

PAWEŁ JANISZEWSKI

University of Warsaw, Faculty of History

ORCID 0000-0002-3984-8688

Afinia Gemina Baebiana, the Wife of Emperor Trebonianus Gallus, and the Great Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus Commissioned for Her*

Abstract

The article presents the hypothesis that the so-called Great Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus was crafted between 251 and 253 for Afinia Gemina Baebiana, the deceased wife of the reigning emperor during those years, Trebonianus Gallus. The lid of the sarcophagus, presently located in Mainz, portrays Afinia Gemina Baebiana on the right side, and on the left side, Trebonianus Gallus seated on a tribunal, receiving barbarian captives; possibly standing before the tribunal is their young son, Volusian. On the frontal panel of the sarcophagus, housed in the Palazzo Altemps in Rome, Volusian is depicted charging on horseback during a victorious encounter with eastern and western adversaries of the empire.

Słowa kluczowe: tzw. Wielki Sarkofag Ludovisi, cesarz Trebonian Gallus, Woluzjan, Wibia Afinia Bebiana

Keywords: Great Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus, Emperor Trebonianus Gallus, Volusian, Afinia Gemina Baebiana

THESIS AND METHODOLOGY

Dispensing with unnecessary introductions, following the example of Xenophon (*Anab.* 1.1) and in defiance of the ridicule by Lucian (*Hist. Conscr.* 23), I shall begin promptly with the thesis of this article. I will argue that the individual for whom the renowned Great Ludovisi battle sarcophagus was crafted was Afinia

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Gemina Baebiana, the wife of Trebonianus Gallus (251–253). This splendid exemplar of Roman funerary art emerged during the reign of Trebonianus Gallus, albeit his spouse likely passed away somewhat earlier. On the lid of the sarcophagus, currently housed in Mainz, Afinia Gemina Baebiana is depicted on the right side, while on the left side, Trebonianus Gallus is seated on a tribunal, possibly with their young son Volusian (251–253) representing his father in the reception of barbarian captives. On the frontal panel of the sarcophagus chest, presently kept in Palazzo Altemps in Rome, Volusian is depicted charging on horseback during a victorious engagement against the typical eastern and western adversaries of the empire (Fig. 1)¹.

Stylistically, where a general consensus prevails², the Ludovisi sarcophagus is dated to a relatively broad period between 230 and 270³. In earlier studies, based on stylistic evidence, its creation was situated around 260⁴. In more recent research, there is a preference for placing the origin of the sarcophagus around 251, although, significantly, this is not solely supported by stylistic considerations but rather by a hypothesis linking the artifact to the deceased Hostilian at that time (see further discussion). Therefore, stylistic analysis does not firmly and indisputably place the sarcophagus within a specific timeframe⁵. When regarding stylistic evidence, it is also necessary

¹ M. De Angelis d'Ossat, "È opera stupenda": notizie intorno al ritrovamento del sarcofago grande Ludovisi, "Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz", 55, 2008, pp. 577–592, at p. 578.

² Although there was also a suggestion that the sarcophagus was originally crafted for a certain military leader around the year 170, subsequently, around 250, it was repurposed and then the face of a charging commander was recarved to resemble the new owner, see A.L. Frothingham, *The Ludovisi Sarcophagus and the dating of Roman sarcophagi*, "American Journal of Archaeology", 26, 1922, pp. 78–79.

³ The broad chronology arises from the incorporation of the most frequently proposed dating of the sarcophagus found in the literature on the subject, see Bibliography. See also M. Allen, *The Death of Myth on Roman Sarcophagi. Allegory and Visual Narrative in the Late Empire*, Cambridge – New York 2022, p. 194, fn. 107.

⁴ The Ludovisi sarcophagus is said to bear resemblance to the sarcophagus from Reims, dating to around 260 (Musée Saint-Remi, inv. 978.20171), depicting a lion hunt (later modified for Flavius Jovinus, *cos.* 367). However, the basis for such a chronology is tenuous: Gerhart Rodenwaldt (*Jagd-sarkophag in Reims*, "Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Römische Abteilung / Bullettino dell'Istituto Archeologico Germanico Sezione Romana", 59, 1944, pp. 191–203, at p. 198) roughly dated the Reims sarcophagus to around 260 ('Als ungefähres Datum des Reimser Sarkophages mag die Zeit um des Jahr 260 vorgeschlagen werden'). Going further, G. Gullini (*Maestri e botteghe in Roma da Gallieno alla Tetrarchia*, Torino 1960, pp. 12–31, at p. 26), suggested that both sarcophagi were crafted in the same workshop. As evident, these are not robust grounds for precise stylistic dating of the Ludovisi sarcophagus. See also the remarks by Stine Birk (*Third-century sarcophagi from the city of Rome: a chronological reappraisal*, "Analecta Romana Instituti Danici", 35/36, 2010/2011, pp. 7–30) on the challenges of stylistic dating of sarcophagi.

⁵ Many scholars disagree that the stylistic features of the Ludovisi sarcophagus indicate its creation around 260. For instance, Donald Strong (*Roman Art*, Harmondsworth 1980, pp. 202–206, 257) stylistically dated the sarcophagus to around 250. Conversely, Oldřich Pelikán (*Der grosse Ludovisische Schlachtsarkophag*, in *Mnema Vladimír Groh*, ed. J. Česka, G. Hejzlar, Praha 1964, pp. 117–135,



Fig. 1. The Ludovisi Sarcophagus along with its reconstructed lid

to consider the individual aesthetic preferences of the commissioner of the sarcophagus and/or its designer and/or its craftsman. Additionally, there has always been, and continues to be, both avant-garde art ahead of its time and conservative trends contesting any innovation. Furthermore, whether around 251 or around 260, we are dealing with a timeframe of approximately ten years, so arguing over precise dating solely based on imprecise stylistic evidence seems rather futile.

at p. 125) observed that the complete absence of background in the battle scene of the Ludovisi sarcophagus is atypical for the art of the Gallienic period (260–268), but rather typical of an earlier period (see also *ibidem*, pp. 126–127); a similar earlier dating, see O. Pelikán, *Vom antiken Realismus zur spätantiken Expressivität*, Praha 1965, pp. 116–138, 170–171.

Another preliminary note regarding technique, as it may serve as a premise for dating, is the meticulous finishing of the interior of the sarcophagus, which argues against attributing its production too close to the end of the third century. Throughout the second and third centuries, one can observe a gradual deterioration in the craftsmanship of sarcophagus interiors (evidenced by increasingly irregular chisel marks)⁶. Therefore, it is more appropriate to place the creation of the Ludovisi sarcophagus earlier rather than later, although this is, of course, a somewhat imprecise determination. Therefore, the style and craftsmanship do not necessarily dictate dating the artifact of interest to the 260s of the third century, the period known as the ‘Gallienic Renaissance’.

I have adopted a fresh methodology in this article, shifting the research perspective by temporarily setting aside stylistic considerations. Let us return to the source – that is, asking the elementary question of what the scenes from the **entire** sarcophagus (both the chest and the lid) depict and which historical figures and events these scenes correspond to. To explore this pursuit, I follow a rigorous examination of Roman iconographic patterns applied to other well-known events from the third century. Only after this review should we return to stylistic issues. Facts, which are not subject to debate, cannot be bent to fit inherently imprecise stylistic impressions.

Two more important preliminary remarks, the first concerning the identification of figures **solely** based on unsigned portraits (excluding coins bearing names). None of the sculptures, whether marble or bronze, purporting to depict any of the rulers or members of their family mentioned in this article from the mid-third century, are signed with an ancient name. Although in modern and recent studies, we can read assertions that they represent, for example, Trebonianus Gallus (as in the purported bronze statue from The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York). A cursory glance at several marble busts allegedly portraying, for instance, Volusian⁷, is sufficient to establish beyond doubt that they clearly do not depict the same individual (see illustrations below). It is also essential to remember that these surviving ancient sculptures were found with some damage, often restored and supplemented in modern times.

Secondly, the identification of the figures on the Ludovisi sarcophagus requires further investigation. Four questions arise: (a) Who was interred in the sarcophagus? (b) Who is depicted on the frontal panel of the sarcophagus chest? (c) Who is seated on a tribunal on the left side of the relief on the lid? (d) Who is the woman depicted on the right side of the lid? However, in previous studies, the number of potential individuals associated with the sarcophagus was often reduced to three or even two.

⁶ Idem, *Der grosse Ludovisische Schlachtsarkophag*, pp. 130–131, acknowledged that this could serve as evidence for dating the sarcophagus to around 250, rather than c. 260.

⁷ Refer to marble portraits: from the Capitoline Museum in Rome (no. 92), from the Palazzo Massimo alle Terme in Rome, from Aschaffenburg (now housed in the Glyptothek in Munich), from the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, from the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Tours, from the Smith College Museum in Northampton. All of them are included below in this article.

That is to say: $a = b$. The individual interred in the sarcophagus and depicted on its front would be one and the same person – this is the most commonly accepted concept; $a = b = c$. The individual interred in the sarcophagus, seated on the tribunal, depicted on the front, is one and the same individual. However, there is also a possibility, which I believe requires further investigation, that none of the three male figures mentioned above should be identified with each other (i.e., $a \neq b \neq c$). Could the sarcophagus have been made for the woman depicted on the lid? (d) Also, it is worth taking a closer look at the young man in military attire standing in front of the tribunal, a figure hitherto overlooked in studies.

Unfortunately, there is variability in the organization and completeness of the exposition⁸, hence researchers often limit themselves to proposing the identification of the figure of the charging young commander on the frontal panel of the sarcophagus (b), without addressing whom they believe was interred within it (a) and whom they depict on the lid seated on the tribunal (c). Additionally, it is assumed, more or less explicitly, that the charging young commander on the battlefield (b) must have been interred in the sarcophagus, because his image on the main panel of the sarcophagus chest is the most prominently displayed. In my opinion, this is an erroneous assumption, as his image on the main panel of the sarcophagus chest is the most prominently displayed⁹.

⁸ See the discussions by Susanna Künzl (*Der Schlachtsarkophag Ludovisi. Bestattung eines römischen Kaisers?*, “Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums”, 52, 2005, 2, pp. 607–608, at p. 607) on the two “owners” of the sarcophagus, mother and son: “Links von der Mitte **ist der jugendliche Inhaber des Sarkophags** als siegreicher Feldherr dargestellt, dem Barbarenkinder – wohl als Geiseln – überstellt werden. Die rechte Seite der Deckelplatte nimmt das Porträt des **zweiten Inhabers, einer Frau mittleren Alters**, ein. Sie ist durch die beigegebene Schriftrolle als gebildete Angehörige der höheren Stände gekennzeichnet und wird wohl die Mutter des jungen Mannes gewesen sein. Der Sarkophagkasten hat eine reliefierte Vorderseite und auch die beiden Seiten tragen Reliefs. Die Schauseite zeigt die Darstellung einer wild durcheinander wirbelnden Schlacht zwischen Römern und Barbaren, in deren Zentrum sich ein Feldherr – **der Inhaber des Sarkophags** – zu Pferd befindet” (p. 607). On the frontal panel of the sarcophagus, its “owner” is depicted: “**Der Inhaber des Sarkophags** trägt im Gegensatz zu seinen Begleitern zu Panzer, Tunica und Mantel auch kurze Hosen. Es fällt auf, dass der Feldherr, der eigentlich das Zentrum des Schlachtgetümmels bildet, anders als seine Begleiter keinen Helm trägt” (p. 608). The conclusion is that the sarcophagus should be dated to around the years 250–260 and that it cannot be proven that it was intended for Hostilian and adorned with the image of Herennia Etruscilla; therefore, the sarcophagus likely belonged to some member of the elite and his mother (“Der Sarkophag ist dennoch ein außergewöhnliches Stück, das für einen wohl nicht unbedeutenden Angehörigen der römischen Oberschicht und seine Mutter angefertigt wurde”). It is difficult to comprehend what Susanna Künzl means by the categories of “first owner” and “second owner” of the sarcophagus.

⁹ According to Helga von Heintze (*Der Feldherr des Grossen Ludovisischen Schlachtsarkophages*, in *Römische Porträts*, ed. eadem, Wege der Forschung Series, 348, Darmstadt 1974, pp. 369–402, at pp. 382–383), the woman depicted on the lid of the sarcophagus is Herennia Etruscilla, because the sarcophagus of Hostilian was also crafted for his mother (“Um so natürlicher ist es, wenn der Sarkophag des Hostilianus auch für sie [i.d. for Herennia Etruscilla] mit bestimmt und ihr Porträt darauf angebracht wurde”).

Thus far, it has been suggested that the Ludovisi sarcophagus was made for the figure charging on horseback depicted in the frontal relief¹⁰, speculated to be, for example (listed chronologically¹¹): Septimius Severus (d. 211), Alexander Severus (d. 235), Timesitheus (d. 243), Herennius (d. 251)¹², Hostilian (d. 251)¹³, Volusian (d. 253)¹⁴, Gallienus (d. 268), Claudius II (d. 270), or an anonymous figure (i.e., an unspecified commander¹⁵). Each of these proposals has its weaknesses, as pointed out by various scholars.

¹⁰ See P. Zanker, B.C. Ewald, *Living with Myths. The Imagery of Roman Sarcophagi*, transl. J. Slater, Oxford 2012, p. 227.

¹¹ Various proposals regarding the personal attribution of the Ludovisi sarcophagus can be found, for instance, in H. von Heintze, *Der Feldherr des Grossen*, pp. 369–374; H. Wrede, *Senatorische Sarkophage Roms: Der Beitrag des Senatorenstandes zur römischen Kunst der hohen und späten Kaiserzeit*, Mainz 2001, pp. 67–68; *Scultura antica in Palazzo Altemps: Museo Nazionale Romano*, ed. M. De Angelis d'Ossat, Milano 2002, pp. 218–221; E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium. Der Ludovisisarkophag – Grabmal eines Feldherrn Roms*, Regensburg–Mainz 2010, p. 67.

¹² G. Gullini, *Maestri e botteghe in Roma*, pp. 12–14; O. Pelikán, *Der grosse Ludovisische Schlachtsarkophag*, p. 121: “Eine sichere Entscheidung zwischen Hostilianus und Herennius Etruscus, wer von ihnen mit dem Feldherrn am Sarkophag mit grösster Wahrscheinlichkeit identisch ist, ist unmöglich. Verschiedene Beweise sprechen sowohl für wie auch wider, **vielleicht eher für den älteren Bruder**. Vom Standpunkt der Kunstgeschichte aus ist es aber belanglos, denn entscheidend ist die Zeit der Entstehung des Porträts, d. i. **das Jahr 251**, mit welchem der ludovisische Sarkophag datiert ist”; E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, p. 67 (only as one of several proposals put forth by other scholars).

¹³ See H. von Heintze, *Studien zu den Porträts des 3. Jahrhundert n. Chr. 4. Der Feldherr des Grossen Ludovisischen Schlachtsarkophages*, “Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Rom”, 64, 1957, pp. 69–91 (= eadem, *Der Feldherr des Grossen*, pp. 369–402).

¹⁴ The inventory of the Ludovisi collection from 1633 (which was compiled 12 years after the discovery of the sarcophagus in 1621) already pointed to Volusian, see E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, p. 6; this was also the opinion held by Wolfgang Helbig (*Führer durch die öffentlichen Sammlungen klassischer Altertümer in Rom*, vol. 3, ed. B. Andreae, Tübingen 1969 [1st edn, Leipzig 1891]), p. 127, fn. 884 (10), see below, p. 69.

¹⁵ This is the opinion of the majority of scholars, see for example: B. Andreae, *Zur Komposition des grossen Ludovisischen Schlachtsarkophages*, “Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Universität Rostock”, 17, 1968, pp. 633–640; K. Fittschen, *Sarkophage römischer Kaiser oder vom Nutzen der Porträtforschung*, “Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts”, 94, 1979, pp. 578–593, at pp. 581–593; G. Koch, H. Sichtermann, *Römische Sarkophage. Handbuch der Archäologie*, München 1982, p. 92; H. Wrede, *Senatorische Sarkophage Roms*, pp. 25, 64, 66–68; P. Zanker, B.C. Ewald, *Living with Myths*, pp. 227–229, ill. 207; E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, pp. 63–69; K.M. Töpfer, *Signa Militaria: Die römische Feldzeichen in der Republik und im Prinzipat*, Mainz 2011, pp. 248–249; S. Faust, rev. of: Ernst Künzl, “Der Traum vom Imperium. Der Ludovisisarkophag – Grabmal eines Feldherrn Roms”, Regensburg–Mainz 2010, “Göttinger Forum für Altertumswissenschaft”, 14, 2011, pp. 1017–1026; S. Faust, *Schlachtenbilder der römischen Kaiserzeit. Erzählerische Darstellungskonzepte in der Reliefkunst von Traian bis Septimius Severus*, Rahden 2012, pp. 210–212; B.E. Borg, *Crisis and Ambition: Tombs and Burial Customs in Third-Century CE Rome*, Oxford Studies in Ancient Culture and Representation Series, Oxford – New York 2013, pp. 184–186; M. Allen, *The Death of Myth*, pp. 104–105.

Instead of dedicating dozens of pages to presenting the basis of the above identifications and the arguments of their critics¹⁶, I have deliberately chosen a **method** limited to providing **three difficult-to-dispute facts** that can be established by examining the artifact. It will then become apparent that its iconography best fits – or indeed exclusively fits (*sic!*) – Afinia Gemina Baebiana, the ephemeral wife of the short-reigning emperor, Trebonianus Gallus, and that the sarcophagus was made for her. I will therefore focus on the three main figures depicted on this fascinating example of Roman funerary art, starting with the arrangement of their relationships: wife – husband – son.

THE WIFE

We evidently have a sarcophagus depicting a woman. Her portrait, shown to the waist, is set against a backdrop of a curtain (*parapetasma*) held up by two female figures. The deceased is dressed in a tunic with a cloak draped over it (*palla*), and she holds a rolled scroll of papyrus in her hands, symbolizing the conclusion of life (**Fig. 2**)¹⁷.

The most significant aspect is the highly characteristic positioning of the portrait of this woman on the lid of the sarcophagus – to the right of the centrally placed, but now lost, funerary inscription (I will return to its absence later), originally engraved on a *tabula ansata* (**Fig. 3**)¹⁸.

Similarly, on the lids of other sarcophagi, images of the deceased are placed in the same position, enlarged and iconographically distinguished, such as being placed in a medallion or against a drapery backdrop. An example of this is the sarcophagus dated to around 190–210, found in Ostia and currently housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (inv. 47.100.4a,b)¹⁹, depicting Selene descending from

¹⁶ However, greater attention must be paid to the hypothesis proposed by Helga von Heintze, presented in an article published in 1957 and reprinted in 1974 (I refer to this version). According to Heintze, the Ludovisi sarcophagus was made for Hostilian, who is depicted as a young commander (aged 20 to 25 years) charging into battle. Heintze's main argument is the X mark on the forehead of this alleged "Hostilian" – marble heads from the Capitoline Museum (no. 92) and from Aschaffenburg (now in the Glyptothek in Munich) also bear the same mark, which Heintze believes also represent Hostilian. I will refer to this hypothesis several times. However, it must be immediately noted that Heintze's idea has met with a wave of criticism (see a compilation of critical remarks in the early publications of the 1960s and 1970s in K. Fittschen, *Sarkophage römischer Kaiser*, pp. 581–582, n. 15).

¹⁷ See *Die Sarkophage mit Darstellungen aus dem Menschenleben*, I 3: *Vita Romana*, ed. C. Reinsberg, Berlin 2006, Fig. 47.2.

¹⁸ E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, p. 12.

¹⁹ See also A.M. McCann, *Roman Sarcophagi in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York 1978, pp. 39–45. To avoid enlarging the bibliography, in the case of artifacts other than the Ludovisi sarcophagus, I will only provide the current location and inventory number; occasionally, I will only mention the literature if it addresses issues relevant to this article.



Fig. 2. The portrait of a woman from the lid of the Ludovisi Sarcophagus



Fig. 3. The reconstructed lid of the Ludovisi Sarcophagus

the heavens to the sleeping Endymion; on its lid, to the right of the inscription preserved this time, the deceased Arria is depicted (**Fig. 4**)²⁰.

Another example may be the sarcophagus dated to around 240 from the Louvre (inv. Ma 1346), depicting Dionysus and Ariadne on its lid, to the right of the lost inscription. The deceased is depicted against a drapery backdrop, with her face left unfinished.

Yet another example may be the sarcophagus originating from Rome, now housed in the Carlsberg Glyptotek Museum in Copenhagen (inv. 2468), dated to around 290–300, in which Aurelia Kyrilla, also known as Hyperechis, was laid to rest – she also was depicted on the lid, to the right side of the dedicatory inscription,

²⁰ M. Allen, *The Death of Myth*, p. 70.



Fig. 4. The Sarcophagus of Arria from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York

against a backdrop held by a putto. It is worth noting that in the same position on the lids, there were also depictions of deceased men, as evidenced, for example, by the Christian sarcophagus of Marcus Claudianus from the fourth century, currently in the Museo Nazionale Romano alle Palazzo Massimo in Rome (inv. 455).

Fact no. 1: It is evident, undisputed, and worth reiterating that the Ludovisi sarcophagus was made for a woman²¹, whose sculpted bust was engraved on the lid, currently located in Mainz.

The woman intended to be interred in the Ludovisi sarcophagus is depicted as a mature individual, estimated to be approximately 30 to 40 years of age²². There is also consensus among scholars that she wears a hairstyle typical of the Severan period (193–235)²³, modeled after the coiffure worn by Julia Domna²⁴ and later by her relatives: Maesa,

²¹ S. Faust (rev. of: Ernst Künzl, *“Der Traum vom Imperium”*, p. 1023) argues that she is indeed the wife, but the wife of the commander buried in the sarcophagus depicted on the frontal panel of the sarcophagus in the battle scene; see S. Faust, *Schlachtenbilder*, pp. 111–212. The question arises, however, why, contrary to numerous examples, the portrait of this commander was not placed next to the tabula ansata with the lost dedicatory inscription?

²² According to Helga von Heintze (*Der Feldherr des Grossen*, p. 283), she is a woman aged 40 to 50 years, but Heintze fits this age into her idea that we have here the image of Herennia Etruscilla.

²³ It must be noted, however, that in the case of the woman depicted on the lid of the Ludovisi sarcophagus, with her head slightly turned to the right, her hairstyle from the profile view is not visible; this complicates her comparison with the wives and relatives of emperors depicted in profile on coins.

²⁴ The literature on this topic is extensive; at this juncture – considering the consensus among scholars regarding the existence of a hairstyle characteristic of Julia Domna and women from her lineage – it may suffice to mention: Meischer 1964 (on the hairstyles of women from the Severan dynasty), J. Fejfer, *Roman Portraits in Context*, Berlin 2008, pp. 251–369 (on depictions of women’s hairstyles), esp. pp. 359–363 (on women emulating the hairstyles of Julia Domna and Julia Mamaea); E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, p. 77 (in the context of the Ludovisi sarcophagus); M. Meyer,

Soemias, and Mamaea²⁵. This poses a certain difficulty, as I have already mentioned that the decoration of the entire sarcophagus is characteristic of a slightly later period. Some scholars²⁶, therefore, argue that this woman died much earlier and is the long-deceased mother (or some older relative) of the young commander depicted on the frontal panel of the sarcophagus. However, this raises the question of why, long after the death of this woman, her likeness was placed on the coffin of the aforementioned commander and in a location on the lid reserved for the depiction of the deceased.

Other researchers downplay the outdated hairstyle, perceiving the woman as young and considering her to be the wife of the young commander, but ignoring facts is not an appropriate research approach²⁷. However, as we will soon discover, if we accept that the sarcophagus was made for Afinia Gemina Baebiana, the issue of her unfashionable hairstyle can be explained. Similarly, such attribution of the artifact will help understand why the sarcophagus, in which the woman was laid to rest, features ‘masculine’ scenes of a military nature.

THE HUSBAND

On the lid of the sarcophagus, to the left of the missing dedicatory inscription, a scene is depicted, with the deceased woman gazing upon it. Here we see a man seated on a *sella curulis* (or, according to some, a *sella castrensis*²⁸) placed on a high tribunal. He may, although this is not certain, be wearing the imperial *paludamentum* upon his shoulders. Surrounding him are lictors with *fascēs* and several soldiers holding the legionary eagle, a standard (*vexillum*), and a shield²⁹. Below the tribunal, barbarians are delivering their children as hostages to a young man with a light beard, dressed in military attire and a cloak, with a sword at his side; he gazes upon the man seated on the tribunal. The question arises: what role does the man seated on the tribunal fulfill? In my opinion, he is the emperor. However, there is a certain ‘but’...

Julia Domna – “*Braut des best Mannes, Mutter des best Kindes, assyrische Göttin der Liebe, nie untergehender Mond*”, in *Portraits. 500 Years of Roman Coin Portraits / Jahre römische Münzbildnisse*, ed. A. Pangerl, München 2017, pp. 365–373, 440–441. See also J. Meischner, *Das Frauenporträt der Severzeit*, Berlin 1964, pp. 122–172; and K. Fittschen, *The portraits of Roman emperors and their families. Controversial positions and unsolved problems*, “*Yale Classical Studies*”, 35, 2010, pp. 221–246, at pp. 236–239, on emulating imperial representations in portraits of private individuals and its utilization for dating purposes.

²⁵ E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, p. 77; *Portraits. 500 Years of Roman Coin Portraits / Jahre römische Münzbildnisse*, ed. A. Pangerl, München 2017, pp. 119, 122, 123, 139, 141, 142, 145, 146.

²⁶ E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, pp. 75–77. See also S. Birk, *Third-century sarcophagi*, p. 8 on the persistence of certain fashion trends.

²⁷ S. Faust, rev. of: Ernst Künzl, “*Der Traum vom Imperium*”, p. 1023.

²⁸ For example, K.M. Töpfer, *Signa Militaria*, p. 248.

²⁹ C. Reinsberg, *Senatorensarkophagi*, “*Römische Mitteilungen*”, 102, 1995, pp. 353–370, at p. 357; K.M. Töpfer, *Signa Militaria*, pp. 248–249.

In 1935, Rodenwaldt analyzed the type of ‘Feldherrnsarkophage’ (generals’ sarcophagi) from the Antonine period³⁰. He believed that their archetype was the sarcophagus from the Palazzo Ducale in Mantua, dating to approximately 165–170, on whose chest three scenes from the life of the deceased commander are depicted, moving from right to left: marriage, offerings, the commander standing on a tribunal and receiving conquered barbarians along with their women and children (Fig. 5)³¹.



Fig. 5. The sarcophagus of a commander from the Palazzo Ducale in Mantua

Rodenwaldt argued that this is an illustration of the four cardinal virtues of a member of the senatorial elite (although there are only three scenes depicted!): *virtus*, *clementia*, *pietas*, *concordia*. Muth, perhaps correctly, interpreted this as rather symbolic representations of three spheres of life of a member of the senatorial class: family, religion, and state service³². Thus, scenes of commanders receiving captives are attested on this and other sarcophagi from the second century, depicting individuals standing or sitting on tribunals who are not emperors. However, it is worth emphasizing that Muth acknowledges that in the same manner, emperors were also depicted in the first and second centuries (to which I will return shortly)³³. Comparing the ‘Feldherrnsarkophage’ with the Ludovisi sarcophagus, we see that only one scene out of the three carved on the latter is similar. Moreover, it is placed in a completely different context than on the sarcophagi of commanders from the second century (although Rodenwaldt and Muth do not refer to the Ludovisi sarcophagus).

³⁰ G. Rodenwaldt, *Über den Stilwandel in der antoninischen Kunst*, Abhandlungen der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin 1935.

³¹ See *Die Sarkophage mit Darstellungen*, Fig. 1.2.

³² S. Muth, *Drei statt vier: Zur Deutung der Feldherrnsarkophage*, “Archäologischer Anzeiger”, 1, 2004, pp. 263–273; See also S. Muth, *Im Angesicht des Todes. Zum Wertediskurs in der römischen Grabkultur*, in *Römische Werte als Gegenstand der Altertumswissenschaft*, ed. A. Haltenhoff, A. Heil, F.-H. Mutschler, Leipzig 2005, pp. 259–286, at pp. 268–273 and 281–283 on “Feldherrnsarkophage” in a broader context.

³³ S. Muth, *Drei statt vier*, p. 267.

The so-called ‘Feldherrnsarkophage’ from the second century AD were crafted for the resting places of commanders from the senatorial class, while in the Ludovisi sarcophagus, a woman somehow associated with the figures of both men on the tribunal and on the battlefield is interred. The latter, namely the young leader (perhaps in a disheveled imperial *paludamentum*), charges triumphantly among the topical depicted ‘Persians’ and ‘Germans’ (to which we will return), signifying the most formidable adversaries of the empire. Since the placement of an ordinary senatorial governor or legion commander in this role seems impossible (especially in the mid-third century), only the emperor or/and the emperor’s son may serve as their vanquisher. Thus, the figure depicted on the tribunal must be the emperor. Consequently, the Ludovisi sarcophagus is not strictly one of the ‘Feldherrnsarkophage’, but rather so to the extent that the emperor is also a ‘Feldherr’.

In my opinion, therefore, the emperor is seated on the tribunal in such an exposed, ‘imperial’ posture that a mere legionary commander or provincial governor would not be depicted³⁴, especially in a scene of receiving hostages from defeated barbarians with whom some agreement has been made. Furthermore, there are several depictions of emperors portrayed in an identical manner. This is indeed evident, for example, in the representations of Augustus, on a silver *skyphos* from Boscoreale (Pompeii); Trajan, on a relief from his Roman column (scene 75); Marcus Aurelius, on a relief later adapted and placed on the Arch of Constantine; Maximianus and Constantius I, on a lead medallion from Lyon, inscribed SAECVLI FELICITAS (currently housed in the Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris). Examples of such depictions abound.

Now, the key issue. Observing the lid of the sarcophagus (currently housed in the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum in Mainz), we notice that the ruler on the tribunal has a youthful face, similar to the face of the equally young commander charging into the enemy crowd on the main panel of the sarcophagus. However, the portrait of the emperor on the tribunal is entirely (*sic!*) reconstructed and evidently crafted to make the figure on the lid resemble the character depicted on the sarcophagus chest. In 1916, a relief purchased from the Viennese art market by Carl von Opel was gifted to the museum in Mainz. An article by Sitte was published on 30 September 1916, in the *Mainzer Zeitschrift*³⁵. This article includes an illustration showing that even then, among other aspects, the left edge of the relief no longer existed. For instance, the figure seated on the tribunal had no face (**Fig. 6**)³⁶.

³⁴ S. Faust, rev. of: Ernst Künzl, “Der Traum vom Imperium”, p. 1021, following older literature, writes that the *sella curulis* indicates a *legatus Augusti pro praetore* of some province; additionally, Faust suggests that considering the changes occurring in the third century, it could even be a *dux* or *praefectus legionis*; the same suggestions can be found in S. Faust, *Schlachtenbilder*, p. 212. However, defining the rank of the depicted figure solely by reference to the *sella curulis* does not take into account the iconographic scheme of the entire scene; analogies suggest that we have a depiction of an emperor.

³⁵ H. Sitte, F. von Duhn, K. Schumacher, *Der Germanen-Sarkophag Ludovisi im Römisch-Germanischen Central-Museum zu Mainz*, “Mainzer Zeitschrift”, 12, 1917, pp. 1–15, at p. 4.

³⁶ See *ibidem*, p. 4.



Fig. 6. The lid of the Ludovisi sarcophagus in 1916

The same damages are confirmed by photographs taken in 1938 (**Fig. 7**)³⁷.

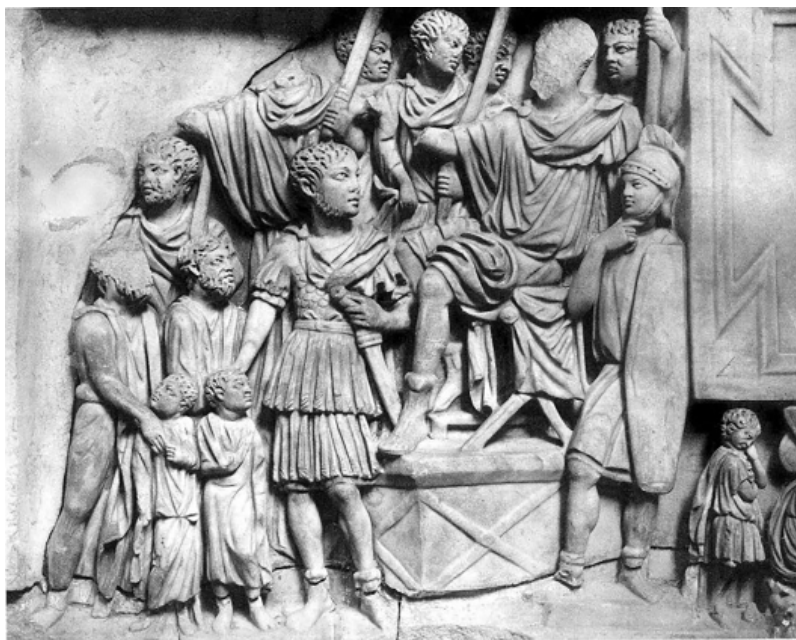


Fig. 7. The damaged scene on the left side of the lid of the Ludovisi sarcophagus in 1938

In 1945, as a result of Allied bombings on Mainz, the covering of the sarcophagus was shattered into approximately 1200 blackened fragments of marble debris. It was reconstructed through considerable effort between 1974 and 1977, with the

³⁷ See *Die Sarkophag mit Darstellungen*, Fig. 47.1; see also the image in E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, p. 105.

addition of a completely new left edge, along with the face of the figure seated on the tribune.

The basis of such reconstruction relied on two drawings from 1702 and 1875³⁸. The first of these was included in Bernard de Montfaucon's *Diarium Italicum*, an account of his journey to Italy between 1698 and 1701³⁹. While visiting Villa Ludovisi, the traveler observed and described a relief located above its gate⁴⁰. According to Montfaucon, the relief depicts Emperor Marcus Aurelius seated on a tribunal, receiving his two adolescent sons, namely Commodus and Annius Verus (they are depicted standing below the tribunal); to the right of this scene, Empress Faustina was portrayed. It was purportedly a part of the 'sepulchral urn' (*urnae sepulchralis*) of Faustina herself or her son, Annius Verus⁴¹. These suggestions were accompanied by a drawing illustrating the described relief (**Fig. 8**)⁴².

Montfaucon revisited this relief in the fifth volume of *L'antiquité expliquée et représentée en figures*, published in 1719⁴³. The same drawing and identifications of the figures were found here as proposed in *Diarium Italicum*. However, this time the author made a reservation, stating that he was not entirely certain of his conclusions because the relief was positioned too high above the entrance gate, thus preventing him from closely examining it⁴⁴ (bear in mind that the entire drawing by Montfaucon is evidently erroneous in several places).

Montfaucon was unaware that the relief was a cover of a sarcophagus situated in the gardens of Villa Ludovisi at the time⁴⁵. More significantly, the presumption made by this author that Emperor Marcus Aurelius was seated on the tribune led to the depiction of features typical of this particular emperor in the 1702 drawing; these include curly hair and a curly beard characteristic of a 'philosopher'. It should be

³⁸ R. Petermann, *Zur Restaurierung des Deckelreliefs vom ludovisischen Schlachtensarkophag*, "Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums", 22, 1975, pp. 218–220; E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, pp. 103–107.

³⁹ B. de Montfaucon, *Diarium Italicum*, Paris 1702, pp. 221–222 (the illustration has been placed between pages 220 and 221).

⁴⁰ Idem, *Diarium Italicum*, p. 221: *Ad portam, sublime visitur anaglyphum muro adfixum*.

⁴¹ D. Kienast, W. Eck, M. Heil, *Römische Kaisertabelle. Grundzüge einer römischen Kaiserchronologie*, 6th edn, Darmstadt 2017, pp. 134: M. Annus Verus (c. 162–169), Caesar from 12 October 166; see also *PIR*² A 698.

⁴² See B. de Montfaucon, *Diarium Italicum*, pp. 220–221 (fragment).

⁴³ Idem, *L'antiquité expliquée et représentée en figures*, vol. 5/1: *Les Funeraillles des Grecs & Romains*, Paris 1719, pp. 100–101 ("Voici le devant d'un beau tombeau que j'ai représenté dans mon Journal d'Italie"), Pl. XCII.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 101: "On pourroit parler plus positivement sur tout cela, si l'on voioit de près les figures; mais comme elles sont sur un portail d'où on ne les peut voir que de loin sans échelle; je laisse à ceux qui la verront de plus près à examiner si ma conjecture est bonne".

⁴⁵ The history of the sarcophagus, see among others: H. Sitte, F. von Duhn, K. Schumacher, *Der Germanen-Sarkophag Ludovisi*; G. Fück, *Die Form des Mainzer Sarkophag-Reliefs nach der Zeichnung von Eichler*, "Mainzer Zeitschrift", 12, 1917, pp. 181–183; E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, pp. 5–14, 103–112.



Fig. 8. The Drawing from Montfaucon's book of 1702

noted immediately that the identifications of the figures proposed by Montfaucon are entirely erroneous, but – in my opinion – he rightly believed that the relief depicted the emperor on a military tribunal and possibly his deceased spouse.

The second source contributing to the reconstruction of the sarcophagus cover during the years 1974–1977 is a drawing by Ernst Eichler from 1875. The depiction is of a man who certainly does not resemble a youth⁴⁶, sporting medium-length hair and a beard devoid of the characteristic curls found in Montfaucon's drawing (Fig. 9a–b)⁴⁷.

In 1880, Theodor Schreiber published a catalog of the artifacts gathered at Villa Ludovisi. In the basement storage area, he discovered a relief from the cover of our sarcophagus (inv. 338 [58]), which had already been removed from above the gate; this must have occurred prior to 1840, as the cover was already in storage by then⁴⁸. However, Schreiber was unaware that it was the cover of a sarcophagus, which was still located in the gardens at that time; it was only in 1890 that this sarcophagus was moved inside the villa. Schreiber described the relief as “Vorderseite eines

⁴⁶ G. Fück, *Die Form des Mainzer Sarkophag-Reliefs*, pp. 181–183; E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, p. 10 (Abb. 9), p. 11 (Abb. 12), p. 106 (Abb. 136).

⁴⁷ See *ibidem*, p. 106 (Fig. 136) and p. 11 (Fig. 12 – fragment).

⁴⁸ G. Fück, *Die Form des Mainzer Sarkophag-Reliefs*, p. 182.



Fig. 9a–b. The Drawing by Ernst Eichler from 1875 (complete – on the left; fragment – on the right)

Sarkophages. Vita militaris und weibliches Porträt”. Importantly, regarding the appearance of the man on the tribunal, Schreiber⁴⁹ noted that he was “still a young man” (“noch jugendlichen Mannes”); the use of ‘still’ suggests some hesitation and an assessment that he is not simply a ‘young man’. In reality, a glance at Eichler’s drawing is sufficient to recognize that we have a portrait of a middle-aged man, albeit one who still appears fairly youthful.

Therefore, in reconstructing the shattered cover in 1974–1977, the ruler seated on the tribunal was significantly rejuvenated, likening him to a youth from the main battle scene on the sarcophagus box. It was known by then that the relief from Mainz adorned the sarcophagus cover at Palazzo Altemps in Rome. It was thus assumed that a charging youth from the battle scene of this sarcophagus should be the same person as the man seating on the tribunal⁵⁰.

Fact no. 2: Barbarian hostages are thus depicted as being held by the middle-aged emperor seated on the tribunal, the husband of the Ludovisi woman interred within the sarcophagus, who gazes from the opposite side of the cover; their shared son presumably stands below the tribunal and fights below on the field of glory.

⁴⁹ Th. Schreiber, *Die Antiken Bildwerke der Villa Ludovisi in Rom*, Leipzig 1880, p. 261: “In dem Kopfe sind deutliche Porträtzüge eines noch jugendlichen Mannes mit kurz verschnittenem Vollbart, Stumpfnase und anliegendem, schlicht zur Stirn herabgestrichenem Haupthaar zu erkennen”.

⁵⁰ Regarding the reconstruction of the sarcophagus lid, see R. Petermann, *Zur Restaurierung*; E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, pp. 103–107.

THE SON

Staying momentarily with the scene depicted on the lid: below the tribunal stands a young man with light facial hair, attired in military garb, wearing a cloak and displaying a sword at his side. This individual is receiving hostages and presenting them to the ruler seated on the tribunal (see the illustration provided above on p. 47). It is likely that he is the son and co-ruler of the emperor⁵¹. In any case, he bears a striking resemblance in facial features and attire, resembling the charging youth depicted on the main panel of the sarcophagus. Although he lacks the X mark on his forehead, his image may simply be too small to discern such a minute detail (**Fig. 10a–b**)⁵².



Fig. 10a–b. The Young Commander from the front panel of the Ludovisi Sarcophagus (on the left) and from the lid of the same sarcophagus (on the right)

Meanwhile, the scene depicted on the front of the sarcophagus chest portrays a young commander charging amidst a dense crowd of Roman soldiers engaged in combat with adversaries (**Fig. 11**).

Of significance, this youth has a short, newly emerging mustache just under the nose, along with a somewhat longer beard. Adorning his forehead is the symbol X, associated by Helga von Heintze with Mithraism⁵³, though Faust contends that it may

⁵¹ According to Helga von Heintze (*Der Feldherr des Grossen*, p. 375), this is a young “prince” (‘Prinz’) or emperor aged between 20 and 25 years.

⁵² See *Die Sarkophage mit Darstellungen*, Fig. 47.1.

⁵³ See H. von Heintze, *Der Feldherr des Grossen*, pp. 387–390, on various similar symbols: markings of slaves and recruits for the army, abbreviation derived from the word *χλιαρχος*, commercial symbols, and symbols associated with cults such as Dionysus or Magna Mater. Heintze herself concluded that the symbol on the forehead of the youth from the sarcophagus is related to the popular cult of Mithras in the army (citing, for example, Tertullian, *De praescript.* 40) and that it is a “signum Tau”, which could also take the form of an X. See also H. von Heintze, *Der Feldherr des Grossen*, p. 391, on a similar, according to Heintze, symbol on the coins of Commodus, as well as on the coins of Herennius (*ibidem*, p. 393). However, other scholars (K. Fittschen, *Sarkophage römischer Kaiser*, p. 583) do not see these symbols on the coins (*sic!*). It is worth noting that the evidence collected



Fig 11. The Battle Scene from the front panel of the Ludovisi Sarcophagus (photo by JG)

be a scar or some “individual feature”⁵⁴. Similar figures⁵⁵, with identical markings on their foreheads, are depicted by two marble busts, one housed in the Capitoline Museum and the other in the Glyptothek in Munich⁵⁶ (**Fig. 12a–c**).

The young Roman commander in question is clearly engaged, significantly, with two types of adversaries⁵⁷. Positioned on the left side (as well as on the left flank

by Helga von Heintze (*Der Feldherr des Grossen*, pp. 393–394 and 399) regarding the connections of Decius and his sons with the cult of Mithras is quite meager and debatable. On the Mithraic character of this symbol, see also E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, pp. 69–72.

⁵⁴ S. Faust, rev. of: Ernst Künzl, “*Der Traum vom Imperium*”, p. 1023: “Viel wahrscheinlicher erscheint die einfache Erklärung, wonach hier eine Narbe wiedergegeben ist, d.h. ein individuelles Merkmal des Dargestellten”.

⁵⁵ E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, p. 67; S. Faust, rev. of: Ernst Künzl, “*Der Traum vom Imperium*”, p. 1023. However, Oldřich Pelikán (*Der grosse Ludovisische Schlachtsarkophag*, p. 121) makes a valid observation that the bust from the Capitoline Museum depicts a person similar to the figure on the sarcophagus, but the bust from Munich is slightly different and portrays the figure in a manner characteristic of slightly later art from the Gallienic era. On the other hand, Heintze (*Der Feldherr des Grossen*, p. 386) argued that the bust from Munich belongs to the art of the times of Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian, although it depicts – similarly to the scene on the main chest of the sarcophagus – Hostilian.

⁵⁶ Considering the identification of the charging youth with Volusian, one would need to examine the clues connecting him with these two portrait sculptures and – more importantly – the potential relationship of Trebonianus Gallus’s son (and the entire family) with Mithraism. However, this is a task for a separate article.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Ch. Heitz, *Die Guten, die Bösen und die Hässlichen: nördliche ‘Barbaren’ in der römischen Bildkunst*, Hamburg 2009, p. 222; E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, pp. 60–63, 79–82; S. Faust, *Schlachtenbilder*, pp. 210–211.



Fig. 12a. The bust from the Great Ludovisi sarcophagus (photo by JG)



Fig. 12b. The bust from the Capitoline Museums (photo as above)



Fig. 12c. The bust from Munich (photo CC BY-SA 3.0 license, M. Cyron)

of the sarcophagus chest) are the conventionally attired, armed, and depicted eastern foes of the empire, the topical ‘Persians’. Conversely, on the right side of the charging leader (and on the right flank of the sarcophagus chest), we encounter the conventionally depicted western barbarians, identified as the topical ‘Germans’ (**Fig. 13a–b**).

Furthermore, the youth, who serves as the central figure of the entire scene, adorns the imperial *paludamentum*. He is mounted on a horse atop a lion skin, and is equipped with a sword with a hilt shaped like the head of the same animal. These are all the attributes of an emperor, not merely those of a common commander.

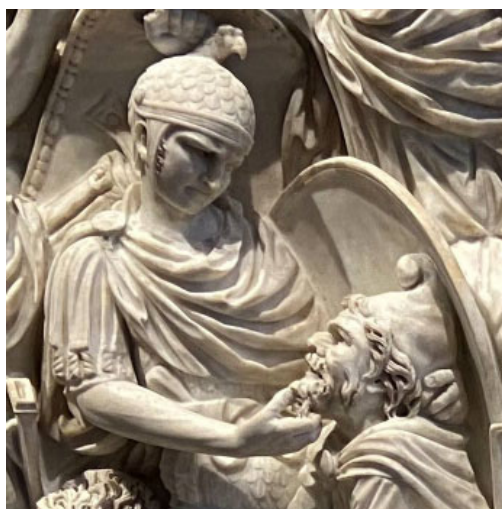


Fig. 13a. The defeated ‘Persian’ (photo by JG)



Fig. 13b. The defeated ‘Germans’ (photo by JG)

Fact no. 3: It is therefore indisputable that the front panel of the sarcophagus chest depicts a young emperor as the conqueror of enemies of the empire from both the East and the West. Since he is depicted on the sarcophagus of a woman identifying herself as the wife of the emperor seated on the tribunal, the young commander must be their common son. It is also possible that he has been depicted on the lid of the sarcophagus, below the tribunal where his father sits, sporting the same short beard and attire as the charging commander in the main scene on the sarcophagus chest.

THE CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE ABOVE ANALYSIS

Schematic: (a) The deceased resting in a sarcophagus; (b) her husband, i.e., the still-living emperor engaging in diplomacy with barbarians; (c) their brave and victorious son, excluding all, except one (Volusian) of the previously considered figures, as connected to the Ludovisi sarcophagus. In the case of Septimius Severus, Alexander Severus, and Claudius II, it is so obvious that it is not even worth considering them. As for Timesitheus, he cannot be the emperor on the tribune, nor was he a young warrior from the front line. Herennius and/or Hostilian, firstly, present the issue that there were two of them, further compounded by the presence of their father, Decius, as a third figure. However, we only have space for two male figures (seated on the tribune, charging into battle), thus necessitating an explanation for whom and why space is lacking. In other words, why does the feminine sarcophagus of Herennia Etruscilla⁵⁸ (as for *Decii*, she is the only candidate) either omit her husband (yielding Herennius and Hostilian – one on the tribune, the other in battle), or one of her sons (resulting in Decius on the tribune and one of the sons – the question being which one – on the battlefield).

Secondly, and this constitutes a pivotal argument⁵⁹, the depictions of Herennius⁶⁰ and Hostilian⁶¹ on coins lack the beard characteristic of the youthful charging commander on the front panel of the sarcophagus chest. This precludes their identification with the depicted individual. Thirdly, there is another, even more compelling

⁵⁸ It should be noted that the woman from the sarcophagus, particularly her hairstyle, bears no resemblance whatsoever to Herennia Etruscilla as depicted on her coins. Therefore, none of Herennia Etruscilla's sons would be depicted on the front panel of the sarcophagus.

⁵⁹ The argument “from the beard” is pivotal, as theoretically we could have depicted: Decius on the tribunal, the First Son (Herennius?, Hostilian?) before the tribunal, the Second Son (Hostilian?, Herennius?) on horseback; although, Hostilian seems too young to be the First or Second Son depicted on the sarcophagus.

⁶⁰ *RIC* IV Herennius Etruscus 138–173.

⁶¹ *RIC* IV Hostilian 174–226; see H. von Heintze, *Studien zu den Porträts*, pp. 69–91 (eadem, *Der Feldherr des Grossen*, pp. 369–402) to locate the beard on a young man resembling the figure on the sarcophagus, Heintze had to refer to two portrait sculptures, albeit devoid of any accompanying signatures or names.

argument against associating the sarcophagus with the Decian family. During Decius' reign (249–251), it is difficult to find grounds for depicting a scene with hostages⁶² and one of his sons as conquerors, simultaneously, of topical 'Persians' and 'Germans'. Furthermore, following the defeat and death of the emperor at Abrittus, it is difficult to characterize Decius as having established a favorable arrangement with the barbarians in relation to Rome. Therefore, Volusian remains, although the Ludovisi sarcophagus could not have been intended for him⁶³, otherwise his bust, rather than the bust of a mature woman, would have been depicted on the lid near the dedicatory inscription.

For the sake of clarity, it must be noted that concerning the three figures depicted on the Ludovisi sarcophagus, only those rulers from the years 235–284 who formed ephemeral familial 'dynasties' could potentially be considered, namely:

(a) Philip the Arab, his son Philip the Younger (however, he is too young to be the charging commander on the front panel of the sarcophagus), his wife Otacilia Severa;

(b) The three sons of Gallienus: Valerian II (d. 257/8), Saloninus (d. 260), Marinianus⁶⁴ (d. 268), and their mother Empress Salonina, who was either killed shortly after her husband's assassination, or survived him for a slightly longer period (see Zonar. XII 25 [601]). However, none of these individuals fit the arrangement of figures on the sarcophagus (it should be: **deceased mother**, living husband, **one** son old enough to fight)⁶⁵;

(c) Carus (282–283) and his wife (name unknown), Carinus, Numerian – these are two sons, not one son, and moreover, this seems to be too late a period, considering that the style of the sarcophagus is typical of the period between 230 and 270.

It is worth noting that a single glance at the images of Otacilia Severa, Herennia Etruscilla, and Salonina depicted on their coins is sufficient to ascertain that none of them resembles the deceased portrayed on the lid of the Ludovisi sarcophagus, primarily due to differing hairstyles.

Therefore, we have the following schema: the deceased wife of the emperor (for whom sarcophagus was made) – the emperor engaging in diplomacy with

⁶² Indeed, coins inscribed with VICTORIA GERMANICA depicting Victoria wearing a laurel wreath and holding a palm have been preserved – *RIC* IV Trajan Decius: 43 (Decius), 76 (Herenius), 185 (Hostilian). There is also an emission bearing the inscription DACIA FELIX S.C. – *RIC* IV Trajan Decius 114. Additionally, we find evidence of the titles *Dacicus Max.* and *Germanicus Max.* attributed to Decius (D. Kienast, W. Eck, M. Heil, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, p. 196). However, we lack any knowledge regarding treaties between Decius and the Germanic or Carpi tribes.

⁶³ Take notice that Volusian, like his father Trebonian Gallus, was killed by soldiers who sided with Aemilianus; therefore, it is rather unlikely that he rested in the sarcophagus.

⁶⁴ However, it is not entirely certain whether this individual existed at all, See *PIR*² L 198; D. Kienast, W. Eck, M. Heil, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, p. 214.

⁶⁵ See also H. Wrede, *Senatorische Sarkophage Roms*, pp. 67–68, noting that their depictions portray beardless and excessively young boys.

barbarians – their son, the conqueror of contemporary enemies from the east and west. Conclusion: only the deceased Afinia Gemina Baebiana fits this schema, which encompasses Trebonianus Gallus engaging with the barbarians and the youthful victor Volusian. Unfortunately, no image of Afinia Gemina Baebiana has survived on coins to compare with the woman on the Ludovisi sarcophagus, so numismatics neither supports nor excludes this identification.

AFINIA GEMINA BAEBIANA

Afinia Gemina Baebiana⁶⁶ passed away before the proclamation of Trebonianus Gallus, which took place in May or June of the year 251⁶⁷, as we do not possess any coins or inscriptions from the time of her husband's reign. However, this is, of course, a classic *argumentum ex silentio*. Nevertheless, during Trebonianus Gallus's reign, the title of *Augusta* was still held by Herennia Etruscilla⁶⁸, the widow of Decius and the mother of Hostilian, his short-lived co-ruler. Such a situation prompted various scholars to engage in diverse speculations. Alföldi wrote thus: "Only Etruscilla was forced into retirement, but the wife of the new emperor, Afinia Gemina Baebiana, did not become Augusta, so as not to encroach on her prerogative"⁶⁹. Furthermore, referring to the coin emissions of Trebonianus Gallus with the inscription IVNO MARTIALIS⁷⁰, Alföldi also suggested: "The type of *Iuno Martialis* may refer to the wife of Gallus; this new goddess may be the deification of the *mater castrorum*". Huttner also argued that due to the high status of Herennia Etruscilla, Trebonianus

⁶⁶ Von Rohden, *RE* I (1894), col. 708, Afinius 3; *PIR*² A 439; D. Kienast, W. Eck, M. Heil, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, p. 200.

⁶⁷ The proclamation of Trebonianus Gallus could have taken place as early as mid-May 251, considering that the Battle of Abrittus likely occurred around the 15 May 251 (F. Mitthof, *Bemerkungen zu Kaiser Decius und seinem Gotenkrieg 250–251 n. Chr.*, in *Empire in Crisis: Gothic Invasions and Roman Historiography / Beiträge einer internationalen Tagung zu den Wiener Dexipp-Fragmenten (Dexippus Vindobonensis)*, Wien, 3.–6. Mai 2017, ed. F. Mitthof, G. Martin, J. Grusková, Wien 2020, pp. 311–336, at pp. 330–331).

⁶⁸ See D. Kienast, W. Eck, M. Heil, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, p. 197: Herennia Etruscilla likely passed away during the reign of Trebonianus Gallus. However, it is not entirely certain whether coins bearing the image of Herennia Etruscilla exist from the period after the death of Decius, especially coins where she is depicted as *Augusta*. Harold Mattingly (*RIC* IV 3, p. 153) acknowledged that a certain Roman *officina* minted such coins (possibly bearing the inscription PUDICITIA AUGG?) following Decius's death; only after the death of Hostilianus in the latter part of 251 did the minting of coins featuring Herennia Etruscilla cease.

⁶⁹ A. Alföldi, *The Crisis of the Empire (A.D. 249–270)*, in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 12: *The Imperial Crisis and Recovery, A.D. 193–324*, ed. S.A. Cook *et al.*, Cambridge 1939, pp. 165–231, at p. 167 and fn. 5.

⁷⁰ *RIC* IV Trebonianus Gallus 25, 35, 54, 69, 78, 83, 109, 110, 111, 112. I will return to the numismatics of the time of Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian at a later point.

Gallus might not have presented his wife in official settings⁷¹. John⁷², on the other hand, believed that either Trebonianus Gallus's wife had died, or the emperor had divorced her before the year 251. However, all of this unnecessarily complicates matters. Furthermore, Afinia Gemina Baebiana does not even appear in inscriptions dedicated to *domus diviana* (e.g., *CIL* XIV 42 = *ILS* 526), and this would be a strange omission if the woman who was the wife and mother of emperors were still alive. As for Iuno Martialis, she frequently appears on coins of other rulers, including the predecessors of Trebonianus Gallus, namely Decius and his sons⁷³. We find that there is no connection between the goddess and the wife in the case of both of these rulers. It seems, therefore, that the simplest solution is to accept that Afinia Gemina Baebiana had indeed passed away by the year 251.

Afinia Gemina Baebiana appears only in one inscription from Perugia (*CIL* XI 1927 = *ILS* 527⁷⁴), which was written when she was still the wife of the senator Vibius [Trebonianus] Gallus. Additionally, another inscription from Alba Fucens, a town located within the territory of the Marsi people (*AE* 1952, 19; *AE* 1962, 30⁷⁵; *CIL* IX 7919⁷⁶), **possibly** commemorates their daughter⁷⁷, Vibia Galla⁷⁸. However, it is uncertain whether this woman was indeed the daughter of the emperor. On the other hand, an idea that is emerging in philosophical studies⁷⁹ is that Afinia Gemina

⁷¹ Huttner, in *Die Zeit der Soldatenkaiser. Krise und Transformation des Römischen Reiches im 3. Jahrhundert n. Chr. (235–284)*, vols 1–2, ed. K.-P. John, U. Hartmann, Th. Gerhardt, Berlin 2008, 1, p. 212 ('Freilich mochte die Selbstdarstellung der neuen Regierung daran krankten, daß der Öffentlichkeit keine Kaiserin vorgestellt werden konnte. Ob das daran lag, daß Afinia Gemina Baebiana, die Gattin des Trebonianus Gallus und vermutlich Mutter des Volusianus, schon tot war, oder daran, daß die Augusta Herennia Etruscilla noch lebte und man eine prekäre Konkurrenz vermeiden wollte, bleibt unklar').

⁷² Ibidem, p. 610 ('Die Gemahlin des ersteren, Afinia Gemina Baebiana, war zur Zeit des Regierungsantritts bereits verstorben oder aber geschieden, als *Augusta* erscheint sie nicht').

⁷³ *RIC* IV Trajan Decius 190, 202A.

⁷⁴ *Afiniae M(arci) f(iliae) / Geminae Bae/bianae cl(arissimae) f(eminae) / uxori / Vibi Galli c(larissimi) v(iri) / Vibius Thallus / patroni / uxori*.

⁷⁵ *Vibia C(ai) f(ilia) Galla balne[u]m / de sua pecunia ref(iciendum) cur[avit]*.

⁷⁶ See *CIL* IX, sup. 1 (2020), no. 7919, pp. 1971–1972: here doubts have been expressed as to whether this inscription may be that of the daughter of Emperor Trebonianus Gallus. On one hand, the shape of the letters seems to correspond more to those of the 1st century. On the other hand, an honorary inscription for Trebonianus Gallus was found in Alba Fucens (*CIL* IX 3916).

⁷⁷ The note in *PIR*² expresses a certain doubt as to whether this is indeed the daughter of Trebonianus Gallus.

⁷⁸ *PIR*² V 595; *RE* s. v. Vibius 71.

⁷⁹ L. Brisson, *Plotin: une biographie*, in Porphyre, *La Vie de Plotin. Études d'introduction, texte grec et traduction française, commentaire, notes complémentaires, bibliographie*, vol. 2, Paris 1992, pp. 10 and 19 (perhaps the **widow** of Trebonianus Gallus); H.-D. Saffrey, *Pourquoi Porphyre a-t-il édité Plotin?: Réponse provisoire*, in Porphyre, *La Vie de Plotin. Études d'introduction, texte grec et traduction française, commentaire, notes complémentaires, bibliographie*, vol. 2, Paris 1992, pp. 31–64, at p. 32; Brisson Luc, 13. *Gémima*, in *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, vol. 3: *D'Eccélos à Juvénal*, ed. R. Goulet, Paris 2000, p. 472; J. Halfwassen, *Plotin und der Neuplatonismus*, München 2004, p. 20.

Baebiana can be identified with Gemina, the mother of another Gemina, both of whom Porphyry mentions (*Vita Plotini* 9.1⁸⁰) as admirers of Plotina (the philosopher even resided in the household of Gemina Maior). The assumption is based solely on the coincidence of the name. More precisely, the coincidence with 1/3 of the name of Trebonianus Gallus's wife, although the element 'Gemina' is the least characteristic and useful for any identifications (it does not derive from the *nomen gentile* – there is a *gens Geminia*, but no *gens Gemina*).

The key issue concerns the age of Afinia Gemina Baebiana at the time of her death and the question of how long before the year 251 this death occurred. Her son and co-ruler of Trebonianus Gallus between 251 and 253, first with the title of *Caesar* and later also as *Augustus*, namely Volusian, must have been an adult, albeit a very young man, at that time, thus he was born around 230⁸¹. Trebonianus Gallus himself was born around 206⁸². Therefore, Afinia Gemina Baebiana should have been born around 210 and died – let's say – slightly before the year 251, reaching her forties; thus, her age fits perfectly with the woman depicted on the lid of the sarcophagus.

There is another aspect related to the appearance of the woman on the lid of the Ludovisi sarcophagus that would align with Afinia Gemina Baebiana; she has a rather outdated hairstyle, typical of the Severan period (193–235)⁸³. However, the youth and the time of Afinia Gemina Baebiana's marriage (born around 210) coincided with the reign of Alexander Severus (222–235), when influence was exerted by Julia Maesa and Julia Mamaea. This could explain why the somewhat old-fashioned wife of Trebonianus Gallus, who may have died by the end of the 40s, was depicted with a hairstyle characteristic of the Severan era.

In my opinion, it is possible to identify the family from which the prospective empress originated. The *nomen Afinius* is not overly represented in extant sources.

⁸⁰ *Plotinus in Seven Volumes*, with an English translation by A.H. Armstrong, vol. 1: Porphyry, *On the life of Plotinus and the Order of His Books*, The Loeb Classical Library 440, London–Cambridge (MA) 1966, p. 30 (Greek text) and 31 (English translation): "There were women, too, who were greatly devoted to him: Gemina, in whose house he lived, and her daughter Gemina, who had the same name as her mother" ("Ἐσχέ δὲ καὶ γυναῖκας σφόδρα προσκειμένας, Γεμίναν τε, ἥς καὶ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ κατόκει, καὶ τὴν ταύτης θυγατέρα Γεμίναν, ὁμοίως τῇ μητρὶ καλουμένην). See also Porphyry, *La vie de Plotin et l'ordre de ses écrits*, in Plotin, *Ennéades*, vol. 1: *Les Belles Lettres*, ed. and transl. É. Bréhier, Paris 1924, pp. 1–34, at p. 11.

⁸¹ D. Kienast, W. Eck, M. Heil, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, p. 201.

⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 200. The *Epit. de Caes.* 31.1 states that at the time of his death in 253, Trebonianus Gallus was 47 years old, implying a birth year around 206; however, *Chron. Pasch.* vol. I, p. 505.13 (Ἐτελεύτησε Γάιος Γάλλος, ὧν ἐτῶν ξβ') reports that the emperor died at the age of 62, suggesting a birth year of 191; see also *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*, ed. I. Thurn, Berlin 2000, p. 227 (= *Ex. insid.* 20, pp. 159: 29–30), which states that the emperor perished at the age of 60 (Ὅτι Γάλλος ἀνηγορεύθη βασιλεὺς ὑπὸ τῶν στρατιωτῶν καὶ εὐθὺς ἐλθὼν ἐν τῇ Ρώμῃ ἐφονεύθη ὧν ἐνιαυτῶν ξ') – although these Greek sources indicate Trebonianus Gallus's advanced age, his depictions on coins do not confirm this.

⁸³ This observation was already noted in the 19th century by Th. Schreiber, *Die Antiken Bildwerke*, p. 263; subsequently, consensus was reached on this matter, see E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, pp. 75–77.

When searching among the senatorial elite of the first to third centuries, the same three individuals are included in *RE*⁸⁴ and *PIR*² (with no one in *PLRE* I⁸⁵): the first of them (*cos.* 62 L. Afinius Gallus) is too distant in time to be reliably linked to Afinia Gemina Baebiana, although such attempts have been made⁸⁶; the second is the *clarissima femina* Afinia Calliste, to whom I will return shortly; and the third is indeed the wife of Trebonianus Gallus. It is appropriate to add to this the son of the latter, Emperor Volusian, whose full name (Caius Vibius Afinius Gallus Veldumnianus Volusianus) also contained the *nomen* of his mother.

The name Afinius Cornelianus appears on a coin originating from Philadelphia in Asia Minor, published in 1998⁸⁷. He may have served as the proconsul of Asia during the reign of Antoninus Pius (138–161), although this remains uncertain. Therefore, we do not know of any member of the senatorial class whose daughter could have been Afinia Gemina Baebiana⁸⁸, born around 210. Perhaps this woman was an example of social advancement. Epigraphic evidence seems to confirm this.

Only through inscriptions do we know the *gens Afinia* from Beneventum⁸⁹. It is noteworthy to immediately observe the popularity of the *praenomen Numerius*

⁸⁴ Von Rohden, *RE* I (1894), col. 708, Afinius: 1. *cos.* 62 L. Afinius Gallus; 2. Afinia Calliste, the daughter of N. Afinius Fortunatus, *CIL* IX 1567 (Benevetum); 3. Afinia Gemina Baebiana (*CIL* XI 1927 Perusia).

⁸⁵ *PIR*² A. 437: L. Afinius Gallus, consul a. 62 (with the suggestion: *Oriundus fortasse Perusia, nam Afinia Gemina Baebiana, quae C. Vibio Treboniam Gallo nupta filium ex eo peperit C. Vibium Afinium Gallum Veldumnianum Volusianum, ex posteris eius videtur fuisse*); *PIR*² A. 438: Afinia Calliste, *clarissima femina* (with the suggestion: *ex eadem stirpe videtur N. Afinius N. f. Pal(atina) Hierax decurio Beneventanus, cui parentes posuerunt t. sepulcralem IX 1638*); *PIR*² A. 439: Afinia Gemina Baebiana (the wife of Trebonianus Gallus).

⁸⁶ M. Craven, *The Imperial Families of Ancient Rome*, Fonthill 2020, p. 328 (see also p. 325): “Afinia M. f. Gemina Baebia [should be “Baebiana” – P.J.]. Daughter of an M. Afinius [...] and in all probability a descendant of L. Afinius Gallus, suffect consul in 62, also, like the Empress, a Perusian; her maternal grandmother was probably Baebia M. f. Nigrina. [*ILS* 527]”; this note contains errors and speculations: 1. Craven uses the name Baebia; it should be Baebiana; 2. Craven states that L. Afinius Gallus was “suffect consul in 62”, but he was *cos. ordinarius*; 3. The suggestion regarding Afinia Gemina Baebiana, that “her maternal grandmother was probably Baebia M. f. Nigrina [*ILS* 527]” – it is difficult to prove this, furthermore, once again, there is the incorrect usage of Baebia instead of Baebiana; 4. Afinia Gemina Baebiana was never an empress.

⁸⁷ W. Weiser, *Namen römischer Statthalter auf Münzen Kleinasiens. Corrigenda und Addenda zu Gerd Stumpfs Münzcorpus*, “Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik”, 123, 1998, pp. 275–290, at pp. 287–288.

⁸⁸ There are no documented representatives of the *gens Afinia* among the senators during the era of Septimius Severus, see D. Okoń, *Septimius Severus et Senatores. Septimius Severus' Personal Policy Towards Senators in the Light of Prosopographic Research (193–211 A.D.)*, transl. B. Zawadka, Szczecin 2012, esp. p. 99.

⁸⁹ By the way, another significant family in Beneventum were the *Trebonii* (*sic!*), cf. P. Veyne, *La Table des Ligures Baebiani et l'institution alimentaire de Trajan (2^e article)*, “Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire”, 70, 1958, pp. 177–241, at pp. 208–209. This is worth further investigation, considering the name of the emperor: TREBONIANUS Gallus.

within this lineage, which will constitute its distinct characteristic. The family is attested to as early as the late Republic, in the first century BC (Merola p. 83 = *AE* 2013, 330 = *AB* p. 16⁹⁰), during which Numerius Afinius Flaccus, son of Numerius and grandson of Lucius, was engaged in some form of foundational activity. Later, from approximately the mid-second to the mid-third century⁹¹, inscriptions emerge documenting *Afinii* who belonged to the *ordo decurionum* of Beneventum. During this period, some members of this family bear *cognomina* (Hierax, Calliste, Acte, Hedone), indicating modest, perhaps even freed (and presumably Greek) origins. It is possible, therefore, that the republican lineage became extinct and was replaced by a family of their own freedmen?

Thus, an inscription dated to the years 131–230 (*CIL* IX 1638⁹²) commemorates the tomb of Numerius Afinius Hierax, a decurion of Beneventum who died at the age of 19, erected by his parents, Numerius Afinius Apulus and Afinia Acte. However, of greater significance is another inscription from Beneventum (*CIL* IX 1567)⁹³, dated somewhat imprecisely to the century, which was erected by Numerius Afinius Fortunatus for his daughter Afinia Calliste, designated as *clarissima femina*. Clearly, through marriage, this woman entered the senatorial class, meaning she married a senator, although her father was not yet a *vir clarissimus*⁹⁴. Aside from our Afinia Gemina Baebiana, she is the only female member of the *Afinii* with attested senatorial status. It would be desirable for Afinia Calliste to be some relative of Afinia Gemina Baebiana, but this cannot be proven in any way.

From Beneventum itself, there is another inscription, only partially preserved and undated (EE-08-01, 00096; EDCS-ID: EDCS-34200163⁹⁵), belonging to someone named Numerius Afinius Saturninus. Additionally, not far from Beneventum, in Saepinum, an inscription from the first century BC was found (*CIL* IX 06627 = *Altilia* p. 194⁹⁶), commemorating the tomb of Afinia Faustilla, erected by her parents,

⁹⁰ *N(umerius) Afinius N(umeri) f(ilius) / L(uci) n(epos) Flaccus / pago Alban(o) aram / de sua pecun(ia) faciu(ndum) / curav(it) eidemque / [probavit]*.

⁹¹ C. Stevanato, *Senators and memory in the funerary epigraphy of Roman Italy (1st century BC – 3rd century AD)*. History, PhD thesis, Université Panthéon-Sorbonne – Paris I, Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, Paris–Venezia 2019, pp. 71, 77–78.

⁹² *N(umerio) Afinio N(umeri) f(ilio) / Pal(atina) Hieraci / decurioni / Beneventan(o) / qui vixit an(nis) / XVIII dieb(us) XXXI / N(umerius) Afinius Apulus / et Afinia Acte / parent(es) infelic(issimi)*. See also Ch. Laes, J. Strubbe, *Youth in the Roman Empire. The Youth and the Restless Years?*, London – New York – Cambridge 2014, p. 177.

⁹³ *CIL* IX, 1567: *Afiniae N(umeri) f(iliae) / Calliste c(larissimae) f(eminae) / N(umerius) Afinius Fortunatus pater*.

⁹⁴ P. Veyne, *La Table des Ligures ... (2^e article)*, pp. 177–241, esp. p. 209 and fn. 4; M. Torelli, *Benevento Romana*, Roma 2002, p. 337; G. Camodeca, *Senatori beneventani da Silla alla tetrarchia*, in *Antiqua Beneventana. La storia della città romana attraverso la documentazione epigrafica*, ed. P. Caruso, Benevento 2012, pp. 233–262, esp. p. 259, fn. 91.

⁹⁵ ...*ius et filia / nomen / restitueru<n=M>(t) / et N(umerius) Afinius / Saturninus / co(n)iu(n)x*.

⁹⁶ *Afiniae Faustilla[e] / Afinius Faustus / Afinia Hedone sibi / [et] sui[s] fec(erunt)*.

Afinius Faustus and Afinia Hedone. Two inscriptions, one from Saepinum, other from its vicinity attest to the existence of Caius Afinius Cordus, who was a magistrate and patron of the same city (*Not. scav.* 1926, p. 246⁹⁷; *AE* 1927, 119; *AE* 2014, 394); both inscriptions were funded by his father and namesake. Moreover, along the road between Beneventum and Saepinum, in the present-day locality of Macchia di Circello, a bronze plaque was discovered (*CIL* IX 1455) containing an edict of Emperor Trajan from the year 101, establishing a maintenance fund. Among the wealthy proprietors mentioned therein is Afinius Cogitatus, whose estate in Beneventum was estimated at 60.000 sesterces.

It is evident that in Beneventum and its vicinity, there lived and flourished a wealthy family of the *Afinii*, one of whose members, Afinia Calliste, (it is difficult to date precisely), between the mid-second and mid-third centuries, married a Roman senator. However, why should these *Afinii*⁹⁸ be linked to Afinia Gemina Baebiana? This is clearly indicated by the last component of her name, as it bears a direct and exclusive (*sic!*) association with the *Afinii* of Beneventum and its environs.

In 180 BC, victorious Romans deported 40 thousand defeated Ligurians (along with women and children) to Samnium (*Liv.* 40.37–38), and a year later, another seven thousand Ligurians were resettled to the same region (*Liv.* 40.41). As a result of this activity, two new districts (*pagi*) were established in central Italy: *Ligures Baebiani* and *Ligures Corneliani*. These names derive from the names of the consuls of 181 BC who supervised the deportations. These consuls were Marcus Baebius Tamphilus and Publius Cornelius Cethegus. While the location of *Ligures Corneliani*

⁹⁷ See also P. Garnsey, *Trajan's alimenta: some problems*, "Historia", 17, 1968, pp. 367–381, at p. 371.

⁹⁸ Other *Afinii*, unrelated to Beneventum and its environs, are known from inscriptions: 1. P. Afinius T[er]nus (*ILAlg*-01, 2262a; Madauros, Africa); 2. L. Afinius L(uci) l(ibertus) Ata[...] (*IL* 02-07, 339 = *AE* 1981, 502; Corduba, Baetica; 1st century BCE/1st century CE); 3.–4. L. Afinius H[...] and L. Afinius Proc[...] (*CIL* X 6675; Antium, Latium; 2nd century); 5.–6. L. Afinius Quart(us) and his wife Afinia Trophime (*CIL* X 4765; Suessa Aurunca, Campania; 2nd century); 7. L. Afinius Modestus (*CIL* Caceres-01, 105 = *HEp* 1995, 191 = *AE* 1997, 798; Norba Brazas, Lusitania; 2nd century); 8.–9. Afinia Trepte and her son Afinius Deucalio (*ERA* Emerita 209, Emerita, Lusitania); 10. Afini[us(?)] (*HEp* 2006, 49 = *AE* 2006, 583; Norba Brazas, Lusitania; 2nd century); 11. S. Af[ni]us (*ILLPRON* 173 = *Legio-II-Ital-Nk*, 22 = *Gerstl* 88 = *Leber* 121 = *AEA* 2005, +09 = *AEA* 2006, +12; Virunum, Noricum, 2nd century); 12. M. Afinius Carpus (*ILAlg*-02-03, 7483 = *ILAlg*-02-03, 7484; Vivus Antoniae Saturninae; Numidia); 13. P. Afinius(?) Felix (*CIL* VIII 7958, 19848 = *ILAlg*-02-01, 2; Rusicade, Numidia); 14. P. Af[ni]us(?) (*Wagner*-02, 96; Abusina, Raetia, 171–250); 15. L. Afinius Proseductus (*CIL* VI 1057, 1058, 31234 = *Veletstino* 2015, p. 113 = *Cenati* 2023, 2; Rome [*cohors V vigilum*], 205–210); 16. C. Afinius Clemens Larino (*CIL* VI 2375, 2404, 32515 = *Cenati* 2023: 72; Rome, 135–137); 17. L. Afinius Ampliatus (*CIL* VI 6984; Rome, 2nd half of the 1st century CE); 18. L. Afinius Abascantus (*CIL* VI 21179, Rome, 2nd half of the 2nd century CE); 19. C. Afinius Soterichus (*CIL* VI 6998; Teate Marrucinorum, Samnium, 31–70); 20. C. Afinius Blastus Ampliatus (*CIL* VI 6999; Teate Marrucinorum, Samnium, 31–70); 21. Afini[us] Maur[us(?)] (Samothrace 39; Samothrace, Thrace); 22. M.(?) Afini[us(?)] (*QFdA*-2021-145,6; Aquileia); 23.–24. L. Afinius P(ubli) f(ilius) Celer (*CIL* V 3478, Verona).

is not entirely certain⁹⁹, *Ligures Baebiani* are situated approximately 25 kilometers north of Beneventum¹⁰⁰, in the vicinity of the present-day locality of Macchia di Circello. It is here that the aforementioned *Tabula Ligurum Baebianorum* from the time of Trajan was discovered, featuring the presence of Afinius Cogitatus.

The conclusion is therefore quite apparent: Afinia Gemina Baebiana, born around 210 and deceased shortly before 251, the wife of a senator and future Emperor Trebonianus Gallus, and the mother of Volusian, born around 230, must have originated from the *gens Afinia*, that is, from the family of decurions of Beneventum, who held estates in the vicinity of that city. The component Baebiana in her tripartite name refers to the *Ligures Baebiani*. What does this signify? That we have a sort of *signum* or *origo* – a manifestation of belonging (real or imagined) to the lineage of descendants of the relocated Ligurians. Such speculation may be made. However, one thing seems certain: other than through association with the Afinii of Beneventum and *Ligures Baebiani*, it is difficult to explain the unique combination of two out of three elements in the name of this woman.

TREBONIANUS GALLUS

This is not an article about Trebonianus Gallus. I am only interested in facts related to him that may confirm that the Ludovisi sarcophagus was created during his reign, for the recently deceased wife of this emperor. Therefore, let us start with the observation that the depictions of Trebonianus Gallus found on his coins do not preclude (this is a cautious stance) his identification with the ruler seated on the tribunal, as depicted on the lid of the sarcophagus, similar to how we can ‘reconstruct’ his appearance based on the drawings by Montfaucon and Eichler. Indeed, as we recall, in 1880, Theodor Schreiber described the man on the tribunal as “still a young man”¹⁰¹, which only implies that he was not advanced in age. It is noteworthy that the coins of Trebonianus Gallus portray a man who still looks relatively youthful, although in 253, he was 47 years old¹⁰². These coins also depict him with hair that

⁹⁹ See *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*, ed. R.J.A. Talbert, Princeton 2000, map 44 and 45 (*Barrington Atlas*, 44 H3 and 45 B2) – in the northeastern vicinity of the road connecting Beneventum to Saepinum, approximately halfway between Luceria and Saepinum; alternatively P. Guacci (*The contribution of the aerial topography for the study of the Roman settlement Ligures Baebiani (Macchia di Circello, Benevento – SW Italy)*), “Aerial Archaeology Research Group [AARG]”, 2016) suggests that both *pagi* are situated on both sides of the road from Beneventum to Saepinum.

¹⁰⁰ *Barrington Atlas of the Greek*, map 44 (*Barrington Atlas*, 44 G3).

¹⁰¹ Th. Schreiber, *Die Antiken Bildwerke*, p. 261: “In dem Kopfe sind deutliche Porträtzüge eines noch jugendlichen Mannes mit kurz verschnittenem Vollbart, Stumpfnase und anliegendem, schlicht zur Stirn herabgestrichenem Haupthaar zu erkennen”.

¹⁰² D. Kienast, W. Eck, M. Heil, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, p. 200; see also fn. 82 above.



Fig. 14a. RIC IV Trebonianus Gallus 1



Fig. 14b. RIC IV Trebonianus Gallus 16

is not very long, with a short or medium-length beard, which corresponds to the figure on the sarcophagus lid (Fig. 14a–b, see OCRE).

At this juncture, it is crucial to recall, as previously mentioned, that sculptures purportedly depicting Trebonianus Gallus (including the renowned bronze statue from The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York¹⁰³) bear no explicit inscriptions identifying him by name. All attributions are hypothetical and rely on the subjective assessment of various scholars that the sculpted figure bears a ‘resemblance’ to Trebonianus Gallus as depicted on his coins. Nevertheless, it may be worth noting, albeit with considerable caution regarding this endeavor, that contemporary artistic reconstructions of the emperor’s face (see for example <https://voshart.com/ROMAN-EMPEROR-PROJECT>), based on these attributed ancient representations, do not preclude identification with the figure on the tribunal from the Ludovisi sarcophagus lid, as depicted in Eichler’s drawing.

The key role in my identification of Trebonianus Gallus with the figure on the tribune is played by something else. It is true that this emperor is criticized and depicted as a traitor in some sources, who led to the defeat and death of Decius¹⁰⁴. Nevertheless, Trebonianus Gallus, in the perspective of ancient writers, is praised for two things: the peace treaty concluded with the barbarians¹⁰⁵ and his magnificent

¹⁰³ See Ch.M. Fitz Gerald, *Bronze Statue of Trebonianus Gallus*, “Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art”, 1, 1905, pp. 12–13; F.S. Kleiner, *A History of Roman Art. Enhanced Edition*, Boston 2010, pp. 268–269, ill. 18.8 and 18.9; S. Hemingway, S. McGregor, D. Smith, *The bronze statue of Trebonianus Gallus in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Restoration, technique, and interpretation*, in *The Restoration of Ancient Bronzes: Naples and Beyond*, ed. E. Risser, D. Saunders, Los Angeles 2013, pp. 113–147.

¹⁰⁴ See Aur. Vict. 29.4; Zos. 1.23.2 and 1.24.1; Zonaras 12.20 [589], *Ioannis Zonarae Epitome historiarum*, vols 1–6, ed. Ludovicus Dindorfus, Leipzig 1868–1875, vol. 3, p. 136, ll. 8–17.

¹⁰⁵ See Zos. 1.25.1; Jord. *Get.* 106; Zonaras 12.21.

conduct during the plague, when he ensured the removal of corpses from the city of Rome¹⁰⁶. Furthermore, Jordanes, drawing from the currently lost account of Dexippus (see Jord. *Get.* 113), writes very favorably about the ruler and his son, as reigning during a time of complete peace¹⁰⁷.

Supra dicti vero Gallus et Volusianus imperatores, quamvis vix biennio in imperio perseverantes ab hac luce migrarunt, tamen ipsud biennium, quod affuerunt, ubique pacati, ubique regnaverunt gratiosi, praeter quod unum eorum fortunae reputatum est, id est generalis morbus, sed hoc ab imperitis et calumniatoribus, qui vitam solent aliorum dente maledico lacerare. hi ergo mox imperio adepti sunt, *foedus* cum gente pepigerunt Gothorum.

(The above-mentioned emperors Gallus and Volusianus, although they remained only two years in powers before leaving this light, yet during these two years in which they held office, they reigned everywhere in peace and everywhere gracefully, except for one thing that can be held to account against their good fortune, namely the widespread disease, but this is only brought up by the unqualified and the slanderous, who are accustomed to attack other people's lives out of envy. Soon after they acquired the empire, they concluded a *treaty* with the Gothic people¹⁰⁸).

In a tradition dating back to the roots of the third century (= Dexippus), we have a solidified tradition favorable to Rome regarding the *foedus* concluded by Trebonianus Gallus with the Goths¹⁰⁹. Moreover, we know that often accompanying such or similar arrangements was the obligation to provide Rome with hostages. Moreover, on the lid of the sarcophagus, we see the emperor depicted taking barbarian children

¹⁰⁶ Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian are combating the plague and its consequences – see Aur. Vict. 30.2; see also Jord. *Get.* 106 (the allegations against Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian regarding the plague are unfounded). Eutropius 9.5 merely records that the reign of these emperors was known solely for the plague.

¹⁰⁷ Only Jordanes (= Dexippus) writes that there was complete peace during the reign of Trebonianus Gallus. This is nonsense, as by probably 251 – and certainly in 252 – Shapur launched an attack in the East. Other sources (such as Zosimus, which also [*sic!*] reflects Dexippus's tradition, *via* Eunapius) provide information that the times of Trebonianus Gallus were characterized by numerous disasters. Why this discrepancy? Perhaps it is evidence that after the lost battle at Abrittus and the subsequent settlement with the Goths, there was indeed peace in the Balkans during the reign of Trebonianus Gallus, unlike in the East, where Shapur's invasions began in 251 or 252. Jordanes, however, is only interested in the Balkans because he writes about the Goths, hence the strange account of peace by this author. See also E. Kettenhofen, *Beobachtungen zum 1. Buch der Nêa Iστορία des Zosimos*, "Byzantion", 58, 1993, pp. 404–415.

¹⁰⁸ *Get.* 106 (Jordanes, *Getica* (*De origine actibusque Getarum*), ed. Th. Mommsen, *MGH AA V/1*, Berlin 1882); Jordanes, *Romana and Getica*, ed. and transl. P. Van Nuffelen, L. Van Hoof, *Translated Texts for Historians* 75, Liverpool 2020.

¹⁰⁹ B. Bleckmann, *Die Reichskrise des III. Jahrhunderts in der spätantiken und byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung. Untersuchungen zu den nachdionischen Quellen der Chronik des Johannes Zonaras*, München 1992, pp. 174–180; R. Mathisen, *Barbarian invasions or civil wars? Goths as auxiliary forces in the Roman army*, in *Empire in Crisis*, pp. 263–286, at pp. 268, 272.



Fig. 15. The Barbarians mourning beneath a *tropaion*

as hostages¹¹⁰; furthermore, right below the *tabula ansata*, there is a scene portraying barbarians mourning beneath a *tropaion* (Fig. 15)¹¹¹.

On the sarcophagus, we have an image of victory and a treaty enforced upon the enemy. This aligns well with the propagandistic portrayal of Trebonianus Gallus as the leader who ended the war with the Goths by reaching a treaty with them. It is of no consequence that the glory from such a peace treaty was dubious: the deaths of Decius and Herennius, the humiliating tribute, and the consent to the barbarians taking captives from Philippopolis¹¹². In official propaganda, Trebonianus Gallus was depicted as the victor who compelled the barbarians into agreements. Such a construct is also attested to by numismatics. Its message generally fits the triumphalistic spirit of the iconography of the Ludovisi sarcophagus.

¹¹⁰ On the principles of taking hostages, see J.M. Moscovich, *The Role of Hostages in Roman Foreign Policy*, academic dissertation, McMaster University, Hamilton 1972 (mainly concerning the Republic and not extending beyond the 1st century); A.D. Lee, *The role of hostages in Roman diplomacy with Sasanian Persia*, "Historia", 40, 1991, pp. 366–374, esp. p. 368 (on prisoners from the time of Aurelian); J. Allen, *Hostages and Hostage-Taking in the Roman Empire*, Cambridge – New York 2006 (only incidentally extending beyond the year 200); S. Thijs, *Hostages of Rome*, "Athens Journal of History", 2, 2016, pp. 199–212 (concerning only the Republican era); on barbarian hostages in the context of the Ludovisi sarcophagus, see Ch. Heitz, *Die Guten*, p. 223.

¹¹¹ See R. Petermann, *Zur Restaurierung*, Fig. 94.1; E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, p. 54.

¹¹² The literature concerning these events is vast, including that associated with the new fragments of Dexippus. I intentionally do not list it here, as it would overburden the text.

The coins of Trebonianus Gallus, both those minted in his sole name and those minted jointly with Volusian¹¹³, most frequently reference content with a long-standing and rather conventional tradition: (Adventus [Rome¹¹⁴, Antioch¹¹⁵], Aequitas¹¹⁶, Aeternitas¹¹⁷, Annona¹¹⁸, Concordia¹¹⁹, Felicitas¹²⁰, Libertas¹²¹/Liberalitas¹²², Moneta¹²³, Pax¹²⁴, Pietas¹²⁵, Providentia¹²⁶, Pudicitia¹²⁷, Roma Aeterna¹²⁸, Salus¹²⁹, Securitas¹³⁰, Ubertas¹³¹/Uberitas¹³², Victoria¹³³, Virtus¹³⁴). On the coins of these rulers, several deities also appear, whose epithets are a typical, primarily militaristic manifestation (Iuno Martialis¹³⁵, Iovis Stator¹³⁶, Mars Propugnator¹³⁷, Mars Pacifer¹³⁸, Apollo Salutaris¹³⁹). It may be worth noting only the numerical predominance of emissions featuring Iuno Martialis; and Apollo Salutaris, could be related to the plague that occurred during Trebonianus Gallus's reign. However, little of this is gleaned for the study of the Ludovisi sarcophagus. Perhaps more significant is that the numismatics

¹¹³ See *RIC IV Trebonianus Gallus and Volusianus*; see also H. Mattingly, *The reigns of Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian and of Aemilianus*, "Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Royal Numismatic Society", Sixth Series, 6, 1946, pp. 36–43; and W.E. Metcalf, *The Antioch hoard of antoniniani and the eastern coinage of Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian*, "American Numismatic Society Museum Notes", 22, 1977, pp. 71–94.

¹¹⁴ *RIC IV Trebonianus Gallus* 128.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem* 14, 15, 79.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem* 16, 17, 80, 81.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem* 30, 102.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem* 4, 18, 31, 62.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem* 6, 7, 19A, 51, 52, 53, 105, 106.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem* 8, 27, 28, 29, 33, 34, 34A, 59, 75, 82, 107, 108.

¹²¹ *Ibidem* 9, 10, 11, 20, 21, 24, 37, 38, 39, 50, 70, 114.

¹²² *Ibidem* 36, 77, 113.

¹²³ *Ibidem* 26.

¹²⁴ *Ibidem* 55, 56, 71, 86, 87, 97, 115.

¹²⁵ *Ibidem* 12, 22, 41, 42, 72, 73, 116, 117.

¹²⁶ *Ibidem* 23, 43, 44, 61, 74.

¹²⁷ *Ibidem* 88.

¹²⁸ *Ibidem* 63, 89, 120.

¹²⁹ *Ibidem* 13, 45, 46, 47, 121, 122, 123.

¹³⁰ *Ibidem* 65, 124.

¹³¹ *Ibidem* 64.

¹³² *Ibidem* 92.

¹³³ *Ibidem* 48, 93, 94, 95, 125.

¹³⁴ *Ibidem* 57, 58, 76, 96, 126.

¹³⁵ *RIC IV Decius* 100 – avers: DIVO AVGVSTO – the deification of Decius was already carried out during the reign of Trebonianus Gallus; other coins of Trebonianus Gallus with the inscription IVNO MARTIALIS see: *RIC IV Trebonianus Gallus* 25, 35, 54, 69, 78, 83, 109, 110, 111, 112.

¹³⁶ *Ibidem* 60.

¹³⁷ *Ibidem* 84.

¹³⁸ *Ibidem* 40, 83, 85.

¹³⁹ *Ibidem* 5, 19, 32, 103, 104.

of the emperor exude boundless optimism¹⁴⁰, despite the bleak and disaster-laden times. Thus, on the coins of Trebonianus Gallus, Rome is still depicted as eternal¹⁴¹, already heralding the forthcoming celebration of the emperor's decade-long rule (VOTIS DECENNALIBUS)¹⁴², even proclaiming the dawn of a New Age (SAECVLVM NOVVM)¹⁴³. All of this aligns with the triumphalistic iconography of our sarcophagus and contradicts the thesis that in times of calamity, one cannot convey a positive message. This is precisely how propaganda operates.

The coins of Trebonianus Gallus also reveal something else, to which I will return in connection with Volusian: the emperor evidently prepares for expeditions to the east against the Persians, as the mint in Antioch heralds his *Adventus*¹⁴⁴ and already foretells the victory of the ruler¹⁴⁵. In addition, coins bearing the same inscription are found for Decius¹⁴⁶ and his sons, minted in Antioch, although none of them ever set eyes on the city as emperor (perhaps there were such plans?)¹⁴⁷. Whereas the fact that Trebonianus Gallus did indeed intend to set out to the east is attested to, amongst others, by Zosimus (1.28.3).

Considering the coins of Trebonianus Gallus lack grandiose, elaborate scenes¹⁴⁸ that could be directly compared with the iconography of the Ludovisi sarcophagus

¹⁴⁰ Also see interesting coins with the inscription *Princeps Iuventutis* and Apollo's ideology: ibidem 118, avers: IMP CAES C VIBIVS TREBONIANVS GALLVS AVG (bust of Trebonianus Gallus, laureate, draped, cuirassed, right); revers: PRINC IVVENT S C (Apollo, half-draped, seated left, holding branch in right hand and resting left elbow on lyre). Ibidem 119, avers: IMP CAE C VIB TREB GALLVS AVG (bust of Trebonianus Gallus, laureate, draped, cuirassed, right); revers: PRINCIPI IVVENTVTIS S C (Apollo, half-draped, seated left, holding branch in right hand and resting left elbow on lyre).

¹⁴¹ See ibidem 89 (Antioch), revers: ROMAE AETERNAE AVG (Roma, helmeted, draped, seated left, holding Victory in extended right hand and spear in left hand; at side, shield).

¹⁴² Ibidem 49 (Rome), revers: VOTIS DECENNALIBVS (in laurel-wreath); Ibidem 127 (Rome), revers: VOTIS DECENNALIBVS S C (legend inscribed in laurel wreath).

¹⁴³ Ibidem 90 i 91 (Antioch), revers: SAECVLVM NOVVM / SAECVLVM NOVVM, Hexastyle temple, with figure (of Roma?) in the centre.

¹⁴⁴ Ibidem 79 (Antioch), avers: IMP C C VIB TREB GALLVS P F AVG (bust of Trebonianus Gallus, radiate, draped, cuirassed, right); revers: ADVENTVS AVG (Trebonianus Gallus, in military attire, on a horse prancing left, raising his right hand and holding a sceptre in his left hand). See also R. Suski, *Trebonian Gallus i emisje z legendą ADVENTVS AVG. Dlaczego cesarz nie udał się na wschód?*, "Wieki Stare i Nowe", 17, 2022, pp. 1–16.

¹⁴⁵ VICTORIA AVG (Antioch): *RIC* IV Trebonianus Gallus 93, 94, 95.

¹⁴⁶ *RIC* IV Trajan Decius 62 (Decius, Antioch), 156 (Herennius, Antioch), 193 (Hostilian, Antioch); see also ADVENTVS and other cities: *RIC* IV Decius 1 (Rome), 34 (Milan).

¹⁴⁷ On the matter of interpreting coins with the inscription ADVENTVS, see Ch. Klose, *A Farewell to Methods? Imperial 'adventus-scenes' and interpretations of Roman historical reliefs*, in *Fresh Perspectives on Graeco-Roman Visual Culture. Proceedings of an International Conference at Humboldt-Universität, Berlin, 2nd–3rd September 2013*, ed. Ch. Klose, L.C. Bossert, W. Leverit, Berlin 2015, pp. 99–116; more specifically, in the context of ADVENTVS Trebonianus Gallus, refer to H. Mattingly, *The reigns of Trebonianus Gallus*, p. 43.

¹⁴⁸ However, there exist commonplace depictions on the reverses of Trebonianus Gallus, sometimes depicting holding a branch and sceptre and/or sacrificing over a lighted tripod, see *RIC* IV Trebonianus Gallus 1, 2, 3, 67, 68, 99, 100.

(e.g., the ruler on the tribune receiving hostages), two emissions are particularly intriguing. The first is the asses struck in Rome (*RIC* IV 128), featuring on the obverse, faces of the father and son turned towards each other and the inscription *CONCORDIA AVGVSTORVM*. The reverse depicts Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian riding horses, preceded by Victoria and a soldier with a shield. In the background, another soldier and two spears, a *vexillum*, and a standard are visible (**Fig. 16**, see OCRE)¹⁴⁹.



Fig. 16. *RIC* IV Trebonianus Gallus 128

The second similar emission¹⁵⁰ only features the bust of Trebonianus Gallus on the obverse, accompanied by the inscription: *IMP CAE C VIB TREB GALLVS AVG*. The reverse, adorned with the inscription *PONTIF MAX TR P II COS II S C*, displays the image of the emperor and his son in quadriga, crowned by Victoria positioned between them. On either side stand two soldiers, one presumably holding a palm, and the other a shield. Both of the aforementioned emissions thus attest to the existence of elaborate propaganda scenes in which the father and son are depicted among soldiers, in a militaristic and triumphalistic setting, akin to that seen on the Ludovisi sarcophagus. However, this is not unique; such portrayals of emperors, in general, were customary.

¹⁴⁹ Ibidem 128, avers: *CONCORDIA AVGVSTORVM* (bust of Trebonianus Gallus, right, and bust of Volusian, left, laureate, draped, cuirassed, facing one another); revers: *ADVENTVS AVGG* (Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian, riding right, preceded by Victory and soldier with shield; in the background, a soldier, two spears, *vexillum*, and standard).

¹⁵⁰ Ibidem 98 (Rome), no photograph is available, description only: “Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian, seated in facing quadriga, crowned by Victory between them; one soldier l., with palm(?), two r. with palms, one with shield also”.

VOLUSIAN

Let us begin with the fact that shortly after the discovery of the Ludovisi sarcophagus in 1621, in the early 1630s, Cassiano del Pozzo¹⁵¹ identified the charging young commander specifically as Volusian. Similarly, in the popular guide of its time by Helbig in 1891¹⁵², it is stated that the head of the man on the sarcophagus **resembles** (*sic!*)¹⁵³ portraits of this emperor (although the author incorrectly stated that Volusian died in 254); such identification also appeared in the English version of this guide from 1896¹⁵⁴. It appears that the earliest researchers were correct.

The most significant aspect is that the depiction of Volusian on the coin aligns well with the figure on the relief panel of the sarcophagus. Numismatics illustrates the evolution of the emperor's appearance with his age¹⁵⁵: initially, he is portrayed as very young and completely beardless (*RIC* IV Volusian 206b); then, that he has only a sparse growth of facial hair around the sides of the face and under the nose – the beard is entirely smooth (*RIC* IV Volusian 206b). Finally, we see him with rather abundant, curly facial hair (*RIC* IV Volusian 251). Particularly important are the depictions of this last type, showing the young emperor with slightly longer and an already curly beard as well as hair not trimmed quite so short. This aligns perfectly with the figure of the charging young commander on the frontal panel of the sarcophagus. Conversely, the coins of Decius's sons, namely Herennius¹⁵⁶ and Hostilian¹⁵⁷,

¹⁵¹ I. Herklotz, *Cassiano dal Pozzo und die Archäologie des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Römische Forschungen der Bibliotheca Hertziana 28, München 1999, p. 291 (see also 131, 140); H. Wrede, *Senatorische Sarkophage Roms*, pp. 66–67; E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, p. 6; M. De Angelis d'Ossat, “*È opera stupenda*” – zur Auffindung des Ludovisisarkophages, transl. F.-W. von Hase, in *Der Traum vom Imperium. Der Ludovisisarkophag – Grabmal eines Feldherrn Roms*, ed. E. Künzl, Regensburg–Mainz 2010, pp. 117–121.

¹⁵² W. Helbig, *Führer durch die öffentlichen Sammlungen*, vol. 3, p. 127, n. 884 (10): “Der Kopf des römischen Feldherrn ähnelt unter den bekannten Kaiserporträts am Meisten demjenigen des Volusianus († 254 n. Chr.).”

¹⁵³ This is important because after the publication of the article by Helga von Heintze, frequently referenced by me, many researchers suddenly noticed the resemblance of this figure to Hostilian (such is the power of suggestion!).

¹⁵⁴ W. Helbig, *Führer durch die öffentlichen Sammlungen*, vol. 3; see English translation: idem, *Guide to the Public Collections of Classical Antiquities in Rome*, transl. J.F. Muirhead and F. Muirhead, vol. 3, Leipzig 1896, p. 123, n. 890: “Among known portraits of Roman emperors that of Volusianus (d. 254 A.D.) most resembles the head of the general”.

¹⁵⁵ *Portraits. 500 Years*, pp. 160–161 (nos. 440–442) – here are significantly enlarged and better-quality photographs of coins compared to those found in *RIC* IV.

¹⁵⁶ *RIC* IV Herennius Etruscus 138–173. The absence of a beard in the depictions of Herennius on his coins is also noted by, for example, O. Pelikán, *Der grosse Ludovisische Schlachtsarkophag*, p. 120; B. Andreae, *Zur Komposition*, p. 634.

¹⁵⁷ *RIC* IV Hostilian 174–226. See also O. Pelikán, *Der grosse Ludovisische Schlachtsarkophag*, p. 120; and idem, *Vom antiken Realismus*, pp. 118–119 with the observation that Hostilian appears to be young enough (beardless) during his father's reign that he does not participate in battles; thus, portraying Hostilian on a sarcophagus as triumphant in battle seems unlikely.

depict them without beards, which essentially precludes their identification with the commander on the sarcophagus. It is worth noting that in order to argue that it is Hostilian, Helga von Heintz had to resort to two marble busts, which were not inscribed with any name¹⁵⁸. We see that Volusian resembles the figure on the Ludovisi sarcophagus, on coins, although it is difficult to compare flat profiles with the three-dimensional sculpture depicted *en face* (Fig. 17a–c, see OCRE).



Fig. 17a. RIC IV Volusian 159



Fig. 17b. RIC IV Volusian 139



Fig. 17c. RIC IV Volusian 166

¹⁵⁸ According to Helga von Heintze (*Der Feldherr des Grossen*, p. 386), who attributes the sarcophagus to Hostilian, stylistically, the bust from Munich (formerly in Aschaffenburg) belongs to the art of the time of Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian ('Der Kopf des Hostilianus in Aschaffenburg (vgl. S. 376 Anm. 43) gehört wahrscheinlich schon in die Zeit des Trebonianus Gallus und Volusianus, mit dessen Münzbildern er in seinen aufgelockerten Haaren und glatten Ausführung zusammengeht').

It is worth noting that, in the case of Volusian and the question of his association with the figure of the young charging commander on the relief panel of the sarcophagus chest, we cannot rely on highly subjective contemporary artistic interpretations. The facial reconstructions of Trebonianus Gallus's son are based solely on a bust that is hypothetically attributed to him and held in the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tours¹⁵⁹. Moreover, as I have already mentioned at the outset, several portraits are hypothetically attributed to Volusian. Apart from those mentioned above, none of the busts from Northampton, Vienna, and the Palazzo Massimo alle Terme in Rome were inscribed in antiquity with the name of this emperor. It is also evident to the naked eye that they differ so greatly from each other that they cannot represent the same individual (**Fig. 18a–c**)¹⁶⁰.

It is worth returning to numismatics to consider any association with the iconography of the Ludovisi sarcophagus. The coins of Volusian himself – those not discussed earlier, struck together with his father – refer to a classical set of personifications: Aequitas¹⁶¹, Aeternitas¹⁶², Concordia¹⁶³, Felicitas¹⁶⁴, Libertas¹⁶⁵/Liberalitas¹⁶⁶, Moneta¹⁶⁷, Pax¹⁶⁸, Pietas¹⁶⁹, Providentia¹⁷⁰, Pudicitia¹⁷¹, Roma Aeterna¹⁷², Salus¹⁷³, Securitas¹⁷⁴, Ubertas¹⁷⁵, Victoria¹⁷⁶, Virtus¹⁷⁷. On the other hand, the list of gods' names appearing on these coins is not very frequent, nor is it very unconventional (the most popular being Iuno Martialis¹⁷⁸ followed by: Mars Propugnator¹⁷⁹, Mars

¹⁵⁹ See, for example, <https://voshart.com/ROMAN-EMPEROR-PROJECT>.

¹⁶⁰ See J. Meischner, *Ein Porträt des Kaisers Volusianus*, "Archäologischer Anzeiger", 2, 1967, pp. 220–228, Fig. 2–6.

¹⁶¹ *R/C* IV Volusian 142, 153, 166, 215, 225, 246.

¹⁶² *Ibidem* 152.

¹⁶³ *Ibidem* 143, 144, 145, 146, 167, 168, 169, 170, 213 (CONCORD MIL.; reverse proper to Valerian I), 249, 250.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibidem* 135, 147, 165, 188A (reverse proper to Trebonianus Gallus), 205, 216, 217, 251.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibidem* 148, 149, 189 and 190 (reverse proper to Trebonianus Gallus), 210 (reverse proper to Trebonianus Gallus), 226, 227, 255.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibidem* 178, 254.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibidem* 164.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibidem* 133, 157, 179, 180, 181, 195 (reverse proper to Trebonianus Gallus), 200 (with revers of Aemilianus), 207, 211 (reverse proper to Trebonianus Gallus), 229, 230, 231, 240, 256.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibidem* 150, 151, 158, 163, 182, 191 and 192 (revers proper to Trebonianus Gallus), 212 (reverse proper to Trebonianus Gallus), 257, 258.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibidem* 193 (reverse proper to Trebonianus Gallus); 201 – 202 – 203 (uncertain reverses)

¹⁷¹ *Ibidem* 204 (uncertain reverses), 232, 233.

¹⁷² *Ibidem* 137, 196 (with reverse of Gordian III), 221, 234.

¹⁷³ *Ibidem* 152, 160, 184, 185, 208, 260.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibidem* 136, 261.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibidem* 237.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibidem* 161, 194 (reverse proper to Trebonianus Gallus), 222A, 223, 238, 239, 262.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibidem* 162, 186, 187, 206, 263.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibidem* 131, 132, 155, 156, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 209 (reverse proper to Trebonianus Gallus), 218, 252, 253.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibidem* 219.

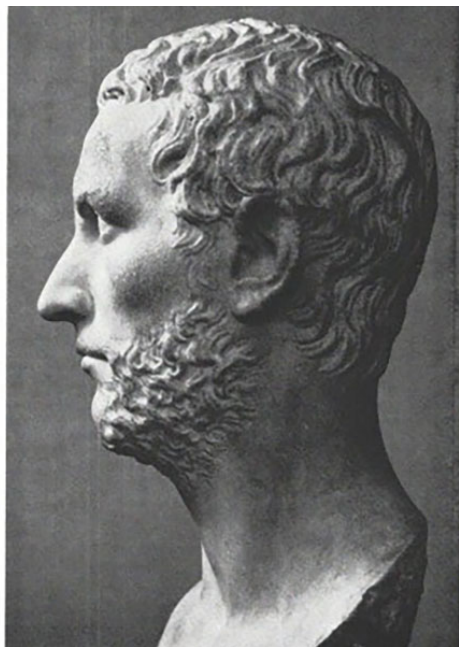
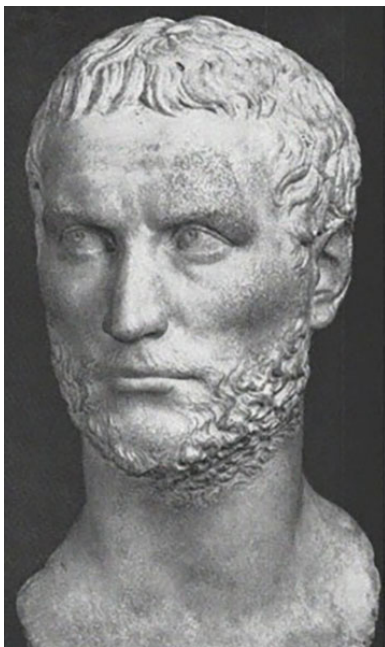


Fig. 18a. The bust from the Smith College Museum in Northampton

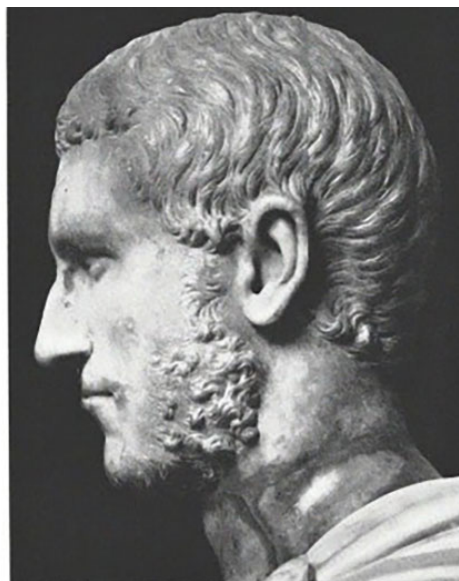
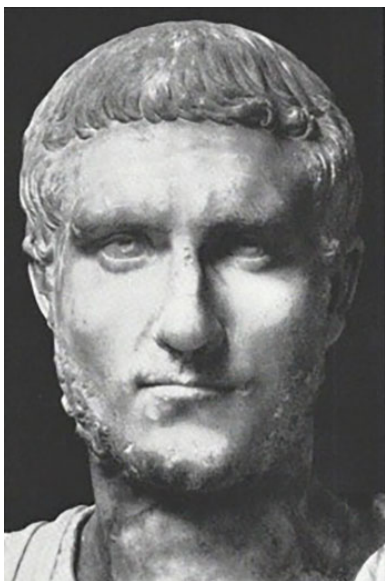


Fig. 18b. The bust from the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna

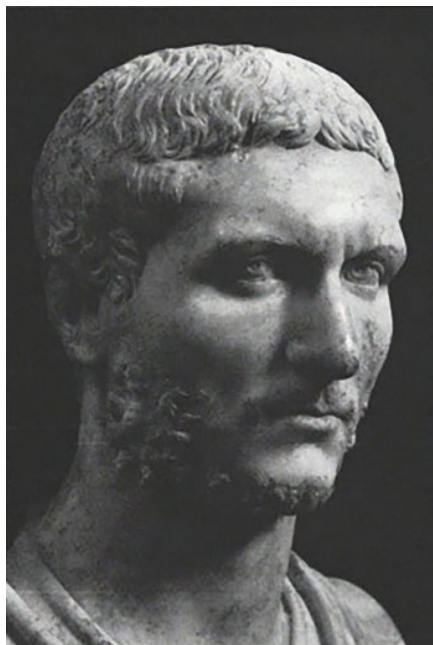


Fig. 18c. The bust from the Palazzo Massimo alle Terme in Rome

Pacifer¹⁸⁰, Apollo Salutaris¹⁸¹, Iovis Conservator¹⁸²). Somewhat more intriguing from the perspective of the Ludovisi sarcophagus iconography are the coins whose reverses depict Volusian himself, rather than personifications and gods. We thus have coins inscribed with *PRINCEPS IVVENTVTIS*¹⁸³, accompanied by the figure of Volusian offering a sacrifice, holding a sceptre and a branch¹⁸⁴. Consequently, there is nothing here that can be related to the iconography of the sarcophagus. Whereas most significant are other emissions from Antioch with the inscription *ADVENTVS AVG*¹⁸⁵ on the reverse and the image of Volusian riding a horse with his right hand raised, holding a spear in his left hand (**Fig. 19**, see OCRE).

The presence of coins from Rome (*RIC* IV 198) further associates Volusian with Dacia¹⁸⁶. Beyond the militaristic message concerning the East, there are also indications of propaganda referencing the European frontier. It is significant that the frontal panel of the Ludovisi sarcophagus portrays the young leader as the conqueror of both Western ('Germans') and Eastern ('Persians') as enemies of the empire.

¹⁸⁰ Ibidem 220, 228.

¹⁸¹ Ibidem 188 (reverse proper to Trebonianus Gallus), 247, 248.

¹⁸² Ibidem 197 (with reverse of Philip II).

¹⁸³ Ibidem 129, 130, 134, 159, 183, 199 (with reverse of Herennius or Hostilian), 241, 242, 259.

¹⁸⁴ Ibidem 138, 139, 140, 141, 244, 245.

¹⁸⁵ Ibidem 214, 224.

¹⁸⁶ Ibidem 198 – avers: *IMP CAE C VIB VOLVSIANO AVG* (bust of Volusian, radiate, draped, cuirassed, right); revers: *DACIA* (Dacia, draped, standing left, holding standard in right hand).



Fig. 19. *RIC* IV Volusian 224, avers: IMP C V AF GAL VEND VOLVSIANO AVG | IM C AF GAL VEND VOLVSIANO AVG | IM C AF GAL VEND VOLVSIANO AVG; revers: ADVENTVS AVG

Meanwhile, emissions from Rome during Volusian's reign herald the celebration of the tenth anniversary of his rule: VOTIS DECENNALIBVS S.C.¹⁸⁷ Coins from this emperor minted in Antioch proclaim SAECVLVM NOVVM¹⁸⁸ / SAECVLVM NOVVM S.C.¹⁸⁹ This shows how the young ruler is not only depicted as the conqueror of enemies from the East and the West but also portrayed as a figure poised for a lengthy reign, heralding a prosperous era for humanity. All of this aligns remarkably well with the ideology of the Ludovisi sarcophagus iconography, particularly with the hypothetical Mithraic symbol on the young commander's forehead, depicting him as the vanquisher of cosmic forces of evil and darkness¹⁹⁰.

ARMED CONFLICTS FROM 251 TO 253 AND THE LUDOVISI SARCOPHAGUS

At this juncture, we arrive at the circumstances and time of the creation of the sarcophagus, which I propose to attribute to Afinia Gemina Baebiana. Key to this case are the political events surrounding approximately 27 months of the reign of Trebonianus

¹⁸⁷ Ibidem 243, 263.

¹⁸⁸ Ibidem 222, 235.

¹⁸⁹ Ibidem 236.

¹⁹⁰ See H. von Heintze, *Der Feldherr des Grossen*, pp. 387–393; H. Wrede, *Senatorische Sarkophage Roms*, pp. 68–69; E. Künzl, *Der Traum vom Imperium*, pp. 69–72. Regarding the critical stance toward the interpretation of the symbol X as Mithraic, see pp. 51–52 above, and fn. 53. I omit the vast literature on Mithraism.

Gallus (May/June [possibly May?] 251 – August 253) and that of his son. I deliberately provide the duration of their reign in months as it better illustrates the brevity of this period. Within this timeframe, numerous events must be accommodated. Naturally, I do not intend to discuss them at this point; I will merely highlight those aspects that may support my hypothesis.

In the sources – aside from the noted exceptional account by Jordanes¹⁹¹ – Trebonianus Gallus's reign is depicted as a period marked by numerous devastating simultaneous invasions by enemies of the empire. Such a portrayal is presented by¹⁹² Zosimus (1.26.1–27.3), *Excerpta Salmasiana* (II 66 = fr. 228 Roberto¹⁹³), Symeon Magister¹⁹⁴, and Zonaras (12.21). Additionally, we must include accounts from the *Thirteenth Sibylline Book*, composed in the Syrian milieu between 262 and 268 (vv. 103–137¹⁹⁵), as well as from the so-called *Res Gestae Divi Saporis* (ll. 11–19)¹⁹⁶. Particularly severe conditions prevailed in the East: Shapur invaded and occupied Armenia; he defeated the Romans at Barbalissos and ravaged northern Mesopotamia; he struck Syria, where he likely captured Antioch in the spring of 253, followed by a similar fate befalling many other cities in Cilicia and Cappadocia¹⁹⁷. Scholars debate vehemently in their attempts to organize the chronology of all these events.

From the perspective of this article, however, this is not of paramount importance; what matters is simply the observation that from 251 to 253, the empire was afflicted by barbarian and Persian invasions. This is precisely what the frontal panel of the Ludovisi sarcophagus depicts, in accordance with the Roman viewpoint. Indeed, it portrays Volusian triumphantly charging amidst a tangle of barbaric 'Germans' and 'Persians' massacred by the Romans.

It is also salient to add here that Zosimus (1.27.3) clearly states that upon learning of the situation in the East, Trebonianus Gallus began preparations for an

¹⁹¹ See also the explanation of the uniqueness of Jordanes's message proposed in fn. 107.

¹⁹² See E. Kettenhofen, *Beobachtungen*, pp. 404–415.

¹⁹³ According to *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta ex Historia chronica* (ed., introd. and transl. U. Roberto, Berlin – New York 2005, LXI–LXXIV), this is a fragment originating from the text of John of Antioch. However, Mariev did not include this part of the *Excerpta Salmasiana* in his edition of John of Antioch, see *Ioannis Antiocheni fragmenta quae supersunt omnia*, ed. S. Mariev, Berlin – New York 2008.

¹⁹⁴ *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon*, ed. S. Wahlgren, Berlin – New York 2006 (CFHB 44.1), pp. 78, 100–101.

¹⁹⁵ Edition and commentary, D.S. Potter, *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire. A Historical Commentary on the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle*, Oxford 1990.

¹⁹⁶ Text in A. Maricq, E. Honigmann, *Recherches sur les Res Gestae Divi Saporis*, Brussels 1953, pp. 11–18.

¹⁹⁷ See *ibidem*, pp. 146–147 (table) and 50–164 (toponyms); for Shapur's invasion of Syria, see for example: P.M. Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia. The Middle Euphrates, Mesopotamia and Palmyra under Roman Control*, London – New York 2008, pp. 184–200 (here the earlier literature) and p. 186 for a full list of cities conquered by the Persians. According to Potter (*Prophecy and History*), Shapur's invasion of Syria took place in the year 252, however, Edwell does not exclude the year 253, still under the reign of Trebonianus Gallus, who ruled until August 253.

expedition against the Persians no later than the spring of 253. Furthermore, we have cited previously mentioned coins of the emperor and his son minted in Antioch, heralding their *Adventus*. The martial scene on the sarcophagus serves as a propagandistic image illustrating the official preparations from 251 to 253 dealing with the enemies of the Roman Empire. It is also necessary to consider that Volusian himself may have been involved in his father's military endeavors in the Balkans; either earlier, during the years 250–251, when Trebonianus Gallus was still solely a senatorial legate of the province of *Moesia Inferior*, or later, during his father's reign, when the young emperor distinguished himself in the province of Dacia (see *RIC* IV Volusian 198¹⁹⁸). Therefore, portraying the young ruler on the sarcophagus as the conqueror of eastern and western enemies of the empire would make complete sense.

THE FINAL RECONSTRUCTION

I hereby propose to examine the iconography of the Ludovisi sarcophagus in the context of the events during the reign of Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian.

Upon learning of the defeat and death of Decius, still in May or early June of 251, Trebonianus Gallus, the former governor of the province of *Moesia Inferior*, was proclaimed emperor, immediately conferring upon his son Volusian the title of *Caesar*. An agreement was reached with the Goths (Jord. *Get.* 106 even speaks of a *foedus*), whereby they withdrew beyond the Danube in exchange for tribute and permission to take captives from Philippopolis. In the latter half of 251, the new emperor and his son were already in Rome. In the city resided Decius's son, formally *Augustus* Hostilian, and *Augusta* Herennia Etruscilla. Their relations with the new ruler and his son must have been difficult. Trebonianus Gallus recognized, and according to Zosimus (1.25.1) even adopted, Hostilian, while his mother retained the title of *Augusta*. However, soon after, perhaps even before 15 July 251¹⁹⁹, Hostilian died as a victim of a plague (*Epit. de Caes.* 30.2), although rumors circulated that he was assassinated (Zos. 1.25.2). Herennia Etruscilla disappears from the sources; her fate remaining unknown.

¹⁹⁸ *RIC* IV Volusian 198 (with reverse of Decius): Dacia stg. I., holding standard.

¹⁹⁹ The date is established by D. Kienast, W. Eck, M. Heil, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, p. 198. Although on August 13, 251, the name of Hostilian is mentioned together with Trebonianus Gallus in a papyrus (Sammelbuch VI 9235). However, by August 30, 251, another papyrus (*P. Oxy.* LI 3610) mentions only the name of Trebonianus Gallus, see X. Lorient, *L'atelier d'Alexandrie sous Trébonien Galle: à propos du P. OXY. 3611*, "Revue numismatique", 152, 1997, pp. 53–59. In the case of dates on papyri, however, we must consider the time it took for information about events in Rome to reach Egypt (see C. Préaux, *Trébonien Galle et Hostilianus*, "Aegyptus", 32, 1952, pp. 152–157). According to Michael Peachin (*Roman Imperial Titulature and Chronology, AD 235–284*, Amsterdam 1990, p. 34), Hostilian died "ca 24 June/30 July 251".

In 251, Trebonianus Gallus did not have a wife by his side, hence the idea of creating an ‘imperial’ splendor around the deceased spouse of the new ruler and mother of the young co-emperor. This was not only a way to neutralize the disconcertingly high status of *Augusta* Herennia Etruscilla but also a tradition of elevating, and even deifying, members of the new emperor’s family who died before his proclamation. During the reign of Titus, in 80/81, his sister, Flavia Domitilla the Younger²⁰⁰, who died before their father Vespasian ascended to power in 69, was deified. Similarly, during the reign of Domitian, probably after 90, his and Titus’s mother, Flavia Domitilla the Elder²⁰¹, who also passed away before her husband’s proclamation, was deified. Under Trajan, around 113, his father and namesake, who presumably died before his son’s proclamation, was deified²⁰².

However, a particularly intriguing example, occurring slightly later than the reign of Trebonianus Gallus, is the *consecratio* of Mariniana, the wife of Valerian and mother of Gallienus. Mariniana died before her husband’s proclamation in 253²⁰³. It has recently been discovered²⁰⁴ that Valerian already had a second wife at that time, Cornelia Gallonia²⁰⁵. Thus, Valerian, a trusted confidant and avenger of Trebonianus Gallus, arranged for the deification of his deceased former wife, even though he was in another relationship when assuming power. There is no shortage of precedents for elevating deceased wives or other family members, and this practice continued into the mid-third century.

The idea of honoring a deceased wife could have been suggested to Trebonianus Gallus by the propagandistic concept of *domus divina*, which posits the existence of a model: emperor – empress – young co-ruling son. The widow of the predecessor, namely Herennia Etruscilla, and her son Hostilian, somewhat disrupted this scheme. Therefore, the elevation of Afinia Gemina Baebiana would be consistent.

It follows that it is possible that in the second half of the year 251 (following the arrival of Trebonianus Gallus in Rome), the remains of the recently deceased Afina Geminia Baebiana were intended to be transferred to the Ludovisi sarcophagus.

²⁰⁰ D. Kienast, W. Eck, M. Heil, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, p. 107.

²⁰¹ Ibidem, p. 103.

²⁰² Ibidem, p. 119 (“vor Okt. 97[?] Gest”).

²⁰³ Ibidem, p. 207.

²⁰⁴ See B. Girotti, *Cornelia Gallonia Augusta, seconda moglie di Valeriano: un contributo epigrafico ad un problema storiografico?*, “*Epigraphica*”, 66, 2004, pp. 365–368; R. Zucca, *Valeriano e la sua famiglia nell’epigrafia della Sardegna*, in *Epigrafia di confine, confine dell’epigrafia*, ed. M.G. Bertinelli Angeli, A. Donati, Faenza 2004, pp. 347–370; M. Christol, *Gallien, Claude et Aurélien*, “*Historiae Augustae Colloquium Nanceiense*”, *Atti dei Convegni sulla Historia Augusta XII*, ed. C. Bertrand-Dagenbach, F. Chausson, Bari 2014, pp. 159–183, esp. pp. 171–172.

²⁰⁵ A somewhat different situation occurred during the reign of Philip the Arab when his father, Marinianus (*PIR*² I 407), was deified, although he died during his son’s reign; the *consecratio* of Marinianus may also have had an exceptional nature, see D. Kienast, W. Eck, M. Heil, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, p. 191: “danach nur (?) in Philippopolis als Gott verehrt (*IGR* III 1199f.). Wohl keine *consecratio* durch den Senat”.

Could this even be evidence of her planned, though undocumented (an *argumentum ex silentio!*), deification? It is conceivable that the inscription on the sarcophagus lid was not carved but painted, with the intention of altering it once she became *diva*. However, such speculation ventures too far into conjecture²⁰⁶.

The complex situation in the year 251 lends itself to the concept of elevating the deceased wife of Trebonianus Gallus. Given that the act of elevation is typically carried out by rulers who glorify their deceased in a somewhat soldierly manner, with a touch of military subtlety, albeit in a customary fashion where women in antiquity are often depicted as someone's 'daughters', 'wives', or 'mothers'.

We can see that Afina Geminia Baebiana was portrayed as the wife of a triumphant politician who had made peace with defeated and humiliated barbarians (as evidenced by scenes of weeping barbarians beneath a *tropaion* and the handing over of hostages). She was also the mother of a brave soldier who vanquishes 'Germans' and 'Persians'. All of this, of course, is—putting it mildly – an exaggeration, but such is the nature of imperial propaganda; after all, according to its principles, Alexander Severus was also supposed to have triumphed in Rome as the conqueror (*sic!*) of Ardashir (*HA, vit. Al. Sev.* 56.1; Festus 22.1)²⁰⁷.

Returning now to the stylistic considerations following on from the entirety of the preceding analysis, it is pertinent to note that the bellicose tableau adorning the Ludovisi sarcophagus, originating – to simplify – in the mid-third century, presents a somewhat minor anomaly. Roughly twenty Roman sarcophagi featuring battle scenes have survived; however, they predominantly date from the period spanning circa 160 to around 200/210 (at most, until c. 220)²⁰⁸. Among the most renowned and stylistically akin to the Ludovisi sarcophagus are: *sarcofago di Ammendola* (c. 170) from the Capitoline Museum (inv. S 213) and *sarcofago di Portonaccio* (c. 180/190) from the Palazzo Massimo alle Terme (inv. 112327). Hence, the overtly martial iconography of the Ludovisi sarcophagus can be traced back to models from several decades prior, notably to the times of the Marcomannic Wars (166–180). The reference to the sepulchral martial art of the era of Marcus Aurelius, is particularly significant when reviewing that period wherein a brutal struggle ensued with European barbarians, Eastern Parthians, and, additionally, an outbreak of pestilence; all of which signifies a striking resemblance to reports from the years 251–253.

²⁰⁶ It is worth considering how many people, who they were, and how frequently individuals could view such a sarcophagus situated in the imperial family tomb. In other words, how extensive was the propagandistic reach of the depictions carved on the sarcophagus. However, this issue would require a separate study, referencing general sepulchral practices.

²⁰⁷ D. Kienast, W. Eck, M. Heil, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, p. 171.

²⁰⁸ B. Andreae, *Motivgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den römischen Schlachtsarkophagen*, Berlin 1956; B.E. Borg, *Crisis and Ambition*, pp. 182–186; S.E. Beal, *Roman Battle Sarcophagi: An Analysis of Composition as a Reflection of Changing Imperial Styles and Production*, MA thesis, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati 2016.

I noted at the outset, that stylistically the Ludovisi sarcophagus is preferred by some to be placed in the times of Gallienus, circa 260. Perhaps the idea of honoring Afinia Gemina Baebiana arose at the beginning of the reign of her husband and son. The execution of the sarcophagus may have been considered as part of a new tomb for the emerging imperial family, anticipating the celebration of a decade of rule and the commencement of a *Saeculum novum*, which could have taken slightly longer. This process may have even extended into the period following the deaths of Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian, as their daughter and the sister of the latter, Vibia Galla²⁰⁹, **may** have continued the construction of the family mausoleum. During the relatively brief reign of Aemilianus (VIII–IX/X 253), both of his predecessors were subjected to *damnatio memoriae*, but under Valerian, a trusted collaborator of Trebonianus Gallus (see Zos. 1.28.3), they were accorded *consecratio*. Consequently, the work on the sarcophagus could have continued into the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus, with its stylistic elements heralding the onset of new tastes characteristic of a new era. While such conjectures may appear speculative, they are necessary only to the extent that we are concerned with the stylistic precision of dating within the approximate span of ten years between around 251 and around 260.

In conclusion, although the iconography of the Ludovisi sarcophagus aligns admirably with the possibility of it containing the remains of Afinia Gemina Baebiana (indeed, it seems to correspond uniquely to her), it may be disconcerting that a woman who left no trace in history was buried in something so splendid²¹⁰. However, such doubt can easily be dispelled. It is necessary to perceive the sarcophagus not merely as the resting place of an ephemeral and insignificant woman, but rather as a product of imperial propaganda serving the interests of Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian. These individuals, hailing from the social advancement of the decurial families of Perusia²¹¹ and Beneventum, were *homines novi* in the Senate. Additionally, they grappled with accusations of treason against Decius and the killing of Hostilian. With such a starting point, and against the backdrop of struggles against barbarians and Persians, a tomb is erected commensurate with ambition, at least, of a decade-long reign and the impending *Saeculum novum*.

²⁰⁹ Note that Iunius Veldumnianus, *cos.* 272, may be the son of Vibia Galla, as indicated by his rare name attested at that time only within the family of Trebonianus Gallus (*PLRE* I Veldumnianus). However, see above (fn. 76 and 77) for doubts about whether Vibia Galla was the daughter of the emperor.

²¹⁰ According to the *Edict of Diocletian on maximum prices*, Proconnesian marble (33.18, M.H. Crawford, J.M. Reynolds, *The Aezani copy of the Price Edict*, “*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*”, 34, 1979, pp. 163–210, no. 31.18: *Proconnesi*) is the cheapest (maximum 40 denarii per foot), while the most expensive is Lacedaemonian marble (see *Diokletians Preisedikt*, ed. S. Lauffer, Berlin 1971: 33.2, [*Lace*]daemonii; maximum 2<50> denarii per foot); thus, material costs were not high. Furthermore, the emperor is a wealthy man (apologies for the banality of this statement).

²¹¹ *PIR*² V 579 (esp. p. 305: *Sane neque pater neque proavus tum senatores fuerunt, ergo non e gente nobili ortus est*). See also: *PIR*² 584 (the father of Trebonianus Gallus), *PIR*² 550 (the great-grandfather of Trebonianus Gallus).

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²¹² I do not include epigraphic and numismatic publications because the abbreviations used in this article (e.g., *CIL*, *RIC*) unambiguously identify them.

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