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Imperial Portraiture of the Tetrarchs: a Material Approach

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Index

Introduction

In this thesis I will investigate the portraiture of the Tetrarchs. What caught my attention while looking at imperial portraiture of this period was the style: it seemed very unnatural and stylized, completely opposite to what my vision of Roman art was. However, not all imperial portraits of the time have this characteristic style, therefore I wanted to know why this is.

The Tetrarchy was a period in the Roman Empire, that lasted from 293 to 311. In this period the imperial power was divided between four emperors. Each emperor ruled over roughly one quarter of the empire but were considered a four-unity. In this period all sorts of statuary were erected for the emperors: statues, busts, portraits and reliefs. One relatively unique aspect were group monuments as a result of the changed political power system. These group monuments are often executed in a stone called porphyry, a red granite-like stone from Egypt. Also several individual statues and busts are executed in porphyry, both the individual- and group statues seem to have a very distinct style of representation: unnatural and stylized. Porphyry was known to the Romans since their conquest of Egypt, but very little imperial portraits in porphyry are known from pre-Tetrarchic times, and also from the period after the Tetrarchy they are very rare compared to the period of the Tetrarchs.

Still, most individual representations are executed in marble, and here the style is again quite distinctive in most cases, however, significantly more naturalistic. It is also quite certain that there was a large amount of metal (bronze, silver and gold) statues, however only a few bronze examples remain; again in a quite distinctive style.

Roman sculpture has been one of the main study interests in both archaeology and art history since the beginnings of these disciplines. The late antique aspect of it has, however, always been a less studied aspect of this. This could be ascribed to the aesthetically less pleasing style of representation that arose around the time of the Tetrarchy. The first two main works published that relate to my research are

two books in German from the early 1930s: Delbrueck's *Antieke Porphyrwerke* (1932) which covers porphyry in the entire antiquity, and more specifically L'Orange's *Studien zur Geschichte des spätantiken Portäts* (1933). From then onward it seems that the work of L'Orange is the more standard work for late antique portraiture well into the 1960s when a new generation of studies commences; most notably Calza's *Iconografia Romana Imperiale da Carausio a Giuliano* (1972), Bergmann's *Studien zum Römischen Porträt des 3. Jahrhunderts n.Chr* (1977) and a new study by L'Orange: *Art Forms and Civic Life in the Late Roman Empire* (1965). Since then there has been a continuous flow of studies focused on Tetrarchic portraiture. What I notice in many of these works is that they see the Roman Empire as one geographical entity. Of course it was one nation, however regional differences within this entity are not thoroughly considered. Even more, it seems that all former research has little to no focus on the choice of material (marble or porphyry), and my research focuses on this particularly.

Thus my research question is: "*What is the reason behind the differences in style between porphyry and marble imperial portraits of the period of the Tetrarchs?*". To do this I will look at as many imperial sculptures from this era as I can find and look at their material, geographical location and archaeological context (where this is known). I will also look at the physical and cultural characteristics of both marble and porphyry. As previously noted, unlike other periods of roman imperial history, these two materials are the vast majority of surviving images, it is quite possible that these two materials already formed the majority of the imperial statues in the time. I will also try to put this change in representation into a broader context of tradition and innovation into the earlier and later way of imperial representation.

Summary in Dutch/Samenvatting in het Nederlands

In deze bachelor scriptie onderzoek ik de portretten van Romeinse keizers uit de periode van de Tetrarchie (293 tot c. 311 N.C.) . Ik kijk hierbij naar waarom er een verschil is in stijl tussen marmeren en porfieren beelden. Ik heb hierbij naar een aantal aspecten gekeken: politieke situatie en de keizerlijke ideologie die hier bij hoort. Vervolgens heb ik de materialen porfier en marmer onderzocht en gekeken hoe deze werden beschouwd in de oudheid. Vervolgens heb ik gekeken naar de stijlen en proberen te verklaren hoe deze zich hebben gevormd, als mede de verspreidingen ervan . Wat ik heb ontdekt is dat hier niet één specifieke reden voor te geven is en dat dit verschil ook niet volledig aan materiaalkeuze te wijten is. Naar mijn mening is de voornaamste reden van het stijlverschil het doel dat de opdrachtgever (de keizer(s)) voor ogen hadden: vanwege het regeringssysteem is er een manier nodig waarop deze in één personificatie kunnen worden weergegeven. Hiervoor werd voornamelijk porfier gebruikt. De individuele portretten in porfier hebben dit ook, ondanks dat ze wél een specifieke tetrarch weergeven is er ook een nauw verband met het systeem in het geheel. Marmeren portretten zien er over het algemeen iets persoonlijker uit en benadrukken meer het individu, ondanks dat ook zij in een heel erg tijdsgebonden stijl zijn weergegeven. Wat verder ook nog invloed heeft in het verschil in stijl, ook tussen bepaalde marmerkoppen, is de herkomst van het portret binnen het rijk: de oostelijke portretten hebben een significant meer gestileerd voorkomen dan die uit het westen. Wat hierbij problematisch is, is dat de meest westelijke (en noordelijkste) porfieren vondsten uit Rome komen. Hierdoor is deze hypothese moeilijk te toetsen, mogelijk dat toekomstige vondsten mijn conclusie hierover kunnen versterken (of juist ontkrachten).

Chapter 1- History of the Tetrarchs.

To understand why and how the Tetrarchy was formed we first have to look at the period that preceded it. This period is called the crisis of the third century; it starts in 235 with the death of Severus Alexander and claim to the throne by Maximinus I Thrax. With this emperor several major changes occurred in succession: there are no more long-lasting 'dynasties' of several rulers related to- or chosen by their predecessor, like it was common in the first two centuries of the empire. This was, of course, no voluntary change but a trend created by the instability and chaos the empire was in. This period is characterized by: quick succession of emperors, emperors from a lower social background serving in the military, inflation due to payments to the military and both internal and external military threats . These events led to a very unstable political, economical and military situation throughout the empire. Diocletian was yet another military general who was pronounced emperor by his troops in 284 after the death of emperor Numerian (L'Orange 1965: 38). Like many other 'Soldier-Emperors' Diocletian was of humble birth, some sources even suggest that he was the son of a freed slave, and born outside of the Imperial Core-region but rather in the provinces, in his case modern-day Serbia. He, however, changed this instability by making huge reforms to the way the empire was governed. The most important reforms discussed in this thesis are two of his reforms in the concept of 'being' emperor. He decided that the empire was too large for a single person to rule it, as was shown by the endless rebellions and external invasions of the past 50 years. He thought that if the emperor was closer to these areas swifter actions could be taken to repel the threat; of course the emperor couldn't be everywhere all the time so if he split up the imperial title into four persons, the emperor could be anywhere quite fast. This wasn't directly done by appointing four emperors; first he appointed one co-emperor, Maximian, in 386 who already appointed Caesar in 385 (Fens 2010: 358). Maximian ruled the western part of the Empire while Diocletian ruled the eastern part. Maximian was Diocletian's equal except for the right to veto all rules; Diocletian was the senior Augustus. In 393 they both appointed a Caesar for their half of the empire. Diocletian appointed Galerius, Maximian appointed Constantius I Chlorus. Also among the Caesars one became the senior: Constantius I. Appointing Caesars was something that had been done for a long time, it was the title that indicated the person was next in line to rule over empire as Augustus, what was new was the extent of power they had. Besides this normally the Caesars were the sons of the Emperor(s), either natural or adopted,

Diocletian and Maximian chose non-related persons (Rees 2004: 72). Interesting to note is that all four came from what we nowadays call the Balkan and were all of low- or middle class descent and rose to power through the military. So from 393 onward we can speak of a true Tetrarchy. All four of them had their own military base from which they ruled their quarter of the empire, which could be considered the capital of their part of the empire (Fens 2010, 350-354).

The other major reform he made in the concept of being emperor was changing the emperors' status: Diocletian equalled himself to his favoured god, Jupiter, and considered himself as his replacer on earth. He and the other Tetrarchs were considered living gods and were seldom in public (Fens 2010, 351). This change is called the dominate and would continue until the Christianization of the empire. The more private, excluded from the public position of the emperor would continue even longer, until the very end of the empire (more on this in chapter 2).

Other reforms which we won't go further into are those in the military, the economy, bureaucratic system and the redesign of the provincial layout. He also started a mayor persecution of Christians, which turned out to become the bloodiest in the entire history of the Roman Empire.

Diocletian abdicated together with Maximian in 305 due to old age and in Diocletian's case illness. The two former *Caesares* became *Augusti*, with Constantius I becoming the new senior Augustus; this is the Second Tetrarchy. The newly appointed *Caesares* were Severus in the West and Maximinus II Daia in the East. The Second Tetrarchy did not last very long due to the death of Constantius in 306. After the death of Constantius chaos broke out in the western part of the Empire; officially Severus was the new Augustus but both Maxentius and Constantine were also pronounced emperor by respectively the rebels in Rome and the British legions. Constantine was chosen as the new Caesar of the West by Galerius, therefore accepting his claim, but retaining Severus' position as the new Augustus. Maxentius was however seen as an usurper so Severus moved his army in Mediolanum (Milan) toward Maxentius in Rome. Because of the threat Maxentius appointed his father, the former Augustus Maximian, as his co-emperor (they both received the (unofficial-)title Augustus). Severus' troops largely deserted him because they were still loyal to their old emperor and so Severus had to flee and was eventually killed in captivity in 307. Maxentius controlled Italia and North-Africa but was still seen

as an usurper, his father then turned against him and joined sides with Constantine, but with no ruling title. On November 11th 308 a conference was organized in Carnuntum (in what is today Bad Deutsch-Altenburg in Austria) where the new division of rule was determined: Licinius would become the Western August, with Constantine as his Caesar (Licinius ruled from a part of Galerius' part of the Empire). The situation in the East remained unchanged with Galerius and Maximinus. Maxentius was denounced as an enemy of the Empire. This situation continued until 310 when Maximinian pronounced himself Augustus a third time in Gaul, he was then besieged and executed by Constantine the same year. Also in this year the two *Caesares* were promoted to *Augusti*, thus creating four *Augusti*, after they had received the title "*filus augustorum*"(son of the augustus) the year before. In 311 Galerius died of leprosy, thus making Maximinus the sole ruler in the East (although a substantial part was under the rule of Licinius, the western co-Augustus (Fens 2010: 348-380).

It is difficult to define the definitive end of the Tetrarchy: the death of Galerius in 311 is in my opinion the best, because up until that point at least in the East the traditional Tetrarchic system was maintained. Although there were still four emperors in 312 these did not cooperate with each other, but were paired up in two factions (Maximinus and Maxentius versus Constantine and Licinius). After Maxentius was defeated in 312 and Maximinus in 313 Constantine ruled over the West and Licinius in the East, this lasted with increasing tension until 324 when Constantine defeated Licinius and from then on ruled as sole Emperor. For a complete chronological overview of all the Tetrachs see the table inserted in the appendix.

Even though the Tetrarchy was only a brief period in the history of the Roman Empire, the reforms made by Diocletian saved the Empire from collapsing and laid the base for the future Byzantine Empire. This totally new form of government changed the Imperial Iconography drastically, we will see how and why in the following chapters.

Chapter 2: Imperial Ideology

As mentioned in chapter 1, the new shape of the imperial rule in the form of four emperors instead of one brought forth a new way in which this entity was represented. Along with this the status of the emperor also changed from first among equals to a more distant living god, that wasn't seen in public as often as former emperors were. The way the ruler(s) was represented was how he wanted to be seen by his subjects, this reflected his beliefs and what he stood for. Images of the emperor were visible in every public space all over the empire, as to be a replacement for the emperor in his physical absence. It was recognizable for the viewer that all these images represented the same individual, even though the medium (statues, coins, frescos etc.) and aesthetic quality fluctuated (Elsner 1998, 54). Until the Christianization of the emperor, all living and deified emperors were seen as (demi-)gods and at their statues sacrifices and rituals were performed. First we look at the 'traditional' or initial way that the emperors were represented, this can be considered as all emperors before Diocletian, so from August to Carus.

As mentioned before the emperors prior to Diocletian still held to the old republican idea that they were 'first among equals' although this of course wasn't the reality: the emperor had far more rights and privileges than any other citizen of the empire. We call this period the Principate. With Diocletian comes, as mentioned in the introduction, an end to this and from then on we speak of the Dominate. The Dominate brought this deification to a new level in which the emperor was the most important god of all. He took the title Jovius, to show he was the representative of Jupiter on Earth. His Co-Augustus Maximianus received the title of Heraclius, this shows they were both living gods, although Jupiter is of course a more important deity than Hercules thus showing the hierarchy between the emperors.

One can quite clearly see three mayor styles in the representation before the Tetrarchy. The first one is the 'Republican' Style which lasts from August to Trajan. This style is characterized by the short hair and clean shaven face. After this came the 'Philosopher' style which lasts from Hadrian to Septimius Severus, characterized by (relatively) long beards and hair. This was followed by the 'Soldier' style which lasted from Caracalla onwards to Diocletian. The Tetrarchy shows in a way a continuation of the 'Soldier' style as it shows the very militarized character of the empire at the time. This soldier style is characterized by a stubbly, short beard and also very short hair; this is to reflect how

soldiers looked after a military campaign as a result of no possibility to shave; and this is how these emperors wanted to be seen: as emperors constantly fighting for the safety of the empire. Although these imperial portraits can be quite clearly divided into these three styles the individual can still be clearly identified. Still, it becomes more stylized during the Tetrarchy as will be discussed further on. It is at this point that, from a 'neutral', viewpoint this individuality becomes blurred. Another important point is that of the eyes: these in general become very direct and focused (see for example catalogue number 11 & 22) yet quite distant to the viewer. The distance created between the statue and the viewer in my opinion due to the introduction of the Dominate as the literal and figurative distance between the emperor and his subjects grew. The style becomes quite radically different, as can be observed in the following examples. This change in style indicates a harsh change in Imperial Ideology: the classical canon is rejected because the social group that indentified with them lost a significant amount of power. The Tetrarchs were soldiers from the Balkan, not members of ancient (mostly Italian) patrician families. It thus is both to show their own identity and to break away from- or reject the past (Kitzinger 1977: 12). The newly emerging style was not a new type of art: it existed in the social class where these emperors came from for centuries. The style was more direct in its intended message, rather than the more detailed, indirect way in the classical canon. Kitzinger (1977:14) further notes that this new style was thus a more successful way to communicate to their intended audience than the classical canon and that is why it rose to such 'popularity'.

2.1 Communal representations

What we see in the period of the tetrarchs is that the individuality is lost, at least in monuments. The persons represented looked so similar not because of their close physical appearance, but because of their similar character and vision, called *similitudo* ("similarity")(Rees 2004: 75). In group monuments we see a hegemony shared by all four emperors, who are of often depicted together, even though they rarely saw each other in real life. This hegemony in the monuments showed that their victories (wherefore these monuments were in general erected) ,although achieved by only one member, were dedicated to the unity of the four emperors. These group portraits often have a highly stylized form of depiction (see catalogue number 13,14 & 25). Although it appears that the shared hegemony is based on total equality, it is not and the representations follow a clear hierarchical system. In the porphyry groups from Venice and the Vatican Libraries

this is isn't very clear although noticeable, the mural painting from the Luxor Temple is a clearer example (Rees 1993, 185-186).

First, in the porphyry group from Venice (Cat. 25) the *Augusti* and the *Caesares* are equal, and to the untrained eye barely identifiable, but the hierarchy between the August and Caesar is noticeable by who wears a beard and who has an arm in front of each duo, which both indicate who is the senior of the two. In this group the difference in importance between the two *Augusti* is not noticeable, although in its original context the placing might have done this. This group was probably originally quite similar to the group from the Vatican library, meaning that the two duos were part of two (huge) porphyry columns (Delbrueck 1932: 84), it is most likely that the *Senior Augustus* (Diocletian) was positioned on the viewer's extreme left. In the group in the Vatican Libraries the duos are different: the two Caesars are embracing each other and the two *Augusti* are embracing each other while all four are holding a globe. Here again the senior Caesar is the one that is embracing from the front (Constantius I), to show the hierarchy. With the two *Augusti* we see the same: the one embracing from the front is Diocletian, the head of the Tetrarchy. The simplistic, direct style in which both porphyry groups are executed is meant to emphasise the political system, any elaborate details or subtitle rhythms from the classical art canon would only weaken the message that was meant to be perceived by the statues (Kitzinger 1977: 12).

As mentioned, the clearest example is the shrine in the Luxor Temple (see figure 1). This is a mural painting depicting a scene where the four tetrarchs are together in some kind of ceremony or meeting (the painting is badly damaged). They are all standing with a full-frontal view. The two persons on the side are slightly smaller than the central pair, which is further emphasized by the columns they are standing next to. The two central figures are equally tall, they both carry orbs and are painted more elaborated. The distinction between them is made by the staff the central-left person is carrying thus identifying him as Diocletian (Rees 2003, 186). It is, however, possible that this image does not show the *Augusti* and *Caesares* because , as Bardill (2012: 73) notes, the central pair and the two persons flanking them to do wear the same clothing as is common in all the other monuments. We see the same difference in clothing in the relief from Romulania further down this paragraph where the different clothing showed the difference between the retired and current *Augusti*. So this would mean that that the central pair is formed by Diocletian and Maximinian (as retired *Augusti*) with Galerius and either Constantius I or Licinius I (as (current) *Augusti*) flanking them. Personally I think the then absence of the

Caesares makes this unlikely because this would mean that the unity was gone from the Tetrarchy. Therefore I believe that indeed the mural depicts the *Augusti* and *Caesares* together, although the question of which ones is unclear, as it might be from the period after Diocletian's abdication (Bardill 2012: 73).
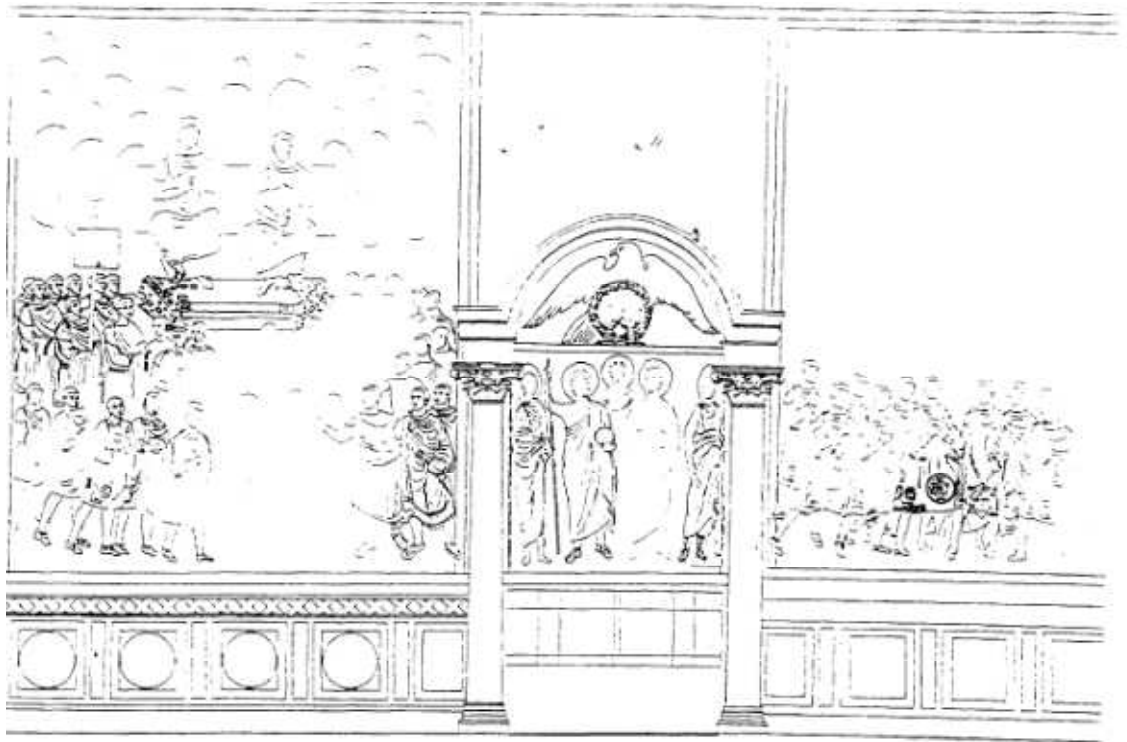

Figure 1: Detail of the reconstruction of the mural painting at the Luxor temple. The emperors are depicted in the central niche. From: Rees 1993, page 185.

A scene similar to the mural painting in Luxor is seen on the Arch of Galerius in Thessaloniki. The arch was built in honour of the *Caesar* Galerius' victory over the Sassanid Empire in his capital, Salonika (modern day Thessaloniki). On one of the many reliefs we see the four emperors combined (see catalogue number 17). The two *Augusti* are seated while being flanked by the two standing *Caesares*. The *Augusti* are seated on spheres. Diocletian has the central-left position, (as usual) on the honorary position. His active gesture further emphasises his superior position within the system. Diocletian's feet are on the personification of the Heaven (*Ouranos-Caelus*). Those of Maximian rest upon the personification of the Inhabited World (*Oikoumene*); this distribution shows both the combined universal rule as well as the balance of power: Diocletian is the divine ruler while Maximinian has the more practical and controlling rule over the world. Both *Augusti* are being crowned by Victories in recognition of Galerius' victory over the

Sassanids. Galerius is portrayed standing next to Diocletian and Galerius in next to Maximinian. They are shown raising their feet to two females next to them who probably personify their parts of the empire. The group of emperors is further surrounded by several gods, indicating their divinity (Bardill 2012: 69-72). On the arch of Galerius we also see a scene that depicts only Diocletian and Galerius in a sacrificial scene (see cat. 16). It is strange that only these two emperors are represented in an official monument but this might be because this is a representation of an actual event of the two eastern emperors meeting (possibly in Diocletian's capital, Antioch) (Pond Rothman 1977: 440-442).

These four or five collective representations all date from the First Tetrarchy which lasted from 293 to 305. When Diocletian and Maximian abdicated the Second Tetrarchy was formed. This second formation lasted only about a year, from 305 to 306, when Constantius I Chlorus died.

From this period we have two more collective representations, both found at Romuliana, the palace of emperor Galerius.

The first consists of two more or less identical pilasters (see for the intact one catalogue number 8), of which one is badly damaged while the other one is nearly intact. The pilasters bear a relief that represent a military standard, consisting of 5 discs of which the top, middle and lowest one each have a pair of emperors in them. The bottom disc (medallion) is occupied by the deified *Augusti Seniores,* Diocletian and Maximianus. As with the other group representations the position on the left side is the honorary position, as well as the left figure being slightly taller, so this figure represents Diocletian. They are wearing togas. The central and top medallions represent the current emperors. Again, the hierarchy is determined by the positioning which indicates that the Augustus and Caesar from one half of the empire are represented together in a medallion. The August is placed on the left and is taller. Both the August and the Caesar wear a *paludamentum*, which was a cloak originally worn by high-ranking Roman officers (Smith 1875: 853). The clasps of the *Augusti* are however decorated by a circular gem, whereas the *Caesares'* clasps are plain. It is impossible to say which 'part of the empire' is in which medallion: they are, again, representations of the institution, not of the actual persons, although the creators and original viewers would have known who represented who. The second, more damaged, pilaster seems to have a different sequencing. Although only the bottom medallion is fairly well preserved, the middle has lost any detail and the top one is

completely gone. In the bottom medallion we see two emperors that are shown at the same height wearing *paludamentum* with the same clasp. The persons in the middle medallion are also shown at the same height, while larger than the persons in the bottom medallion; any further details have been lost (Srejović 1994: 145). Srejović (1994: 145) therefore (in my opinion) rightfully assumes that in here we see the *Caesares* paired in the bottom medallion and the *Augusti* are depicted in the central medallion. It seems as though the hierarchy between the two ('active') *Augusti* has faded, no clear sign of (absolute) power is shown unlike the porphyry monument from the Vatican or the painting at Luxor, where this is done. If the duo in the top medallion was still visible this would be able to show us exactly how the Tetrarchy functioned at this point: it represented Diocletian and Maximianus, but were they depicted in equal height? If so this would be rather odd so I think this was not the case, if Diocletian was represented taller this might mean that he was still considered the head of the Empire even though he was retired.

What is strange about these representations is that all emperors are bearded: apparently the hierarchy was enough emphasised by the positioning, height difference and difference in clothing details. I think that a possible explanation for the beards could be that the *Ceasares* also started wearing beards, possibly to further emphasise their unity and/or authority.

The second example from Romuliana is another pilaster, although here only a fragment remains. The terrible condition it is in is due to the fact it was reused in a Early Byzantine house. It's the middle part of a pilaster. This third pilaster was also a relief representation of a military standard. This fragment shows three figures: on top are two figures wearing tunics standing on an inscribed bar, below it is a winged figure wearing armour. The two persons in the upper part are emperors, the winged figure is Victoria. It is likely that the composition of the entire pilaster was comparable to those on the other two pilasters mentioned. This would mean that there were three rows of paired emperors were above each other with a Victoria behind every pair, crowning the two (so the Victoria of the surviving fragment was part of the pair below the surviving emperors). Identifying which emperors are represented is impossible as we have seen in the difference in order between the previous mentioned pilasters, but it is near-certain the same six persons are represented (Srejović 1994: 146).

2.2 Individual Representations

What we see in the individual representations is somewhat more diverse. On the one hand we see several portraits that are clearly made to represent a specific individual, while others are represented in a more 'generalized' way. What should be kept in mind with several of these individual representations is that they might have been part of a group, which consisted of all four emperors as might be the case with the porphyry head from Romulania (Srejović 1994: 144-151). The possibility that several of the surviving individual portraits are in fact part of a group makes it difficult to make any certain assumptions whether there is any distinction between the group- and individual representations. Still, we will look at several 'individual' portraits.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the portraiture of the Tetrarchs is somewhat of a continuation of the portraiture of the ´Soldier-Emperors´; the short, cropped hair and beard are present in most portraits, although there are some exceptions. The identification of individuals is possible in a relatively large amount of portraits, the identification is mainly based upon numismatic comparisons. The basing from numismatic evidence has, however, its drawbacks as there is a significant difference between mints. What also should be kept in mind is that the previously discussed *similitudo* probably is also present in (some of) the portraits.

First we will have a look at the Porphyry portraits. There are five portraits that have been found individually, but as noted they may have been part of a group. The strongest and in my opinion most important example is a bust found in Athribis, Egypt (See catalogue 11). It is a bust from the later period of the Tetrachy (after 305), with a much discussed identification (Kiss 1984: 95). It's either Licinius, Galerius or Maximinus Daia, although the current consensus favors Galerius as the most likely represented. The overall style of the bust is reminiscent of the two porphyry groups from Venice and Rome. The stern, distant look from his unnaturally large eyes are a clear extension from these group monuments: it shows the commitment of the individual in performing his duty, with nothing being able to distract him in his cause. Further, his cloak (*paludamentum)* is again in a stylized way represented; it is to show the person's function (that of the 'soldier-emperor') and nothing more.

A portrait similar to the bust from Antioch shows the same style (see catalogue 22), and probably the same individual (Galerius). It is equally stylized, but in a more neutral

expression and even less dynamic. It is difficult to interpret this statue but it might be that this statue has a different political meaning than the one from Egypt. The difference might be further dependant on the dating and/or difference in workshop (Srejović 1994: 150).

Another porphyry head, the only one of whom the identification is undisputed, from Galerius shows that the hierarchal system was also present in the individual (or at least groups that consisted of individual statues), as he is shown without a beard. What is interesting to see in this specific portrait is that although the portrait is extremely stylized certain specific physical characteristics are visible: a very small mouth, double chin and pronounced ears that are somewhat sticking out. These characteristics clearly show that a specific person is indented to be represented. Still, even in this individualized portrait the unity of rule is present; Galerius is wearing a *corona triumphalis* which shows both gems and small busts of all four emperors that are placed in a laurel crown. Unfortunately there is no further identification possible in the busts as all heads have been cut off.

This head, together with another fragment (see catalogue 35) from Romuliana has by far the most stylized hair of all porphyry sculptures: it is merely indicated by a difference in height but nothing more, not the usual chipped lines as are present in the other porphyry and marble sculptures.

There are also three known fragments (see cat. 6, 9 and 35), all three from modern-day Serbia, of which two are also from Romuliana. The other fragment, from Transdierna, is the forehead and eyes that look quite similar to the other indivual porphyry portraits(especially the one from Athribis). This fragment doesn't tell us much more apart from further confirming the uniformal style of porphyry sculpture at the time.

The same goes for the other two fragments; one is a hand holding an orb, as can also be seen in the Vatican group, this makes it likely that this fragment was part of a group monument with all emperors holding orbs. The second fragment is part of a head consisting of the neck and lower part of the back of the head; the small piece of hair shows the same style of hair as the other portrait from Romuliana (Srejović 1994: 143-145).

What the known porphyry portraits tell us is that they probably all intended to send the same political message. They are in a distinct style with very little stylistical fluctuation between the different statues. These statues were perhaps an

extension from the porphyry groups we know and it even possible that most of them were in fact part of groups.

When looking at the marble portraits the uniformity and *similitudo* is less present. Most portraits do have the typical beard and hair but compared to the porphyry sculptures the style is often far less uniform. One thing that should be noted is that marble was significantly more used and also used over a larger time span, so although certain statues represent a tetrarch it does not automatically mean that he was at the time tetrarch (or did not truly identify with it).

We will look at some examples to explain the differences and their ideology. We see several statues that look quite similar to the porphyry ones, although as said they are less uniform. The look in the person's eyes can be divided in looking upward or direct at the viewer. Looking upward in general indicates seeking divine guidance (Bardill 2012: 14-15). The difference in style has something to do with ideology namely whether or not one identified with the constitution (see the next two paragraphs), but can also just be difference in the workshops' styles (see chapter 4).

2.3 Maxentius and Constantine

Maxentius was the son of Maximianus Heraclius. He spend his youth largely at the court of Diocletian along with Constantine and other family members of the Tetrarchs to make sure they wouldn't rebel against Diocletian. During the forming of the Second Tetrarchy Maxentius was not appointed a position within the new composition, much to his dismay. When Constantius died a year after his appointment as senior emperor in 306 his son Constantine was appointed as new *Caesar* of the west after being pronounced emperor by his troops. Due to the negative view Constantine had on the Praetorian Guard they pronounced Maxentius emperor. Maxentius wasn't recognized; the *Caesar* of the second Tertarchy, Severus, was pronounced *Augustus* of the West. Maxentius defeated and killed Severus after battle in 307 and continued to be an usurper until 312 while Constantine became the official emperor in the west. Maxentius was eventually defeated by Constantine in the battle at the Milvian Bridge near Rome, after which he became the only ruler in the west.

Both Constantine and Maxentius did not continue the Tetrarchic art canon. They both reached back to an earlier period but for different reasons. It was Maxentius' ideal to restore the power of the city of Rome itself, we call this *Romanitas*. He propagated the traditional Roman idea of the city being the centre of the world. We see this mainly in his building projects and the monuments he erected such as the Basilica- and Circus of Maxentius. We are not certain whether this was also depicted in his statuary, because there are few sculptures that are certainly his (Cullhead 1994: 61) . If the two statues as *Pontifex Maximus* (catalogue 4 & 30) indeed represent him (which is not sure) this could give us an indication that indeed his style represents the imperial style of the 2nd century A.D. Also several of his images have been resculpted to represent Constantine, one example is a statue originally placed at the Baths of Maxentius and Constantine (see catalogue 29).

Identifying portraits of Constantine from the Tetrarchic period is difficult because the coins indicate that Constantine (too) broke from the 'traditional' way of representations in the Tetrarchich period. Here we see that he already was representing himself in a more juvenile way with little to no beard and more modest brow contrary to the coins we have from the other Tetrarchs (Bardill 2012: 11).

2.4 Ideology after the Tetrarchs

The end of the Tetrarchs in terms of Ideology as seen in art is even more difficult to define as the end of the institution is. The problem is that while the Tetrarchy was still the official system of rule, there were several usurpers (most notably Maxentius) who didn't identify with the institution. Also after the second Tetrarchy ended in 306 the members were often in open war with each other so there was no more unified glory or victory. We don't see any more combined monuments after the second Tetrarchy. The first monument we see that includes again several emperors is the Arch of Constantine dating from 315. Here find mainly Constantine the Great but also representations of his (deceased) father Constantius I and of his co-emperor Licinius I sculpted in a very classic style (see catalogue 31, 32 and 33).

One thing that is directly noticeable is the way of representation: Constantine is no longer portrayed as wearing a ('military') beard but instead was clean-shaven. Also the position of their eyes changed as can be seen in the colossal head of Licinius from Ephesus (see catalogue number 27) and the colossal statue of Constantine from Rome (see catalogue

number 35): the look upward instead of directly at the viewer. So it is quite clear that the two emperors that 'survived' the Tetrarchy didn't want to be associated with this past anymore. The reason for this is that they both wanted to establish dynasties rather than continuing the 'election' of future rulers (Bardill 2012: 14). Of Licinius there aren't that many other portraits known (at least from after his period as a Tetrarch). Constantine however left us with a huge amount of statues and other monuments. It is good to look at some of them to get a better image of his perception. Arguably the strongest example is that of his triumphal arch in Rome: both the style of the monument as well as the (re-)used sculpture send a message that he identified with the great emperors of the 2nd century (Bardill 2012: 94-95). What is interesting to note is that the competition between these two emperors can be seen in the way they are represented. The head of Licinius from Ephesus seems rather odd in the way an emperor is represented: clearly aging and, more interestingly, he is smiling; these two elements are contrary to what we see in Constantine's representations: that of a young, handsome man with a stern expression (Ellingsen 2003: 31). After Licinius was defeated in 324 Constantine further distanced himself from the recent past by starting to identify himself with Alexander the Great. On coins he started to wear a diadem and a bronze colossus in his new capital Constantinople showed him as a Hellenistic ruler (Bardill 2012: 28-36). He did however continue the use of porphyry and the reliefs from his reign and they too had a rather unnaturalistic style. One porphyry sculpture seems to be however a complete continuation of the Tetrarchich style, it a fragment from a porphyry head (see catalogue 7) that has a very strong resemblance to the heads in the Venice group. The dating is disputed (Bergmann 1977:166)(Vasić 2001: 245-251), however it is most likely from the 2nd decade of the 4th century, with a likely date being 315 (the *decennalia* (ten year of rule) of Constantine). It is probably not intended to represent either Licinius or Constantine but their 'hybrid': again it is mainly intended to celebrate the imperial institution (at this point a 'Diarchy'). It is possible that relatively shortly after the dissolution of the Tetrarchy the idea of the imperial unity was again implied, as there were now two emperors with a common cause, and that in their public image they indented not to show any rivalry. Of course the rivalry grew stronger which eventually resulted in the propaganda against each other as can be seen in the other examples.

Chapter 3- Materials

In this chapter I will look at the materials used for the sculptures. I will look at both their cultural and physical characteristics and will also try to give some information about their provenance.

3.1 Porphyry

Material characteristics

First of all I must note that porphyry in (Roman) art and porphyry in geology aren't exactly the same materials. Porphyry in geology is a significantly larger group of stones. In Roman art porphyry refers to Egyptian red porphyry.

Porphyry means purple in Greek (Malgouyeres 2003: 13), all types of porphyry are thus called after the ancient red Egyptian type, although porphyry isn't explicitly red. What makes a stone a porphyry is its formation. It is a subvolcanic rock, so it is formed in subterranean conditions. Porphyry is formed in two stages, the relatively large crystals (in the case of red porphyry feldspar and sometimes quartz) are formed separately deep in the earth and are subsequently surrounded by a matrix consisting of finer crystals that formed closer to the surface (Van Der Lijn 1958: 55), thus creating the rather unique texture. The crystals most often are feldspar or quartz.

The red porphyry from Egypt is meta-andesite phorphyrite that contains a large amount of very small white feldspar crystals, the red colour is created by tiny iron oxide crystals in the matrix.

Two other types of porphyry used in antiquity were green and black porphyry, although I think it is unlikely they were considered to be the same material by the ancient Romans, mainly because it was not purple as will be explained further on. The source of green porphyry was however rather close to the red porphyry source, about 3 kilometers south of Mons Porphyrites. It was also found in Greece, near Sparta (Malgouyres 2003: 13). Black porphyry was also found at Mons Porphyrites, it was actually the first type to be discovered as an inscription at the site indicates. Black porphyry was however apparently not as popular and seems to have been abandoned in the first decades of quarrying (Malgouyres 2003: 16).

Source

As explained in the previous paragraph the only (red) porphyry used came from Egypt, from the mountain Mons Porphyrites, although other types of porphyry were thus present within the Roman Empire. Mons Porphyrites is over 1900 m high and today is known as Djebel Duchan ('the smoking mountain'). It's located north of Wadi Hammat, a dry riverbed (wadi) that was used as a trading route to connect the Nile (at the city of Koptos) with the Red Sea (at the harbour city of Myos Hormos). It is located about 50 kilometres to the northwest of Myos Hormos and 150 kilometres to the northeast of Koptos (see map in figure 2)(Delbrueck 1932: 1). ,It was first discovered by Burton and Wilkinson in 1822 when they were conducting a geological survey of Egypt. A large survey and excavation of the site was conducted during the 1990s (Maxfeld & Peacock 2001). The complex consisted of six quarries (each with a slightly different kind of stone) that had a permanent habitation consisting of several villages with temples, the complex also possessed a watering system so crops were also grown.

In antiquity the source was discovered by a roman soldier in ca. 18 A.D., the area was used as quarry from then on by the Romans. The porphyry was cut into blocks and then transported over land to Koptos and Kainepolis where it was transported to Alexandria by boats over the Nile and from there shipped to other destinations across the Mediterranean. Another possible route via the Red Sea does not seem to have been used (Delbrueck 1932: 2)(Malgrouyeres 2003:17). During the age of Diocletian the completion of statues and other objects was already done at Mons Porphyrites by Christians convicts, with the exception of imperial statues. These were probably made in special ateliers, although Delbrueck (1932: 2) does not note where these were located (I think Alexandria is most probable). The permanent usage of the quarries seems to have halted around 350 A.D. with occasional working expeditions continuing for another hundred years. After this period we only find evidence that hermits visited the site from the inscriptions they left (Delbrueck 1932: 11). This did not mean that porphyry wasn't used anymore: we find many examples of reused porphyry from the latter antique and medieval period, all (red) porphyry objects we have in Europe from

the 4th to the 18th century have its source provenance in Mons Porphyrites (Malgouyeres 2003: 11).
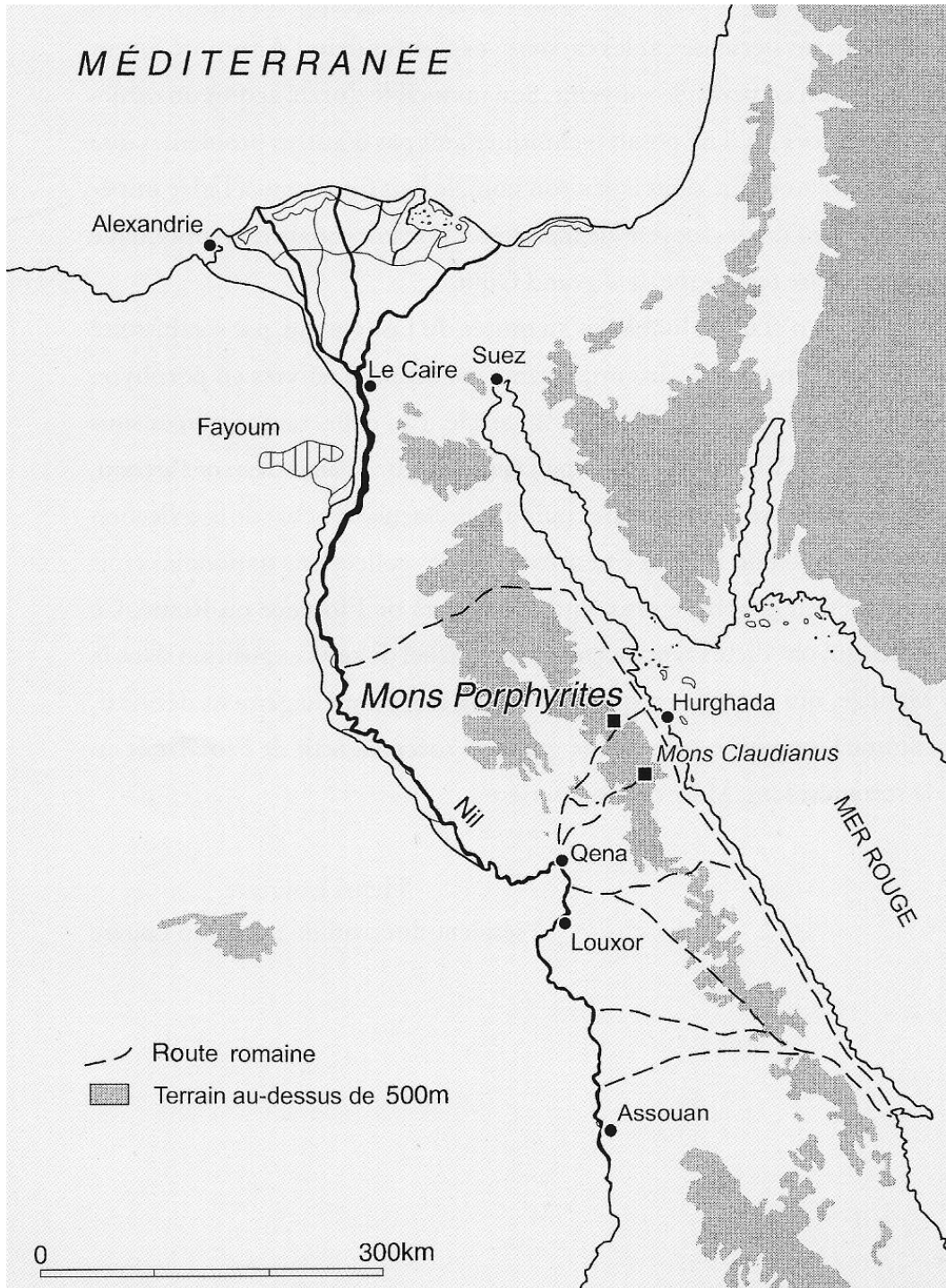

Figure 2: Map of Egypt (in French) indicating the location of Mons Porphyrites. From Malgouyres 2003, page 10.

Cultural Value

Porphyry was a material reserved for imperial use during the Tetrarchy (Kitzinger 1977: 9). This was not directly because of the stone but because of the cultural value attached to the colour purple. The significance of purple developed over the course of almost two millennia; initially it was 'limited' to clothing as the purple dye used was one of the most expensive materials in the ancient world. The expensiveness came from the extremely time consuming way of production: the glands of 20.000 molluscs were needed for only a few grams of dye. It was however very much in demand because of the value already attached to the colour purple: it was seen a divine colour. Because of its price it was reserved for the more elite already in the bronze- and iron age. The affiliation with royalty developed with the (Achaemenidian-) Persians who only allowed it to be worn by the king and a select few who received it as gift from him. When Alexander the Great Conquered Persia he adopted the colour in his royal garments (although he allowed it to be worn by anybody). His heirs adopted this tradition and expanded it by making almost their entire outfit purple. Imperial Rome seems to have adopted this fashion: the colour of one's clothing showed his status better than the actual clothing itself. Several emperors, most notably Augustus and Nero, tried to attach the colour purple to the imperial household. Laws concerning who could wear purple fluctuated until (our) Emperor Diocletian deemed the Tyrian purple-making workshops imperial property. He truly made purple a sign of the imperial household, only he-, his co-emperors- and their households were allowed to dress in purple, others wearing it were to be severely punished (Elliott 2008: 178-184). It was under him that the colour purple itself became a symbol of imperial rule; this is where porphyry comes into place. Emperors were from now on buried in Porphyry coffins (although the oldest surviving examples come from the Constantinian period) and imperial births were given in rooms richly decorated with porphyry (Elliott 2008:184). Although there are a few imperial statues executed in porphyry before Diocletian it stands in no comparison to the amount of statues in porphyry from the Tetrarchs. This huge increase in imperial porphyry

statues is thus the result of the full claim upon the colour. The only sure example we have that the head of an Pre-Tetrarchic imperial statue was made out of porphyry is that of two columns that have the bust of Nerva and Trajan on them (see fig. 3).

Figure 3: Porphyry busts of Nerva (left) and Trajan. H.: c. 0,50 m. Originally from Rome, currently at Musée du Louvre, Paris. Source: combined image of http://www.lessing-photo.com/search.asp?a=1&kc=2020202072A7&kw=PORPHYRY&p=2 and http://www.lessing-photo.com/search.asp?a=1&kc=202020203C45&kw=CAESAR&p=21&ipp=6

It was used in other imperial statues too but always in combination with another material, with the porphyry making up the clothing and marble representing the flesh; a good example is a bust of Caracalla (see fig. 4). This combined use too continued as can be seen in several torsos we have from this period, although none are complete. What becomes clear from these three statues is that a significant higher amount of detail could be achieved in porphyry as the porphyry sculptures from the Tetrarchic era show us.

Figure 4: Bust of Caracalla with the head made of Marble and the bust made of Porphyry. Life size, found and displayed at the Capitoline Museum, Rome. Modern restorations on the right breast and nose. Source: http://www.ancientpeddler.com/roman%20imp/severan/caracalla/caracalla.htm

It is near-certain that the porphyry sculptures were not painted, for two reasons. First of all the stone was chosen for its colour so painting over this would be unnecessary. Secondly, the surface of the stone is not absorbing/porous, unlike marble, so paint will not attach to the stone.

3.2 Marble

Material characteristics

Marble is a crystalline limestone consisting of calciumcarbonate that is formed under very high pressures and temperatures. Differences between different sources can be observed through variations in colour, size of the individual crystals or type of mineral inclusions (Walker 1984: 205). The grain-size largely affected how the stone was worked and therefore affected the amount of detail that could be achieved.

Compared to porphyry it was much more reused for two reasons. The first was that because of the easier workability the statue could be resculpted easier into the likes of another (later) emperor or other person. Secondly, especially in the early medieval period, it was burned in huge amounts to make quicklime for the construction of buildings.

Provenance

Marble was a far less rare stone, the amount of sources is great. Several of the more important mines were Carrara in Italy and several in Greece and Turkey.

As with porphyry, it was cut into blocks and then transported to workshops all over the empire and worked there into sculptures and other decorative objects. It was also used as a building material because of it bright white colour.

It is possible to determine the provenance of a marble statue through either colour and inclusion identification, which works with specific types of marble, and isotope analysis, which can differentiate nearly every source. The problem is that this is costly and has (to my current knowledge) not been done on any statue from the Tetrarchic period.

Cultural Value

For sculptures, especially those of the elite such as the emperors, marble was a material of preference due to the high level of detail that could be easily achieved.

Marble was, as in the entire antiquity, painted. The amount of detail that was present in the painted layer in this period of time is hard to tell as none is still preserved with the paint still on it, nor has there been any attempt to reconstruct this. It was allowed to be used by anybody; there was no imperial claim to it.

3.3 Other Materials

In my research I have found a few statues that were not made of marble nor porphyry. Although there are only three known statues made of bronze from this period (see catalogue number 23, 37 and 38), this material category will probably have made up a significant percentage of the statues of the time period. Bronze is a valuable material and so when a statue was no longer deemed 'necessary' it would be melted down and used for another purpose, for example a new statue, coins, tools etc. This saw its most extreme phase during the fall of the roman empire and the early middle ages, although it is very possible that most bronze statues were already destroyed during the aftermath of the Tetrarchy on command of Constantine and/or Licinius. Bronze was considered a valuable material with which one could achieve a high amount of detail and was more resistant to weathering and damage. Because of this in, at least the earlier periods of the empire, the most prestigious were cast from bronze. These statues were besides this often gilded, further increasing their appeal and value.

Another type of stone used for one (known) statue is basalt (see catalogue number 10). Black basalt can also be found in Egypt and is reminiscent of porphyry although it is black instead of red. Because of the difference in colour in probably had less cultural value than porphyry.

We have at least one limestone portrait from this period, found in Egypt (see catalogue 36). As with marble this material was easily workable and used often in construction, the amount of detail that could be achieved was however limited due to its coarseness.

Is it possible that there were even more materials used for the statues? I personally think so, but they probably were rare and not the material of preference. We have two examples from Egypt, one small wooden statue and one small terracotta relief, which are not further discussed, because they are not as much part of the Imperial Ideology; they were for domestic use. Terracotta should be preserved in nearly all (soil-) conditions so it is quite possible that this indeed was a medium rarely used, as we have no other (current)

examples. Wood on the other hand only survives in extremely dry- or anaerobic (waterlogged) conditions, so it's hard to tell, but very likely that more have existed.

3.4 Conclusion

It is hard to reconstruct what the original frequencies of materials was, as some are more likely to be preserved than others, in different circumstances. It is clear that porphyry made a huge leap in imperial use due to Diocletian's claim to the colour purple, while marble and bronze (probably) also remained a standard and much used material. Where I did not go into much deeper in this thesis but what made up quite a deal of the representations were 2D images in form of mosaics, coins and frescos.

Chapter 4 – Styles

In the portraits that we have from this period we have several different 'styles' as I like to call them. In this chapter I will try to somewhat categorise- , explain- and put the portraits in chronological order.

4.1 Diocletian before the Tetrarchy:

As we have seen in chapter one the Tetrarchy wasn't formed directly with the ascension to the throne by Diocletian, but in this period too imperial portraits were created. It is difficult to certainly date specific portraits because of the abstract method of representation in most portraits. One portrait that is probable from the early years of his ascension is one from Nicomedia (see catalogue no. 2). It is dated stylistically to the period 280-285 (Calza 1972: 91), since Diocletian didn't rise to power until 284 this portrait should be from his first two years as (sole) emperor. Another two (one of which is reused(?)) portraits that look quite similar may also be from this period (see catalogue no. 1 & 24). In these three portraits we see a bearded emperor with a laurel crown. Both the hair, beard and laurel are realistically depicted. There are also some portraits depicting Diocletian without a beard most notably the Copenhagen head (see cat. 12). The fact that he is portrayed beardless might also indicate that this is a portrait from a relatively early date.

All these portraits have a quite strong resemblance to the imperial portraits of the earlier 3rd century. These portraits are still based upon the classical Hellenistic canon: they emphasize the individual and their character. During the 3rd century there was however somewhat of a simplification of the hair and beard, L'Orange (1965: 106-110) considers this the Impressionism of the antique as the realistic style (Hellenism/Realism) laid the basis for these new styles.

4.2 - During the Tetrarchy

The style that we in general associated with the Tetrarchy seems to indeed have been truly introduced to the imperial portraiture with the creation of the Tetrarchy. However, this was not the only style that was used during this period. Even if we ignore the portraits of Maxentius and Constantine there still remains a large amount of portraits that do (completely) fit in the style seen at the communal monuments. These portraits, such as the two nearly identical ones of Constantius (cat. 26 & 28), show us that they are clearly

from the Tetrarchic era, further supported by numismatic evidence. These do have a rather militaristic expression typical along with the suggestion of movement of the third century but not the unnatural and 'distant' traits seen in some of the other statues. Other more realistic images have two almost standard traits: the eyes are often not as focussed and directed to the viewer but are look to one side; also something what is really striking are the very pronounced tearsacks. Further there often still some kind of hint of motion; all three characteristics can be very clearly seen in a head from Maxmianus (see cat. 19).

Especially in marble portraits we see a clash of styles: the impressionistic and stern are combined (see for example cat. 18 & Y). The result is a a-symmetrical and 'messy' image as a result, the hint of movement is still somewhat present but only makes the image look more 'odd'. L'Orange (1965: 111-114) speaks of a blocklike simplification of the head. He further notes that the facial features are placed upon the rather than evolving from inside the face. This block-like style of representation originated in the east and then further spread throughout the empire. Local Roman and to some degree Greek local styles remained more traditional and organic, it wasn't until the latter part of Constantine's rule that the more eastern style became the standard in the entire empire (L'Orange 1965: 114-115).

As we will see in the next chapter style was also greatly affected by the location of production. This is quite well documented and explained in a study by Kiss (1984); this study focusses on Egypt. With the rise in popularity of porphyry we see that although it was used throughout the empire, it seems to have been (mainly) sculpted in Egypt. This explains the relatively 'eastern' look that all porphyry statues have from this period. It is however not limited to porphyry; most statues have a rather eastern look. We can consider this style 'Romano-Egyptian'; the term eastern is due to the fact that it highly resembles the art we have from Palmyra (for example see figure 5). In Palmyra we see already before the Tetrarchy a very stylized way of representation. This does however not mean that all representations in the east are in this style; for instance, the Luxor fresco is painted in a very 'Roman' style. An explanation for this might be that as it was used as a temporal base for Diocletian, and that his household, including his artists were present; further images could have been transported, both ways.

This style was not only limited to portraiture but can also be seen in reliefs, the most important relief(s) we have are from the Arch of Galerius in Thessaloniki. What we see

here is that there is a strict order of representation: the most important figures are placed in the centre surrounded by a symmetrical mass of figures, placed in hierarchical order; important figures are further emphasized by difference in height. This structure can be seen in nearly all reliefs of the time, and continues well into the middle ages (L'Orange 1965:).

Figure 5: Funerary stone from Palmyra, dated to the first quarter of the 3rd century C.E. Note the woman's stare in her eyes and the very stylized way her dress is represented. Currently at the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leiden. Source: http://www.rmo.nl/collectie/-topstukken-

To continue in this 'eastern' style; It had a wide currency in official high-class art during the Tetrarchy and may be found in a variety of media beside sculpture (coins and mosaics). The hallmark of the style wherever it appears consists of an emphatic hardness, heaviness and angularity- in short, an almost complete rejection of the classical tradition. Some people consider this phenomenon as a decline: less effort to produce an representation, their way of creating statuary changed from modelling to engraving. There was a loss of craftsmanship, traditional forms may have been abandoned not because they were difficult to execute but because they were no longer relevant, (which would make sense in both the group-unity and the introduction of the dominate). The organisation within sculptures was no longer based upon naturalistic positioning within but rather on a

mechanical order of depiction, we see this especially within reliefs, most notably the 'new' elements from the Arch of Constantine as well as the reliefs from Romulania. Another reason or aspect might be that the empire was greatly influenced by outside influences (Africa and Western Asia, with Palmyra being a good example)(Kittzinger 1977: 12-17)(L'Orange 1965: 88-89). Further the works are often characterized by their symmetry and the fact that the importance of the person is depicted through difference in height (L'Orange 1965: 92) It might also have its origin in the very heartland of the Empire: Italy. Here indigenous or plebeian art remained distinct and unclassical, with unnatural proportions within depictions, which had a 'revive' towards the elite during the time of the Tetrarchy. This revive was probably created due to the fact that the elite was changing in composition. Whereas in the first two centuries the majority of emperors, generals and senators was of Italian descent, during the 3rd century the military gained importance. The makeup of the military during period was for a large amount from the provinces. Especially the areas that we nowadays call the Balkan yielded a large amount of emperors during the Crisis of the 3rd Century, including the Tetrarchs. These did not identify with the classical way of representation, one could consider this propaganda for this new social makeup. You can already see in portraits of Claudius Gothicus and Probus (in both cases mainly with the way hair is represented, and the stiffer representation of the individual) that the style was somewhat changing, although it seems to truly 'escalate' with the Tetrarchs (see figure 6 and 7).

Figure 6: Gilded bronze portrait of Claudius Gothicus from 268-269 C.E. Currently at Santa Giulia Museum, Brescia, Italy. Image Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Santa_Giulia_4.jpg
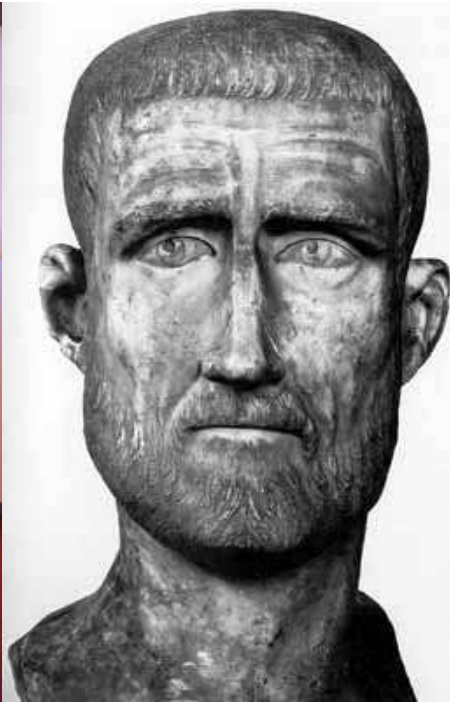

Figure 7: Marble portrait of Probus from 278-282 C.E. Currently at the Capitoline Museum, Rome. Image Source: http://thepaolas.com/Emperors/Emperors/Scans/Probus.jpg

Chapter 5 – Spread of the Portraits

In this chapter I will look at the spread of the statues over the empire in several ways:

- Material dispersion
- Where is which emperor found?
- Where is which 'style' found?

The statues in the catalogue cover a slightly lager timespan than the Tetrachy itself; it also covers the period of Licinius I and Constantine I as the only remaining rulers (313-324), the portraits that certainly or very likely belong to this period are not included in this analysis and are only included in the catalogue to understand the post-tetrarchic developments in representation.

5.1 - Material Dispersion

In figure 6 below we see the spread of porphyry sculptures. I intentionally did not include the other materials because these were either found everywhere (marble (although there is a hiatus in Spain and Britain)) or too rare (bronze and other stones). Of the porphyry portraits a relatively high percentage has a known provenance so although the amount of known porphyry sculptures is small it gives us somewhat of a good idea how the original dispersion may have been. As can be seen in the catalogue also a number of torsos in porphyry were found, the identification and dating of those is more difficult and their heads might have been from another material (in most cases marble) as we have already seen with the bust of Caracalla. These busts were found in the same areas though. Returning to the map: we can see that the spread of Porphyry is rather limited. The most western find is located in Rome (the Vatican library group), the most northern are found in or close to Galerius' palace at Romulania in modern-day Serbia.
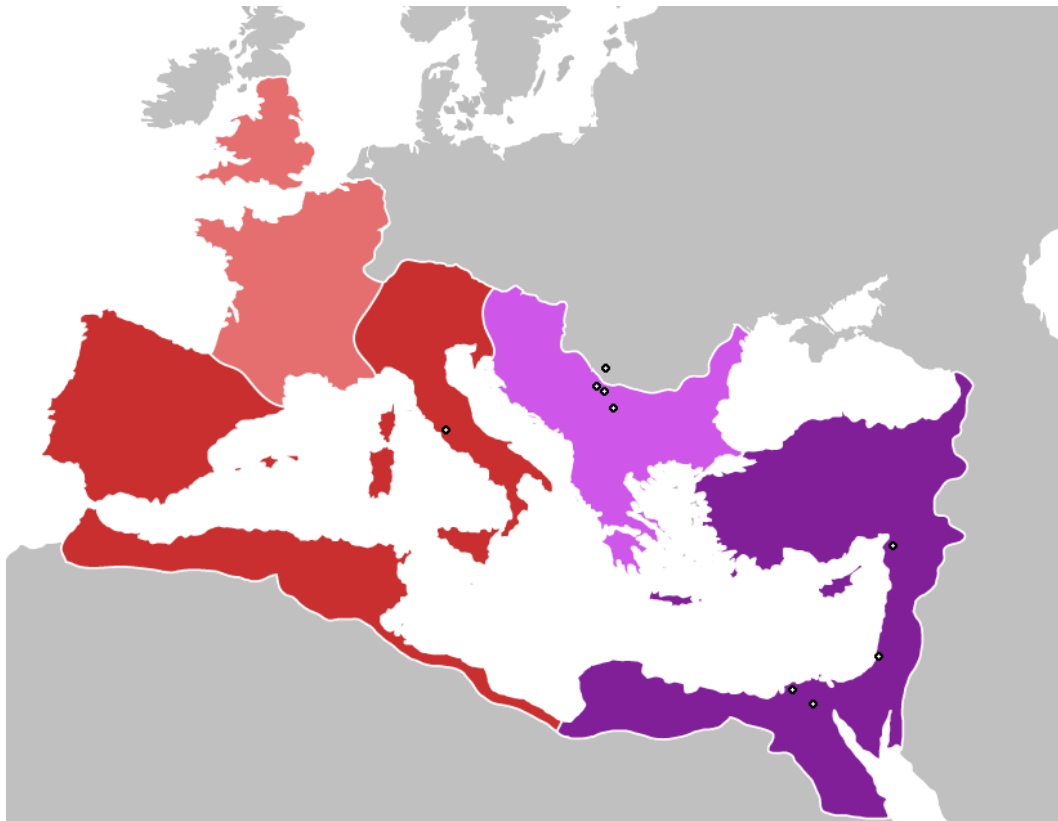
Figure 8: Original spread of the porphyry sculptures of whom this is (near-) certain. Sculptures of which it is certain that they are part of a group are combined in one dot. The different colours show the borders of the areas divided between the four emperors during the First Tetrarchy; light red: Constantius, dark red: Maximianus, light purple: Galerius, dark purple: Diocletian. Source: http://members.tripod.com/chanyut_1/oliverssite/id48.html edited using paint.

5.2 - Dispersion of Individual Portraits

I was also thinking about including a map where which indiviual emperor was found. This proved to be both problematic and unnecessary. Most of the identifications have been based on a combination of comparing the images with those found on numismatic portraits and the area in which they were found. Thus in most cases the emperor found was in their part or halve of the empire (in the case of individual representations). Diocletian is common also outside his half of the empire, mainly in Rome. This shows that Diocletian was seen as the supreme emperor but also that a region was indeed bound to a certain emperor. The amount of portraits found in the eastern part of the empire and Rome is significantly higher than those further to the west.

5.3 - Spread of Style

As discussed in the previous chapter there is a clear correlation between the area where a portrait is found and in what (general) style it has been made. Some portraits from the east are in a more classical style though and some western portraits have more eastern traits although this is less expressed. The exceptions in style may very well be imports or the product of 'non-native' sculptors, working under a different canon.

5.4 - Contexts

Unfortunately a lot of statues were excavated without proper documentation, fortunately we can get a pretty accurate guess in what contexts most statues have originally stood. What is interesting is that porphyry sculpture indeed only were placed in important cities and palaces. This not mean that marble was excluded from such places, they are however found in more common places also. in my opinion it thus seems that porphyry was closer to the emperors themselves, as it was rarer and probably also more expensive. There are relatively a lot of finds from Serbia. It could be that here have been relatively many excavations on Late-Roman sites but this could also have to do with the fact that this was the region of origin for many of the Tetrarchs (Diocletian, Constantius, Galerius, Licinius and Maximinus were probably all born in what is today Serbia) further especially large and important cities seems to have porphyry sculptures in them. Also interesting is that at least two porphyry sculptures (the enthroned emperor from Alexandria and the Vatican group) were originally placed in temples that were (probably) dedicated to the Imperial Cult.

Conclusion

As I have shown there is not one direct reason for the difference in style between the marble and porphyry portraits, even more there is no absolute distinction between the two 'styles'. There are a number of reasons that in combination created the distinction between the two styles. The two most important reasons in my opinion are the production location and the political message that was intended to be showed. It is nearly certain that nearly every, if not all, porphyry statues from the Tetrarchic era were sculpted in Egypt. Local differences in sculpture canons seem to have been maintained over time, and possibly (then) 'recent' influences from the east (e.g. Palmyra) defined the local style. Finds we have found so far seem to indicate that porphyry was mainly used in the core regions of the empire. Unfortunately a lot of the original contexts of porphyry statues have been lost and often the remains are fragmentary themselves. It seems that porphyry was the material of preference in monuments; these monuments often included all four Tetrarchs. Porphyry is more laborious than marble, still this probably had (in my opinion) little to do with the difference in style between most marble sculptures and the porphyry sculptures. Most sculptures in marble (although not all) seem to slightly more emphasize the individual. Beside this they were made over a much larger part of the empire where a different, local, more 'realistic' style was still in place. In my opinion, the combination porphyry together with this 'new' style of imperial canon were completely used to propagate the new imperial system. It shows us that one emperor became four, it also shows us a lot about the social structure of the time. The emperors who were part of the Tetrarchy all were people who originated from the Balkans, this was no coincidence. During the 3rd century the social structure of the empire greatly transformed. The old Italians families lost their importance to soldiers from the provinces; imperial portraiture showed this transition: by rejecting the classical canon they emphasised their own identity. The identity is shown in a style that apparently was already familiar to the lower classes of (especially) the eastern parts of the empire.

What should always be doubted is whether the dataset is representative for what once existed, as with any category of material that once existed only a fraction is preserved today. Besides this many contexts have been lost and it is hard to tell what happend to certain statues after the Tetrarchy before they were disposed. Should future (well documented) excavations yield more portraits of this era, especially if they are in

porphyry, my conclusions could be further confirmed. In the case that a very realistic, 'individual' portrait in porphyry were to be found this would prove me wrong.

In terms of tradition and innovation, I would consider this to be one of the most important periods of the Roman Empire. What we see is one of the largest changes in representation of the emperors. However the fact that imperial portraiture continues shows that the elite culture's concept did not break away completely from its past but gave a new interpretation to it, also mainly due to the fact that the imperial entity changed so much. The 'innovations' made by Diocletian were largely abolished by his heirs after the Tetrarchy ended, although during his reign or more specifically due to his reign the 'primitive' style that rose to popularity remained and set the base for the later Byzantine art.

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Appendix

Table of the Tetrachic rulers

	Western Augustus	Western Caesar	Eastern Augustus	Eastern Caesar	Notable Usurpers
First Tetrarchy (293-305)	Maximianus Heraclius	Constantinus I (senior)	Diocletianus Jovius (senior)	Galerius	
Second Tetrarchy (305-306)	Constantius I (senior)	Severus II (senior)	Galerius	Maximinus II Daia	
Third Tetrarchy (306-307)	Severus II	Constantine I The Great	Galerius (senior)	Maximinus II Daia (senior)	Maxentius Maximianus
Period of Discord (307-308)	None	Constantine I The Great	Galerius (senior)	Maximinus II Daia (senior)	Maxentius
1st revised Tetrarchy (308-310)	Licinius I	Constantine I The Great	Galerius (senior)	Maximinus II Daia (senior)	Maxentius
2nd revised Tetrarchy (310-313)	Licius I (as co-augustus)	Constantine I The Great (as co-augustus)	Galerius (senior and co-augustus until 311)	Maximinus II Daia (as co-augustus)	Maxentius (until 312) Maximianus (in 310)

(after Fens 2010 : 348-349)