth time (in 17 BCE). Augustus saw the games
as a powerful tool for his imperial propaganda; therefore it seems likely that the chronology of the
games was at least for some part an Augustan innovation, so that his games would fit
chronologically with the earlier games – for example, the celebration of the games in 126 BCE is
highly doubtful.548

Almost nothing is known about the details of the republican ludi. Censorinus only provides dates
and names of consuls who were in office when the games were held. Plutarch briefly mentions how,
during the first legendary games, an offering was made to the gods of the underworld when Rome
suffered terrible pestilence.549 Written sources provide some minor information about other
republican celebrations as well, especially those of 249 and 146. The authors indicate that the
games were organized by the quindecimviri sacris faciundis, which was also the case for the
imperial ludi saeculares. In addition, we have reports of how the ritual was conducted in Tarentum
(Campus Martius) to honour Dis and Proserpina, gods of the underworld. The sacrifice was
conducted by an underground altar, which was unearthed for the period of the celebration. The
victims offered to the gods were black, which was a custom among the Romans when sacrificing to
the chthonic deities.550

546 Zos 2.1—4.
547 Cens. 17.10—11.
548 Palmer 1974, pp. 102—103.
549 Plut. Publ. 21; Plutarch mentions only one god of the underworld, Dis (or Pluto).
550 See, for example, Liv. Per. 49; Zos. 2.4; August. De civ. D. 3.18. A list of the main sources regarding the republican
ludi is provided in Nilsson, M.P., ‘Saeculares ludi’. In RE 2R 1A, 1699—1700.
Even if the information about the earliest Secular games is scarce, it seems likely that the republican games were expiatory rites in honour of the deities of the underworld. However, when the games were celebrated by Augustus in 17 BCE, the nature of the ludi seems to differ considerably compared to the republican ones, and the themes celebrated in the Augustan festivals became central for the other ludi saeculares of the imperial period as well. The new main themes for the festival were, from that point on, public purification and the celebration of the beginning of the new Golden Age.

After Augustus gained power, he conducted a great cultural policy that celebrated ideas considered as “traditional” Roman values: proper morals, piety (pietas), and a proper relationship with gods (pax deorum) were central to new imperial ideology. Augustan propaganda sent a message that before the civil war, the Romans had neglected the proper way of worshipping the gods; now it was time to renew the relationship with them. The message was brought forward in many ways: through an extensive building programme which demonstrated in a concrete way that the gods were again honoured, as temples were repaired and new ones were constructed; through moral legislation, which emphasized the primacy of marriage and family; and through literature and other arts. The great poets of the period, such as Horace and Virgil, dealt with these questions in their works and celebrated the coming of the new Golden Age.\textsuperscript{551}

The ludi saeculares of Augustus were an extremely important manifestation of these values in the Augustan regime. The games were organized by the quindecimviri sacris faciundis, a board of fifteen priests. The quindecimviri already existed in Rome in the early fourth century BCE, as some changes were apparently made to the regulations of the priesthood in 367 BCE (from that year on, the office was open to plebs as well; before that, only nobility was allowed membership ).\textsuperscript{552} Their main responsibility was to consult the Sibylline oracles and control the foreign cults in Rome. According to the tradition, the Sibylline books were introduced in Rome during the regal period, when an old woman offered to sell nine oracle books to Tarquinius Superbus, the last king of Rome. When the king refused, she burned three of them and offered the remaining six books at the same price. After the king’s second refusal, she again burned three of the books. When the king saw that,
he was assured that the woman was serious and bought the remaining three. The books which contained orders and advice from the gods to be used in different situations were given to the responsibility of the quindecimviri. The books burned during the civil war in 83 BCE, but seven years later the senate began to collect new books from Greece. This “second edition” was used in Rome at least from the 50’s BCE on.

The passage of the Sibylline books ordering the Augustan games of is reproduced by Zosimus in his history. The change of ideas, compared to the republican games, is obvious in his work. The gloomy deities of the underworld are absent in the text; Tarentum and the nocturnal rites were still present, but the gods for this occasion are changed from Dis and Proserpina to Parcae, Lucina and Tellus (Moirae, Eileithyia and Terra Mater, as they appeared in the inscription). Moreover, the main focus was upon the daytime rituals, where white victims were sacrificed to the heavenly deities. Moreover, the place of worship was not the Campus Martius, but the Palatine and Capitoline hills. Thus, even if some of the rituals possibly had roots in the republican tradition, it is nevertheless probable that the gloomy republican celebration, marking a passing of an era, was replaced by a more positive approach, the celebration of the birth of a new age altogether.

But how are these changes possible, as it is very likely that the republican games were also based on Sibylline books? After all, they were organized by the quindecimviri, the priests who took care about the oracle texts. One possible answer is that the books used in the Augustan period were not that old: as mentioned earlier, the Sibylline books were burnt during the civil war between Sulla and Marius, and new books were obtained from Greece a few years later. More importantly, when Augustus took power, he transferred the books from the temple of Juppiter Optimus Maximus, where they were traditionally held, to the temple of Apollo. During this time, he apparently also carried out a variety of modifications in the books to suit his own purposes better.

The ludi after Augustus probably quite closely followed his example. However, to make the chronology of the ludi more complicated, the next celebrations were organized by Claudius in AD 47, only 64 years after Augustus. Suetonius reports how Claudius tried to prove that Augustus

555 For comparing the nature of the republican games with those of Augustus, see Beard, North & Price, pp. 201—206.
556 Parke, p. 140.
557 Tac. Ann. 11.11.
had in fact celebrated the games too early, and that the proper time for the games was in AD 47.\textsuperscript{558} By celebrating the \textit{ludi saeculares}, Claudius apparently wanted to celebrate the 800\textsuperscript{th} birthday of Rome. For the emperor, it was obvious enough that the proper way of honouring the birthday was to use the rituals of the \textit{ludi saeculares}; after all, they were supposed to celebrate a new age. We do not know a lot about the festivals of Claudius. The only contemporary source we have is the short passage of the inscription most likely erected in an “Augustan” manner after the games.\textsuperscript{559}

It could be argued that Claudius started a new cycle for the games, since in AD 88 Domitian organized the games again, thus following the Augustan tradition, and in AD 148 Antoninus Pius followed the games of Claudius.\textsuperscript{560} In coinage issued by Antoninus Pius to celebrate the occasion, many “city-oriented” images can be found, like Aeneas leaving Troy with Ascanius and Anchises; the white sow with 30 piglets which was a sign for Aeneas that he had reached the site of Alba Longa; and Mars visiting the sleeping Vestal Virgin Rhea Silvia to conceive Romulus and Remus (fig. 15). As the iconography of the coinage celebrating Antoninus Pius’ \textit{ludi} is very much connected to the founding stories of the city of Rome, it seems that the games consciously followed the “birthday-cycle” initiated by Claudius.\textsuperscript{561} In addition, it seems that Tarentum, as one of the central areas of celebration, was, in the Claudian and Antoninian festivals, displaced to the temple of Rome and Venus. This highlights the importance of the city even more, as the temple was also known as the Temple of the City.\textsuperscript{562}

Fig. 15. A coin of Antoninus Pius portraying Mars, with a spear and a shield, descending through the air to Rhea Silvia. \textit{RIC} 3, no. 694a (Antoninus Pius).

\textsuperscript{558} Suet. \textit{Claud.} 21.2.
\textsuperscript{559} See Pighi, pp. 131—136.
\textsuperscript{560} Aurel. Vict. \textit{Caes.} 15.
\textsuperscript{561} The coins: \textit{RIC} 3 nos. 627, 629 and 694a. Other examples and similar subjects can be found as well from this period. The story of Aeneas leaving Troy: Verg. \textit{Aen.} 2.707—744; sow and piglets as a sign of Alba Longa: Verg. \textit{Aen.} 8.42—49; Mars and Rhea Silvia: Liv. 1.4.
\textsuperscript{562} Beard, North & Price, p. 206.
The themes celebrating the foundation of the city of Rome which were possibly present in the games of AD 148 do not occur that much in the documents of the Severan games of AD 204. In fact, it seems that Antoninus Pius’ celebrations were not even considered as *ludi saeculares* during the third century since Censorinus, in his account of the secular games, does not mention them at all, and the Severan inscription mentions that the games of AD 204 games were the seventh ones.563

As we saw from the account of Censorinus, it was traditionally assumed that the number of games carried out during the republican period amounted to four. As Augustus held the fifth games, it would seem logical that Severus considered the *ludi* of Domitian in AD 88 as the sixth ones, and his own as the seventh, thus omitting both the Claudian and Antoninian celebrations. Therefore, it seems plausible that by the Severan period, a separation between two cycles, the Augustan and the Claudian ones, was known, although the account of Censorinus does generate some confusion: the author counts the Claudian games as the sixth, Domitian’s as the seventh and those of Septimius Severus as the eighth.564

The Severan games were the last of the Augustan cycle. However, one more set of games were celebrated after Severus. These were organized by Philip the Arab, and again followed the cycle of Claudius and Antoninus Pius. They were apparently first and foremost the 1000th birthday of Rome, but were also considered as *ludi saeculares*. This is suggested by the coinage, as the birthday of the city is also celebrated as a *saeculum novum* as well as a *saeculum Augusti*, again with images quite similar to the Antonine celebrations (fig. 16).

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564 Cens. 17.10. Zosimus does not include the games of Antoninus Pius either.
In AD 248, the history of the *ludi saeculares* ended. The next ones were supposed to be celebrated in the early fourth century, but this never happened. Zosimus, who wrote his history about a hundred years later, accused emperor Constantine (and his fellow emperor Licinius) of neglecting the games, and considered it this a major reason for the later downfall of the Roman empire. Zosimus reminded his readers that the empire was secure as long as performances were made according to the advice of oracles, but when Diocletian resigned and new games were never conducted, Rome fell to decay and barbarism.  

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565 Zos. 2.7.
The City of Rome and the Ceremonial Sites of the *Ludi Saeculares*
MAP 2

The Forum Romanum and the Via Sacra during the Later Imperial Period

1. Portico of the Dei Consentes
2. Temple of Vespasian and Titus
3. Temple of Concord
4. Temple of Saturn with the Aerarium
5. Basilica Julia
6. Temple of the Castores
7. Lacus Iuturnae
8. Arch of Augustus
9. Temple of Divius Julius
10. Regia
11. Temple of Vesta
12. House of the Vestal Virgins
13. Horrea Vespasiani
14. Arch of Titus
15. Antiquarium Forense
16. Basilica of Maxentius
17. Temple of Romulus
18. Private house
19. Cemetery
20. Temple of Antoninus and Faustina
21. Basilica Fulvia-Aemilia
22. Curia Iulia
23. Lapis Niger
24. Column of Phocas
25. Arch of Septimius Severus
26. Carcer
27. Imperial Rostra
28. Rostra Vandalica
29. Lacus Curtius