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Citation style: Kluczek Agata A. (2019). The Significance of Roman Coins for the Preservation and Construction of Memory. W: K. Baluza, M. Musielak, K. Królczyk (red.), "Meministine? Memory and Oblivion in the Ancient World - the Ancient World in the Memory and Oblivion" (S. 53-71). Poznań : Instytut Historii UAM, 2019



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The Significance of Roman Coins for the Preservation and Construction of Memory

Abstract

In their treatment of the relationship between the Roman coin and memory, researchers usually focus on the etymology of the concept of *moneta*, perceiving also in Moneta the goddess of memory and emphasising to a greater or lesser extent her relationship with *memoria*. The article suggests another perspective, namely the treatment of representations featured on coins and medallions as peculiar monuments of memory. The focus is those monetary representations by which the issuer pursued not only the preservation of his deeds and the memory about himself but also expressed his attitude to the Roman past. In some cases, this past was constructed by memory, which referred especially to the “founding memory” focused on the episodes and the heroes of the Roman founding myth.

Keywords: Roman coins, memory, Roman founding myth

The coin and the medallion are sometimes associated with the sphere of memory in many ways. Researchers, Cristiano Viglietti¹ and Daniele Miano² among them, consider in their studies the relations between the coin, the goddess Juno Moneta and memory (*memoria*). They focus on the etymology of the epithet of the goddess Moneta but they also refer to the idea of commemoration in the form of *monumentum* of those things which were considered worthy of commemoration by the ancients. And they weave the thread which links the coin–

¹ C. Viglietti, *Moneta, la moneta, la memoria*, *Scienze dell'Antichità* 16, 2010, p. 202–218. Cf. C. Carlan, *Memória e Poder: um estudo de caso*, *Mneme — Revista de Humanidades* 12 (30), 2011, p. 23–34.

² D. Miano, *Moneta: Sacred Memory in Mid-Republican Rome*, in: *Memory and Urban Religion in the Ancient World*, ed. by M. Bommas, J. Harrisson, P. Roy, E. Theodorakopoulos, London 2012, p. 89–110.

numismatic specimen with *Moneta*, as well as with *Mnemosyne* and the monuments which constitute a permanent and material expression of memory.

The examples of reference works which were mentioned indicate the theoretical significance for us, and perhaps also the practical significance for the ancients themselves, of the position of Roman coins in the sphere of memory. I will not present these multi-faceted problems in a comprehensive way in this article. I merely intend to attempt a synthetic overview (I emphasise the generalising aspect of the work) of the commemorative nature of Roman numismatic specimens (*i.e.* coins and medallions) and an arrangement of their representations according to the criterion of the function of the preservation and construction of memory. I may also suggest certain problems which are interesting in terms of further research. In this context emphasis is put on the most salient representations because the primary purpose of the numismatic specimens indeed was not to preserve the knowledge about the past for posterity. However, I disregard individual instances of description of the genesis of the particular types of coins (alluded to later on in the work), which was associated with the political and social situation in a given period of time.

One assumes that in the Roman world the numismatic specimen was by its nature a splendid carrier of content which was considered worthy of commemoration by the issuers and an appropriate means for dissemination of such content. The activities and the agenda of the specific men of politics or rulers or the current situation in the entire Roman state or in its parts was commented upon in the coins either in an iconographical manner or in the form of inscriptions. The very selection of the content represented in the coins remained an element of the emission-related “policy of commemoration”, and the representations in which the *res gestae* of the selected people were immortalised and the *honores* which were accorded to them were symbolised, performed the function of peculiar miniature monuments (*monumenta*). They remained as if a substitute either of honorificatory and triumphal arches or statues. Such an aspect of the content represented in the specimens of Roman coins is emphasised in many places by contemporary researchers. In this context they indicate that also in times which were marked by political or economic difficulty the role of a substitute of great monuments which could not be erected for a number of reasons could be performed by coins — miniature monuments

(*monuments in miniature*).³ The images of monuments which actually existed were replicated on the coins or one created the images of structures which existed only in the declarative sphere. Nevertheless, if we consider the timeless significance of coin–monetary representations, then regardless of the condition of the Roman state they constitute for us peculiar *monumenta* which honour certain people — emperors, men of politics, rulers or the members of their family — and which perpetuate the memory (*memoria*) of the said people.⁴

It is worthwhile to juxtapose the opinions formulated in the subject literature with the data drawn from ancient literature and — above all — to emphasise the natural properties of the specimens of coins *in se* which are relevant in the process of commemoration.

The ancients themselves usually were reluctant to make a clear statement in this area. We find a certain indication in post-classical author. Namely Cassiodorus (Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator, c. 485–c. 580), an official at the court of Ostrogoth rulers, linked the image of the ruler placed on the coin with the idea of the commemoration of this ruler. He established this link in the *formula*, providing therein a description of the authority and the obligations of one of the officials of fiscal administration (*comes sacrarum largitionum*). In Cassiodorus’s official rhetoric the fragment in question runs like this:

[...] Quod vere decorum, vere fuit omnimodis exquisitum in donorum regalium parte sequestratam facere dignitatem et alterius honorem dicere, dum nos constet dona conferre, Actus innocens, pietatis officium illud semper ingerere, unde se fama principis possit augere. Regalibus magna profecto felicitas militare donis et dignitatem habere de publica largitate. [...] Supplicum per te fortunas erigimus, kal. Ianuariis affatim dona largimur et laetitia publica militia tua est. Verum hanc liberalitatem nostram alio decoras obsequio, ut figura vultus nostri metallis usualibus inprimatur, monetamque facis de nostris temporibus futura saecula commonere.⁵

³ See: A. Cheung, *The Political Significance of Roman Imperial Coin Types*, GNS 48 (191), 1998, p. 56–58; R. Hedlund, “...achieved nothing worthy of memory”. *Coinage and Authority in the Roman Empire c. AD 260–295*, Uppsala 2008, p. 50, 89–90.

⁴ Cf. Pompon. in Hor. *Od.* I, 2.15: “monumentum non sepulcrum tantum dicitur, sed omne quicquid memoriam testatur”.

⁵ Cassiod. *Var.* VI, 7.

Cassiodorus Senator noticed the historical and documentation-related significance of the coins, which is related to its perception as an object of contemporary science of numismatics. Moreover, the sources relate that in the antiquity one perceived the presence of images and names of major figures in the coins. A strong argument in favour of such a perception of the numismatic specimens is furnished once again by a relatively late text written by Palladius (Rutilius Taurus Aemilianus Palladius, 4th/5th AD). In a certain fragment of his work, *Opus agriculturae*, Palladius directed the following words to Pasiphilus (who was otherwise an unknown figure)⁶:

Non est magni loci assibus intuendis oculos duxisse per puluerem, quia nescio quomodo notae sunt quaedam maximarum personarum minuta compendia.⁷

This is an allusion made in the 5th century to the representations of emperors on *asses* that were perceived. These were denominations which lost currency already a long time ago. They were issued for the last time in the 3rd century.⁸ In the context of the fact that Palladius was a great landowner⁹ and that he discussed agricultural problems in his treatise, this mention acquires special significance. According to Robert Turcan, Palladius saw one of such coins, which was unearthed by the peasant's "hoe", similarly as in contemporary times when ancient numismatic specimens are acquired.¹⁰ To put it in a different way: in the 5th century, due to the discovery of old coins, the memory of one of the former emperors, the issuers of the *asses* in question, was restored.

Therefore one may assume that the perception of the monetary representation (even though this perception was not articulated directly) as a form of circulation of the memory about the former emperor, ruler or man of politics *etc.* could have been related to the mentality of the ancients. The represented

⁶ Cf. I. Mikołajczyk, *Wstęp*, in: Rutilius Taurus Aemilianus Palladius, *Traktat o rolnictwie*, tłum., wstęp i komentarz I. Mikołajczyk, Toruń 1999, p. ix–x.

⁷ Pall. *Agr.* 14, *praef.* 3.

⁸ Cf. S. Estiot, *The Later Third Century*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Coinage*, ed. by W.E. Metcalf, Oxford 2012, p. 546 and 549.

⁹ Cf. Pall. *Agr.* II, 7.1; III, 25.20; IV, 10.24: Italia; *ibidem*, IV, 10.16: Sardinia.

¹⁰ R. Turcan, *L'archéologie dans l'antiquité: tourisme, lucre et découvertes*, Paris 2014, p. 139–140. Cf. A.A. Kluczek, *Moneta — klucz do świątyni starożytności. Uwagi na kanwie książki Roberta Turcana [R. Turcan: L'archéologie dans l'antiquité: tourisme, lucre et découvertes. Paris 2014]*, *Wiek Stary i Nowy* 10 (15), 2016, p. 135–136.

people who were preserved or animated in images (*imagines*) as if acquired immortality, life after death (*post mortem vivere*).¹¹ In both of the quoted fragments emphasis — in the scope in question — is put on the obverse representation of the numismatic specimens, *i.e.* — because the period of the Empire is discussed — the portrait of the emperor-issuer. Such representations perpetuated the memory about former rulers, but not exclusively about them, for about other people as well: men of politics, emperor’s wives, caesars *etc.* In this context it is worthwhile to recall the content of a poetic epitaph which is testimony to the fact that the ancients, realising the brevity of human life, perceived the possibility of “prolonging” life in the memory perpetuated in images. The latter, as it was loftily related, were created to serve this purpose:

Sint licet exiguae fugientia tempora vitae / parvaq(ue) raptorum cito transeat hora dierum / mergat et Elysiis mortalia corpora terris / adsidue rupto Lachesis male conscia penso, / iam tamen inventa est blandae rationis imago / per quam prolatos homines in tempora plu[ra] / longior excipiat memoratio multaq(ue) servet / secum, per titulos mansuris fortius annis / [...].¹²

This inscription is derived from a funerary monument. Therefore it is obvious that its function was completely different from the function of the numismatic specimens. A long metrical epitaph also carries a considerably greater amount of thought than the short passage that was mentioned. In this interpretation it is reduced merely to a single, simplified theme.¹³ However, its essence seems to be similar to the idea of the preservation of memory about specific people, featured in monetary representations, interpreted in the late antiquity by Palladius and at the dawn of the Middle Ages by Cassiodorus Senator, but also by the early modern commentators, on the role of Roman coins and me-

¹¹ “Post mortem vivere” — Petron. *Sat.* LXXI, 6. Cf. Cic. *Phil.* IX, 5.10: “Vita enim mortuorum in memoria est posita vivorum. Perficite, ut is quem vos inscii ad mortem misistis, immortalitatem habeat a vobis. Cui si statuum in rostris decreto vestro statueritis, nulla eius legationem posteritatis obscurabit oblivio”.

¹² *CIL VIII*, 212, Afr. Procons., Cilium, 2nd AD.

¹³ Cf. E. Pillinger, “Inventa est blandae rationis imago”: *Visualizing the Mausoleum of the Flavii*, *TAPhA* 143, 2013, p. 171–211; and E. de Buck, *L’originalité thématique des poèmes*, in: *Les Flavii de Cillium. Étude architecturale, épigraphique, historique et littéraire du mausolée de Kasserine (CIL VIII, 211–216)*, Rome 1993, p. 153–167; G. Devallet, *Nitentes consensus lapidum: l’architecture des poèmes et celle du monument*, in: *Les Flavii de Cillium*, p. 169–189. See: <http://edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/edh/inschrift/HD064997&lang=en>.

dallions.¹⁴ For these authors there was an obvious relationship of the representations placed on numismatic specimens with the honour of commemorating the chosen ones of the ancient world.

Unfortunately, we know little about the position of numismatic portraits of former emperors and other figures of the elite circle of power in a political game associated with the “tyrants” who were overthrown and in this context about the practicing of *damnatio memoriae* and the destruction of representation in which the *damnati* were represented, in order to expel the former from the collective memory (*memoria damnata*). Many instances of various acts of general destruction of representations in images, bas-reliefs and statues of emperors affected by *damnatio memoriae* are attested.¹⁵ However, no instances are known of pulling from circulation of coins in the empire which were issued by those who were affected by *damnatio*. Elagabalus (M. Aurelius Antoninus, 218–222 AD) is an interesting example. After a successful assassination attempt, as a result of which the emperor was murdered, and when Severus Alexander (M. Aurelius Severus Alexander, 222–235 AD) was elevated to the throne, Elagabalus’s memory was desecrated, his body as well, and his name was removed from documents and inscriptions. The victims of *damnatio memoriae* also included Elagabalus’s mother, Julia Soemias, and two of his last wives, Aquilia Severa and Annia Faustina.¹⁶ In spite of the political change, the coins issued by Elagabalus continued to be circulated. However, attempts were made to “update” the data about the issuer which were featured on them. The obverses of coins from a few cities of the Roman East — Nicaea, Neapolis, Sebaste, Seleucia Pieria, Sidon, Tyre — feature countermarks with a portrait or the initials of the name of Elagabalus’s successor, Severus

¹⁴ Cf. *Discorso di M. Sebastiano Erizzo sopra le Medaglie antiche*, Venetia 1559, p. 110.

¹⁵ Cf. L. Mrozewicz, *Damnatio memoriae w rzymskiej kulturze politycznej*, in: *Damnatio memoriae w europejskiej kulturze politycznej*, red. R. Gałaj-Dempniak, D. Okoń, M. Semczyszyn, Szczecin 2011, p. 11–16. Cf. also: E.R. Varner, *Memory Sanctions, Identity Politics, and Altered Imperial Portraits*, in: *Un discours en images de la condamnation de memoire*, éd. par S. Benoist, A. Daguet-Gagey, Metz 2008, p. 129–152.

¹⁶ Cf. A. Łukaszewicz, *Antoninus the ΚΟΡΤΦΟΣ* (Note on P. Oxy. XLVI 3298.2), *JJP* 22, 1992, p. 44; K. Królczyk, *Pomiędzy damnatio memoriae a consecratio. Potępienie pamięci i ubóstwienie w walce politycznej w Rzymie w okresie Sewerów (193–235 r. po Chr.)*, in: *Damnatio memoriae...*, p. 91–92. Cf. E.R. Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture*, Leiden 2004, p. 189–192.

Alexander.¹⁷ One may still distinguish the original obverse representations on these coins. The *damnati* in question prevailed in these coins despite *oblitteratio memoriae*. The example which was adduced also demonstrates the peculiar nature of the *imagines* — representations put on numismatic specimens, which defied the rigours of the procedure of *damnatio memoriae*.

Remembering is based on concrete things; ideas — if they are to become objects of memory — must acquire a material symbol; figures and historical facts are transformed into a symbol, becoming an element of the idea of society. These are truths which were gleaned from Jan Assmann's thinking.¹⁸ The treatment of Roman numismatic specimens as a peculiar repository of collective memory was favoured by the encoding and the replication of content on these coins — according to the best rules of *ars memorativa* — in the form of simple images as well as short but forceful mottoes. Both of these systems of signs — the image and the word — made an impact. Nevertheless, it was the monetary representations which carried a great power of persuasion, potential richness of thought and expressivity of the message, for the ancients wrote: “*simulacris pro litteris uteremur*”,¹⁹ and: “*Imagines sunt formae quaedam et notae et simulacra eius rei quam meminisse uolumus*”.²⁰ The official nature of monetary representations enabled one to perceive “programmed images” in them. The latter were replicated both synchronically and diachronically, as well as in numerous numismatic specimens of specific types. Therefore the content which was provided through the coins and medallions may be referred to as “visual rhetoric”.²¹

Especially the reverses of numismatic specimens furnished the opportunity, solidified by minting practices of a few centuries, of symbolising events and their protagonists. The strict relationship, indicated by the ancients themselves, between the exercised — or questioned — imperial authority and the presenta-

¹⁷ Cf. A. Kindler, *The damnatio memoriae of Elagabal on City — Coins of the Near East*, GNS 28–32, 1978–1982, p. 3–7; E.R. Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation...*, p. 189.

¹⁸ J. Assmann, *Pamięć kulturowa. Pismo, zapamiętywanie i polityczna tożsamość w cywilizacjach starożytnych*, tłum. A. Kryczyńska-Pham, Warszawa 2015, p. 53–54.

¹⁹ Cic. *De or.* II, 86, 354. Cf. *ibidem*, III, 54, 207; *Rhet. Her.* III, 30; *Quint. Inst.* II, 13.8–14; XI, 2.21; Hor. *Ars P.* 6–7; Plin. *Ep.* I, 20.5.

²⁰ *Rhet. Her.* III, 29. Cf. *ibidem*, III, 37.

²¹ Cf. Ch. Pérez, *Images monétaires et pratiques sémiologiques*, DHA 11, 1985, p. 111–140 (esp. p. 118); T. Hölscher, *Sztuka rzymska: język obrazowy jako system semantyczny*, tłum., opr., wstęp L. Olszewski, Poznań 2011, p. 135–139.

tion of the portrait of the ruler in the coin or the issuing of coins at all.²² This relationship accounted for the fact that in the form of a reverse representation and inscription the most important (according to the issuer) events which occurred during the period of a given ruler were commented upon. This registering nature of numismatic content is responsible for the fact that one should consider it a repository of memory about the aspects of this history although it is difficult to perceive in this content a clear, coherent and logically ordered narration about Roman history.²³

Coins known as imitation, restitution and consecration coins had a different nature. According to the premise, their content referred to the episodes and the protagonists of the past, *i.e.* those things which were elements of collective memory. The first variety of the coins that was mentioned, the imitation ones, featured reverses which doubled the ideas and slogans which appeared in Republican mintage and the imperial predecessors. The obverses presented the portrait and the titlature of the current issuer,²⁴ whereas the restitution coins *nummi restituti*, were a copy of previously issued coins. Their obverses and reverses featured the themes which were formerly used in mintage, either in the age of the Republic or in the age of the Empire. It was merely the formula *restituit*, appended to the name of the ruler who issued a series, that updated the early monetary types.²⁵ In the case of these two groups of coins, the active, positive attitude of the issuer to the past was indicated by making reference to early numismatic models and by copying them. One also cultivated the things drawn from the mythical, legendary or historical past the things which seemed worthy of commemoration. A special instance of drawing respectable and deified figures from the past had to do with commemorating them in the content

²² See, Cass. Dio LXXVIII, 12.6; LXXIX, 4.7; Hdn. II, 15.5; SHA *Alex. Sev.* VIII, 3; SHA *Quatt. Tyr.* II, 1–2; SHA *Tyr. Trig.* XXVI, 2–3; XXXI, 2–3; SHA *Gall.* XII, 1.

²³ Cf. C. Foss, *Roman Historical Coins*, London 1990.

²⁴ See: A. Serra, *Le monete di “restituzione o imitazione” di Vespasiano: gusto antiquario e esigenza politica?*, in: *Ou pān ephēmeron. Scritti in memoria di Roberto Pretagostini*, a cura di C. Braidotti, E. Dettori, E. Lanzillotta, Roma 2009, p. 1159–1181; G. Lepri, *L’attualizzazione storica del messaggio iconografico nelle monete vespasiane e la cosiddetta aurea aetas*, NAC 43, 2014, p. 245–246.

²⁵ See: H. Komnick, *Die Restitutionsmünzen der frühen Kaiserzeit. Aspekte der Kaiserlegitimation*, Berlin–New York 2001. See also: H. Mattingly, *The ‘Restored’ Coins of Titus, Domitian and Nerva*, NC 20, 1920, p. 177–207; *idem*, *The Restored Coins of Trajan*, NC 6, 1926, p. 232–278.

of consecratory coins. Also rulers were referred to, although not only they. This point is demonstrated by the commemoration of M. Ulpus Traianus, the father of emperor Trajan, who as the *divus pater Traianus* was honoured with a special monetary issue.²⁶ Nevertheless, this gallery of people who were distinguished was dominated by emperors, *divi*.²⁷ Among them there were also those who, once they were affected by *damnatio memoriae*, subsequently were vindicated and thus managed to have their place restored in the official memory — for there was the evaluation-related aspect of the consecration of rulers.

The slogan *memoria* introduced to Roman numismatic specimens remained in relation to the appeal to commemoration of the deceased member of the imperial family and of the imperial predecessor (DIVO [...] / MEMORIA(E) AETERNA(E)²⁸, DIVO [...] / MEMORIA FELIX²⁹, DIVO [...] / MEMO-

²⁶ DIVVS PATER TRAIAN(VS) — B. Woytek, *Die Reichsprägung des Kaisers Traianus (98–117)*, Wien 2010, n^{os} 401, 406 (D), 402, 407–408 (Au); DIVI NERVA ET TRAIANVS PAT — *ibidem*, 400, 405 (Au); cf. O. Hekster, *Son of Two Fathers? Trajan and the Adoption of Emperor-ship in the Roman Empire*, *The History of the Family* 19, 3, 2014, p. 380–392; *idem*, *Emperors and Ancestors: Roman Rulers and the Constraints of Tradition*, Oxford 2015, p. 66–78.

²⁷ E.g., RIC IV.3, Tr. D. 77: DIVO AVGVSTO, 79–80: DIVO VESPASIANO, 81–82: DIVO TITO, 83–84: DIVO NERV(A)E, 85–86: DIVO TRAIANO, 87–88: DIVO HADRIANO, 89–90: DIVO PIO, 91–92: DIVO MARCO (ANTONINO), 93–94: DIVO COMMODO, 95–96: DIVO SEVERO, 97–98: DIVO ALEXANDRO; cf. H. Mattingly, *The Coins of the Divi Issued by Trajan Decius*, NC 9, ser. 6, 1949, p. 80–81; O. Hekster, *Emperors and Ancestors...*, p. 222–224.

²⁸ E.g., AETERNA MEMORIA — RIC VI, 24 (Obv. DIVO MAXIMIANO SEN AVG), 25 (Obv. DIVO MAXIMIANI PATRI MAXENTIVS AVG), 26 (Obv. IMP MAXENTIVS DIVO MAXIMIANO PATRI), 27 (Obv. DIVO CONSTANTIO COGN MAXENTIVS AVG), 28 (Obv. IMP MAXENTIVS DIVO CONSTANTIO COGN), 28A (Obv. DIVO CONSTANTIO ADFINI MAXENTIVS AVG), 29 (Obv. IMP MAXENTIVS DIVO CONSTANTIO ADFINI); 29 (Obv. IMP MAXENTIVS DIVO CONSTANTIO ADFINI), 30 (Obv. DIVO MAXIMIANO SOCERO MAXENTIVS AVG), 31 (Obv. IMP MAXENTIVS DIVO MAXIMIANO SOCERO), 32 (Obv. DIVO ROMVLO N V FILIO MAXENTIVS AVG), 33 (Obv. IMP MAXENTIVS DIVO ROMVLO N V FILIO); AETERNAE MEMORIAE — *ibidem*, 34 (Obv. DIVO ROMVLO N V BIS COS); cf. P. Bastien, AETERNAE MEMORIAE GALERI MAXIMIANI, RBN 114, 1968, p. 15–43; E.A. Dumser, *The AETERNAE MEMORIAE Coinage of Maxentius: an Issue of Symbolic Intent*, in: *Imaging Ancient Rome: Documentation, Visualization, Imagination*, ed. by L. Haselberger, J. Humphrey, D. Abernathy, JRA Supplementary series 61, Portsmouth 2006, p. 106–118. AETERNAE MEMORIAE — RIC V.1, Cl. Goth. 292–295 (Obv. DIVO CLAVDIO OPT IMP), 296 (Obv. DIVO CLAVDIO); cf. S. Estiot, *Monnaies de l'Empire romain: XII, 1. D'Aurélien à Florian (270–276 après J.-C.)*, Paris 2004, p. 60–62, 83, 104–107; O. Hekster, *Emperors and Ancestors...*, p. 225–226.

²⁹ E.g. MEMORIA FELIX — RIC VI, 110, 789–790, 264–268, 297 (Obv. DIVO CONSTANTIO PIO).

RIA³⁰ etc. Such usage of this element was related to the classical understanding of *memoria* as an object by which the deceased were commemorated. However, *memoria* was a very capacious term and it was applied in many meanings by the ancients.³¹ Their core had to do with commemoration, a token, memory, also in the sense of knowledge about the past.

Once M. Tullius Cicero used the phrase *memoria rerum Romanarum*, covering the knowledge of the history of Rome.³² Let us additionally narrow down the Roman history to the earliest Roman past, the legendary and mythical past in the period “from Aeneas to Romulus”, i.e. to the content of the founding myth. For the ancients themselves this earliest period, which is not documented in epigraphical and literary sources, was not so much a remembered subject but a constructed one. Moreover, the *memoria rerum Romanarum* which was conceived of in such a way, especially considering the multiplicity and the variety of the versions of the Roman founding myth, was not a coherent creation: these were rather *memoriae rerum Romanarum*, whose variety constituted a part of collective memory.

By exploring various themes of the founding myth, both the *monetales* of the Republican age and the rulers who issued coins and medallions in the age of the Empire made reference to images, symbols and values which were more widespread or even stereotypical. By drawing in this scope from mythical stories about the primordia and the origins of Rome, on the one hand they conferred an aspect of up-to-datedness to them, which corresponded to their own contemporaneity. On the other hand, they modified mythical content in a peculiar way. By engaging in mintage the themes of the Roman myth in the images and, sporadically in monetary slogans, they could present merely

³⁰ E.g. DIVO CONSTANTIO AVG / MEMORIA DIVI CONSTANTI — *RIC* VI, 97; DIVO CONSTANTIO PIO / MEMORIA DIVI CONSTANTI — *ibidem*, 127.

³¹ Cf. A. Stróż, *O wieloznaczności terminu memoria*, in: *Sympozja kazimierskie poświęcone kulturze świata późnego antyku i wczesnego chrześcijaństwa*, vol. VII: *Pamięć i upamiętnienie w epoce późnego antyku*, red. B. Iwaszkiewicz-Wronikowska, D. Próchniak, A. Głowa, Lublin 2010, p. 124–126; K. Galinsky, *Introduction*, in: *Memoria Romana: Memory in Rome and Rome in Memory*, ed. by K. Galinsky (ed.), MAAR, Suppl. 10, Ann Arbor 2014, p. 1–12. Cf. also: S. Benoist, *L'usage de la memoria des Sévères à Constantin: notes d'épigraphie et d'histoire*, CCG 19, 2008, p. 129–143.

³² Cic. *Vit. Brut.* 93, 322. See also: Cic. *Off.* II, 12, 43. Cf. Cic. *De or.* I, 4.16: “[...] ex omni memoria aetatum, temporum, civitatum [...]”; Liv. XXV, 24: “[...] recentissimae memoriae rex [...]”.

a simplified, symbolic version of a specific story. The entire potential richness of the things which remained a part of the general repository of tradition about the primordia and which constituted a *res digna memoratu*, was reduced to these symbolic images and brief inscriptions. In spite of this, the figures of the protagonists of myth — divine, human and animal figures, that is e.g. Aeneas, Romulus, Mars and Rhea Silvia, the she-wolf *etc.*, their acts/gestures and attributes, scenery — all these things enabled a subtle arrangement of the content of the stories, extracting from them the things which seemed appealing and necessary in specific circumstances.

Memoria rerum Romanarum preserved in the content of the numismatic specimens did not constitute ossified and unchangeable memory. On the contrary — it was a creation which changed according to the expectations of the issuers, for indeed the drawing of the elements of the Roman myth from the tradition was supposed to create a temporary image of the families³³ or specific individual figures by erecting a monument (*monumentum*) to them in a metaphorical way. However, one may assume that the mythical content which was featured in mintage — content which referred to the ideas about the fate and the actions of heroes, the values they embodied and the values which were embraced due to their activities — manifested a certain aspect of declaration about the respecting and veneration of tradition, therefore a conservative aspect and above all a traditionalistic one. By reducing it to a commemorative and utilitarian function one may say that by adducing the “memory” about the Roman origins in various historical conditions one justified the order of the mythical Roman world. Nevertheless, what is more important, on the other hand one justified or even glorified the state in which the issuers were functioning. Thus there occurred a “materialisation” of myth already in the historical reality.

This materialisation also had its more literal manifestation. Namely, in mintage the content of myth was rarely commented upon with an inscription whose content referred directly to the earliest Roman history. Usually it was reduced to a more or less elaborate image of a selected theme. The *imago* preserved in the disks of the numismatic specimens endured longer than the period of the life and the activity of the issuers. It was able to carry and to

³³ Cf. Ch. Pérez, *Monnaie du pouvoir. Pouvoir de la monnaie. Une pratique discursive originale: le discours figuratif monétaire (Ier s. av.J.-C.–14 ap. J.-C.)*, Paris 1986, p. 260.

disseminate the memory about the Roman primordia over the years, or rather about a selected episode of this history.

Mythical content in mintage illustrated the early history of the Romans. At its origin was Aeneas's fate, but above all the history of Remus and Romulus, and the deeds of the latter. In a pursuit of illustrative expositions of the stories about these heroes, I would like to point out three solutions (designs) featured on reverses. They are rare; they were used only sporadically in the course of a few hundred of years.³⁴

By adhering to the order determined by the mythical chronology I will commence by discussing the coins which feature a representation of Aeneas who marches forth, carrying a *Palladium* and his father, Anchises. Such an image of the hero featured next to the inscription CAESAR, which refers to the figure of the C. Iulius Caesar, was introduced to reverses of denarii dated to 47–46 BC. The obverses represented the image of Venus.³⁵ A formal link was established by two ancestors of the *gens* Iulia: Aeneas and his divine mother — on both sides of these coins. This solution was recalled on denarii issued within the framework of the restitutive series of Trajan (112/113 AD).³⁶

The second image is more elaborate. Remus and Romulus suckled by a she-wolf was presented at the feet of a sitting Roma. Symmetrically arranged birds soar in a field next to her. One perceives in them an allusion to the *divinationes* conducted by the twins who sought directions before they established the city. Due to this Secondina Laura Cesano referred to this representation as *augurium Romuli*.³⁷ The name continues to be used until today. In conjunction

³⁴ Cf. A.A. Kluczek, *Primordia Romana. Mityczna przeszłość Rzymu i pamięć o niej w rzymskich numizmatach zakłeta*, Katowice 2019, esp. p. 441–456 (forthcoming). Cf. also: C. Dulière, *Lupa Romana. Recherches d'iconographie et essai d'interprétation*, Bruxelles–Rome 1979, esp. p. 84, 141–143, 154–162; J.P. Martin, *Les thèmes de l'épopée romaine dans la numismatique impériale*, in: *Imago Antiquitatis. Religions et iconographie du monde romain. Mélanges offerts à Robert Turcan*, éd. par N. Blanc, A. Buisson, Paris 1999, p. 329–340; C. Ferro, *Immagini della memoria: Romolo nei tipi monetali di età imperiale*, *Scienze dell'Antichità* 16, 2010, p. 219–250; A. Dardenay, *Les mythes fondateurs de Rome. Images et politique dans l'Occident romain*, Paris 2010, esp. p. 57–58, 77–78, 110–117; eadem, *Images des Fondateurs. D'Enée à Romulus*, Bordeaux 2012, p. 16–17, 44–53, 89–90, 95–102.

³⁵ *RRC* 458/1; cf. *CRR* 1013 (48 BC); *BMCR*, East 31–35 (48 BC).

³⁶ Komnick, *Trajan* 38.0; Woytek 836.

³⁷ S.L. Cesano, *La figura di Roma sulle monete romane*, in: *Atti del I Congresso Nazionale di Studi Romani*, a cura dell'Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma 1929, p. 56.

with the representation of the *initia* of Remus and Romulus, suckled by the she-wolf, and the figure of Roma who dominates in the representation, we receive a metaphorically treated image of the founding myth. This idea was first introduced to Republican denarii in the late 2nd century BC (115 or 114 BC).³⁸ After some years the idea was replicated two times: in the imitation aurei of Titus which were created in the years 77–78 during Vespasian’s reign,³⁹ and then in the restitution denarii of Trajan (112/113 AD).⁴⁰

During the reign of the Flavii, one introduced the image of Roma, “enthroned” on the seven hills, on Vespasian’s sestertii of 71, of the ROMA S C type.⁴¹ Next to her the she-wolf suckles the twins, whereas Tiberinus Pater lies adjacent to her. The whole representation is not a simple reconstruction of one of the episodes of the juvenile history of Romulus and Remus. The recalling of the classical image which refers to the story about their salvation was utilised in order to construct an allegorical presentation of Roma *septemgemina*, precisely with her Romulean tradition, and with the great purpose. This representation was replicated on one of the so-called contorniates which was created probably in the late 4th century.⁴² These are objects which are similar to numismatic specimens; they feature peculiar references to the Roman past; they may have been issued by the representatives of the late Roman elite.

If we compare the iconography of the original models of these three reverse-related ideas with their imitations, restitutions or simply later realisations, we receive proof that indeed one replicated the basic composition of the reverses but nevertheless one may perceive discernible differences in it. Examples of such differences include the arrangement of Roma’s figure, the proportions of her and the group of the she-wolf, the arrangement of the heap of shields, the form of the birds or — as in the case of the contorniate — realisation in the

³⁸ *RRC* 287; cf. *CRR* 530 (c. 110–108 BC); *BMCRR, Italy* 562 (93–92 BC).

³⁹ T CAESAR IMP VESPASIANVS / COS VI — *RIC* II.1, *Vesp. (Tit.)* 954.

⁴⁰ ROMA / IMP CAES TRAIAN AVG GER DAC P P REST — Komnick, *Trajan* 5.0 and p. 137–138; Woytek 805.

⁴¹ *RIC* II.1, *Vesp.* 108 and 193.

⁴² A. Alföldi, E. Alföldi, C.L. Clay, *Die Kontorniat — Medaillons*, Bd. I: *Katalog*, Berlin 1976, p. 158, n° 491, pl. 195.1 (Napoli, Post-Fiorelli 20). Chronology, cf. *ibidem*, p. 222; P.F. Mittag, *Alte Köpfe in neuen Händen. Urheber und Funktion der Kontorniaten*, Bonn 1999, p. 247–249.

mirror-like way of the idea drawn from the original model. Therefore we are not dealing with a mechanical and passive utilisation of original models.

The oldest of these three images was created more than six hundred years after the establishment of the *Urbs*. At that time, for the first time in Roman mintage, one combined in one representation the group of the she-wolf and the personified Roma — *i.e.* themes which were crucial for the identification of Romans during the course of centuries. The founding-related tradition was concretised in the image which features elaborate symbolic elements. It includes the indication of Rome as such, as well as providence which protected the fate of the Roman people and the subjection of the Roman people to the decrees of gods. After the elapsing of about 200 years this idea was introduced to the reverses of imitational Flavian issues which afterwards returned after a few decades in the restitution mintage of Trajan. The Republican model (which was chronologically remote), as the “remembered” and replicated model which in itself animated the memory about the period of Romulus, was updated. The content which this image symbolised should now be referred to subsequent issuers. In the utilisation of the scene of the *augurium Romuli* there is an inherent concern about the construction of the desired representation of the Flavian dynasty in images, then a concern about the creation of the representation of emperor Trajan. In the mintage of the latter, among the many instances of recalling of the models of earlier coins, one also restored the theme of Aeneas carrying his father, Anchises, and *Palladium*. In this case, one utilised a Republican idea which was conceived about 150 years before.

The original model of the third representation — *Roma septemgemina* — dates back to the period of the Flavian period, which *nota bene* affirmed its success and merits for the restoration of the state *inter alia* in the utilisation of the representation of Roma and a turn toward the past.⁴³ The representation featured on Vespasian’s sestertii returned after more than three centuries when one abandoned mythological themes in regular mintage. At that time these representations became more commonly featured on contorniates. One rep-

⁴³ Cf. A. Serra, *Le monete di “restituzione o imitazione” di Vespasiano...*, p. 1162–1177; E. Rosso, *Le thème de la Res publica restituta dans le monnayage de Vespasien: pérennité du „modèle augustéen” entre citations, réinterprétations et dévoiements*, in: *Le Principat d’Auguste. Réalités et représentations du pouvoir. Autour de la Res publica restituta*, sous la dir. de F. Hurlet, B. Mineo, Rennes 2009, p. 209–242; A.A. Kluczek, *Primordia Romana...*, s. 191–205.

resented in these coins e.g. the themes of Aeneas or the she-wolf with Remus and Romulus. In the group of representations which refer to the mythical past of Roma the recalling of the theme of the *Roma septemgemma* is a rarity. Even though the contorniates were not sufficiently recognised both in terms of their time of origin and purpose, prove the presence (desired by the late ancient people) of mythical images and the mythical history of Romans and their progenitors. The themes which were constructed by these images as peculiar artefacts constituted the bulk of the “founding memory”, referring to the *primordia*.⁴⁴

The examples which were indicated are testimony of the appeal of the memory about the earliest stage of the development of Rome in various political and social conditions in the course of many centuries which was recalled in the monetary representations. They also demonstrate the enduring nature of images that were created at one point in history. Even though I focused on the most spectacular examples, as far as the classical, topical themes are concerned, they were replicated in imitations, restitutions or “normal” issues of legal coins and occasional medallions. Their content recalled selected solidified points of the past. One manipulated these points. Until the early 4th century one mentioned in monetary representations not so much the particular episodes of a myth but their new numismatic and iconographical transformations. In any case, the first instance of the introduction of an image of a given theme may be treated as an instance of “creation” of memory about *primordia*. Then one merely recalled this theme and updated it in order to explain the contemporaneity of the world of the issuers.

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Abbreviations

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CIL = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, ed. Preuss, Berlin 1863 nn.

CRR = E.A. Sydenham, *The Coinage of the Roman Republic*, London 1952.

Komnick = H. Komnick, *Die Restitutionsmünzen der frühen Kaiserzeit. Aspekte der Kaiserlegitimation*, Berlin 2001.

RIC II.1 = *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. II.1: *from AD 69–96. Vespasian to Domitian*, ed. by I.A. Carradice and T.V. Buttrey, London 2007.

⁴⁴ Cf. J. Assmann, *Pamięć kulturowa...*, p. 67–68.

- RIC IV.3 = H. Mattingly, E.A. Sydenham, C.H.V. Sutherland, *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, London 1968.
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O znaczeniu numizmatów rzymskich dla przechowywania pamięci i jej konstruowania

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest, oparte na pojedynczych przykładach numizmatów, zreferowanie komemoracyjnego waloru rzymskich monet i medalionów oraz uporządkowanie ich wyobrażeń według kryterium, jakim jest ich funkcja przechowywania i konstruowania pamięci. Tak rozumiany związek numizmat–pamięć mógł być dostrzegany przez samych starożytnych. Aspekt komemoratywny numizmatów wskazywali dawni autorzy, czemu dali wyraz w swych pracach Palladiusz (Rutilius Taurus Aemilianus Palladius, koniec IV–V w.) oraz Kasjodor (Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator, ok. 485–ok. 580).

Treści monet i medalionów tworzyły repozytorium pamięci zbiorowej o wybranych postaciach i zdarzeniach z dziejów rzymskich. Taka rola numizmatów wyrastała ze ścisłego ich związku z władzą i polityką. Sam dobór tych treści, a w efekcie rejestrowanie wydarzeń i uczczenie ich bohaterów w formie napisów oraz wyobrażeń monetarnych, można rozumieć jako element „polityki upamiętniania”. Wyjątkowej materii dostarczyły jej wątki mityczne dotyczące początków

Rzymu, czyli epizody nie zapamiętane, a skonstruowane. Interesujące jest, że wyobrażenia, które stworzono by „pamięć fundacyjną” odzwierciedlały, niekiedy przypominano w mennictwie po upływie wielu lat. Odwołaniami do mitów fundacyjnych wyrażano uznanie dla tradycji, a także tę wykreowaną przeszłość pragmatycznie osadzano w rzeczywistości emitenta.

W tych kontekstach szczególnej wartości nabierają monety zwane „imitacyjnymi” i „restytucyjnymi”. Razem z numizmatami należącymi do trzeciej z ważnych grup — monet „konsekracyjnych” — odgrywały one wyjątkową rolę w przechowywaniu pamięci o losach i czynach dawnych bohaterów, polityków, cesarzy.