NOTAE NUMISMATICAE
ZAPISKI NUMIZMATYCZNE

Tom XVI

MUZEUM NARODOWE W KRAKOWIE
SEKCJA NUMIZMATYCZNA
KOMISJI ARCHEOLOGICZNEJ PAN
ODDZIAŁ W KRAKOWIE

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On the Search for *Damnatio Memoriae* on Ancient Roman Numismatic Artefacts. Research Assumptions*

ABSTRACT: The article concerns the possibilities and limitations of including numismatic sources in studies of the phenomenon of the condemnation of memory (*damnatio memoriae*) in ancient Rome. The presented findings show the need for extended analyses that would consider all of the Roman coinage and use statistical modelling, quantitative approaches, and the findings' archaeological context.

KEY WORDS: condemnation of memory, ancient Rome, memory culture

ABSTRAKT: *O poszukiwaniach* damnatio memoriae *na starożytnych rzymskich numizmatach. Postulaty badawcze*

Artykuł dotyczy możliwości i ograniczeń włączania źródeł numizmatycznych do badań nad zjawiskiem potępienia pamięci (*damnatio memoriae*) w starożytnym Rzymie. Z przedstawionych ustaleń wynika konieczność przeprowadzenia szeroko zakrojonych analiz uwzględniających całość rzymskiego mennictwa oraz wykorzystujących modele statystyczne, ujęcia kwantytatywne, a także kontekst archeologiczny znalezisk.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: potępienie pamięci, starożytny Rzym, kultura pamięci

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For decades, researchers have agreed that numismatics faces "greater prospects" than merely the inventorisation of coins and medallions collected with care by enthusiasts and museums.[1] However, this is where the agreement ends. There is controversy about the potential of numismatic objects for use in research, especially in cases where coins and medallions act as guides to the world of ideas or propaganda.[2] The inclusion of numismatic artefacts into research on the memory culture[3] may also raise concerns, including on a methodological level.

It is evident that the uses of coins and medallions in the formulation of descriptions of the memory culture may take different forms, depending on the specific society, time, and element of memory culture to be studied. In this article, I would like to examine the possibilities and limitations of including numismatic material in research on a selected part of memory culture in Rome – the phenomenon of *damnatio memoriae*.[4] In the title of this article, the phrase "ancient Roman numismatic artefacts" was mentioned. At this point, some clarification is in order, since this article also considers provincial coins placed in numismatic cabinets dedicated to Greek coins. Despite the many differences between imperial and provincial minting, itself a fascinating topic of the specificity, distinctiveness, and the identity of the provinces, the condemnation of memory understood as a tool of political struggle affected both the centre and periphery alike. Of course, by placing the condemnation of memory in the context of Roman and provincial cultures, one would have to highlight the different origins of the phenomenon when interpreting the material, including its varying weight and resonance. However, given the purpose of this paper, I focus exclusively on the rationale behind the qualification of specific changes on numismatics as manifestations of the condemnation of memory.

The discussion surrounding this topic may help research the memory culture and the history of the Empire that grew out of the Eternal City, since "memory defined Roman civilization"[5].

Generally speaking, and especially in the context of ancient Rome,[6] *damnatio memoriae* was the practice of condemning the memory of people considered unworthy of belonging to the community, those who from the perspective of Roman

[1] BODZEK 2008.

[2] MADEJSKI 2013.

[3] "Memory culture" is a concept with an extensive scope, which includes, in its widest sense, all practices that form the way societies handle their past. Considerations on "memory culture" are often accompanied by analyses concerning collective memory and the politics of historical memory. For instance, in the context of ancient history: OLSZEWSKI 2013; KLUCZEK 2019a; EADEM 2019b.

[4] I will provide a closer account of my approach to this practice in the following paragraphs.

[5] GALINSKY 2014.

[6] *Damnatio memoriae* is a modern term. Presently, the concept's meaning is considerably broader. *Damnatio memoriae* is also used to refer to phenomena unrelated to antiquity. The described widening of the concept's scope is discernible in public discourse and historical works.

values and politics had committed severe crimes related to treason against the state or the people.[7]

The use of this kind of punishment during the period when it was established in the political culture was supposed to result from a Senate or the Emperor's separate decision[8] and was not a permanent consequence of a particular person being found guilty of the crimes as mentioned above. However, not all the cases that are today referred to as condemnations of memory had any legal basis – some of them may have been the result of spontaneous activities of the army, the people, or even the Senate. Condemnation of memory consisted in, among other things, the removal or destruction of depictions or references in inscriptions of people subject to this procedure; it involved the prohibition of burial, grieving, and cultivating the memory of the deceased; it might also manifest itself in the cancellation of decisions made by the convicted. However, it is difficult to maintain that such undertakings served to entirely erase someone from memory, that is, to sentence them to oblivion. In most known cases, we can, rather, speak of the stigmatization of a given character.[9]

The practice of *damnatio memoriae* was intended as a severe punishment – it stigmatized, ruled out, and made to impact life after death. The severity of the sanction of *damnatio memoriae* resulted from beliefs, traditions, and a specific model of public life. However, in practice, it is worth remembering that *damnatio memoriae* (both the "order" and its revocation[10]) would become an instrument of political struggle[11] and element shaping collective memory.[12]

Just as defining *damnatio memoriae* is not an easy task, the inclusion of numismatic material in research on memory condemnation is no less troublesome.[13] An obvious but necessary point is that coins and medallions do not provide access to the full "catalogue" of such *damnati*. In theory, people who were showed or mentioned on numismatic artefacts – mainly officials responsible for issuing coins, people at the height of power in the time of the Republic (and their families), rulers (legal and usurpers), and their family members – could be "condemned" through the use of coins and medallions. Having accepted these limitations, one must accept another difficulty – namely the availability of source materials. Other than the obvious lack of direct access to remelted coins, the method of forming basic coin catalogues is

[7] AMIELAŃCZYK 2013: 25–27.

[8] DYJAKOWSKA 2011: 139.

[9] FLAIG 2013: 48–100.

[10] It is worth noting that it was possible to rehabilitate a previously condemned memory.

[11] DYJAKOWSKA 2011; KRÓLCZYK 2011; FLAIG 2013: 92–94; OLSZEWSKI 2013: 337–339, 343.

[12] MACIEJOWSKI 2011.

[13] MOWAT 1901–1909; AMARDEL 1912; DESNIER 1988. The most important works for me: HOSTEIN 2004; CALOMINO 2016.

a significant issue. Corpuses are mainly aimed at representing the original appearance of the coin as faithfully as possible through descriptions and reproductions of the iconography and content of the legend (and rightly so). All changes to do with later interferences with the object are not so easy to grasp from catalogue descriptions. However, the researcher can use specific treasures and databases with photographs of the numismatic artefacts. Potentially, every copy of a numismatic artefact related to a person whose memory had been condemned (whether officially or not) could show signs of removal of traces of honoured memory.

Written sources mention authorities melting down coins that bore the likeness of a condemned emperor.[14] One can easily observe that condemnation did not lead all artefacts minted on behalf of the condemned to be remelted. This is attested to by often numerous preserved copies. The organization of such an operation on numismatic objects that remained in circulation on a wider scale would have been unprofitable and unrealistic for logistical reasons. Melting down with the purpose of *damnatio memoriae* was, then, more symbolic and fragmentary. It is worth noting here that – based on estimates for different rulers – only a small number of newly emitted coins and medallions would immediately leave the mint and reach the Roman Empire's inhabitants.[15] Remelting a large part of the coins was therefore made possible without engaging wider groups of inhabitants.

Given the possibility that coins had been melted down in large numbers, it is worth searching for methods of verifying them. We have access to tools with some potential in this respect; however, they are neither definitive nor used on a wider scale. There have been attempts to create models that enable estimations of the number of coins issued and the extent to which the coins have been preserved to the present day, which may be correlated with the number of specimens kept in collections.[16] The awareness of the shortcomings of such a method pushes researchers to make use of physicochemical studies on numismatic artefacts. The presence of certain elements or chemical compounds and their distribution in specific specimens is already in use – to great effect – to establish coins' authenticity, age, and the source of bullion.[17] It is possible to rule out that the coins may have been melted down and reissued in specific cases.[18] For these studies to be authoritative, we would have to analyze all of the available numismatic material, which is a task for generations.

[14] Remelting of numismatic artifacts: D.C., LXXVIII 12.6 (Geta), D.C., LX 22.3 (Caligula; there are varying views on whether this action was really undertaken – BARRETT 1999, additional literature in footnote 2; HOSTEIN 2004: 224. Fairly numerous remeltings are suspected in relation to Macrinus' and Diadumenian's coins (VARNER 2004: 187, 202).

[15] NOREÑA 2011: 264 (see for further literature).

[16] DE CALLATAŸ 2000.

[17] WOYTEK et AL 2007; BLET-LEMARQUAND et AL 2009.

[18] CARTER 1966: 196–197; CARTER and REZI 1989 (for instance, the presence of cobalt).

Furthermore, the question still stands – what about cases in which melted down coins were not reused in later issuances?[19]

In addition to this, there are indications that not every remelting or withdrawal from circulation was a manifestation of *damnatio memoriae.* The practice of melting down, instead of (or in addition to) condemnation of memory, could have been a sign of the need to present oneself through the use of material from melted coins; the necessity to improve the state of the treasury by lowering the value of precious metals used with melted metal; or differences in mintage.[20]

The development of statistical models and physicochemical research is ongoing and need not be justified with the purposes of studies on *damnatio memoriae*. However, it may also have its use in the area of condemnation of memory in the future (although only ever to a limited extent).

Countermarks are worth mentioning in the context of changes to coins' appearance that were commissioned by authorities (the emperor, the senate, or local authorities) due to *damnatio memoriae*. They were an additional mark punched into the numismatic artefact. Their emergence points chiefly to the legalization of the coin,[21] the lawful use of which may have been under question; the highlighting of a new entity authorizing a given numismatic object; as well as to changes to the mintage and value of the coin. Countermarks were used against rulers during uprisings to mark money by the new contender to the "throne" and perhaps also to designate the coin's purpose – its intended use for cult purposes.[22] It has been suggested that coins with countermarks may have been signs of *damnatio memoriae.*[23] This may have been a result of the fact that all decisions and documents (coins and medallions were a sort of document in themselves) of a condemned emperor could be annulled.[24] The correct countermark pointed to the ongoing legality of the coin issued by a condemned ruler. Nevertheless, it is difficult to believe that the existence of countermarks was an undeniable sign of the condemnation of memory, since they also appeared on the likenesses of worshipped figures whose memory was ordered to be respected.[25] In addition to ruling out practices other than *damnatio memoriae,* the analysis of places in which countermarks occur would be beneficial in this case. It would also be helpful to show data on the numerical correlations between the appearance of a stamp on the image of an emperor or a family member next to him

[19] D.C., LX 22.3 – mentioned remelting coins into a statue.

[20] Trajan's decree of AD 107.

[21] A possible example the rubbing off of a coin during use – compare Fig. 1.

[22] MACDOWALL 1960; HOWGEGO 1985.

[23] Summarising: HOSTEIN 2004: 225–227; CALOMINO 2016: 15.

[24] Plin., *Ep.* X 58; Dig. 28.3.6.11.

[25] Pl. 1, Fig. 2.

and other iconographic elements unrelated to the potentially condemned figure.[26] The correlation between the occurrence of countermarks with other kinds of damage made to coins due to *damnatio memoriae* may also turn out to be significant.[27]

Another procedure, similar to countermarks in some sense, was overstriking coins. When analyzing numismatic material in terms of *damnatio memoriae*, one ought to bear this technically complex procedure in mind. Just like countermarks, coin overstriking was not invented to condemn anyone's memory, but nevertheless one cannot overlook the possibility of using them to such an aim.[28] It is worth emphasizing that in this case, we cannot speak of a character stigmatization incident.

It is also telling when specific figures fail to appear in commemorative coinage or given godly attributes. It is worth taking a closer look at numismatic material that refers to deceased members of a dynasty and correlating gaps with condemned memory cases. Note the direct commemoration and the indirect references in the form of pointing to the ancestor (e.g., *filius, nepos, pronepos*). "Great absentees" are worth juxtaposing with the other extreme – the rehabilitation of memory.[29] For example – Tiberius, despite signs of worship in the East, some references in sources as well as a supposedly moving funeral speech delivered by his successor Caligula, was not officially deified. This can be explained either by the problematic relationship between the two rulers, by Tiberius' dislike of divine honours, or by the public's hatred of Tiberius, which almost resulted in the condemnation of the memory of the emperor.[30] Nor did subsequent rulers of the Julian-Claudian dynasty make any effort to divinize Tiberius or commemorate him on their coins. A sort of exception is the mention of Tiberius on numismatics commemorating Germanicus and minted for the latter's biological son. The portrait of Germanicus is accompanied by a legend describing him as the son of Tiberius (remember – through an adoption forced on Tiberius) and the grandson of Augustus.[31] Tiberius, however, appears in commemorative and restitution coinage of the Flavian dynasty and Trajan.[32] Thus, it seems that Tiberius can be described as partly divine and partly condemned, commemorated on the one hand and eloquently overlooked on the other. Nero

[26] Compare to Nero's coins: Pl. 1, Fig. 3 (example of a countermark on Nero's neck resembling decapitation) and Pl. 1, Fig. 4 (countermark that does not infringe on the image, suggesting only the legality of the coin, with no additional stigma), and Pl. 1, Fig. 5 (countermark on Caligula's reverse, no change on or near the image of the emperor, despite the fact that we know the countermarks clearly targeted against Caligula – MARTINI 2003).

[27] Pl. 1, Fig. 6 (countermark on erased Domitian's image).

[28] On countermarks and overstriking coin: CALOMINO 2016: 46; WOYTEK 2018, n.v. (the whole volume is worthy of attention in this respect). RPC II, 1305; RPC I, 3045.

[29] ANZORGE 2020.

[30] SAJKOWSKI 1994 (Ibid also numerous sources are showing the different reception of the character of Tiberius). See also: JONG and HEKSTER 2008.

[31] RIC I^2 Gaius/Caligula 35.

[32] RIC II^2, Part 1 Titus 411; MIR 856.

is also worth mentioning – his memory was explicitly condemned yet he was also commemorated by his successors – there are known numismatics from the 4th century,[33] recalling his figure in the context of games, and showing the Circus Maximus, a Roman tradition rather than dynastic politics.

In addition to pointing out the aforementioned possible signs of *damnatio memoriae,* authored by Roman rulers, one ought to mention more problematic cases created by the Empire's anonymous inhabitants. Attempts to establish the authorship of changes mentioned below can be made based on the level of detail, modification technique, or – which is more difficult – on the frequency and schematic nature of a specific modification as well as the relation between the number of changes made to the image of a possibly condemned figure and other depictions – e.g. personifications.[34] The reliability of such attempts is nevertheless still subject to discussion. On the other hand, one should also consider intentional damage to the reverse of coins and aimed at the ruler. One auction featured a coin minted for Nero and most likely intentionally stigmatized by his subjects on both the obverse and reverse.[35] The emperor's image was mutilated multiple times (by means of numerous facial scars). The reverse image depicting Apollo Citharoedus was also damaged (face wiped during use or intentionally obliterated and a visible scar on the figure). It is possible that the mutilation of the image of Apollo was not related to resentment towards the deity, but against Nero (the emperor's beloved art was stigmatized, or the figure on the reverse was read as Nero depicted as Apollo Citharoedus).

I would also like to mention here the possibility of a mistake occurring during the modification of numismatic goods or inscriptions on them, sometimes even resulting from the condemned having the same names as their relatives. To date, I have not found an example of such a mistake, but there are such incidents of errors among other sources.[36]

The first kind of interference into a numismatic artefact, which could both be ordered from above or be initiated bottom-up, was the removal of specific elements initially present on the artefact, which could consist in the removal of its entire legend, or parts thereof, related directly to the condemned person. It corresponded to signs of *damnatio memoriae* left in epigraphic sources and artworks. The removal

[33] Fig. 7. Cf. KISS 2011.

[34] Assuming the changes were made by inhabitants of the Empire. It is possible that modifications arose in later times, after the fall of the Empire. The archaeological context and the development of physicochemical research (focused e.g. on the process of corrosion) may prove helpful in attempts to exclude the possibility of numismatic objects having been modified later.

[35] Pl. 1, Fig. 8.

[36] CALOMINO 2016: 125–127.

of images or legends that would point to a specific person seems similar to "erasing" from memory, however, it can also be interpreted as a meaningful absence or a kind of stigmatization. Significant "nonobviousness" is most effectively manifested in the removal of the entire image or face and references to the person in the legend. Famous instances of this treatment are the removal of the figure of Geta observed in provincial coins, where he was depicted together with his father – Septimius Severus[37] or his brother – Caracalla – the person who imposed the condemnation of memory on Geta. Also extremely telling is a medallion that originally depicted Commodus, where his face has been very carefully stripped of his facial features.[38] There is an interpretation of this object, saying that the change in the coin was a kind of security for its holder, fearing the unpleasantness of having an image of Commodus after his fall.[39] If we were to maintain that the removal of the facial features was made by a private individual, and not as a result of some kind of spectacle condemning Commodus,[40] attention can be drawn to the owner of the mutilated item itself. The fact that it is a medallion points to a person from a circle enjoying (until then) the emperor's favour.[41] It is also worth mentioning the removal of fragments of legends without affecting the image. Such a practice is observed, for example, on examples of Caligula's numismatics.[42] The first two letters [C C] of the obverse legend have been removed. The state of preservation does not indicate wear on the material, suggesting rather a deliberate act. This removal of letters is usually mentioned in the context of the condemnation of memory. However, the erasure of the initial letter referring to the first name (Caius) and the first letter of the word Caesar still related to the family tradition (and not only to the title) does not eliminate the possibility of identifying the person depicted on the sestertius. Other parts of the legend may still point to the person depicted on the coin (Augustus' great-grandson). Perhaps the plan was to remove the praenomen as a kind of stigma? At this point, a whole theory could be developed about the Roman attitude to the different parts of a multi-part surname, but it seems more interesting to contradict the interpretation that the coin described here is an example of the condemnation of memory. Perhaps, in this case, we are dealing with a mini-apotheosis? "Aesar" (Caesar without the C) in Etruscan meant "god",[43] a fact which the Romans themselves were aware.[44] Caligula's

[37] Pl. 1, Fig. 9 (also erased Domitian – Pl. 1, Fig. 6).
[38] Pl. 1, Fig. 10.
[39] CALOMINO 2016: 108.
[40] *Hist. Aug., Commodus*, XVI-XIX; D.C. LXXIV.2.
[41] CALOMINO 2016: 108.
[42] Pl. 1, Fig. 11.
[43] FREEMAN 1999.
[44] Suet., *Augustus* 97. Cf. CARION 2017: 12.

successor Claudius, who knew Etruscan, almost certainly it was familiar with the term. Claudius faced a difficult choice concerning the posthumous fate of his predecessor (the question of reconciling the different aspirations of the Senate and part of the army, maintaining the dynasty). Perhaps this wordplay was designed by Claudius? Or perhaps some military man who held Caligula in high esteem decided to express his feelings? Or perhaps it was still invented by Caligula himself, who supposedly considered himself a god? All of these considerations can be made as long as we agree on the intentionality of the removal of the two letters.[45]

I believe the most obvious reference to *damnatio memoriae* in coinage to be the complete removal of the image of the condemned figure from numismatic artefacts, especially when another depiction would remain untouched. In some examples, this effect is strengthened by the use of a countermark.

Such a method of stigmatizing figures on numismatic artefacts requires great skill and accuracy and suggests acting upon orders, although bottom-up action cannot be ruled out. However, one should consider that a large part of obliterations may have been a result of the passing of time or the incorrect storage or use of a coin, so it is best to remain cautious when qualifying such materials.

Incisions on the image of a given person are also considered to be signs of *damnatio memoriae*. It is possible for such scars to occur by accident[46] or as a result of checking the coin's quality;[47] nevertheless, it is safe to assume that they were intentional, aimed at the emperor's scarred image. This could occur especially in the following cases: incisions on bronze coins, which were seldom checked – though they may have happened; or a more significant number of incisions than is necessary to establish the coin's value. The discussed phenomenon relates especially to specimens with clearly visible incisions: in the figure's neck, which resembles decapitation; or on eyes.[48] However, the question arises whether a coin or medallion damaged in this manner could remain in circulation and whether symbolic revenge and the punishment of a figure, beyond a moment of satisfaction, did not have economically harmful results (here it is worth remembering the pragmatism of Romulus' descendants, who partly reused the damaged statues of figures condemned to *damnatio memoriae*).[49]

[45] Also puzzling is the case of the precise removal of the reference to Augustus' divinity from the numismatics – compare: Pl. 2, Figs. 12–13. This case, however, seems to be on the sidelines of memory condemnation.

[46] Pl. 2, Fig. 14.

[47] Pl. 2, Fig. 15.

[48] Pl. 2, Figs. 16–18.

[49] PRUSAC 2016. However, cases of the use of (among others) likenesses of rulers without the intention of pointing to the condemnation of their memory ought to be taken into account.

It is possible that the discussed change was unrelated to the condemnation of the memory of a specific person. Damaging coins and likenesses of the emperor and his family can also be interpreted as a form of protest against Roman rule itself and could have been related to public sentiments in the provinces. In order to try to interpret a given numismatic coin as an example of the expression of the feelings of the inhabitants of the conquered territories, it is necessary to find it outside the area that fully accepted Roman rule.[50]

It is worth making a separate note of intersecting incisions on the surface of coins. It has now been shown that this could have been the result not so much of the activity of citizens condemning a specific figure to *damnatio memoriae* but rather the result of Christians making a mark of their presence and distinctiveness.[51]

One must also remember cases of coins scratched right through, which have been documented in Britain and were related to the ritual "killing" of objects that were to be then placed in graves.[52] It may have also been a method of removing a coin from circulation and offering it as a sacrifice.

One also ought to mention other noticeable damage done to numismatic objects – cutting corners, cutting across, splitting coins into parts, bending, or even rolling numismatic objects. More than expressing the condemnation of a ruler's memory or that of his family, these phenomena attest to the votive character of such actions.[53] The procedure would probably lead to a coin being taken out of circulation, rendering it useless as a means of payment. Corner cuts may also have been indicative of checking the quality of the coin or a non-intentional break in the continuity of the material when cutting corners or using a weak coin.[54]

In the study of such a case, it appears significant whether the mutilation of the numismatic object was performed only on the ruler's image or on other elements of the depiction in equal measure.[55] The place in which a coin was found is also of immense importance to how it is to be interpreted – for instance, it can provide a clue as to whether the artefact might be connected to a temple treasure. Sadly, due to the absence of documentation concerning many discoveries and due to dispersed materials, it is not possible to establish this in every case.

Additions of inscriptions or modifications of a figure's appearance are other kinds of exciting cases of interference in depictions on numismatic objects. The

[50] CALOMINO 2016: 190–195.
[51] *Ibidem*: 195–204.
[52] KIERNAN 2001: 21–22.
[53] SAUER 2005.
[54] Pl. 2, Fig. 19.
[55] KIERNAN 2001: 22–33.

numismatic objects minted for Mark Antony[56] and Maximinus Thrax[57] are prime examples.

Let us begin with Mark Antony's denarius. Just after the coin was first minted, a Greek inscription – "KAX", which may have meant "ridicule", "loud laughter" – was included above the obverse image. Still, one can hardly claim that it was a sign of condemnation in its pure form. The possibility (though not a necessity) of the author of the inscription being of Greek descent is not conducive to this.[58] However, this example shows that inhabitants of the Empire (suggested by the lack of skill the inscription exhibits) also expressed their opinions through the use of coins, which they could use to ridicule the figures that appeared on numismatic items. There is also the possibility that this is merely an example of ancient satire. It is important to see that this case emphatically highlights the importance of numismatics as a medium of expression beyond the issuer's narrative.

In terms of its interpretation, the alteration to the depiction of Maximinus Thrax's depiction on a coin minted for him is less problematic. The interference consisted in such a modification of the ruler's profile that he gave the impression of his head being impaled.[59] The impressive precision of this procedure gives reason to consider its authorship. The depiction referred to accounts of the ruler's death,[60] and related to the desire to mock and stigmatize Maximinus Thrax, which corresponds to the concept of *damnatio memoriae*. According to Dario Calomino, we know of more than one case of such modification of a numismatic coin, with one particularly priceless example having been found in the Capitoline temple of Ostia. It suggests with greater certainty (than in cases of unknown provenance) that the lesion originated in antiquity. Calomino supposes that the coin may have been meaningfully altered by soldiers transporting the former emperor's head to the capital.[61] Assuming, therefore, that there were no incidents of the numismatic coin being lost along the way and taken over by someone else, one can imagine that after the soldiers had completed their mission, they went to Ostia, not far from Rome, and deposited (?) the symbol of their journey in the temple there. However, there are many other possibilities, such as the coin having been modified by a witness

[56] Pl. 2, Fig. 20.

[57] Pl. 2, Fig. 21.

[58] The coin is in a private collection. All information provided for Dario Calomino (CALOMINO 2016: 35–36). If we assume that the change originated in the world of Greek culture – this case can emphasize the exciting subject of the functioning of *damnatio memoriae* in ancient Greece: both in separation from Roman practices as well as in the context of Roman influences on Greek culture and Greek equivalents of *damnatio memoriae*.

[59] CALOMINO 2016: 175–176.

[60] Hdn. 8.5.9; *Hist. Aug., Maximinus,* 23, 25–26. The head of Maximinus Thrax (and his son) was put on a pole and sent back to Rome.

[61] CALOMINO 2016: 176.

to the parade. Nevertheless, the interpretation indicating that the change in question on the coin, referring to the condemnation of memory, is the work of soldiers escorting the emperor's head to the capital is extremely convincing. At the same time, I think there is another eventuality worth keeping in mind. The marches of Roman legions were accompanied by imago – busts of rulers carried by an imaginifer that were mounted, possibly on a spar.[62] The iconographic representations of imago or imago and imaginifer are well known.[63] The imago appears in the hand of a personified *Moesia* on a coin minted for Gordian III,[64] but this representation is extremely rare. It seems understandable – the imago very much resembles a head impaled, which may have caused unnecessary confusion for the ruler. However, the modification on the coin struck for Maximinus Thrax resembles a head impaled on a stake rather than an imago. Thus, perhaps we instead have a case of an unfortunate modification made for (or by) an imaginifer (out of boredom or symbolically). With this in mind, however, I continue to favour the interpretation proposed by Calomino.

Although there is so much we already know about Roman numismatics, questions concerning authorship and the intentionality of messages continue to be impossible to answer (and will perhaps remain so forever). We will never run out of research areas or burning issues. What we will run out of – at least to solve some problems – is life.

The consideration of numismatic objects potentially indicative of the condemnation of memory is not the only crucial element to analyzing signs of *damnatio memoriae.* There is a lot to be gained from contrasting them with mintages that bears no traces of the Roman practice. For a fuller analysis of the phenomenon of *damnatio memoriae* on numismatic objects, we ought to investigate every accessible medallion, every coin, and update our knowledge to encapsulate every single available new finding. Until resources are fully and reliably digitalized with the use of varied techniques,[65] researchers will be forced to travel to numismatic collections all over the globe, where, in most cases, they will have to summarise their search with an unimpressive – although important in terms of the study of condemnation of memory – a piece of information about the lack of specimens bearing traces of *damnatio memoriae*.

In perfect conditions, after completing the physicochemical analysis, every case would be taken into consideration in separation; however, considering the archaeological context of finds and their correlations with similar cases arising in

[62] DE PURY-GYSEL 2019.

[63] CALOMINO 2016: 210; DE PURY-GYSEL 2019.

[64] RPC VII.2, – (unassigned; ID 2334); cf. DE PURY-GYSEL 2019: 324.

[65] HESS, MACDONALD and VALACH 2018.

a given territory or products of the same mint at a similar time, inevitably lead to quantitative research.

While aware of the fact that we can only dream of such things in relation to the richness of Roman coinage, I believe we should nevertheless conclude that, from a long-term perspective, these dreams may well come true. The efforts we take can give fruit to developments in knowledge on the phenomenon of *damnatio memoriae*, Roman politics of historical memory, and the attitudes of the Empire's inhabitants.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANS = American Numismatic Society.
BMCRM = H.A. GRUEBER and R.S. POOLE (eds.), *Roman Medallions in the British Museum*, London 1874.
D.C. = Dio Cassius Historicus, *Historiae Romanae*.
Dig. = Digesta.
Hdn.= Herodianus*, De imperio post Marcum historiae.*
Hist. Aug. = Scriptores Historiae Augustae.
MIR = B.E. WOYTEK, *Die Reichsprägung des Kaisers Traianus* (98–117), Moneta Imperii Romani 14, Wien 2010.
Plin., *Ep.* = Plinius Minor, *Epistulae.*
RIC = H. MATTINGLY, E. SYDENHAM et AL (eds.), *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vols. I–X, London 1926–2020.
RPC = A. BURNETT, M. AMANDRY et AL (eds.), *The Roman Provincial Coinage*, vols. I–X, London – Paris 1992–.
Suet. = Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum.*

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PLATE 1

Fig. 1. A coin with countermark applied probably to confirm legitimacy of coin with no visible legends and images
Photo: ANS, Inv. No. 2017.38.100

Fig. 2. Countermark on the face of Augustus – a ruler whose memory has not been condemned
Photo: ANS, Inv. No. 1953.171.1007

Fig. 3. Example of a countermark on Nero's neck resembling decapitation (RIC I Nero 546)
Photo: ANS, Inv. No. 1953.171.1304

Fig. 4. Countermark on Nero's coin without facial stigma
Photo: ANS, Inv. No. 1953.171.1294

Fig. 5. Countermark on Caligula's reverse, without additional sigma on observe
Photo: ANS, Inv. No. 1953.171.1081

Fig. 6. Countermark on Domitian's erased image
Drawing: P. Sikora based on the coin from British Museum, Inv. No. 1979,0101.2178

Fig. 7. Commemoration of Nero in the 4th century
Photo: ANS, Inv. No. 1944.100.62207

Fig. 8. Intentional damage to the reverse targeting the ruler? The mutilation of Apollo Citharoedus – Nero
Drawing: P. Sikora based on coin from VCoins, SKU: RC0266d, https://www.vcoins.com/en/stores/romae_aeternae_numismatics/136/product/nero_ae_as_damnatio_memoriae_playing_lyre_extremely_rare_damnation_of_memory/539857/Default.aspx

Fig. 9. Erased bust and name of Geta, intact image of Septimius Severus
Photo: ANS, Inv. No. 1944.100.48076

Fig. 10. Erased the facial features of Commodus. Scale 1:2
Drawing: P. Sikora based on the medallion from British Museum, Inv. No. 1846,0910.245

Fig. 11. Caligula's coin. The first two letters [C C] removed
Photo: ANS, Inv. No. 1995.110.14

PLATE 2

Fig. 12. Mention of the divine Augustus
Photo: ANS, Inv. No. 1944.100.39214

Fig. 13. Removing the mention of Augustus' divinity (in the legend)
Photo: ANS, Inv. No. 1965.108.1

Fig. 14. Accidental scarring
Photo: ANS, Inv. No. 1969.222.1275

Fig. 15. Test cut
Photo: ANS, Inv. No. 0000.999.558

Fig. 16. Scratched eyes
Photo: ANS, Inv. No. 1944.100.27009

Fig. 17. Intentional scratches on eyes and crown (?)
Photo: ANS, Inv. No. 1944.100.27232

Fig. 18. Blinded Uranius Antoninus (?)
Drawing: P. Sikora, based on the coin from British Museum, Inv. No. 1861,1101.9, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1861-1101-9 and Calomino 2016:213

Fig. 19. Corner cracks
Photo: ANS, Inv. No. 1929.999.62

Fig. 20. Ridiculing Mark Anthony
Drawing: P. Sikora based on coin presented in Calomino 2016:19 (photo: Mark Tursi, London Coin Galleries, 2015)

Fig. 21. Head of Maximinus Thrax on a pole
Drawing: P. Sikora, based on coin presented in Calomino 2016: 175 (photo: Johannes Wienand, private collection, Munich, ex Lanz 10, December 10, 1977,792)

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