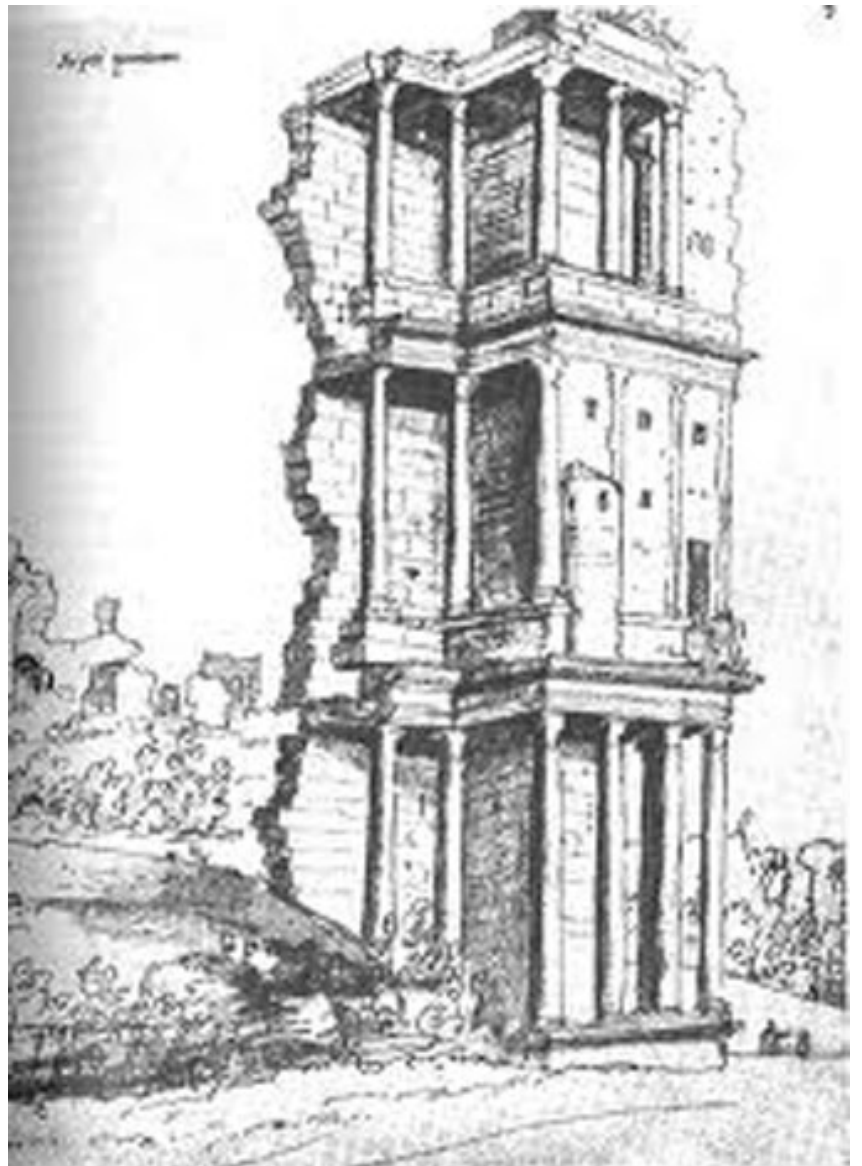


Water as Imperial Propaganda



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1. Introduction

A lot has been written about the architectural aspects of water buildings in ancient Rome, such as fountains and aqueducts. These structures have very obvious practical uses: they were intended to bring water to the populace. That is not the end of their story though. Aside from their practical function, the buildings can also be seen as part of the imperial propaganda machine.

Water as part of imperial propaganda did not receive its due attention for a long time. Until recently, it was only mentioned on the side and was never the main focus of any scientific work. Scholarship focused on individual monuments or architectural typologies, as can be found in Wolfram Letzner's book on Roman springs and *nymphaea* in the Roman West.¹ Susann Lusnia did focus on propaganda in her 2004 article on the Septizodium², but she did not look any further than that single monument. In 2011, Brenda Longfellow wrote *Roman Imperialism and Civic Patronage. Form, Meaning and Ideology in Monumental Fountain Complexes*.³ This book extensively treats the ideology behind monumental water complexes. Longfellow however has not written much about the reason why imperial ideology incorporated water. Other types of Roman monuments that were related to water, such as the famous Porta Maggiore, are not even mentioned. Robert Coates-Stephens has devoted a book to the Porta Maggiore, but he in turn looks more to the architectural features than to the ideological ones.⁴

In this bachelor's thesis all this literature will be incorporated whilst trying to answer the following question: in what ways did the Roman emperors from the 1st to the 5th century A.D. use water in their imperial propaganda?

Taking the Imperial period between the 1st and 5th century A.D. into consideration only, has been a practical choice. Although wealthy families did advocate themselves during the Republican period, they were restricted in doing so by the other senatorial families. The emperors' position in society, elevated above everyone else, allowed them to use every means

¹ Letzner, Wolfram. 1990. *Römische Brunnen und Nymphaea in der westlichen Reichshälfte*. Charybdis Bd. 2. Münster: Lit.

² Lusnia, Susann S. 2004. "Urban Planning and Sculptural Display in Severan Rome: Reconstructing the Septizodium and Its Role in Dynastic Politics." *American Journal of Archaeology* 108.4, 517-544.

³ Longfellow, Brenda. 2011. *Roman Imperialism and Civic Patronage. Form, Meaning and Ideology in Monumental Fountain Complexes*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

⁴ Coates-Stephens, Robert. 2004. *Porta Maggiore: monument and landscape. Archaeology and topography in the southern Esquiline from the Late Republican period to the present*. Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider.

possible to broadcast themselves and their achievements, water amongst them. Why water of all things could be used in this way, will be discussed later on.

The choice for having my research end with the 5th century A.D. was also a practical one. There are two main reasons for this. First of all, from 330 on Rome was no longer the capital of the Roman Empire. From then on, Constantinople was to be the home of the emperor. The populace of Rome was already declining by that time and without the emperor there, the city started to become less important. This meant that Rome was no longer the place to be when an emperor wanted to advertise himself.⁵

The second reason is the destruction of the aqueducts. Whilst the aqueducts supplied around 700 watering basins, 500 public fountains and 130 service reservoirs during the time of Augustus⁶, giving Rome the title of *Regina Aquarum*,⁷ this changed when the Visigoths came in 410. Aqueducts, especially the parts that ran above ground, were an easy target for invaders. Therefore, parts of them were destroyed by the Visigoths, and again by the Vandals in 455 and by the Germani in 476. Earthquakes, one in 394 and one in 557, a flood in 589 and the Byzantine-Gothic war that lasted from A.D. 535 to 553 did the rest.⁸

Since I have chosen to focus on the 1st to the 5th century A.D., all dates in this thesis will be A.D. unless explicitly mentioned otherwise.

I am aware of the fact that the Romans themselves did not have a word for propaganda, although propaganda is derived from the Latin *propagare*, which means ‘to spread’ or ‘to procreate’. The *Etymological Dictionary*⁹ shows that the word was first used in 1622 by pope Gregory XV who set up a new congregation of cardinals, which he named the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*, or Congregation for the Spreading of the Faith. Since I am applying a term to a period of time in which this term did not yet exist, it is necessary for me to explain here what I include in this term and what not.

When I use the term ‘propaganda’, I mean ‘the self-advertisement of a person and/or his deeds’. Of course that does not mean that I only count the coins that were minted by the actual emperors themselves, the term ‘self-advertisement’ includes all activities acknowledged, regulated, approved of and realised by the subject. Also, ‘propaganda’ has a distinctly negative connotation nowadays. I hereby explicitly distance myself from this

⁵ Venturi F. and Sanfilippo M., 1996. *Fountains of Rome*. New York: The Vendome Press, 29.

⁶ Plin. *HN*. 36.24.121.

⁷ Venturi and Sanfilippo, 1996, 17.

⁸ *Idem*, 21-29.

⁹ Van Veen, P.A.F. and Sijs, N. van der. 1997. *Van Dale Etymologisch Woordenboek*. Utrecht/Antwerpen: Van Dale Lexicografie, 702.

connotation. When the term ‘propaganda’ is used in this thesis, it is used in a neutral way, without any personal sentiments attached.

The primary sources used for this thesis mostly consist of inscriptions and numismatics. Unfortunately, literary primary sources on the monuments that are being discussed in this thesis are scanty. Water is usually mentioned on the side if at all, so only small bits and pieces of text can be used. The only primary source dedicated to water is Frontinus’ *De Aquaeductu Urbis Romae*.¹⁰ Unfortunately, the text is all about the water supply provided by the aqueducts, specific structures that would have been supplied by the aqueducts are rarely mentioned. There is no mention of any ideological vision behind the creation of any monument supplied with water. Cassius Dio is a useful source on several dates and rumours associated with Septimius Severus¹¹ and Pliny the Elder has written on the amount of structures supplied by the aqueducts as well as the cost of the Aqua Claudia-Anio Novus.¹² No literary sources have been found that describe what the emperor wanted any of the monuments to mean to the common people, or what the people actually felt about them.¹³

Many secondary sources have been used that describe the current archaeological state of the monuments discussed. As stated before, many of these sources mention only the archaeological features of a monument, not the ideological ones.

In order to understand which role water played in imperial propaganda, it is necessary first to discuss how imperial patronage worked in ancient Rome, as well as to explain why water could have played a role in propaganda. That will both be discussed in the next chapter. The three following chapters will discuss fountains, *nymphaea* and (parts of) aqueducts respectively. In these chapters I will discuss what means emperors had to using water in their imperial propaganda. I will not only discuss the monuments themselves and the impression they made, but also the media through which the emperor could focus attention to these monuments such as inscriptions and coins.

¹⁰ Frontinus, *De Aquaeductu Urbis Romae* (translation : R.H. Rodgers, 2004, *Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries no. 42*, Cambridge University Press).

¹¹ Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana* (translation: E. Cary, 1927, *Loeb Classical Library*, Vol. IX, Harvard).

¹² Pliny the Elder, *Historia Naturalis*. At: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Plin.+Nat.+toc&redirect=true>. Accessed 22 March 2012.

¹³ It is also difficult if not impossible to guess to what extent the emperor was personally involved in the planning and building of the monuments. This same problem also occurs when numismatic evidence is discussed. It is however safe to assume that the emperor and his staff followed a general imperial ideological policy.

2. Imperial Patronage and the Meaning of Water as Propaganda

2.1 Patronage and benefactions

During the time of the Roman Republic the local elite, in Rome's case its senatorial ranking families, were the main benefactors of the city. They would, if the Senate allowed it, build privately funded monuments on public land that were intended to be seen and used by the entire community. Of course, the benefactors made sure that the public knew whom they had to thank, for example by attaching their name to a building they had funded.¹⁴

This same system was continued in the Roman imperial world, except that now the emperor was the supreme patron and therefore also the supreme benefactor to the nation and to its capital in particular.¹⁵ This image of supreme patron and benefactor, first created by Julius Caesar and perfected by Augustus, helped maintain the emperor's authority and legitimised his claim to power. Imperial benefactions included, but were not limited to, tax discounts, renovations of existing public buildings, food giveaways and new public building projects.¹⁶

New building projects were without a doubt designed to fit into the current imperial ideological policy. These projects were the perfect opportunity for an emperor to leave his mark on a city and to make sure that its citizens were constantly reminded of the powers that be. Placing an eye-catching building on a spot where it was bound to be seen by a lot of passers-by was a perfect way for the emperors to show their presence in Rome, in life as well as in death. But why would an emperor prefer the building of a fountain over for example a basilica or temple? The answer to that question lies in the many extra connotations water provided to the Roman people.

¹⁴ Glaser, F. 2000. "Fountains and Nymphaea." In: O. Wikander, ed., *Handbook of Ancient Water Technology*. Leiden: Brill, 413.

¹⁵ Longfellow, 2011, 5-7.

¹⁶ Idem, 20.

2.2 *The meaning of water*

The Roman emperors were not the first to build water monuments that were not simply meant to be an addition to the existing water supply. This practice started with the Hellenistic monarchs, who adorned large cities such as Pergamon with a number of fountains that combined water with sculptural design. The Romans were however the first to apply this on a large scale and with great attention to placement.¹⁷ Monumental fountains and *nymphaea* would be placed in such a manner that they would immediately catch the attention of passers-by, either by the sound of the water or by the reflection of the light. Fountains, *nymphaea* and aqueducts would also catch the eye by their grand decoration in marble or travertine and in some cases, their spectacular sculptural design.¹⁸

Fountains were of course more essential to the population than a basilica or temple in terms of basic needs. But other than the necessity to provide the populace with enough to drink, water also played a key part in Roman culture. The Romans were firm believers in bathing and the idea that washing was the key to good health. This is part of the reason why so many emperors built great bath complexes.¹⁹ By making sure that the entire populace had access to essential structures such as baths and public fountains, the emperor could show his people that he was genuinely concerned with their welfare. One of the reasons why water could have been part of imperial propaganda is thus that it brought an image of a kind and caring emperor across.

Water was also key to Roman culture because of the river Tiber. The Tiber was essential to the Roman lifestyle, as it provided the Romans with water that could be used for many purposes, such as drinking, washing and plumbing. Importantly, it also allowed for trading by river and even by sea.²⁰ Water was thus intricately bound to the Roman culture as a whole, a symbol of civilisation.

Another possible reason why water monuments could be so effective that pertains to the river Tiber, has been suggested by Venturi and Sanfilippo in 1996. They believed that it might have something to do with the traditional lore on the beginnings of Rome. When slaves tried to toss the babies Romulus and Remus into the Tiber river as ordered by the boys' uncle Amulius, they were prevented from doing so because the seasonal spate had flooded the region between the Capitol, Palatine and Aventine hills. The slaves could therefore not reach

¹⁷ Longfellow, 2011, 11-13.

¹⁸ Idem, 2.

¹⁹ Venturi and Sanfilippo, 1996, 24.

²⁰ Plin. *HN*. 3.54.

the main river currents and decided to leave the twins on the banks in a basket, thinking that the water would take the basket along with it when it receded. The future founder of Rome was thus saved by water and so the city's origins were inextricably intertwined with it.²¹

While this is a possible explanation as most Romans would definitely have known this lore, it is however less likely that this would be in the forefront of their minds each time they saw a fountain, aqueduct, lake or even the Tiber river. Another, more compelling notion has been made by Longfellow: "Roman urban fountains, with their seemingly endless supply of freshwater, stood as testaments to the Roman prowess for harnessing and controlling nature."²²

The Romans believed themselves to be opposite to nature. By building aqueducts, Roman civilisation gained a victory over this usually uncontrollable nature, forcing it to abide by their will.²³ This was an achievement worth showing off in style. Fountains were even better, since fountains not only proved that the Romans could control nature, but also that they could make nature do something incredible, which it would not have done on its own: defying gravity. Fountains therefore showcased the almost divine power of their patron.

Other elements to water that would have made it suitable for use in propaganda, are the fact that water in huge quantities was a luxury good and also that the use of water showcased peacefulness as well as Roman imperial strength in the region.²⁴

Most people could get the amount of water they needed on a daily basis from a public fountain, but not much more than that. The wealthy could afford to buy a grant that allowed them to tap water directly from the distribution line into their homes.²⁵ This is why fountains were originally found in the gardens of the wealthy Romans only. When emperors started to build large decorative fountains on public property, they were in fact bestowing upon the common people a private luxury that could only be enjoyed by the very rich before.²⁶ As such, by employing water in a monument, emperors could show their subjects that they

²¹ Venturi and Sanfilippo, 1996, 11.

²² Longfellow, 2011, 1.

²³ Mays, Larry W., 2010 (1). "A Brief History of Water Technology." In: L.W. Mays, ed., *Ancient Water Technologies*. Springer: Dordrecht, 117.

²⁴ Brill's New Pauly: "Waterworks." At: http://brillonline.nl.proxy.library.uu.nl/subscriber/uid=3828/entry?entry=bnp_e12209220. Accessed April 10, 2012.

²⁵ Frontinus. *Aq.* 105-7.

²⁶ Brill's New Pauly: "Waterworks." At: http://brillonline.nl.proxy.library.uu.nl/subscriber/uid=3828/entry?entry=bnp_e12209220. Accessed April 10, 2012.

intended to make the lives of the people more luxurious, while at the same time making a statement on their own wealth.

The large imperial fountains and *nymphaea* in Rome were supplied by the aqueducts. However, these aqueducts themselves were rather vulnerable to enemy attack. They could easily be interrupted or destroyed.²⁷ As such, the lavish use of water for fountains and *nymphaea* signified (peaceful) Roman control over the immediate region. This peace could only be maintained by a strong emperor with command over strong legions. The water from the aqueducts thus showed off the strength of the Roman Empire as a whole and that of the emperor in particular.

²⁷ Dodge, H. 2000. “‘Greater than the Pyramids’: the Water Supply of Ancient Rome.’ In J. Coulston and H. Dodge, eds., *Ancient Rome: The Archaeology of the Eternal City*. Oxford: Oxford University School of Archaeology, 170.

3. Fountains

In the previous chapter we have explored why fountains could have been part of the imperial propaganda program. It goes without saying that not every fountain was intended to be part of this propaganda. This chapter will concern itself with two of the largest, most famous and most spectacular imperial fountains that were built in Rome between the first and fifth century A.D.: The Flavian Meta Sudans and the Fountain of Domitian.

In the case of the Flavian Meta Sudans, this chapter will look beyond the Flavian emperors, to both Augustus and later emperors such as Alexander Severus and will show that this monument did not lose any of its strength in terms of imperial propaganda, even after the last Flavian emperor, Domitian, had been killed. By contrast, the destruction of the Fountain of Domitian can be seen as a propagandistic act by one of his successors, Trajan.

3.1 Flavian Meta Sudans

The Flavian dynasty built many great monuments, one of them being the Flavian Amphitheater that is now called the Colosseum, that can be seen on the center of the coin minted under the reign of Titus in Figure 1. On this coin two other monuments can be seen as well, a portico to the right and on the left, standing proudly all the way up to the third storey of the Colosseum: the Flavian Meta Sudans. It was placed close to a number of busy roads, one of them being the Via Sacra. It's location has been marked red on the map of Ancient Rome that has been added to this thesis as an appendix. The Meta Sudans was also close to the Forum Romanum. This would have made sure that the monument was seen by a lot of people on a daily basis.²⁸



Figure 1: Obverse of Titus' Amphitheater-Meta Sudans coin. At: www.the-colosseum.net.

The Meta Sudans was a 17 meter high cone with a lead pipe in it that led water to the top of the cone, from where it would flow down the sides, hence it's name, which means 'the sweating cone'.²⁹ It is likely that statues depicting nymphs and sea creatures were once placed in niches cut out in the lower part of the cone.³⁰ This would have increased the impact of the fountain as a whole, and would have invited passersby to stop what they were doing for a

²⁸ Longfellow, 2011, 37.

²⁹ Venturi and Sanfilippo, 1996, 21.

³⁰ Longfellow, 2011, 35.

moment and take a closer look. Its size and marble finishing³¹ are clear indicators of the monumental nature of the project and so is its Augustan legacy.

Before the Flavian Meta Sudans, there was an Augustan Meta Sudans, which was burnt in the great fire in 64 A.D. The fountain was built on the junction of four or five of Rome's fourteen regions and was also positioned close to the birthplace of Augustus.³² The remains of this earlier version have been discovered beneath the Flavian Meta Sudans, indicating that the Flavians positioned their Meta Sudans in such a way that it would draw a clear parallel to Augustus.³³ As a new imperial dynasty, it would have been very important for the Flavians to make sure that the people felt that the Flavian reign was legitimate. One way of doing this, is identifying oneself with an illustrious forbear, which in this case would have been Augustus. By building a Meta Sudans alike in appearance on the exact spot where the Augustan Meta Sudans once stood, the Flavians made the link between them and Augustus immediately clear.³⁴

Another way in which the Flavians legitimised their dynasty was by demonising their predecessor, Nero. They made sure to accuse Nero of caring only about himself and not about his people whenever they could. They also made sure that they themselves in contrast would be seen as caring emperors, devoted to their people, by returning to the people the land Nero 'stole' from them when he built his Domus Aurea after the fire in 64.³⁵ The area where the Augustan Meta Sudans once stood, was part of the area that Nero claimed for himself and which became public property under Vespasian again.³⁶ As such, the Meta Sudans was a public monument intended to show off the generosity and sense of justice of the Flavian emperors, especially in comparison to the emperor that had reigned before them.

The coin type shown in Figure 1, the Meta Sudans-Amphitheater type, was minted by Titus and Domitian both. However, by the time Titus issued the coin the Meta Sudans had not yet been completed.³⁷ This suggests that the Meta Sudans along with the Amphitheater were intended to be a set of Flavian landmarks from the moment they were commissioned.

³¹ Letzner, 1990, 461.

³² Venturi and Sanfilippo, 1996, 21.

³³ Longfellow, 2011, 23.

³⁴ *Idem*, 32.

³⁵ Boyle, A.J. 2003. "Introduction: Reading Flavian Rome." In: A.J. Boyle and W.J. Dominik, eds., *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*. Leiden: Brill, 29.

³⁶ *Idem*, 4.

³⁷ Longfellow, 2011, 42;
Letzner, 1990, 461.

It is easy to see why Domitian would have re-used this type on the obverse on one of his coins, as can be seen in Figure 2 below. After all, he was part of the Flavian dynasty and as such the monument was intended to glorify him also, not just his by now deceased brother. It would also have shown continuity in the Flavian reign.³⁸ The fact that a similar coin type was also used by Alexander Severus and Gordian III many years later, is more unusual at first glance.



Figure 2: Domitian's Amphitheater-Meta Sudans, obverse. At: <http://numismatics.org>.

In A.D. 223, six years after the Amphitheater was struck and damaged by lightning, it was repaired and rededicated by Alexander Severus.³⁹ In order to commemorate the event, Alexander Severus had coins struck that are very similar to the coin type Titus and Domitian used. The coin in Figure 3 shows

the Amphitheater with Alexander Severus and some of his attendants to its left. The Meta Sudans, barely visible, can be seen depicted behind Alexander Severus due to its length.

Whilst the choice of coin type itself makes sense, the presence of the Meta Sudans is not really required as it had nothing to do with the rededication of the Amphitheater. Its presence right behind the emperor makes this part of the coin look rather crowded and it does not help to bring the emperor himself into focus. The experienced personnel of the mint must have known this and still they, most likely in collaboration with the emperor or one of his staff, decided that the Meta Sudans should have its spot on the coin. This clearly shows that the Meta Sudans had become a part of the general imperial propaganda, and that it showed to the people the greatness of all emperors and the imperial legacy, rather than being a monument for just the Flavian emperors. By including the Meta Sudans on his coin, Alexander Severus could show his people that he was the legitimate imperial authority, and that he would strive to achieve greatness, as his legendary predecessors had done.



Figure 3: Alexander Severus' Amphitheater-Meta Sudans. At: www.the-colosseum.net.

It now makes more sense that Gordian III would have used a similar coin type as well. In his case, the meaning of the coin type is purely symbolic as he did not restore any of the

³⁸ Boyle, 2003, 12-3.

³⁹ Longfellow, 2011, 43.

monuments displayed on the coin in Figure 4.⁴⁰ This again shows that the Meta Sudans-Amphitheater combination was a very potent one in terms of imperial propaganda.

Interesting to note is that none of the four coins just showed displayed the names of the monuments themselves. As coins had the potential to travel across the entire Roman world, this can mean two things. Either the coins were specifically intended for the citizens of Rome and as such it would not have been necessary to write the names of the monuments on the coin as these people would have without a doubt seen them before and recognise them even without their names added, or the coins were intended for an audience from outside Rome as well, but the monuments were promoted in such a way that it was believed that the audience would recognise the monuments, even if they had never visited Rome in their life.



Figure 4: Gordian's Amphitheater-Meta Sudans. At: www.the-colosseum.net.

3.2 Fountain of Domitian

The remains of the Fountain of Domitian are located beneath the colonnaded palace of the Knights of Malta. It was set into the wall known as the Terrace of Domitian, close to the northwest exedra of the Forum of Augustus, between the Quirinal Hill and the Capitoline Hill, north of the Forum of Augustus.⁴¹ A blue dot marks its location on the map of Rome on the last page of this thesis. Unfortunately, not much is known about it as it has only recently been recognised as a fountain. Since it is a very good example of a large scale fountain intended to impress before anything else, it will be discussed here.

What we do know is that it was part of a forum Domitian was building in the place where Trajan would later on build his Forum and Markets and the only part that was completed to the point where it was operational when Domitian was murdered in 96.⁴² The fountain was two storeys high and 26 meters wide and included a water staircase in a rectangular niche with a semi-circular niche above it.⁴³ The upper niche probably had a large statue of a German Chatti in it. This would have reminded the viewer of Domitian's victory over the Chatti in 83/4.⁴⁴ Water from the Aqua Marcia would have flowed through the upper

⁴⁰ Longfellow, 2011, 44.

⁴¹ Idem, 51.

⁴² Packer, James E. 2003. "Plurima et Amplissima Opera: Parsing Flavian Rome." In: A.J. Boyle and W.J. Dominik, eds., *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*. Leiden: Brill, 176.

⁴³ Longfellow, 2011, 52.

⁴⁴ Boyle, 2003, 43.

niche first, then came down the lower niche where it cascaded down the water staircase.⁴⁵ As this made a lot of noise, it would certainly have attracted the attention of the passers-by, if the shimmer of sunlight on the water hadn't done so already. Taking into account its size also, this fountain must have been meant as an eye catcher above anything else.

The fountain may have also drawn the attention to the Quirinal Hill.⁴⁶ In order to build his forum, Domitian had to cut away a large part of this hill. By locating his fountain in such a way that the work that had been done to make the forum habitable could clearly be seen, Domitian made sure that the people would recognise the huge amount of work and planning that had gone into the project.⁴⁷

Brenda Longfellow has suggested that the fountain may have served as a new monumental terminal fountain, or *mostra*, for the Capitoline branch of the Aqua Marcia.⁴⁸ By creating this *mostra* on a spot where many people would have been able to see it, "Domitian could cast himself as a founder of Rome, providing life's necessities where needed."⁴⁹ James E. Packer has expressed a similar opinion in his 2003 article on Flavian building projects.⁵⁰

Peter Aicher would have disagreed with both of them. In his 1993 article on *mostre*, he states that a *mostra* is specifically intended to highlight the achievement of having built an aqueduct.⁵¹ No matter how much water a fountain or *nymphaeum* uses, it is generally not meant to celebrate the aqueduct specifically.⁵² As there is no indication that the fountain was meant to show off the Aqua Marcia, it is unlikely that it was meant as a *mostra*. Either way, the fountain would have made a great impression on passers-by and would have showed off Domitian's imperial, technical and military prowess.

The Fountain of Domitian had been operational for just over ten years when it was destroyed by Trajan in order for him to build his Forum and Markets.⁵³ Even though at first glance it might not seem that way, the destruction of the Fountain can also be seen as part of Trajan's imperial propaganda.⁵⁴

⁴⁵ Longfellow, 2011, 53.

⁴⁶ Packer, 2003, 176.

⁴⁷ Longfellow, 2011, 52.

⁴⁸ Idem, 54.

⁴⁹ Idem, 56.

⁵⁰ Packer, 2003, 176.

⁵¹ Aicher, 1993, 339.

⁵² In the same way, Aicher rejects the Septizodium, Nymphaeum Alexandri and Nymphaeum of Nero that will be discussed later on as possible *mostre*.

⁵³ Longfellow, 2011, 32.

⁵⁴ A similar case will be discussed at the end of paragraph 5.2, where the relationship between Vespasian and Nero will be explored.

When Domitian was killed in 96, his memory was condemned to *damnatio memoriae*.⁵⁵ This meant that he was so ill-liked, that every trace of his existence was erased from the public sphere. When Trajan became emperor in 98, it was important for him to show that he was nothing like Domitian and that he would be an honourable emperor. He thus had to distance himself from Domitian and one way of doing this was by demolishing Domitian's building projects, including the parts of Domitian's intended new forum that already had been built. They made way for Trajan's own monuments: his Forum and Markets.⁵⁶ Seen in this light, the destruction of the Fountain of Domitian was part of Trajan's propaganda, in that it showed Trajan as the legitimate emperor who intended to honour his subjects in a way that Domitian, practically his predecessor, had not.

⁵⁵ Boyle, 2003, 14.

⁵⁶ Longfellow, 2011, 52.

4. Nymphaea

Originally, A *nymphaeum* was a monument dedicated to the nymphs. From the first century A.D. onwards, it came to mean a monumental well, often fed by an aqueduct, with statues in niches.⁵⁷ A monument of this type often had a grotto-like feel. Of the monuments that ancient historical sources identify as *nymphaea* in Rome, two can be identified without a doubt: the Septizodium and the Nymphaeum Alexandri.⁵⁸ These two will both be discussed in this chapter, but first attention will be paid to Nero's Nymphaeum. Not as much is known about Nero's Nymphaeum as about either of the other two, but since it is significantly bigger, it is worth mentioning here.

4.1 Nero's Nymphaeum

Nero's Nymphaeum still measures an astonishing 167 meters and is well over 11 meters high. It consisted of seven large niches with smaller niches in between, both framed by columns.⁵⁹ What we can tell about the niches themselves is that they were alternately semi-circular and rectangular and that water would have flown through them.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, no decoration remains so we can't tell for sure whether the niches were clad in marble or whether they contained statues. With a building project of this size though, it is definitely likely that it would have been done up extravagantly.

Nero's Nymphaeum was part of his *Domus Aurea*, his personal villa.⁶¹ The entire complex extended to the large area between the Palatine, Esquiline and Caelian Hills.⁶² The nymphaeum was built against the podium designed for the Temple for the deified Claudius, at the edge of the gardens belonging to the *Domus Aurea*, on the north side of the Caelian Hill.⁶³ It is marked yellow on the map of Rome (Appendix I). The Temple for the deified Claudius is also shown on the map: it is the square building directly north of the *nymphaeum*.

Nero's Nymphaeum was built right next to the Via Caelimontana, the road crossing the Caelian Hill. To passers-by, it would have been impossible not to notice the enormous

⁵⁷ Brill's New Pauly: "Nymphaeum." At: http://brillonline.nl.proxy.library.uu.nl/subscriber/uid=3828/entry?entry=bnp_brill0900100. Accessed 11 April 2012.

⁵⁸ Longfellow, 2011, 163.

⁵⁹ Idem, 29-30.

⁶⁰ Letzner, 1990, 422.

⁶¹ Ball, Larry F. 2003. *The Domus Aurea and the Roman Architectural Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 7.

⁶² Idem, 2.

⁶³ Aicher, 1993, 341.

nymphaeum on the side of the road and be awed by it. It would also have reminded them of the greatness and the imperial powers of the Julio-Claudian House, to which both Nero and the deified Claudius belonged.⁶⁴

Nero never got to complete the Temple for the deified Claudius, as he was murdered in A.D. 68. The temple was finished by Vespasian, but he changed the original building plan and it is unclear whether the *nymphaeum* has ever been operational or even finished.⁶⁵

4.2 The Septizodium

The Septizodium was built in 202 or 203 on the south-east side of the Palatine, facing the Porta Capena where the Via Appia entered the city.⁶⁶ A green dot marks its exact location on the map of Rome that can be found as an appendix to this thesis. Between the Septizodium and the Via Appia a large plaza was located that many people going to the fora would have passed through on a daily basis.⁶⁷ For foreigners coming into town by way of the Via Ostiensis, the almost 30 meters tall and 95 meters wide Septizodium would be one of the first things they would see as they entered the city through the Porta Capena.⁶⁸ Automatically, the Septizodium would draw their attention to the imperial palace located on top of the Palatine Hill. Thus they would straight away be impressed by two of Septimius Severus's building projects, as the extension of the palace to the south-east was Septimius's doing also.⁶⁹

Beside the Septizodium itself and the imperial palace, Septimius Severus made several more alterations to the area around the Palatine. He restored several aqueducts and baths and built his own bath complex, the *Thermae Severianae*. There are also indications that he was planning the construction of a new road.⁷⁰ All this seems to suggest that the entire south-east area of the Palatine was intended to glorify Septimius Severus and to show the people that he was leading them to prosperity. The Septizodium would have been the standout piece in all of this.

There are several reasons why Septimius Severus might have commissioned the Septizodium. Firstly there is Septimius Severus's *Decennalia*, the tenth anniversary of his imperial rule in

⁶⁴ Letzner, 1990, 421-2.

⁶⁵ Packer, 2003, 167-8.

⁶⁶ Longfellow, 2011, 166; Letzner, 1990, 448; Lusnia, 2004, 534/540.

⁶⁷ Venturi & Sanfilippo, 1994, 21.

⁶⁸ Lusnia, 2004, 526.

⁶⁹ Longfellow, 2011, 164-5.

⁷⁰ Lusnia, 2004, 517/535.

202.⁷¹ He had these celebrations coincide with the celebration of his victories in Parthia, which he had won in 198.⁷² The double festivities must have been organised on a grand scale. Based on what we can tell from the inscription on the Septizodium that will be discussed in full detail later on, the dedication date for the Septizodium must have been either 202 or 203, but 202 seems more likely.⁷³ This means that the monument was probably finished just in time for the great festivities that would have taken place in the area near the Septizodium. Due to its location, people would have been able to actually see the almost 30 meter high *nymphaeum* as they would be watching the races at the Circus Maximus that were part of the *Decennalia* celebration.⁷⁴

The appropriate way of celebrating a military victory was a triumphal procession, which passed along the Via Sacra.⁷⁵ The Septizodium was strategically placed on the side of the Via Sacra.⁷⁶ Any emperor holding a triumph (such as Septimius Severus himself did in 202) would have had to pass by the Septizodium. To the spectators at such an event, the monument would thus have spoken of the greatness and the military capacities of their emperor.

Secondly, it might have been part of his efforts in trying to get himself to be acknowledged as the rightful emperor after seizing the throne when the Antonine dynasty had ended.⁷⁷ In 195, two years after becoming emperor, Septimius Severus named himself the adopted son of Marcus Aurelius and the brother of Commodus, whom he deified.⁷⁸ By doing so, he made himself part of the Antonine dynasty leading back to Nerva. This meant that Septimius Severus could broadcast that he was the legitimate successor to Commodus, as he now had possession of an impressive imperial lineage. This broadcasting was done on the Septizodium itself. On the first-storey frieze a huge inscription was placed, that recalled Septimius Severus's Antonine genealogical lineage.⁷⁹ For example, it shows the link between Septimius Severus and Commodus: the latter is mentioned as '*divi Commodi frater*', or rather

⁷¹ Cass. Dio. 75.1.1-3.

⁷² Idem, 76.9-13.

⁷³ CIL VI 1032: *IMP. CAES. DIVI M. ANTONINI PII GERM. SARM. FIL. DIVI COMMODI FRATER DIVI ANTONINI PII NEP. DIVI HADRIANI PRONEP. DIVI TRAIANI PARTH. ABNEP. DIVI NERVAE [ADNEP] L. SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS PIUS PERTINAX AUG. ARAB. ADIAB. PARTH. MAX. PONT. MAX. TRIB. POT. XI IMP. XI COS. III P. P. ET IMP. CAES. M. AURELIUS ANTONINUS PIUS FELIX AUG. TRIB. POT. VI COS. FORTUNATISSIMUS NOBILISSIMUSQUE.*

⁷⁴ Longfellow, 2011, 182

⁷⁵ Brill's New Pauly: "Triumph, Triumphal Procession." At:

http://brillonline.nl.proxy.library.uu.nl/subscriber/uid=3828/entry?entry=bnp_e1221100. Accessed 11 April 2012.

⁷⁶ Longfellow, 2011, 172.

⁷⁷ Idem, 164.

⁷⁸ Lusnia, 2004, 539.

⁷⁹ CIL VI 1032.

his 'divine brother Commodus'. Unfortunately, not the entire inscription has survived through the ages, but the part that we still have left clearly shows Septimius Severus's intentions. Seen in this light, it seems very likely that some of the statues the Septizodium contained were of the Antonine imperial family as well as of Septimius Severus's family: his wife Julia Domna and his two sons, Caracalla and Geta.⁸⁰

The Septizodium was unfortunately destroyed in the 16th century by Pope Sixtus V who used what was left of the monument as a quarry for building material.⁸¹ As such, we now have little to go on when trying to reconstruct exactly what the Septizodium must have looked like. Fortunately, some clues are given by the *Forma Urbis Romae* and sketches of the ruins made during the Renaissance.⁸²

The Septizodium stood on a large podium and had a three-storey high columnar façade. There were also three large *exedrae*, each with a fountain in it. Along the entire front a porphyry basin was placed. The monument had a large base for a statue in the central *exedra* and statues were placed along the top edges of the upper storey also.⁸³ The entire monument had a concrete core that was covered in marble of many different colors.⁸⁴ In terms of propaganda, the marble was more than just pretty. The different marble types were not only expensive, they also came from different parts of the Roman empire. By using many different types of marble, Septimius Severus showed his control over regions far away from the city of Rome.⁸⁵ A large number of columns were used.⁸⁶ Most likely there were several large mosaics to be seen as well.⁸⁷ It must have been spectacular to look at, and this was of course exactly what Septimius Severus intended for his monument when he commissioned it.

The sculptures once present on the Septizodium are the other decorative element with a distinct propagandistic feature to them. As the monument was huge, a lot of statues of various sizes would have fitted in or on top of the monument. Part of a statuary group consisting of a river god and an animal have been recovered in the area and are most likely to have belonged to the Septizodium. It is unclear whether the animal is canine and thus presents a wolf, showing the emperor's Roman roots, or a tiger, in which case the river god is most

⁸⁰ Lusnia, 2004, 533.

⁸¹ Longfellow, 2011, 167-9; Letzner, 1990, 448; Lusnia, 2004, 518.

⁸² Lusnia, 2004, 519.

⁸³ Longfellow, 2011, 167-8.

⁸⁴ Letzner, 1990, 156.

⁸⁵ Idem, 249/448.

⁸⁶ Longfellow, 2011, 170; Letzner, 1990, 448; Lusnia, 2004, 519/20.

⁸⁷ Letzner, 1990, 448.

likely the Tigris.⁸⁸ In the last case, the statuary group may have referred to Septimius Severus's Parthian victories.⁸⁹

Other statues may have depicted planetary deities, as the name 'Septizodium' is often interpreted as connected to the seven planetary deities.⁹⁰ Also, part of a statue identified as Apollo has been found so it is possible that there may have been statues of many other gods present as well.⁹¹

The enormous statue base at the centre of the monument most likely supported an enormous statue of the emperor himself. There is some scholarly debate as to the way in which Septimius Severus would have been presented here. Wolfram Letzner believes that as the name Septizodium most likely refers to the planetary deities, Septimius Severus might have been pictured representing Sol Invictus.⁹² Brenda Longfellow makes a slightly less radical suggestion:

"If in keeping with the long-standing tradition in imperially sponsored fountains, a large statue of the emperor was the focal point of the monument, then Septimius presided over the imperial family, Rome and the entire cosmos. Such a program would represent the celestial harmony, political stability and empire-wide prosperity brought about by his reign."⁹³

Although this theory still presents Septimius Severus as an equal to the gods, he does not actually identify himself with one. The focus lies on the gods' divine approval of Septimius Severus's reign.

Susann Lusnia takes another step back, saying that by the combination of both divine and humane sculptures, Septimius Severus meant to show that he was merely accompanied by the gods.⁹⁴ By showing statues of the imperial family alongside the statues of the gods, Septimius Severus wanted to let his people know that the gods legitimised his imperial rule. While that last part sounds like what Brenda Longfellow suggested, Lusnia does not go as far as to think that Septimius Severus would have intended to be seen as an equal to the gods. It surely does not sound likely that an emperor would portray himself as a deity. This would have been considered *hybris* and would thus have made him vulnerable to the wrath of both

⁸⁸ Longfellow, 2011, 170.

⁸⁹ Lusnia, 2004, 523.

⁹⁰ Idem, 524.

⁹¹ Longfellow, 2011, 170; Lusnia, 2004, 525.

⁹² Letzner, 1990, 448.

⁹³ Longfellow, 2011, 178-9.

⁹⁴ Lusnia, 2004, 525.

the gods and his subjects.⁹⁵ Presenting oneself as equal to the gods would still be pushing the envelope. Extremely popular emperors might have gotten away with it, but it would be dangerous for an emperor whose legitimate rule was questionable due to his genealogical lineage. Therefore, it would seem that the more conservative option provided by Lusnia is the most probable one. Either way though, the sculptures would have showed that the gods favoured Septimius Severus⁹⁶ by being in his presence and can be seen as very strong imperial propaganda.

4.3 *Nymphaeum Alexandri*

The last known ancient *nymphaeum* in Rome was built in 226 by Alexander Severus.⁹⁷ Like Septimius Severus before him, he built his 20 meter high *nymphaeum* on a strategic spot: just outside the Esquiline Gate, in the fork formed by the junction of the Via Labicana and the Via Tiburtina Vetus.⁹⁸ Its location is marked pink on the map of Rome. By doing so, he made sure that his monument would be noticed by a lot of people on a daily basis. In celebration of the dedication of the *nymphaeum*, a series of coins were issued that can now help us identify the design and decoration of the project.

On the coin as can be seen on Figure 5, a trapezoidal monument made out of two levels can be seen, the upper level being two storeys high. The lower level was intended for the distribution of water, the upper level for the monumental *nymphaeum* itself.⁹⁹ The entire monument would originally have been covered with marble slabs.¹⁰⁰ Many arches and niches containing statues can be seen, the centrepiece being a large semi-circular niche, containing two unidentifiable statues. The most interesting part about this *nymphaeum* however is not the



Figure 5: *Nymphaeum Alexandri*. At: <http://pilgrimstorome.co.uk>.

⁹⁵ Lusnia, 2004, 525.

⁹⁶ Cass. Dio, 74.3.1-3: Cassius Dio describes an auspicious dream the emperor had in which water gushed forth from his hand like a spring while he slept. We can therefore be sure that the entire monument was indeed intended to be interpreted as the divine favour of the gods, bestowed on the legitimate emperor Septimius Severus.

⁹⁷ Longfellow, 2011, 190.

⁹⁸ Idem, 193.

⁹⁹ Letzner, 1990, 450.

¹⁰⁰ Longfellow, 2011, 193; Letzner, 450.

centrepiece, but the two statues of *tropaia* standing on the corners of the same storey as the central sculptural group.¹⁰¹

The *tropaia* gave the entire monument the feel of a triumphal arch. This feel was further enhanced by a *quadriga*, a chariot drawn by four horses, placed on top of the monument. A *quadriga* was a feature often found on top of honorific arches.¹⁰² The monument would thus have spoken of imperial military prowess to the Roman people. However, the *tropaia* did not commemorate one of Alexander Severus's victories, as they were created for Domitian, commemorating his Germanic and Parthian victories.¹⁰³ What could this use of statues intended for Domitian have meant?

It is unlikely that Alexander Severus knew that the statues were intended for Domitian, who was exceptionally disliked as an emperor. He most likely associated them with the great military strategist and popular emperor Trajan who was emperor shortly after Domitian, as it was easy to confuse the Germanic armor displayed on one of the *tropaia* with Dacian armor.¹⁰⁴ With the military theme of the monument, Alexander Severus most likely wished to be compared to not only Trajan, but to all militarily gifted emperors of the past. But why re-use sculptures instead of commissioning new pieces? We can safely assume that the inhabitants of Rome would have known that Alexander Severus had not won any great military victories of his own yet. Putting up newly sculpted *tropaia* would have been seen as an empty boast. But putting up sculptures of predecessors would have spoken about the great imperial legacy Alexander Severus had as an emperor of Rome.¹⁰⁵ This way, Alexander Severus could make perfectly clear what kind of emperor he intended to be.

¹⁰¹ Lusnia, 2004, 533.

¹⁰² MacDonald, W. 1986. *The Architecture of the Roman Empire II: An Urban Appraisal*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 94.

¹⁰³ Longfellow, 2011, 197.

¹⁰⁴ Idem, 192.

¹⁰⁵ Idem, 164/202.

5. Aqueducts

Nowadays, aqueducts are often seen as one of the Romans' greatest and most spectacular contributions to architecture. Back in the day, they were looked upon in this same way by the Romans themselves.¹⁰⁶ It thus made sense for an emperor to use aqueducts as propaganda, for example to show off his engineering skills. The most striking examples of this kind of propaganda are the Porta Maggiore and the Aqua Traiana. The Porta Maggiore is still one of the most famous parts of a Roman aqueduct. The Aqua Traiana possibly was more propaganda than necessity. They will both be discussed in this chapter.

5.1 Porta Maggiore

The so-called 'Porta Maggiore' is one of the most famous monuments in Rome and is without a doubt the most famous piece of Roman aqueduct, due to its fantastic preservation. The 25 meter high monument is part of the well over 170 kilometer long Aqua Claudia-Aqua Anio Novus aqueduct line that ran from the Alban Hills to Rome.¹⁰⁷ The building of this aqueduct line was started by Caligula in 38 and finished (including the monumentalisation of the Porta Maggiore) in 52 by Claudius, who dedicated the two aqueducts on the 7th of August, his birthday.¹⁰⁸ This already indicates the importance of the aqueduct line and of the Porta Maggiore in particular.

The 'Porta Maggiore' was a monumentalised section of the Aqua Claudia-Anio Novus aqueduct that had the look and feel of a triumphal arch. It was built close to the crossroads of the Via Praenestina and the Via Labicana, two busy transport roads leading to the Alban Hills, came together and as such, it was necessary to build a double rather than a single archway.¹⁰⁹ A purple dot on the map of Rome on the last page of this thesis shows the Porta Maggiore's location.

What makes the Porta Maggiore really stand out from other arches is the use of the so-called 'rusticated' style for the lower sections up to the *specus* of the Aqua Claudia. This style is characterised by the purposely unworked surface of the travertine blocks that makes them look rough and unfinished. This gives the entire monument a more massive feel than its size merits.¹¹⁰ The style is intricately bound to Claudius as he used it for his prestigious

¹⁰⁶ Venturi and Sanfilippo, 1994, 21.

¹⁰⁷ Coates-Stephens, 2004, 35

¹⁰⁸ Dodge, 2000, 178.

¹⁰⁹ Coates-Stephens, 2004, 9.

¹¹⁰ Ramage, Nancy H. and Andrew Ramage. 2009. *Roman Art: Romulus to Constantine*. Fifth Edition. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education Inc, 161.

monuments. This isn't just a modern connection but rather one that Claudius' subjects themselves already made. That is why after Claudius died, the decision was made to build the Temple for the Divine Claudius in this same style.¹¹¹ Robert Coats-Stephens notes that Claudius only used the style on monuments connected to water such as the arch of the Aqua Virgo and that it is possible that Claudius intended for it to represent a connection to grottoes. Grottoes themselves were connected to water deities and nymphs in particular.¹¹² Unfortunately, there are no primary sources that mention what the style meant to the locals at the time, so we will probably never know for sure.

The monumentalisation of the Porta Maggiore consisted of dressing the double archway in travertine and building everything from the water channel or *specus* of the Aqua Claudia upwards in travertine only, except of course for the lead water channel itself. The span of the arches was increased so they left enough room for both roads. The three piers were given the look of temple frontons complete with engaged columns with Corinthian capitals, pediments and friezes. There is no indication that the pediment and friezes ever contained relief sculptures. The piers were also opened up to make it look as if the temples could be entered, the middle pier even got a second storey.¹¹³

Above the piers, the archway is divided into three bands of travertine. The upper one, which is the outside of the *specus* of the Aqua Anio Novus, still carries Claudius' inscription, one of the largest and most complete examples of its kind.¹¹⁴ The inscription is without a doubt intended to show off the grand achievements of the emperor for the greater benefit of the Roman citizens. The inscription emphasizes two things. First, the extraordinary total mileage of the two aqueducts, the Aqua Claudia spanning 45 milestones (*a milliario XXXXV*) and the Aqua Anio Novus was 62 milestones (*a milliario LXII*) away from the center of Rome.¹¹⁵ This showed the great power and technical prowess of Claudius. As far as we know, this is the only Roman inscription that notes the total length of a project like this.¹¹⁶ And second, the fact that Claudius paid for this enormous project '*sua impensa*', with his own money, rather than using money from the national treasury.¹¹⁷ Pliny the Elder tells us that the

¹¹¹ Coates-Stephens, 2004, 44.

¹¹² *Idem*, 46.

¹¹³ *Idem*, 41.

¹¹⁴ CIL VI 1256: *TI. CLAUDIUS DRUSI F. CAESAR AUGUSTUS GERMANICUS PONTIF. MAXIM., / TRIBUNICIA POTESTATE XII, COS. V, IMPERATOR XXVII, PATER PATRIAE, / AQUAS CLAUDIAM EX FONTIBUS, QUI VOCABANTUR CAERULEUS ET CURTIUS A MILLIARIO XXXXV, / ITEM ANIENEM NOVAM A MILLIARIO LXII SUA IMPENSA IN URBEM PERDUCENDAS CURAVIT.*

¹¹⁵ CIL VI 1256.

¹¹⁶ Coates-Stephens, 2004, 39.

¹¹⁷ CIL VI 1256.

entire sum Claudius paid comes down to a stunning 350 million sesterces, so it is no wonder that Claudius wanted to share this with the world.¹¹⁸ The entire aqueduct line can thus be seen as one enormous gift to the people from their most generous benefactor: Claudius. Without a doubt Claudius would have wanted his people to be aware of this.

As stated before, the Porta Maggiore stood near the point where the Via Praenestina and the Via Labicana, necessitating the build of a double archway. However, the Aqua Claudia-Anio Novus ran along the south side of the Via Labicana and it would have been much easier to stay on this path until after the crossroads so the aqueduct line need only to cross one road. Robert Coates-Stephens has interpreted the engineer's choice as a conscious decision with imperial propaganda in mind, especially if the role of the *pomerium*, the sacred boundary between the city for the living inhabitants of Rome and the territory of the dead where funerals and anything military took place, is taken into consideration.¹¹⁹

During his reign, Claudius expanded the *pomerium*, the new border of which might have been where the Porta Maggiore was later built.¹²⁰ If this is the case, the placement of the Porta Maggiore makes perfect sense in that it would have functioned as a monumental boundary marker for the new *pomerium*. Not every emperor extended the *pomerium*, which could only be extended if the empire as a whole did as well. The fact that Claudius did this would be something that he wanted everybody to know.

While Coates-Stephens makes his theory sound very credible, if the Porta Maggiore really marked the border of the new *pomerium*, one would expect the inscription on the Porta Maggiore to refer to this. As it does not, there might not be a connection to the *pomerium* after all.

A final element to the location of the Porta Maggiore that could have made fine imperial propaganda for Claudius, is the relative closeness to a similar type of monumentalised arch of the Marcia-Tepula-Julia aqueduct line that Augustus built to cross the nearby Via Tiburtina. It is relatively certain that Augustus also placed a mirror image of this arch over the Via Praenestina, only 40 meters from the Porta Maggiore, the latter being much bigger but similar in style.¹²¹ It is possible that the Porta Maggiore was also intended to show a link between Augustus and Claudius. This would have emphasised the bond between the emperor Claudius and his deified family, making him related to a god and so on his way to divinity himself. Also, some of the greatness of Augustus might have rubbed off on Claudius

¹¹⁸ Plin. *HN*. 36.123.

¹¹⁹ Coates-Stephens, 2004, 56.

¹²⁰ *Idem*, 40.

¹²¹ *Idem*, 41.

in this way. As we have seen, the propaganda strategy of linking the current emperor to Augustus was a very popular one.

Claudius may have built the Porta Maggiore, he is not the only emperor whose name is written on it. Aside from Claudius' inscription on the upper band of the archway, there is also one from Vespasian on the *specus* of the Aqua Claudia (the middle band) and one from Titus on the lower band. Vespasian's inscription was added in 71 AD and commemorates his restoration of the Aqua Claudia-Anio Novus.¹²² Interesting about this inscription is that Vespasian, like Claudius, emphasises the fact that he paid for the restorations *sua impensa*, with his own money. Even more interesting is the phrase '*urbi restituit*'. Vespasian states that he restored the aqueduct to the city and its people. This doesn't sound much like propaganda, yet it can definitely be seen as such.

In the inscription, Vespasian notes that the waters of the Aqua Claudia-Anio Novus have been poorly maintained and interrupted for nine years (*et postea intermissas dilapsasque/ per annos novem*). Vespasian hereby refers to the reign of Nero, although he makes a point of deliberately not mentioning his predecessor by name. Nero diverted the water of the Aqua Claudia to the Palatine through a newly built branch, the Arcus Neroniani, so it would provide his *Domus Aurea* with plenty of water.¹²³ However, this Arcus Neroniani was intended for his own private purposes, rather than for the benefit of Rome's citizens. By '*urbi restituit*', Vespasian clearly wished to let his people know that he had restored the water of the aqueduct to the people, as it should be. Vespasian was thus trying to show that he was a righteous, caring emperor with attention to the needs of his people. He also made clear that he was the legitimate successor to the divine Claudius who is mentioned in the inscription, not Nero.¹²⁴

The final inscription, the one added by Titus in 80/1 A.D., probably was purely added as part of the imperial propaganda. The inscription claims that parts of the Aqua Claudia-Anio Novus had come down and that Titus had had to rebuild them, again *sua impensa*.¹²⁵

¹²² CIL VI 1257: *IMP. CAESAR VESPASIANUS AUGUST. PONTIF. MAX. TRIB. POT. II IMP. VI COS. III DESIG. IIII P. P. / AQUAS CURTIAM ET CAERULEAM PERDUCTAS A DIVO CLAUDIO ET POSTEA INTERMISSAS DILAPSASQUE / PER ANNOS NOVEM SUA IMPENSA URBI RESTITUIT.*

¹²³ Dodge, 2000, 178.

¹²⁴ Packer, 2003, 197-8.

¹²⁵ CIL VI 1258: *IMP. T. CAESAR DIVI F. VESPASIANUS AUGUSTUS PONTIFEX MAXIMUS TRIBUNIC. / POTESTATE X IMPERATOR XVII PATER PATRIAE CENSOR COS. VIII / AQUAS CURTIAM ET CAERULEAM PERDUCTAS A DIVO CLAUDIO ET POSTEA / A DIVO VESPASIANO PATRE SUO URBI RESTITUTAS CUM A CAPITE AQUARUM A SOLO VETUSTATE DILAPSAE ESSENT NOVA FORMA REDUCENDAS SUA IMPENSA CURAVIT.*

However, Robert Coates-Stephens notes that as the aqueduct had been thoroughly renovated only ten years earlier, the inscription most likely claims far more than was the case. He believes that Titus probably did no more than a little maintenance on the aqueduct line.¹²⁶

Indeed it does seem strange that a thoroughly renovated structure would have come down only ten years after the renovation. This would suggest that Titus was probably looking for an excuse to add an inscription of his own to the pre-existing inscriptions by Claudius and his own father Vespasian. That in turn would suggest that the intention behind the adding of the inscription was purely propagandistic. Of course, as we have noted already, many people would have passed by the two roads the Porta Maggiore stood on, and an inscription at such a strategic place would definitely have been noticed by a lot of passers-by.

5.2 Aqua Traiana

In 109 Trajan inaugurated the Aqua Traiana, whose water supplied the Transtiberium before it came to downtown Rome, as well as the Baths of Trajan.¹²⁷ The route of the Aqua Traiana up to the Janiculum Hill has been marked as an orange line on the map of Ancient Rome. Trajan celebrated the Aqua Traiana's dedication with a coin series (Figure 6). The reverse side of these coins showed a river god sitting on several rows of stone, holding a branch and leaning on an overturned urn from which water came flowing. Below the god, the following text can be seen: *AQVA TRAIANA S(enatus) C(onsultum)*. Above and around him, something that looks like the entrance to a man-made grotto with columns on the side can be seen.



Figure 6: Aqua Traiana. At: www.coinarchives.com

Who the river god is, is unclear. Longfellow believes that we are dealing with a representation of part of a statue group that would have adorned either the *mostra* of the aqueduct, or a shrine at its source.¹²⁸ Peter Aicher disagrees and has suggested that it is either the personification of the aqueduct or its source. He points to the fact that if the image represents part of a terminal fountain, the setting certainly seems off. A grotto-type fountain would have been rather unusual.¹²⁹ He also notes that Trajan was known to use personifications of rivers, such as the personification of the Danube river on the Column of

¹²⁶ Coates-Stephens, 2004, 66.

¹²⁷ Longfellow, 2011, 101.

¹²⁸ Idem, 103.

¹²⁹ Aicher, 1993, 348.

Trajan, and so the use of a personification here seems to fit Trajan's iconography.¹³⁰ The text above the grotto reads *SPQR OPTIMO PRINCIPI*, which of course denominates the great patron Trajan himself.

Through an inscription, Trajan made sure that the people would know that he covered the expenses with his own money, '*pecunia sua*'.¹³¹ While it is possible that the Baths of Trajan required a new aqueduct being built, at this point in time Rome was well supplied with water already.¹³² Therefore, it has been suggested that the Aqua Traiana was not built out of a direct need, but more to show that Trajan was the ultimate benefactor of Rome in every way, including the water supply.¹³³ While the Aqua Traiana's water was used for many practical purposes, for example supplying the Baths of Trajan and several water mills on the Janiculum Hill, in my opinion this does not prove that there was a demand for yet another aqueduct.

The Baths of Trajan were built on the Esquiline.¹³⁴ If the Aqua Traiana was intended mainly to supply the Baths with water, it would have made far more sense to build an aqueduct that entered the city from the east rather than the west. If they were intended to supply water mills on the Janiculum, we would expect the mills to be connected to the main line of the aqueduct. Rather, the mills are located further to the south, aside from the main channel.¹³⁵ This suggests that the mills were not part of the reason why the aqueduct was created, but were built later when the aqueduct was already there. There is thus no clear practical reason for the Aqua Traiana being built. From this point of view, the entire Aqua Traiana can be viewed as imperial propaganda before anything else. Evidence for this theory can be found in the type of coin that has just been discussed.

As far as we know there is no other coin type celebrating the dedication of an aqueduct. Trajan was however known to showcase the impressive monumental buildings he gifted to the Roman populace on the coins issued in his name.¹³⁶ This suggests that Trajan built his aqueduct not from a practical point of view, but to impress his people. This point is further proved by the specific coin that featured the image, namely the *sestertius*. In the time

¹³⁰ Aicher, 1993, 347.

¹³¹ CIL VI 1260: *IMP CAES[AR DIVI] NERVAE . F . N[ERVA T]RAIANVS . A[UG]GERM . DACIC [P]ONT . MAX . TR . POT . XIII IMP . VI . COS . V . P . P AQVAM . TRAIANAM PECVNIA . SVA IN VRBEM . PERDVXIT EMPTIS . LOCIS PER . LATITVD . P . XXX .*

¹³² MacDonald, 1986, 99.

¹³³ Longfellow, 2011, 102-3.

¹³⁴ It's exact location can be found on the map in the Appendix, it is the square building above and to the right of the Amphitheatrum Flavium.

¹³⁵ Aicher, 1993, 346.

¹³⁶ Longfellow, 2011, 104.

of Trajan, the *sestertius* was the basic coin unit and was therefore bound to be used in many transactions so large parts of the population must have seen it.¹³⁷

The aqueduct line itself may not have been the only part of Trajan's propaganda concerning the Aqua Traiana. It is possible that this aqueduct ended in a spectacular terminal *mostra*. Water from the aqueduct most likely fed a *nymphaeum* as well, placed between the Baths of Trajan and the Porticus of Livia. Unfortunately, not much is known on either of the two structures, especially evidence of the possible *mostra* is rather scanty. The ruins of the possible *mostra* on the Janiculum hill were documented in the 19th century. Unfortunately, they were destroyed not long after. It is therefore impossible to tell whether we are really dealing with a *mostra*, or with some other kind of water installation.¹³⁸

In the last three chapters, several examples of water monuments that were intended as imperial propaganda have been discussed. In the conclusion the question that we started out with will be answered: in what ways did the Roman emperors from the 1st to the 5th century A.D. use water in their imperial propaganda?

¹³⁷ Longfellow, 2011, 104.

¹³⁸ Aicher, 1993, 346.

6. Conclusion

In the previous three chapters, several very different monuments all concerning water have been discussed. Despite the difference in appearance of the monuments that have been discussed, there are remarkable similarities when it comes to imperial ideology and propagandistic themes. For one, there is the use of propaganda to legalise an emperor's reign. The best example of this is the inscription on the Septizodium, built by Septimius Severus, in which he traces his fictional lineage back to Nerva. Other examples are the attempts of Titus and Domitian to distance themselves from Nero through the Flavian Meta Sudans, the inscription of Vespasian on the Porta Maggiore and the demolishing of the Fountain of Domitian by Trajan to make room for his own Forum.

Another propagandistic element that has come up several times is the link to imperial heritage in general or to a specific predecessor. Without any doubt the Flavian Meta Sudans was intended to bring to mind the Augustan Meta Sudans that was once built on the same spot. Also, the use of the two *tropaia* for the Nymphaeum Alexandri has been interpreted as a reference to the military prowess of the Roman emperors in general.

Other elements that showed that a monument was built having propaganda in mind are the chosen location and the decoration. Almost all of the water monuments discussed, except for the Aqua Traiana which of course did not stand on one single spot, were placed on a site where it was guaranteed that they would be seen by a lot of people, both local and visiting, on a daily basis. The lavish use of marble, sculpture and of course basins and fountains would have assured attention from many passers-by.

Except for the fountains and basins, all the propagandistic themes just mentioned can probably be attributed to other monuments which did not involve water as well, such as the Colosseum. So what additional elements did water add to the imperial propaganda showcased in the fountains, *nymphaea* and aqueducts that have been under discussion?

First of all, using water would have been more effective in terms of getting the people's attention as they passed by. Because of its sound, movement and reflection of light, water would have caught the attention of passers-by more than a monument that consisted of nothing but stone. Therefore, a monument involving water would appeal greatly not only to the public, but also to the emperor whose name was to be linked to the monument. Second, the use of water could be seen as an emperor's victory over nature, since he had been successful in making the water bow to his will by deciding its route and even defying gravity.

As such, the emperor could profile himself as more than human. Third, water was one of life's necessities, appreciated even more greatly during the hot summers. By providing his subjects with fresh water, preferably paid for with his own personal money, an emperor could show his people that he truly cared for their well-being. It was more than a necessity though, in large quantities it was also a luxury good. The emperor thus added greatly to his subjects' quality of life. Finally, the fact that so much water was available through the aqueducts showed the power the emperor held over the surrounding land, as aqueducts were vulnerable structures. All these elements combined would have made water excellent propaganda material.

The six coins that have been shown in this thesis provide additional proof of this conclusion. Coins were constantly exchanged and as such they travelled around the entire empire, the same way Euro's do now. Having the image of a monument adorn a coin, would have been a certain way of advertising this same monument to a great variety of people, both in and outside Rome. The emperors that featured their fountain, *nymphaeum* or aqueduct on a coin clearly felt that this would improve their standing amongst his subjects. Even more telling is the fact that the many of the coins, except the one by Trajan, did not feature any text explaining which monument could be seen on the coin. This suggests that the people creating the coin felt that the monuments and their meaning would be clear to the people using the coins.

In this last paragraph, a few suggestions for further research will be discussed. It probably has not escaped anyone's notice that this thesis has been completely silent about Roman imperial bath complexes. Incorporating monumental (sections of) aqueducts and leaving out bath complexes was done based on the fact that baths are a completely different type of building, often being practical before monumental. Also, due to their size they would have been positioned in such a way that less people would have passed by them accidentally, and therefore might also have been more interesting to look at from the inside than the outside.

That being said, it might greatly improve the knowledge of water as an imperial means to propaganda from the first to the fifth century A.D. if future studies encompassed all of the water structures mentioned above; fountains, *nymphaea*, aqueducts as well as baths. Also, it might be fruitful to make a comparison to a more modern Roman fountain complex, such as the Trevi fountain.

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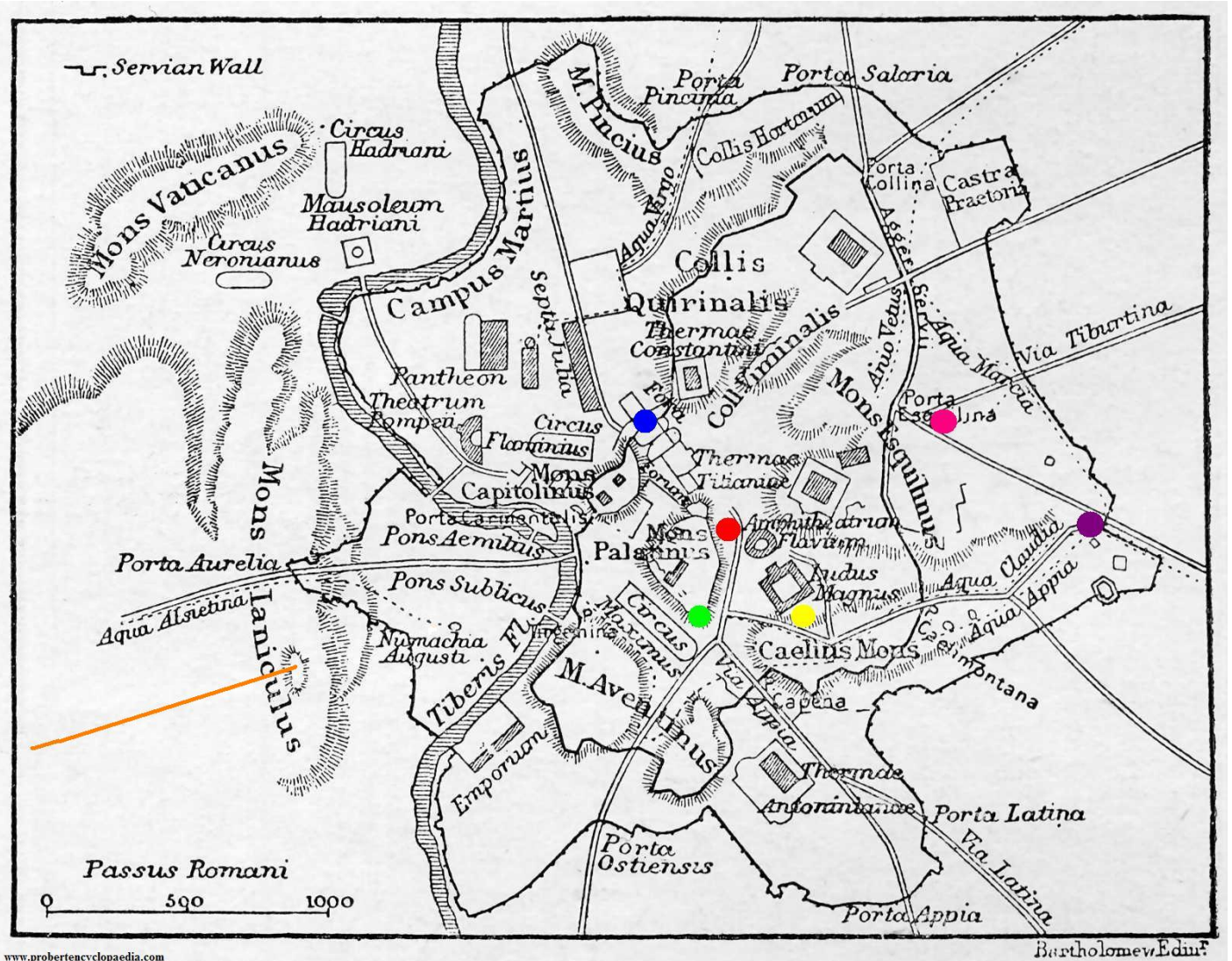
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Appendix

I. Map of Rome



Legend

Red	=	Flavian Amphitheatre
Blue	=	Fountain of Domitian
Yellow	=	Nero's Nymphaeum
Green	=	Septizodium
Pink	=	Nymphaeum of Alexandria
Purple	=	'Porta Maggiore'
Orange	=	Aqua Traiana