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Editors’ Note

The JOURNAL OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS (JAC) is published annually in two fascicles by the Institute for the History of Ancient Civilizations (IHAC, Northeast Normal University, Changchun, Jilin Province, People’s Republic of China).

The aim of JAC is to provide a forum for the discussion of various aspects of the cultural and historical processes in the Ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean world, encompassing studies of individual civilizations as well as common elements, contacts and interactions among them (e.g. in such traditional fields as Assyriology, Hittitology, Egyptology, Classics, and Sinology among others). Hence, we publish the work of international scholars while also providing a showcase for the finest Chinese scholarship, and so welcome articles dealing with history, philology, art, archaeology and linguistics which are intended to illuminate the material culture and society of the ancient Near East, the Mediterranean region, and ancient China. Articles discussing other cultures will be considered for publication only if they are clearly relevant to the ancient Mediterranean world, the Near East and China. Information about new discoveries and current scholarly events is also welcome. Publishers are encouraged to send review copies of books in the relevant fields.

JAC is a double blind peer-reviewed journal. All submitted articles are first carefully read by at least two editors of JAC, who will give a feedback to the author. Articles (excluding book reviews or research reports) are afterwards reviewed anonymously by at least two referees in the specific field, appointed by the editorial board. In cases where the reviewers recommend changes in the manuscript, authors are requested to revise their articles. From time to time, we will publish a list of the referees to make the double blind peer-review process transparent and comprehensible.

Our double blind peer-reviewed articles of this issue present a study on the structure of the Hittite rule in respect of legal terminology in treaties, the anchoring of innovations with regard to religion in Ancient Rome and the influence of a high-ranked person on the issuing of certain coin types during the Tetrarchy. Instead of single reviews, we also offer the first part of a comprehensive research survey on recent developments and studies in the field of Ancient Economy. Additionally, our Forum opens the ground for a discussion of the chances and challenges of Comparative Studies.

All communications, manuscripts, disks and books for review should be sent to the Assistant Editor, Journal of Ancient Civilizations, Institute for the History of Ancient Civilizations, Northeast Normal University, 130024 Changchun, Jilin Province, People’s Republic of China (e-mail: jac@nenu.edu.cn), or to the Executive Director in Chief, Prof. Dr. Sven Günther, M.A. (e-mail: svenguenther@nenu.edu.cn or sveneca@aol.com).
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Introduction

Religious practices and preferences changed markedly throughout Roman history, yet at the same time, the ancient Roman world was dominated by tradition. A well-known characteristic of Roman morality was that people ought to behave according to *mos maiorum*. Innovation was suspect. Any literary, architectural and religious innovations were argued away by claims that they were in fact a return to ancestral customs.¹ There is, however, an apparent contradiction between the idea of an ever-adapting religious “market” which caters for both permanent niches and changing tastes, and a mental framework which strongly emphasises a “proper” ancestral way of doing things.² Indeed, many gods which were well-established in the Roman imperial period, such as Isis, Magna Mater, or Mithras, had at one stage or another – rightly or wrongly – been perceived as foreign imports and took their time in finding a place within Roman society. Not all of them managed to become socially acceptable members of the Roman pantheon.³

This article focuses on the apparent paradox between the historical reality of continuous developments in religious practices (and probably beliefs) and the equally continuous importance, for several groups within the Roman Empire, of maintaining that matters remained the same. It will do so by looking primarily at “the way [in which] religion [is] referred to and constituted in communication,” one of the three perspectives proposed by Jörg Rüpke in an insightful recent

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¹ See for an extended discussion on this point: Wallace-Hadrill 2008.
³ Orlin 2010.

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article on historical religion and religious transformation. It will suggest that a systematic analysis of the relation between exercising power and religious innovation is helpful to solve the paradox, and that an important concept within that analysis is “anchoring.” Ultimately, religious changes that were most easily “anchored” in changing traditions were the most successful ones.

**Faces of power and a shared field of experience**

When addressing the role of exercising power in religious innovation, it is important to make clear from the outset what is meant by power. This article will take as its starting point the probably most-used definition of the process of exercising power. Robert Dahl, in a seminal 1957 article, wrote famously: “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do.” The methods for A to get B to do so include physical constraint and coercion, but also persuasion. This has become known as the first dimension, or the first face, of power.

By implication, there are more faces of power. A second face, linked to the names of Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, includes non-decisions into the process of exercising power and is known as agenda-setting power:

… the researcher … would begin … by investigating the particular “mobilization of bias” in the institution under scrutiny. Then, having analyzed the dominant values, the myths and the established political procedures and rules of the game, he would make a careful inquiry into which persons or groups, if any, gain from the existing bias and which, if any, are handicapped by it. Next, he would investigate the dynamics of non decision-making; that is, he would examine the extent to which and the manner in which the status quo oriented persons and groups influence those community values and those political institutions … which tend to limit the scope of actual decision-making to “safe” issues.

Bachrach and Baratz effectively argue that power may have already been in play before A has to get B to do something. Through what they call the “mobilization of bias” certain notions or perspectives never come to the fore. A is so clearly in the dominant position, that B does not even make a demand upon A, which means A does not have to take action to get B not to do something he had originally wanted to.

A third face, also known as ideological power, was introduced by Steven Lukes in the 1970’s, and focuses attention on culturally influenced collective behavior.

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4 Rüpke 2015, 350.
5 Dahl 1957; Barry 1989, 223.
According to Lukes:

... A may exercise power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants. Indeed, is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have – that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires?7

Following the work by Michel Foucault, there is also reference to a “fourth face of power,” which is a “performative power” that reshapes reality as it exists in relationships and in the link between power and knowledge. This is a different mode of thinking about power, which distances itself from the basic assumption that someone (A) exercises power over someone else (B) through actions.8 That makes it a less useful part of a typology that aims to understand the role of the exercising power in religious innovation. This article will therefore not touch upon this further.

Now what about the use of the concept of “communication” in this article? To communicate any notions through which power can be expressed – or indeed constructed – there is the need for a shared terminology. Without such a shared terminology it becomes near-impossible to make a point. As already argued by Wilbur Schramm in the 1950’s, any analysis of communication needs to include the way a message is received by, and has effect upon, the target of the message – the so-called feed-back loop. It is, furthermore, only possible for a recipient of a message to decode the meaning of the sender, when there is a so-called “shared field of experience.” When decoding of a message is impossible, there can be no communication. Where there is a shared field of experience, communication becomes possible, and with it persuasion or coercion – and thus the exercise of power. Crucial in this process are the major dimensions through which communication becomes possible: What is communicated? (message), by whom? (encoder or sender), how? (channel or medium), and to whom? (decoder or receiver).9

**Communicating power and religious change**

Establishing definitions from the outset is a useful practice in itself. Yet the

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7 Lukes 1974, 23.
8 Digeser 1992, 980: “The first three faces agree at some level that A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests...: the A's and B's are taken as given. In contrast, the fourth face of power does not take as presupposed the subjects (the A's and B's) of the other three faces ... Power, postulates that subjectivity or individuality is not biologically given. Subjects are understood as social constructions, whose formation can be historically described.”
notions implied in the definitions above are also directly relevant for the purposes of this article. When discussing “power and religious change,” surely the question should be relevant whether, for instance, distribution of new religious practices is a form of exercising power – that is, becoming involved in a new cult is what those with power want those with less power to do (or not do) – or a side-effect of exercising power – that is, getting those with less power to accept the dominance of those with more power leads to involvement in a new cult, but that is not the purpose in itself – or indeed a way of communicating power – by publicly advertising their involvement in a new cult (or not) those with more power stress their superiority.

Similarly, if one accepts the importance of a shared field of experience, that should have serious repercussions for the way we think about the modes in which notions of religious change – or, more precisely, changed notions of religion – could be distributed. After all, communication would be impossible if a message were wholly alien to the target audience; the relevance of which should be self-evident when discussing the functioning and development of so-called foreign cults, or their use in propagating power through politics. This of course relates closely to the tendency to “translate a new religious phenomenon into terms of the familiar.”

**Anchoring power**

One final conceptual notion needs to be clear before coming to the historical contents. That is the notion of “anchoring.” In psychology this concept describes a subconscious phenomenon regarding the way in which people make estimates. Individuals work from suggested reference points (“anchors”) and then reach estimates through incremental adjustments by including additional information. In the words of Tversky and Kahneman, who coined the concept:

> In many situations, people make estimates by starting from an initial value that is adjusted to yield the final answer. The initial value, or starting point, may be suggested by the formulation of the problem, or it may be the result of a partial computation. In either case, adjustments are typically insufficient.

This concept is now developed further within the new research agenda “Anchoring innovation” by OIKOS, the National Research School in Classical Studies, the
In doing so, the concept is used to describe a broader mental process that gives people cognitive footholds to adapt to new contexts. In this interpretation, certain types of terminology, concepts or images are seen as anchors that affect later perceptions and decisions. Since new developments need to be connected to what people expect, value and understand, such anchors can aid the conceptualisation and communication of ideas and notions, which then become firmly entrenched in the public mind as commonly accepted knowledge. Importantly, also, as the quote above shows, adjustments from anchors are typically insufficient. This gives the initial anchor enormous influence over later estimates.

For instance, thinking for a moment in political rather than religious terms, the use of the term princeps to describe the first Roman emperor made this Republican office the starting point from which people thought about emperors, allowing the new political landscape to become more easily entrenched in the perceptions of the Roman subjects. The use of the term was neither “invention of tradition” nor “a Republican façade” but a way of understanding political change by anchoring it in a traditional framework. Likewise, the continuous use and re-interpretation of the term res publica, as analysed by Claudia Moatti, may have been a mode to adapt to the various revolutions and ruptures in Roman society.

How can these various notions be applied in practice? Examples tend to clarify, and the remainder of this article will sketch three more or less exemplary scenarios in which (perhaps inadequately called) “new religious notions” are communicated, and perhaps anchored in society, through the exercise of power. The scenarios will pay particular attention to the role of the “by whom,” “how,” and “to whom” questions – and to the importance of a shared field of experience. Each of the scenarios will take one of the three faces of power as a starting point. Perhaps needless to say, this differentiation in the three faces of power is meant to illustrate how theories relating to the individual “faces of power” can be applied to specific cases of Roman religious change to provide new perspectives on the material. It does not imply that only one “face of power” can be applied within the individual case studies. Typology may overlap at occasions, and the different typologies to describe exercising power need not be mutually exclusive. This point will be further discussed within the case studies.

It is being developed with the financial support of Leiden University, Radboud University, the University of Amsterdam and the University of Groningen. For the concept of “anchoring,” see Sluiter 2017.

Moatti 2011; 2011/2014. Note how the term princeps was first used by senators in the edict of Fabius Maximus on the new ruler’s birthday and the 5th Cyrene edict.
The first face of power

A fairly clear example of a “first-face” way of exercising power (to get someone, or a group, to do something that he, or they, would not otherwise do) can be seen during the short-lived reign of the emperor Bassianus, better known – of course – as Elagabalus. This somewhat idiosyncratic emperor ostensibly attempted to dethrone Jupiter as the chief Roman deity to the benefit of a little known eastern god named Elagabalus, who was worshipped in the form of a conical black stone. The reign and religious notions of the young emperor himself have recently been expertly analysed in scholarship, which emphasises the unreliability of the (written) sources, but has also suggested some reasonably clear reconstructions of events. This allows the current article to focus on how the actions of the young emperor can be played out as a scenario for exercising power in relation to religious change.

Under Elagabalus’ rule, there was an apparently systematic attempt to elevate one specific god. Clearly, the emperor wanted his people to both recognise and worship this god, possibly above all other Roman gods. Equally clearly, many of his people did not particularly want to do so. By exercising his power, then, the emperor forced many of his subjects to worship a god whom they would otherwise not have worshipped. The third-century author Herodian makes this very explicit:

[The emperor] directed all Roman officials who perform public sacrifices to call upon the new god Heliogabalus before all the other gods whom they invoke in their rites (Herodian. 5.5.7).

He goes on to state that, and again I quote:

Heliogabalus danced around the altars to music played on every kind of instrument; women from his own country accompanied him in these dances, carrying cymbals and drums as they circled the altars. The entire senate and all the knights stood watching, like spectators at the theatre (Herodian. 5.5.9).

This elevated position of the new supreme god is also mentioned by Herodian’s near-contemporary Cassius Dio, who stated:

The offence consisted, not in his introducing a foreign god into Rome or in his exalting him in very strange ways, but in his placing him even before Jupiter himself (Cass. Dio 79(80).11).

The ancient authors are, of course biased, and may also have (purposefully)

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15 Icks 2011; de Arrizabalaga y Prado 2010; Altmayer 2014.
misunderstood some of the imperial actions. Yet, these authors are not our sole source for this information. The new god and his close relationship to the emperor were also emphasized through coinage. The conical stone, or the emperor making an offering to it, was depicted on a substantial number of centrally minted coins, accompanied by the legends Sacerdos Dei Solis Elagabali and SVMMVS SACERDOS AVG(VSTVS). Importantly, also, from AD 220 onwards the god is described as CONSERVATOR AVG(VSTI) (fig. 1):

![Fig.1: RIC IV.2 Elagabalus 32 (no. 61d)](image)

This was a function which Jupiter had traditionally held, but lost after 220, when he no longer figured on the emperor’s coinage at all.

It is, of course, possible that the emperor aimed to equate the two gods, rather than an attempt at replacing one with the other. Suggestive in this context is the Historia Augusta, which states that Elagabalus established a shrine “either for himself, or for the Syrian Jupiter – the matter is uncertain – or for the Sun.” That such confusion was possible may suggest that Elagabalus’ aim was attempted syncretism, rather than a “take-over” of Jupiter’s position. Yet whatever the imperial aim, there was unwillingness of (part of) the emperor’s subjects to do as he wished. Material and literary evidence seem to coincide here. Thus, the coins show the stone (with an eagle depicted on it) in a chariot, which fits another passage of Herodian:

17 See for an insightful analysis of the historiographical bias: Sommer 2004.
18 RIC IV.2 Elagabalus 24, 37 (nos. 131–135), 38 (nos. 146–147), 44 (no. 200).
19 E.g. RIC IV.2 Elagabalus 43 (no. 196a); RIC IV.2 Elagabalus 43 (no. 195); Manders 2004/2005. It is possible that the symbolism of the eagle was already associated to the stone at Emesa, and not meant to indicate an attempt to replace Jupiter as supreme god, but the appropriation of the legend Conservator Augusti leaves little doubt about the new god’s place in the Pantheon.
20 HA Carac. 11.7: sibi vel Iovi Syrio vel Soli – incertum id est – templum fecit.
A six-horse chariot bore the sun god, the horses huge and flawlessly white, with expensive gold fittings and rich ornaments. No one held the reins, and no one rode in the chariot; the vehicle was escorted as if the sun god himself were the charioteer... The people ran parallel to him, carrying torches and tossing garlands and flowers. The statues of all the gods, the costly or sacred offerings in the temples, the imperial ornaments, and valuable heirlooms were carried by the cavalry and the entire Praetorian Guard in honor of the sun god (Herodian. 5.6.7).

The passage clearly describes how the emperor actively promoted the new cult and expected his subjects to participate in it. The list of gruesome ends of those who thwarted the emperor in some of his other plans, at least in the texts of Herodian, Dio and the *Historia Augusta*, makes it likely that the monarch was not beyond the threat of violence to convince people to act their parts.

As a “first face of power”-scenario, this is hopefully clear. The case of Elagabalus – god and emperor – is even more interesting for the purpose of this paper. There is some evidence that the emperor tried to generate a “shared field of experience” before communicating his religious notions. The best case in point is the priestly costume in which the emperor is depicted on some of his coins (fig. 2), and which according to our literary sources he also wore in daily life:

![Fig. 2: RIC IV.2 Elagabalus 34 (no. 86b)](image)

The outfit as depicted has been studied in close detail by Lucinda Dirven, who has argued that it does not match any of the known Syrian priestly garments. The emperor is shown “in a short tunic with a long tight-fitting sleeves and wide trousers. A sash is wrapped around his waist.” Most priests from Syria and Mesopotamia, however, wore “ankle-length robes, girded at the waist, with tall, rimless conical hats.” These are occasionally combined with a Greek mantle. A much smaller group of priests wore an “Iranian costume” which implies a “long-sleeved belted tunic,” which is still markedly different from the numismatic
images of the emperor. Instead, Dirven suggests that the new costume is either a Roman adaptation of the original dress, or a complete innovation – possibly designed with military appeal in mind. The Roman adaptation of this exotic costume is further strengthened by the way that “the novel phenomenon” is presented “in a very traditional way,” with the emperor “depicted standing next to an altar, or in some cases a tripod, holding a *patera* in his right hand and a twig in his left.”

Likewise, the earlier depicted reverse type with the black stone in a *quadriga* (fig. 1) resembles earlier coin types going back to Augustus (fig. 3), depicting *modii* of grain being similarly moved around, or alternatively the triumphal chariot which carried the emperor.

In this way, one could argue, the emperor created a framework in which his new religious demands could be understood. It might even be worthwhile to note that the obverse of Augustus’ coin showed Sol, allowing for an easy link to the sun-god Elagabalus. Indeed, even the “reformulation” of the god from Emesa in Roman terms may have been an attempt to make the god intelligible to a Roman audience – though doing so by reformulating him as “a new Jupiter” was a mistake.

One final passage of Herodian even suggests the *conscious* creation of a shared field of experience regarding his costume:

> Since, however, [the emperor] wished the Senate and the Roman people to grow accustomed to seeing him in this costume and wished to test their reaction to this exotic sight, before he returned to Rome he had a full-length portrait painted, showing him performing his priestly duties in public. His native god

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also appeared in the painting; the emperor was depicted sacrificing to him under favorable auspices. Heliogabalus sent this picture to Rome to be hung in the centre of the Senate house, high above the statue of Victory ... By the time the emperor came to Rome presenting the appearance described above, the Romans saw nothing unusual in it, for the painting had prepared them for what to expect (Herodian. 5.5.6–7).

The most straightforward shared field of experience, however, was never going to be between the emperor communicating this centralized message and the senatus populusque Romanus, but between the emperor and some of the inhabitants of eastern cities, where Elagabalus was a much better known deity. It is, then, hardly surprising that these eastern cities are the only places where we can find some traces of a successful reception of the imperial message by the target of that message, showing a positive effect of the message upon an intended audience. More or less simultaneously with the imperial directive, several of these eastern cities started minting coins depicting the black conical stone, and Martijn Icks has assembled a half-dozen other examples. In Altava and Attaleia (in Pamphylia), furthermore, there is even epigraphic evidence for the actual introduction of the cult, and in Sardes also for the celebration of Elagabalia – in honour of the god, not the emperor.\(^\text{22}\)

It seems unlikely that these events were directly ordered by the emperor. A much more likely scenario is that these cities – many of which lie near or on the route which the young emperor took to get to Rome from Antioch – understood the centrally issued message, and reacted accordingly. The fact that Sardes received its third neokoros from Elagabalus may suggest that the emperor, in his turn, reacted to this reaction.\(^\text{23}\) If so, we have a perfect example of a “feedback loop.” It would also show that not only force, but also the enticement of imperial appreciation allowed the emperor to get his subjects to do what they would not otherwise have done. One can communicate power without the threat of violence; particularly when religious change fits established patterns.

**The second face of power**

The first face of power, to all appearances, could be re-enacted through a fairly straightforward scenario. The second face much less so. How to demonstrate non-decisions, and the mobilisation of bias? A possible scenario concerns the reign of Augustus with its emphasis on traditional divinities and qualities, and the relative absence of new religious notions, let alone exotic ones, at the time.

\(^{22}\) Icks 2008.

\(^{23}\) Icks 2011, 85–87.
Indeed, where there was some sort of religious change – such as the re-institution of the *flamines* and the somewhat more debatable “re-institution” of the *fetiales* – there was much emphasis on how traditional and typically Roman these innovations were. There seems to have been a fairly coherent set of “dominant values, myths and established political procedures and rules of the game,” and it is apparent that Augustus had to gain from this “existing bias.”

Clearly, the scenario cannot be pushed too far. After all, even if it can be usefully argued that Augustus’ emphasis on traditional Roman religion can be seen as an attempt to mobilise bias, the attempt seems not to have been terribly successful. The first emperor’s 28 BC ban of the Egyptian rites within the *pomerium*, and its 21 BC extension by Agrippa to the area up to one Roman mile from the city, are very clear directives – showing the first face of power in full action.

However, it may well be useful to see Augustus’ measures as an attempt to adapt a shared field of experience and through it mobilise bias in a way that suited the new regime. These attempts are usefully placed within the context of identity-formation. Such focus on identity-formation, however, has its limits. Because there were so many possible cults and divinities in the Roman Empire, most of which could be combined, it seems likely “that most of these choices would have contributed not more to a person’s identity in antiquity than preferences for certain brands of consumer goods do today.” Someone may be “a coca-cola man” but it is doubtful that this would be anyone’s primary description of himself. If instead of focusing on notions of identity, one analyses the first princeps’ actions in terms of the mobilisation of bias, it seems apparent that a whole series of measures in Augustus’ early reign can be usefully interpreted as attempts to direct debate away from foreign rites. This combines well with Augustan attempts to formulate the new regime in traditional terms. If so, one could catch a glimpse of the way in which the second face of power could have operated in Roman imperial times.

Of course, Augustus’ emphasis on the restoration of ritual practice post-civil war has been abundantly looked into. Georg Wissowa’s observation that it was

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24 Bachrach and Baratz 1962.
26 Augustus’ measures against Egyptian cult, for instance, have recently been explained by Orlin 2008 as a mode in which the new emperor drew explicit boundaries between inside and outside. Outside of the *pomerium*, foreignness and change were acceptable, but inside the *pomerium* he constructed an apparently traditional, though effectively new, pure form of Romanitas. In Orlin’s view, such application of a “pomerial rule” was probably an Augustan construction without clear Republican precedent.
27 Rives 2011, 273. Cf. Günther 2016 on how people “live in different identities” whilst positioning themselves in society, and how important values were as frames of identification in ancient society.
“mehr ein Neubau als eine Wiederherstellung” is still regularly adhered to. Yet, Neubau or not, the triumvir and later princeps consistently emphasised the importance of tradition and the examples of archaic Rome in the relationship between men and gods. John Scheid has argued that this consistent emphasis in Augustus’ religious activities amounted to an actual “religious policy” and that this policy was “entirely enacted between 43 and 28 BC,”28 which would see the ban on Egyptian cults as an endpoint of this early phase. This sequence might usefully be seen as some sort of interaction between different faces of power. In the earliest period of imperial rule, first-face measures could be used to create a context in which second-face power could operate.

There was, after all, a noticeable series of imperial measures which emphasised religious traditions. Thus, for instance, fetiales were used to declare war on Cleopatra in 32 BC, coinciding with the restoration of the priesthood and the temple of Jupiter Feretrius. In the same period, there were discussions surrounding the spolia opima that were intrinsically linked to this temple. A similar religious innovation which was formulated in the language of tradition was Augustus’ 29 BC restoration, transformation or even innovation of the sodales Titii. Again, we see emphasis on longstanding tradition, in this case the role of Titus Tatius as Romulus’ co-ruler. Likewise, in 29 BC Augustus awarded a public grant to the Fratres Arvales and elevated them to senatorial level.29 Further direct actions from the centre to emphasise the importance of traditional Roman religious notions took place in 28 BC, when Augustus acted as censor. As set out by Suetonius:

He increased the number and importance of the priests, and also their allowances and privileges, in particular those of the Vestal virgins ... He also revived some of the ancient rites which had gradually fallen into disuse, such as the augury of Salus, the office of Flamen Dialis, the ceremonies of the Lupercalia, the Secular Games, and the festival of the Compitalia (Suet. Aug. 31.3).

Famously, this was also the year in which Augustus, as described in detail in his Res Gestae (20.4) “rebuilt in the city eighty-two temples of the gods, omitting none which at that time stood in need of repair.”

These direct central actions emphasising religious tradition took place in the same years in which the young ruler had begun amassing positions within the four traditional priestly colleges, which would later become standard offices for the emperors. When, in 13 BC, Augustus became Pontifex Maximus, his elevated

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28 Wissowa 1912, 72. Cf. Scheid 2005, 176, who goes on to argue that Augustus’ “very real reform of Roman ritual tradition” took a new start after Lepidus’ death in 12 BC.
29 Cass. Dio 50.4.5; Liv. 4.20; Corn. Nep. 20.1.2–3; Varro ll. 5.85; Eder 2005, 17; Wiedemann 1986; Coarelli 1996; Scheid 2005, 181; Flower 2000.
religious position was emphasised through coins depicting the various sacrificial implements that symbolised the main priesthods which the emperor now held: the *simpulum* and *lituus* were shown above the tripod and *patera* (fig. 4). Yet earlier coinage already linked the princeps with sacrificial implements, especially though not exclusively the *lituus*. Again, one sees an emphasis on Roman traditional practice, which was transmitted through various “media,” such as coinage in a variety of denominations, sculptural reliefs and poetry.

Fig. 4: RIC I*²* Augustus 73 (no. 410)

The argument here is not whether the *princeps* really tried to get back to Republican traditions or whether Wissowa’s *Neubau* formed a finished façade hiding Augustan innovation. Instead this section attempts to draw attention to the systematic emphasis on traditional religious values, invented or not, broadcast by Augustus in a variety of ways. Returning briefly to the concepts of communication set out above, in this period the direct influence of the ruler seems paramount, answering the “by whom” question. The “to whom” is always difficult, but the variety of media employed, including coins of different denomination (which answers “how” the message was transmitted) suggests that all inhabitants of at least the city of Rome were potential targets of the message.

Would it then be too much to suggest that the aim of this exercise was not solely to place Augustus in a traditional framework, and thus to legitimise his position, but also to make people *think* about society as a whole, and religion in particular, in a traditional framework? Augustus seems to have had strong personal opinions about religion and was, according to Suetonius, in awe of thunder and lightning, and attached great importance to omens and prodigies. If Suetonius is to be believed, Augustus held religious preference for what he considered “Roman” cults and “treated with great respect such foreign rites as

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30 RIC I*²* Augustus 69 (no. 367) (16 BC); 73 (no. 410) (13 BC); RSC no. 91 (37 BC); RPC I, no. 2275; Burnett 2011, 14.
were ancient and well established, but held the rest in contempt.” Such personal preferences from the part of a sole ruler can have major effects on the policy that is pursued in an effective dictatorship. In this interpretation, the various ways, invented or otherwise, in which traditional religion was emphasised, can be seen as a “mobilisation of bias;” an attempt to make people not even think about turning to more exotic new religious notions. If this was the case, the attempt was not entirely successful, and more directive ways were needed to reach the aim, as the 28 and 21 BC bans of Egyptian rites make clear.

The above-sketched scenario is of course highly speculative. Moreover, the boundaries between more directive “first face” actions and more indirect attempt to “mobilise bias” are not straightforward. There is always a bandwidth when using modern typologies to analyse a historical series of events. Occasionally, it may even be possible to see how different faces of power can work in tandem. The Augustan scenario, for instance, suggests that a resort to a “first face” action could mean that less obtrusive “second face” actions had failed. In any case, this way of analysing events may help us to steer somewhat away from notions of identity-formation and auctoritas, which have dominated the debate. Also, this mode of viewing events also makes it much less problematic that the emperor allowed himself to be depicted as a Pharaoh on Egyptian soil whilst prohibiting Egyptian rites in Rome. The aim was not to mobilise bias in Egypt, but in Rome. Different targets need different messages to exercise power through communication.

The third face of power

The third and final face of power was formulated as getting others to have the desires you want them to have. For this mode of exercising power, the reign of Caracalla provides an interesting scenario. His somewhat troubled reign was not only characterised by fraternal bloodshed and violence, but also by a bombardment of messages relating to exotic gods. In fact, two independent recent analyses of the differences between images on central coinage during the joint reign of Severus and Caracalla (AD 198–210) and Caracalla’s sole reign (AD 212–217) show an enormous rise in the number of coin types emphasising divinities when Caracalla came into sole power. Dividing the coin types in RIC in different “representational categories,” the category “divine association” even rises from 18.2% to 66.9%.

31 Suet. Aug. 93, cf. Suet. Aug. 90, 92. For the possibility that Octavian/Augustus acted upon personal beliefs in reacting to omens, and the possible repercussions for his actions regarding the foundation of the Apollo Palatine temple, see Hekster and Rich 2006.
32 Hekster 2015, 268–269, with references.
Importantly also there are references to substantial numbers of new gods during Caracalla’s sole reign. During the period of joint rule, Mars and Sol appeared most frequently on coin types from the “divine association” category, with occasional appearances of Minerva, Liber Pater, and Hercules/Melquart. In 212–217, however, Venus, Vesta, Apollo, Diana, Sol, Pluto, Isis, and Serapis are introduced on Caracalla’s coinage. There is also attention to Dea Caelestis, Ceres and the god Elagabal. Isis and Sarapis were not new, one or the other having appeared previously in coins of Domitian, Hadrian, Antoninus, Marcus, and Commodus. Pluto, however, was new, and appears only on Caracalla’s coins. This attention to new, especially eastern, divinities, coincides with epigraphic and literary evidence for a temple to Serapis and temples to Isis at Rome.

This attention to “exotic” divinities coincided with claims about imperial piety. According to Cassius Dio (78.16.1), Caracalla was “claiming to be the most pious of all mankind.” Similarly, the surviving text of the Constitutio Antoniniana focuses on divine support:

that I render thanks to the immortal gods for preserving me [when that conspiracy occurred], in that way I believe that I should be able [magnificently and reverently] to appropriately respond to their majesty, [if] I were able to lead [all who are now my people] with all others who should join my people [to the temples] of the gods. Caracalla explicitly formulated the issuing of this edict as an appeasement to the gods. The “conspiracy” in question (if that reconstruction of the papyrus text is right) can only be the presumed conspiracy against Caracalla of his brother Geta. In December 211, Caracalla killed his brother, after an escalating fight for power. Fratricide was an enormous aberration of normal behaviour, and could only be condoned if the murdered brother had been a conspiring monster. Noticeably, in the immediate aftermath of Geta’s death, Caracalla is said to have gone into the sanctuary of the praetorians to make “sacrifices in gratitude for his deliverance.” Emphasis on divine support against a conspiracy was the only way to make imperial fratricide understandable and necessary.

Interest in divine support is also suggested by the numerous temples to which the emperor paid visits. With regard to the Near East, imperial visits by Caracalla to the important cult centres at Hierapolis Bambyke (Mabug) and Doliche (Dülük)

RIC IV.1 Caracalla 246 (nos. 241, 242), 249 (nos. 261a–d), 250 (nos. 262a–c), 253 (nos. 279, 279A), 302 (no. 542), 304–305 (nos. 555a–c), 306 (no. 560), 307 (no. 569). Cf. Manders 2012, 236–240, though Clare Rowan maintains that the image is not of Pluto, but of Sarapis. It is possible that either of these deities came to a viewer’s mind when looking at the image.

P.Giss. 40, col. 1.1–12.

Herodian. 4.4.5, cf. Hekster 2008, 48–49 for discussion and further references.
have been postulated by Henry Seyrig and Margherita Facella, and nobody needs to be reminded that the emperor found his somewhat embarrassing end going to (or from) the moon temple at Harran (Carrhae).  

It is striking how this centralised public attention to imperial piety and exotic cults coincided with the oft-cited “eastern religious climate” of the Severan age. Caracalla’s personal involvement seems clear, since during Severus’ reign only very few “exotic” gods featured on coinage and on reliefs – almost all of them connected to the emperor’s home town of Lepcis Magna, or to Africa more generally. One could, continuing the line of argument that this paper has advocated, suggest that the increasing attention to eastern religions in the third century was at least partly a result of Roman desires which followed this bombardment of attention to the East. By emphasising somewhat alien but not wholly novel deities throughout his reign, Caracalla managed to shape the very wants of a number of his subjects, without forcing them to do so in an Elagabalus-sort of way.

It is tempting to suggest that the success of Caracalla’s approach to religious change may have been due to the absence of apparent direct imperial involvement. Where Elagabalus directly presented himself as high priest of an openly “alien” god, and in doing so emphasised the “easterness” of that god, Caracalla did not link himself in such a personal way. Rather, Caracalla brought a wide range of new gods into play, without apparent personal interest, and in doing so created a climate in which he could convincingly claim to be “the most pious of all mankind.”

This is not to say that all attention to the East resulted from Caracalla’s exercising a third face of power. Indeed, the emperor was himself equally part of a cultural framework – if not perhaps a shared field of experience – and reacted to his surroundings and to events and ideas that clearly predated his reign. Yet, it is tempting to speculate that the emperor who issued the Constitutio Antoniniana, and so initiated one of the more spectacular unifying events in Roman history, also helped integration on the way by his systematic attention to exotic divinities to whom he did not connect himself personally. This cannot be pushed too far. It is only too likely that there was some mutual influence, in which the emperor reacted to the cultural framework of which he formed part, and in doing so influenced the shape of that framework; a feed-back loop in action. All the same, analysing Caracalla’s religious messages with the third face of power in mind helps us understand how imperial communication could influence the Roman Zeitgeist, and be a form of exercising power.

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37 Seyrig 2008.
38 On Severus’ religious imagery, see Lichtenberger 2011.
RELIGION AND TRADITION IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Faces of power and anchoring religious change

Hopefully this paper has shown how theoretical notions of power and communication can help when looking at religious change in the Roman Empire. Like all historical scripts, of course, the three different scenarios that form the core of this paper are only brought together in hindsight – making use of concepts that will have been unrecognisable to ancient Romans. These scenarios do not suggest a conscious decision by any of the exemplary emperors to exercise power in one specific way. Rather, by trying to analyse the ways in which power was exercised, one may learn something about the purposes for which power was exercised.

The three scenarios, of course, followed the three different modes in which power can be exercised. This means that they emphasise differences in Roman imperial involvement in religious change. Yet the three scenarios can be linked by underlying aspects: the importance of a shared field of experience, and the different roles played by traditions, either invented or not, to come to “common ground” and understanding. In fact, the importance of such a shared field of experience seems paramount to explain the (lack of) success of imperially encouraged religious change. And crucial for playing into or forging such a shared field of experience is the process of anchoring.

Looking at Bassianus/Elagabalus, it seems clear that the young emperor chose the wrong anchor as a starting point. The black-stone god was emphatically alien, and since mental adjustments remain typically insufficient, his attempt at making the new god understandable for his subjects failed, and with it the religious change he encouraged. It would be interesting to take into account the extent to which Bassianus’ choice for the god Elagabalus resulted from the normality of this god in the young emperor’s hometown Emesa.39 In other words: for the boy from Emesa, the black stone Elagabalus was anchored in traditional religion, and since (again) mental adjustments remain typically insufficient, it was difficult for the emperor to see quite how alien the conical stone would be for his subjects at Rome. Looking at the second scenario, it appears that Augustus systematically chose traditional anchors and since, once again, adjustments remain typically insufficient, the massive changes in society – religious and otherwise – were perceived with this anchor in mind. Caracalla, finally, used acceptable exotic gods as explicit anchors for his religious behaviour, and in so doing he may have

39 Kaizer 2005, 189–191. Cf. Gaifman 2012 on the normality of worshipping stones and poles without images in the Greek and eastern world during the Roman period. The point here is not so much that the Romans would not recognise an aniconic divinity as such, but that the aniconism drew attention to the foreign origin of Elagabalus. The problems with aniconism in Rome in the context of Elagabalus are set out in Sommer 2008.
boosted their role as points of reference for his subjects.

The apparent paradox between the Roman historical reality of continuously developing religious practices, and the equally continuous importance of maintaining that matters remained the same, can be solved by looking at the way religious change was communicated. Both the rulers who tried to change religious emphasis and their subjects who tried to understand what was going on, aimed to anchor situations of major change in known contexts, identifying rather than inventing traditions to understand the situation. Religious changes that were most easily anchored in changing traditions were the most successful ones. People could only accept what they thought they understood.

**Figures**

Figure 1: Aureus (20 mm, 6.59 g) of Elagabalus. Rome mint. Struck AD 220–222, RIC IV.2 *Elagabalus* 32 (no. 61d). Image courtesy: Classical Numismatic Group.

Figure 2: Aureus (21 mm, 6.45 g) of Elagabalus. Rome mint. Struck AD 220–222, RIC IV.2 *Elagabalus* 34 (no. 86b). Image courtesy: Roman Numismatics Ltd.

Figure 3: Denarius (20 mm, 3.32 g) of Augustus. Rome mint. Struck after 19 BC, RIC I *Augustus* 63 (no. 303). Image courtesy: Classical Numismatic Group.

Figure 4: Denarius (18 mm, 4.16 g) of Augustus. Rome mint. Struck ca. 13 BC, RIC I *Augustus* 73 (no. 410). Image courtesy: Stacks Bowers Numismatic Auctions.

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ABSTRACTS

Marta PALLAVIDINI (DAAD P.R.I.M.E Fellow, Freie Universität Berlin / KU Leuven)
KURI/EWANA-, KUI/ERWANA-: A NEW ASSESSMENT (pp. 1–11)

The meaning of the Hittite word *kuriwana-/kuierwana-* has not been yet established with certainty. Some scholars translate it with “independent” while others favor the exactly opposite meaning “dependent.” Since the word is attested in a limited number of documents, it is possible to re-examine all the occurrences and the related contexts, and to propose a new assessment of the meaning of the word. In particular, I will suggest the meaning “juridically equal.”

Olivier HEKSTER (Institute for Historical, Literary and Cultural Studies, Radboud Universiteit)
RELIGION AND TRADITION IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE: FACES OF POWER AND ANCHORING CHANGE (pp. 13–34)

This article focuses on the apparent paradox within the religious history of the Roman Empire between the historical reality of continuous developments in religious practices and beliefs, and the equally continuous importance of assuming that matters remained the same. It will suggest that a systematic analysis of the relation between exercising power and religious innovation is helpful to solve the paradox, and that an important concept within that analysis is “anchoring.” The article takes the three “faces of power” that have been developed to define the process of exercising power as a starting point, and applies these to three exemplary case studies of religious change within Roman history. This shows how only changes enacted within a shared field of reference had any chance of being successful. Ultimately, religious changes that were most easily “anchored” in changing traditions were the most successful ones.
Lyn M. KIDSON (Macquarie University)
ANONYMOUS COINS, THE GREAT PERSECUTION AND THE SHADOW OF SOSSIANUS HIEROCLES (pp. 35–53)

Early in the fourth century CE an unusual series of bronze coins was minted in three cities: Antioch, Nicomedia and Alexandria. It is noteworthy that portraits of Emperors and Caesars are missing from these coins. Instead, they mostly depict city gods and goddesses, or in some cases the city *tyche*. J. van Heesch, in his influential 1993 study, dated all the coins to 312 CE. This study proposes a broader timeframe, 303–312 CE. It also argues that Sossianus Hierocles is a person to whom these issues might plausibly be tied.

RESEARCH SURVEY: THE ANCIENT ECONOMY – NEW STUDIES AND APPROACHES
Sven GÜNThER (IHAC, NENU, Changchun)
INTRODUCTION & ANCIENT GREECE (pp. 55–67, 69–81)
Patrick REINARD (University of Trier)
ANCIENT ROME (INCLUDING GRECO-ROMAN EGYPT) (pp. 83–105)

Ancient Economy is a highly competitive as well as innovative field in modern ancient studies. The survey, divided up in two parts (the second part in *JAC* 32/2 (2017)), presents new theoretical and methodological approaches, models and recent studies that have emerged in the last years. In part 1, Sven Günther will provide a general overview and discusses latest developments with regard to Ancient Greece. Patrick Reinard deals with the Roman world including Greco-Roman Egypt.
FORUM: COMPARATIVE STUDIES – CHANCES AND CHALLENGES
Fritz-Heiner MUTSCHLER / Walter SCHEIDEL (Dresden / Stanford University)
THE BENEFITS OF COMPARISON: A CALL FOR THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS (pp. 107–121)
Sven GÜNTER (IHAC, NENU, Changchun)
AD DIVERSAS HISTORIAS COMPARANDAS? A FIRST, SHORT AND DROYSEN-BASED REPLY TO MUTSCHLER AND SCHEIDEL (pp. 123–126)

The forum focuses on comparative studies, their chances and potential challenges. While Fritz-Heiner Mutschler and Walter Scheidel point out the benefits of this approach, Sven Günther offers objections from a historian’s point of view.