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## THE THICK NECK OF THE EMPEROR CONSTANTINE<sup>1</sup> SLIMY SNAILS AND "QUELLENFORSCHUNG"

1. A puzzling passage concerning Constantine the Great in the *Epitome de Caesaribus* was the subject of a study by Andreas Alföldi some twenty years ago. The *Epitome* states: (*Constantinus*) *Irrisor potius quam blandus. Unde proverbio vulgari Trachala, decem annis praestantissimus, duodecim sequentis latro, decem novissimis pupillus ob profusiones immodicas nominatus* (41.16).<sup>2</sup>

The interpretation of the appellation *Trachala* has caused considerable difficulties. Many scholars have regarded it as derived from the Greek *ὀ τράχηλος* / *τράχαλος* ("neck") and as meaning "thick neck".<sup>3</sup> Alföldi, in an ingenious argument, suggested instead that *Trachala* refers to the upper part of a snail („Schnecke"). Therefore the author of the *Epitome* „möglichlicherweise [my italics] will er nur besagen: er ist 'schleimig und schlüpfrig wie ein Schneckenkopf'".<sup>4</sup>

- 1 The final version of this paper was written in Cologne while enjoying a grant from the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung; my sincere thanks go to both the A.v.H.-Stiftung and to my host at the Universität zu Köln, Prof. Werner Eck. For their most useful advice and comments I wish to thank Prof. T. D. Barnes, Dr. Bruno Bleckmann (Göttingen), and Dr. John Curran (Belfast). I am also grateful to my father Patrick Bruun for the opportunity of discussing various matters with him, and for the use of his library. Thanks are due to Ms. Aara Suksi for correcting my English.
- 2 A. Alföldi, "Constantinus ... proverbio vulgari Trachala ... nominatus", *BHAC* 1970 (Bonn 1972) 1-4. "He was a mocker rather than a flatterer. Whence he was by a popular saying called *Trachala*, for ten years the foremost, for the next twelve years a villain, for the ten last years a puppet [*scil.* of the church] because of his excessive lavishness". The passage has now been extensively discussed by V. Neri, "Le fonti della Vita di Costantino nell' *Epitome de Caesaribus*", *RSA* 17-18 (1987-88) 249-280.
- 3 See the summary in Alföldi, *Constantinus* (as in n. 2) 1. Add E. A. Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods (from B.C. 146 to A.D. 1100)* (New York, reprint of 1887 ed.) 1088: "Bull-neck ... on account of the massiveness of his [Constantine's] neck"; and Fr. Bechtel, *Die einstämmigen männlichen Personennamen des Griechischen, die aus Spitznamen hervorgegangen sind*, *Abh. d. Kön. Ges. d. Wiss. Göttingen, phil.-hist. Kl.*, n. F. 2:5 (Berlin 1898) 31: *Τράχαλος* = "having a long neck" (listing one occurrence, *BCH* 20 [1896] 206 l. 36: 4th century B.C.).
- 4 Alföldi, *Constantinus* (as in n. 2) 4. The hypothetical conclusion of Alföldi has now been considered a certitude by Neri, "Fonti" (as in n. 2) 255 and idem, *Medius princeps. Storia e immagine di Costantino nella storiografia latina pagana* (Bologna 1992) 161: "convincentemente spiegato". It was also accepted by J. Schlumberger, *Die Epitome de Caesaribus*, *Vestigia* 18 (München 1974) 200 n. 83: „hat erst A. Alföldi ... befriedigend erklärt".

Alföldi's suggestion gives "Trachala" a clearly pejorative meaning, for which the following explanation is provided: „Die Heiden bezeichneten also Konstantin als *Trachala*, weil sie ihn für einen zynischen, unverantwortlichen Frevler hielten, der alles verlacht, was teuer war.“<sup>5</sup> Alföldi's hypothesis is therefore of interest when investigating, as the present writer is doing, to what extent mocking epithets for Roman emperors can be shown to have been in use during their lifetime.<sup>6</sup> At first sight Alföldi's solution would seem to fit the context better than previous interpretations, since *irrisor* as used in the *Epitome* is clearly an epithet with a negative meaning.<sup>7</sup> It is implied that people who approached the emperor were not treated very well, and, in the words of Fergus Millar: "When it was so firmly and so long established that one important function of the emperor was to give ear to his subjects, it was natural that he should be judged partly on how approachable he was and how graciously he heard people."<sup>8</sup>

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2. On the other hand, as we shall see, Alföldi's argument is open to criticism on many points and can hardly be correct. As a decisive statement, providing the *raison d'être* for his whole argument, Alföldi argued that „Konstantin hatte keinen dicken Hals, wie etwa Vitellius oder Vespasian: wir kennen seine Gesichtszüge gut genug, um das sicherstellen zu können“ (p. 1). In the light of recent research on Constantinian iconography such a blunt statement no longer holds true.<sup>9</sup>

5 Alföldi, *Constantinus* (as in n. 2) 2.

6 This paper originated as part of a larger study on the nicknames of the Roman emperors, which I hope to publish soon.

7 For *irrisor*, see *ThLL* s.v. and Alföldi, *Constantinus* (as in n. 2) 2.

8 This general statement is in F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World 31 B.C. – A.D. 337* (2nd ed. London 1992) 467 (while I can find no reference to the above passage from the *Epitome de Caesaribus* in that monumental work). See also *ibid.*, 469: "The existence of a conscious ideology by which it was part of the functions of a good emperor to respond favourably to requests is undeniable, and it is reflected in Eusebius' account of how Constantine would compensate with gifts those who lost cases before him." The verdict of the *Epitome* is preceded by a passage of apparently opposite content: *Commodissimus tamen rebus multis fuit ... audire legationes et querimonias provinciarum* (*Epit. de Caesaribus* 41.14), i.e. he willingly lent his ear to provincial embassies.

9 There might be even less certitude about what Constantine really looked like, than is apparent from the following paragraphs. Two of the most important portraits not to be found on coins, a *tondo*-head from the Arch of Constantine in Rome, and the colossal head in the courtyard of the Palazzo dei Conservatori on the Capitol, may be reworkings of second-century originals according to C. Evers, "Remarque sur l'iconographie de Constantin. À propos du remploi de portraits des 'bons empereurs'", *MEFRA* 103 (1991) 785–806.

The coin portraits of Constantine appear in a logical sequence and clearly show a trend towards a more open courtyard of the *vicennalia* of 32 especially thick sought to create

This fact brings portraits. First, especially for the first among the rule features.<sup>15</sup> We have features on coin

10 See P. Bruun, 337 (London 1972) "fina monetale" (Roma 1972): *zu den Konstantinischen Münzen* (Berlin 1972) in den *Capitolinischen Museen*, I. Kaiser

11 See P. Bruun, *in Constantini RIC VII Siscia*

12 L'Orange, *Heads of Emperors* to A.D. 324/337 n. 10) 147–153. Cf. C. W. to the new suggestion

13 Fittschen & Zanker

14 Similarly B. L. (1981) 8–21, e.g. P. Zanker, *Aufbau des Kaiserbildnis* (1985) 101–aware of how

15 L'Orange, *Heads of Emperors*

16 P. Bruun, *Studia Constantini* of Siscia). For "Lattanzio e l'Oratio" esp. 127; L'Oratio

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The coin portraits are of special importance. It has long been known that Constantine appeared on coins in at least four versions that appeared in chronological sequence.<sup>10</sup> Some of Constantine's coin portraits during the 310s definitely show a thick neck.<sup>11</sup> So does the colossal head of Constantine now in the courtyard of the Palazzo dei Conservatori in Rome.<sup>12</sup> To be sure, after the *vicennalia* of 325/6 a new portrait was created, where the neck does not appear especially thick. But it must be kept in mind that at this point Constantine sought to create an image based on the new ruler-ideal.<sup>13</sup>

This fact brings us to an important methodological point regarding imperial portraits. First, portraits might be unfaithful to some extent.<sup>14</sup> This was so especially for the tetrarchic period, which stressed *similitudo* and *concordia* among the rulers to the extent that their portraits contained many common features.<sup>15</sup> We know that emperors frequently borrowed each other's portrait features on coins before Constantine became sole ruler.<sup>16</sup>

- 10 See P. Bruun, *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, VII. *Constantine and Licinius, A.D. 313–337* (London 1966) passim, and, for instance, the description of Constantine's "iconografia monetale" by R. Calza, *Iconografia romana imperiale*, III. *Da Carausio a Giuliano* (Roma 1972) 210–212; H. P. L'Orange, *Das spätantike Herrscherbild von Diokletian bis zu den Konstantin-Söhnen 284–361 n.Chr.*, *Das römische Herrscherbild* III, ed. M. Wegner (Berlin 1984) 50–53; K. Fittschen & P. Zanker, *Katalog der römischen Porträts in den Capitolinischen Museen und den anderen Kommunalen Sammlungen der Stadt Rom*, I. *Kaiser- und Prinzenbildnisse* (Mainz am Rhein 1985) 149. 154.
- 11 See P. Bruun, *RIC* VII (as in n. 10), passim, e.g. pl. 12.1–2, 12, and 29; P. Bruun, *Studies in Constantinian Numismatics*, *Acta Inst. Rom. Finl.* XII (Roma 1991), e.g. pl. IV.12 (= *RIC* VII Siscia no. 15); V.20 (Nicomedia); V.25 (= *RIC* VII Antiochia no. 5).
- 12 L'Orange, *Herrscherbild* (as in n. 10) 70–77 and esp. 77 dated the reworking of the statue to A.D. 324/337, but see now the careful discussion by Fittschen & Zanker, *Katalog* (as in n. 10) 147–152: the head is of the "second type" and can be dated to shortly after A.D. 312. Cf. C. Walden, "The Tetrarchic Image", *OJA* 9 (1990) 221–235, esp. 232; and note the new suggestion by Evers, *Remarque* (as in n. 9) 794–799.
- 13 Fittschen & Zanker, *Katalog* (as in n. 10) 154f.
- 14 Similarly B. Baldwin, "Physical Descriptions of Byzantine Emperors", *Byzantion* 81 (1981) 8–21, esp. 8. The best known example is the study of Augustus' representations by P. Zanker, *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder* (München 1987) e.g. 50–52. 103–106; cf. „Das neue Bildnis war ein Erfolg ...., obwohl es mit dessen wirklichem Aussehen wahrscheinlich nur noch wenig zu tun hatte“ (p. 104). See also T. Pekáry, *Das römische Kaiserbildnis in Staat, Kult und Gesellschaft dargestellt anhand der Schriftquellen* (Berlin 1985) 101–103 who uses literary sources to show that the Romans themselves were aware of how often statues and pictures of emperors had a poor likeness.
- 15 L'Orange, *Herrscherbild* (as in n. 10) 3–10.
- 16 P. Bruun, *Studies* (as in n. 11), e.g. 153f.; 176f. (coinage of Heraclea); 183–199 (coinage of Siscia). For Licinius appearing with the features of Galerius, see also P. Bruun, "Lattanzio e Massimino il tiranno", *Opuscula Inst. Rom. Finl.* 4 (Roma 1989) 123–130, esp. 127; L'Orange, *Herrscherbild* (as in n. 10) 50f.

Secondly, even though some of the tetrarchs may have had a thicker neck than Constantine<sup>17</sup> (for instance Galerius or Maxentius<sup>18</sup>), the former could all the same, for some reason, have gained an epithet such as "Thick-neck" (if that is what "Trachala" refers to, and if the epithet is to be taken literally). One can surely not postulate as a rule that a fair assessment of every person's features and capacities is made during his/her lifetime or by posterity.<sup>19</sup>

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3. The argument of Alföldi rests mainly on a complicated deduction based on a passage of the second century antiquarian Pompeius Festus: *Trachali appellantur muricum ac purpurae superiores partes. Unde Ariminenses maritimi homines cognomen traxerunt Trachali* (Paul. Fest. p. 504 Lindsay).<sup>20</sup>

Alföldi used one or two occurrences of the cognomen Trachalus at Ariminum as proof of the correctness of this passage, the senator Galerius Trachalus (*cos. ord.* 68) being the most important case.<sup>21</sup> Secondly, Alföldi pointed to a coin from the Adriatic town Hadria (Hatria, present-day Atri) dating from the

17 Among the sources describing other emperors of the tetrarchic age very few pay attention to the neck of the persons in question, as can be seen from the collection by Marina Torelli in Calza, *Iconografia* (as in n. 10) 13–83. Regarding later emperors, for Constantius II there is Amm. Marc. 16.10.10 *velut collo munito*; for Julian (on whom see below section 8) there are mentions in Amm. Marc. 25.4.22; Greg. Naz. *or.* 5.23; and *Paneg. lat.* 3 (11).6.4 (ed. Mynors). One may compare the descriptions given by Calza, *Iconografia* (as in n. 10) of the various emperors based on their "iconografia monetale". The following passages are relevant: on Carausius, "collo basso e taurino" (p. 87); on Allectus, "collo alto e dritto" (p. 88); on Diocletian, "collo saldo e solcato da rughe" (p. 91); on Maximian Herculeus, "collo corto e tozzo" (p. 119); on Licinius, "collo grosso e corto" (p. 201).

18 For convenient references see Calza, *Iconografia* (as in n. 10) pl. XXXVII and LXIV.

19 For instance, as shown on photographs but rarely commented upon, Princess Stephanie of Monaco has a remarkably thick neck, but this is not how she is primarily thought of today, nor, presumably, how and why posterity may remember her.

20 As is shown by H. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* VII (Paris 1848–54) 2372f., there is ample Greek evidence that ὁ τράχηλος could denote the neck of an animal, or even the upper part of shells, for which see Athen. 3.87d, 87e, 87f. (citing Poseidippus).

21 Alföldi, *Constantinus* (as in n. 2) 2f. In a passage of Valerius Maximus (7.7.4) a certain Septicia, *mater Trachalorum Ariminensium* of Augustan age is mentioned. Secondly, there is the *cos. ord.* of A.D. 68, P. Galerius Trachalus. He is the only known bearer of this cognomen belonging to the upper classes, and he is commonly assumed to be from Ariminum (thus Alföldi, *Constantinus* [as in n. 2] 3; R. Syme, *Roman Papers* IV [Oxford 1988] 381 n. 66 referring to Plin. *HN* 10.50, which is a notice from 78 B.C.; A. Donati is less certain in *Epigrafia e ordine senatorio* II [Roma 1982] 305). The danger of a vicious circle is clearly present here; "Galerius is called Trachalus, so he must be from Ariminum. Galerius is from Ariminum, therefore the statement of Festus is proven right". No actual evidence links the senator P. Galerius Trachalus to Ariminum, even if a few Galerii are known from inscriptions there (no Publius, but four Gaii).

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early third century B.C., where a human head can be seen looking out of a shell.<sup>22</sup> According to Alföldi, this coin shows that the people on the Adriatic coast were indeed, as Festus said, called „Schneckenmenschen“ or „Schneckenköpfe“: „Für diese *maritimi homines* war die Schnecke mit dem Menschenkopf, *Trachalus*, kein Witz, sondern ihr Urahne, der ihre marine Existenz in ihrem Ursprungsmythos begründen sollte. Dieser Mythos muß in Ariminum und Hadria gleich beheimatet gewesen sein“ (p. 3).

Alföldi's first mistake was to take the word *cognomen* in Festus' passage as a *terminus technicus*, i.e. as meaning "these people have as the third element of their *tria nomina* the name Trachalus". In fact, outside a small number of legal texts, *cognominare* and *cognomen* are not used with any consistency as *termini technici* in Roman literature. These terms *might* indicate the third element of a Roman's name, but they might equally well denote a nickname, and thus be synonymous to *appellare*. In Festus' passage, the latter is clearly the case.

What Festus is claiming is that people around Ariminum were nicknamed Trachali. Whether his statement is true is, to begin with, open to some doubt. It is no secret that his etymologies, presented by the 8th-century monk Paulus Diaconus, are often nothing but speculations or later aetiological inventions.

Secondly, Festus cannot be proven right by pointing to the name of the senator Galerius Trachalus, a man presumably originating from Ariminum. The tendency is for newcomers in the senate not to advertise their recent ascent by carrying *cognomina* pointing to their country of origin.<sup>23</sup> If anything, one may suspect that Festus' passage is the result of etymologizing on Galerius' *cognomen*.

Whatever the inventory of the occurrence of the *cognomen* Trachalus in the Roman world shows, it cannot be used for proving Festus' assertion that the Ariminenses were nicknamed Trachali. As Alföldi candidly showed, the *cognomen* appears, although it is relatively rare, in several other places in the Roman Empire: once at Tusculum (*CIL* XIV 2616), twice at Cannes (*AE* 1945, 79), once at Lepcis Magna (*IRTrip* 677), and once at Carthage (*CIL* VIII 24830).<sup>24</sup> To this list can be added a soldier originating from Utica (*AE* 1969/70, 633 col. III).

This criticism of Alföldi's method is vindicated by a parallel in Festus. The antiquarian states about the inhabitants of Praeneste: *Nuculas Praenestinos*

22 Alföldi, *Constantinus* (as in n. 2) 3. For the coin, see E. J. Haeblerlin, *Aes grave. Das Schwergeld Roms und Mittelitaliens* (Frankfurt a. M. 1910) Tafelband, pll. 75.7–11 and 96.10.

23 H. Solin, „Beiträge zur Namengebung der Senatoren“, *Epigrafia e ordine senatorio* I (Roma 1982) 411–432, esp. 424f.

24 As recorded by Alföldi, *Constantinus* (as in n. 2) 2, the earliest occurrence of a name of this type in Italy is in Plaut. *Rud.* 306ff. where a slave is called Trachalio, while a Republican inscription from Picenum also gives the name Trachalio (*CIL* IX 5279, between Asculum and Cupra, this reading provided by H.-G. Pflaum).

*appellabant, quod inclusi a Poenis Casilini famem nucibus sustentarunt, vel quod in eorum regione plurima nux minuta nascitur* (Paul. Fest. p. 177 Lindsay). Again we are dealing with the story of a nickname.<sup>25</sup> This time there is no onomastic material to suggest that inhabitants of Praeneste actually bore the *cognomen* Nucula. A survey shows that while Nucula (Nugula) actually does appear as a Latin *cognomen*, there is no concentration in or around Praeneste; rather the contrary is the case.<sup>26</sup> There is further evidence to show that onomastic "observations" by Latin grammarians can sometimes be misleading.<sup>27</sup>

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4. The starting point of the second main objection is that Hadria is not merely "eine andere Küstensiedlung" laying "südlich von Rimini", as Alföldi stated. The town lies over 200 km further south along the coast and belongs to a different region. Ariminum lies in Umbria, Hadria in Picenum.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, certain cultural affinities between Hadria and Ariminum have been identified for the first period of minting in the two towns. Both towns, like some other mints but unlike Rome, used the decimal division of monetary units. This might be a cultural pattern derived from an indigenous substratum, as suggested by Michael Crawford.<sup>29</sup> However, nothing is known about any common "Ursprungsmythos".<sup>30</sup>

25 See Fr. Münzer in *RE* XVII (1937) 1238f. s.v. *Nucula*.

26 See I. Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina* (Helsinki 1965) 89f. and 337. Of five known occurrences, two are from Pompeii, one from Rome, and one from Comum. The fifth is an unidentified Nucula who was *septemvir agris dandis adsignandis* in 44 B.C., see Münzer, *Nucula* (as in n. 25).

27 According to Varro, *Ling.* 6.5, children born at dawn in the neighbourhood of Reate (Rieti) were called Lucius: ... *ut Lucii prima luce [nati] in Reatino*. This information would however be worthless, were we interested in the time of day when a "Lucius" from Rieti had been born. "Lucius" is one of the most common Latin praenomina and was borne by over 20% of the male population (30% in Etruria and 24% in Picenum) – hardly all of them born at dawn. For "Lucius" and the name statistics see O. Salomies, *Die römischen Vornamen* (Helsinki 1987) 34. 150–160 (who apparently does not comment on this passage of Varro). Also, there is the statement by Festus himself (p. 135 Lindsay): *Lucius qui luce (natus est)*. Again, it would be false to use this in concluding that, since we now know that Lucius is used by some 20% of the Romans, very few Roman children were born in daytime.

28 On the location, see G. Azzena, *Atri: forma e urbanistica*, *Città antiche in Italia* 1 (Roma 1987) 15 with map in fig. 7. Cf. Plin. *HN* 3.110: *ager Hadrianus et Hadria colonia a mari VI (milia) p(assuum)* and Strab. 5.4.2.

29 M. Crawford, *Coinage and Money under the Roman Republic. Italy and the Mediterranean Economy* (London 1985) 15f.; 43–45; cf. Azzena, *Atri* (as in n. 28) 13.

30 The only known myth that concerns Hadria is in Steph. Byz. s.v. Ἀτρία, who says that the town was founded by Diomedes (see Stephanus Byzantinus, *Ethnika*, ed. A. Meineke

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The numismatic evidence is clearly crucial to Alföldi, and is therefore worth citing in full. We know seven different coin types (*aes grave*) from Hadria from the period shortly after 289 B.C., when the Latin *colonia* was founded and Hadria began minting.<sup>31</sup> Altogether eleven coin figures appear on the coins, each of them on one type of coin only (descriptions by Haeberlin, in translation):<sup>32</sup> "Head of Silenos" with "Dog sleeping" on the reverse; "Female (?) head in shell" with "Pegasos" (i.e. the coin discussed by Alföldi); "Head of male youth" with "Kantharos"; "Fish" with "Dolphin"; "Cock" with "Shoe"; and "Anchor".

Ariminum, supposedly the real home of the "snail-men", had its own coinage for a brief period after Hadria began minting and possibly even before the town became a Latin *colonia* in 268 B.C.<sup>33</sup> The seven *aes grave* types all carry a "Head of a Gaul" on one side, and seven different pictures on the other: "Horse's head", "Shield", "Sword and sheath", "Trident", "Dolphin", "Ros-trum", "Cockle-shell". On a struck coin one finds "Head of Vulcan" combined with "Gaulish warrior".<sup>34</sup>

Thus, the coin evidence does not indicate the existence of a foundation myth of Hadria or of Ariminum involving "snail-men" or the like. The two towns only have the "Dolphin" in common. In fact, the pictures on the coins of Ariminum were clearly influenced from Rome (except for the "Gaulish warrior"). As stressed by Thomsen, six of the above motifs derive from Roman coins.<sup>35</sup>

In passing it might be mentioned that Alföldi's attempt at identifying the image of a "founding father" of Hadria on its coinage was by no means the first one. During the 19th century a number of local historians were engaged in the same pursuit, but were concentrating their efforts on the *as*-coin showing "Head of Silenos" with "Dog sleeping". The suggested identifications ranged from

[Berlin 1849, repr. Graz 1958] 143). If one would like to connect the name Trachalus to an ancient myth, the best alternative is surely the old name Trachas used of the Italic town of Anxur (modern Terracina) in Ovid. *Met.* 15.717. But Anxur lies on the opposite shore of the peninsula.

31 For the beginning of minting in Hadria, see R. Thomsen, *Early Roman Coinage. A Study of the Chronology II* (København 1961) 104f.; cf. Azzena, *Atri* (as in n. 28) 10–13, on both minting and the foundation of the urban nucleus.

32 See Haeberlin, *Aes* (as in n. 22) I, 205–210. Cf. Azzena, *Atri* (as in n. 28) 12f. fig. 6, who shows all the coin types.

33 Azzena, *Atri* (as in n. 28) 13, dates the coinage to ca. 289/284 B.C.; similarly S. Balbi de Caro, "Aes grave italico con testa di Gallo – Ariminum, III secolo a.C.", in *I Galli e l'Italia* (exhibition catalogue) (Roma 1978) 259f. A date after 268 B.C. for the minted coinage is advocated by F. Panvini Rosati, "La monetazione di Rimini", *StudRomagn* 13 (1962) 159–173; likewise by P. Marchetti, "Numismatique romaine et histoire", *CCG* 4 (1993) 25–65, esp. 52.

34 For Ariminum, see Haeberlin, *Aes* (as in n. 22) I, 214–218 and *Tafelband*, pl. 77.

35 Thomsen, *Coinage* (as in n. 31) III, 245–247.



"Picus" to "Faunus", but were all discarded by Giovanni Pansa, who thought instead that the bearded head "potesse rappresentare quella del dio tutelare della schiatta, fondatore della città, e propriamente quella di *Hadranus* o *Hatranus*, nume indigete dei Siculi, dio della guerra e del fuoco".<sup>36</sup> This suggestion was disposed of by Haebler in 1910.<sup>37</sup> Whether Alföldi found inspiration in this tradition cannot however be determined, since he gives no references in this direction.

To return to the main argument: there is no need to postulate a foundation myth involving the "human head in shell" from Hadria, because there is a much more likely explanation. The shell shown on the coin is cone-shaped. It is not possible to determine whether it depicts any particular species. But if the representation can be assumed to be mildly accurate, the shell might belong to the *Charonia*-genus and is then presumably a *charonia lampas*, the only variety that can be found in the Mediterranean.<sup>38</sup> Robin Skeates has recently pointed out the great symbolic importance of the *charonia* shells in Italy and elsewhere in the Mediterranean since Neolithic times. There are clear indications from coins and elsewhere that the *charonia* shell was connected to the seagod Triton, who sometimes is represented blowing into a shell trumpet.<sup>39</sup> There are other cone-shaped shells as well that attracted the attention of ancient Mediterranean cultures.<sup>40</sup>

Not "snail-men" then, but a connection to Triton or generally a result of the importance given to particular shells in Italy since oldest times, should be the explanation for the coin from Hadria. The same explanation seems to apply to the frequent use of the scallop-shell on coins in Rome, Ariminum and elsewhere.<sup>41</sup>

There is little substantiation for Festus' assertion that the people on the Adriatic coast were known as *trachali*, meaning "Schneckenmenschen" or "Schneckenköpfe".

In any case, the largest step remains to be taken, namely to advance from Alföldi's analysis of Festus' passage and the coin from Hadria to the nickname

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36 G. Pansa, "La protome senile dell' Asse di *Hatria*", *RIN* 20 (1907) 517-532, esp. 517.

37 Haebler, *Aes* (as in n. 22) I, 203.

38 See A. P. H. Oliver, *The Hamlyn Guide to Shells of the World* (1980, first publ. 1975) 144f. Referring to the same passage, R. Skeates, "Triton's Trumpet: A Neolithic Symbol in Italy", *OJA* 10 (1991) 17-31, esp. 17, somewhat confusingly claims that the Mediterranean variety is called *Charonia nodifera*.

39 Skeates, "Triton's Trumpet" (as in n. 38).

40 See the broad survey by D. S. Reese, "The Trade of Indo-Pacific Shells into the Mediterranean Basin and Europe", *OJA* 10 (1991) 159-196. Reese mentions no *Charonia* shells, but some other varieties, especially the cone-shaped *Cerithium vulgatum*, found in West Africa and in the Mediterranean, resemble the shell on the coin from Hadria.

41 The scallop-shell is found on coins from Rome, Ariminum, Cales, Luceria, and Venusia; see Thomsen, *Coinage* (as in n. 31) III, 245.

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"Trachala", supposedly given to Constantine. The emperor was not from Ariminum or Hadria, nor was he a *homo maritimus*, as far as we know. Alföldi ends on a sincerely doubtful note: „Man hat ihn [Constantinus] als *irrisor*, *illusor*, *contemptor* (und *circumventor*) verstanden, aber man sieht es kaum, wie der Bedeutungswechsel zustande kam". Still, his final phrase is the one cited above: "perhaps it was just supposed to mean: 'he is slimy and slippery like the head of a snail'", a suggestion that has met with considerable approval.<sup>42</sup>

It remains to be discussed what the real meaning of Constantine's nickname might have been.

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5. In the world history by the Byzantine chronicler pseudo-Symeon, written in the 10th century,<sup>43</sup> there is the following description of Constantine:<sup>44</sup>

ὁ μέγας Κωνσταντῖνος ... εὐρύτερος δὲ τοὺς ὤμους καὶ παχὺς τὸν αὐχένα, ὅθεν καὶ Τραχηλᾶν αὐτὸν ἐπωνόμαζον.

"The great Constantine ... (had) strong shoulders, and a strong neck, and therefore they called him Trachelas"

This passage was taken over almost verbatim by the better-known chronicler Georgios Kedrenos (late 10th/early 11th century).<sup>45</sup> In this passage there is no doubt about the meaning of Constantine's nickname: it was his thick neck that gave him the epithet "Trachelas". This passage in fact caused Raissa Calza to write on Constantine's coin portraits from the decade 310–320: "più che altrove, qui si può notare il collo massiccio e corto dell'imperatore, che gli valse presso i contemporanei il soprannome spregiativo di *Trachellas* (dal collo taurino)".<sup>46</sup> But the value of Calza's opinion is diminished by the fact that she

42 Alföldi, *Constantinus* (as in n. 2) 4 and see n. 4 above.

43 For pseudo-Symeon, see H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner I*, Byzantinisches Handbuch im Rahmen des Handbuches der Altertumswissenschaft V.1 (München 1978) 355.

44 F. Halkin, "Le règne de Constantin d'après la chronique inédite du pseudo-Syméon", *Byzantion* 29–30 (1959–60) 7–27, esp. 11.

45 Ἦν δὲ τῇ ἰδέᾳ ὁ μέγας Κωνσταντῖνος μεσῆλιξ, εὐρύτερος τοὺς ὤμους καὶ παχὺς τὸν αὐχένα, ὅθεν καὶ Τραχηλᾶν αὐτὸν ἐπωνόμαζον; Georgios Kedrenos, *Historiarum Compendium I*, col. 516 (*Patrologia Graeca* 121). This passage is also presented by Marina Torelli in Calza, *Iconografia* (as in n. 10) 34f., while the passage in *Epit. de Caes.* 41.16 is missing from the collection of sources in the work of Calza and Torelli describing Constantine's appearance. Alföldi, *Constantinus* (as in n. 2) 1 cited the passage of pseudo-Symeon (and Kedrenos) as indication that *τραχαλᾶς* can mean "*qui est crasso collo*", but then went on to build his own argument.

46 Calza, *Cronologia* (as in n. 10) 212.

seems unaware of the passage in the *Epitome* where Constantine's nickname "Trachala" appears in a different context (while she could not have known Alföldi's interpretation, which appeared simultaneously).

Pseudo-Symeon's opinion contradicts Alföldi's interpretation, but it cannot be accepted at face value before discussing how the Byzantine scholar could have arrived at his judgement. His physical description of Constantine might have been based on an aitiological conclusion ("because Constantine was called Τραχηλάς he must have had a thick neck"). There might be some cause for suspicion. The part of pseudo-Symeon's chronicle that concerns Rome is unpublished except for the passages about Constantine. We can instead read Kedrenos, who presents nicknames for three other emperors during the period from Nerva to Constantine. In two cases these nicknames are unhistoric and based on false etymologies and misunderstandings. Kedrenos claims that Didius Julianus got the name Didius because he bribed his way to the throne (PG 121, col. 481C), and that Constantius was called Chlorus because of his pale face (PG 121, col. 512C).<sup>47</sup>

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6. We shall next consider the question of literary influences, in order to explain why the epithet "Trachala" appears in the *Epitome* and, with a different meaning, in pseudo-Symeon (copied by Kedrenos), but in no other source.

First a misunderstanding ought to be cleared up. The recent claim that "Trachala" is mentioned also in the Byzantine "Life of Constantine" published by Guidi in 1907 is unfounded.<sup>48</sup> The phrase ὁθεν δὲ καὶ Τραχηλῶν αὐτὸν ἐπονόμαζον used by pseudo-Symeon does *not* appear in Guidi's "Life", which is all the more intriguing, since otherwise pseudo-Symeon and Guidi's anonymous author present practically identical passages giving a physical description of Constantine.<sup>49</sup>

47 However, the claim that the emperor Antoninus received the epithet "Pius" because of his benign rule (PG 121, col. 480A) is found in antiquity as well. The emperor Elagabal is called either "Avitus", "Pseudantoninus", or "Aurelius Antoninus Heliogabalus" (ibid. col. 492A), which undoubtedly is in accordance with the practice of ancient historians.

48 The claim was made by F. Fusco, "Costantino in Niceforo Gregora", in G. Bonamente & F. Fusco (eds.), *Costantino il Grande dall'antichità all'umanesimo I* (Macerata 1992) 433–444, esp. 438. For the "Life of Constantine", based on manuscripts of which none is earlier than the 11th century, see M. Guidi, "Un βίος di Costantino", *RAL* 16 (1907) 304–340, 637–655.

49 For the physical descriptions, see Halkin, "Règne" (as in n. 44) 11, and Guidi, "βίος" (as in n. 48) 319. For a discussion of the implications of this feature, see B. Bleckmann, "Bemerkungen zu den Annales des Nicomachus Flavianus" (*Historia* 44 [1995] 83–99).

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Can we assume that pseudo-Symeon or a source that he was using found the epithet Trachala in the *Epitome*? If so, the *Epitome* would be the only relevant witness, and pseudo-Symeon would be guilty of a later reinterpretation. Or is it possible that the *Epitome* and pseudo-Symeon were using texts that derive from a common source? If so, a mistake by either writer might be to blame for the differing interpretations of Trachala. Thirdly, we might of course be dealing with parallel and independent traditions.

Since the *Epitome* alone among fourth century historical Breviaries mentions the nickname Trachala, it presumably had in part a different source of information than Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, and Festus. If this source can be discovered, it might provide the key to the epithet Trachala. Trachala must be the Latin form of the Greek τραχηλᾶς, but it need not necessarily have been found in a Greek source; as is well-known, the Romans made ample use of Greek loanwords.<sup>50</sup> Now, a Latin historical work that made considerable use of Greek writings was designated as the "principal unknown source" or "Hauptquelle" of the *Epitome* in Jörg Schlumberger's thorough study. According to Schlumberger, we are dealing with the Annals of Nicomachus Flavianus (which are completely lost).<sup>51</sup> Although this suggestion did not persuade everybody at first,<sup>52</sup> recent research has stressed this possibility.<sup>53</sup>

Other scholars have put forward different suggestions. In particular, T. D. Barnes has argued that the *Epitome de Caesaribus* used Eunapius for the history

50 Cf. Quint. *Inst.* 1.5.70: *Sed res tota [the formation of word-compounds] magis Graecos decet, nobis minus succedit, nec id fieri natura puto, sed alienis favemus; ideoque cum κρυπαύχενα mirati simus, incurvicervicum vix a risu defendimus.* Incidentally, here is an epithet which refers to the neck.

51 Schlumberger, *Epitome* (as in n. 4) 234–248, esp. 240. On the lost *Annals*, see also J. Schlumberger, „Die verlorenen Annales des Nicomachus Flavianus: ein Werk über Geschichte der römischen Republik oder Kaiserzeit?“, *BHAC 1982/1983* (Bonn 1985) 305–329, esp. 324f., plausibly objecting to some recent suggestions that the *Annals* did in fact deal with Roman Republican history. See more recently Th. Grünewald, „Der letzte Kampf des Heidentums in Rom? Zur posthumen Rehabilitierung des Virius Nicomachus Flavianus“, *Historia* 41 (1992) 462–487, esp. 471–473, who does not take a clear stand on what period the *Annals* dealt with.

52 Against it are, e.g., T. D. Barnes in *CPh* 71 (1976) 258–268, esp. 267f.; R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire* (Liverpool 1981) 23f.: "ingenious but implausible"; J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London 1989) 476f. n. 6. For earlier views, see Schlumberger, *Epitome* (as in n. 4) 10–13; cf. W. Den Boer in *Gnomon* 51 (1979) 165–171, esp. 170.

53 Schlumberger's thesis is accepted by, e.g., Neri, "Fonti" (as in n. 2) 279, and Fr. Paschoud, "Valentinien travesti, ou: De la malignité d'Ammien", in J. den Boeft/D. den Hengst/H. C. Teitler (eds.), *Cognitio Gestorum. The Historiographic Art of Ammianus Marcellinus* (North Holland 1992) 67–84, esp. 81, who has supported this solution in a number of earlier writings.

of the fourth century.<sup>54</sup> This hypothesis is based on an earlier dating, ca. A.D. 380, of the publication of Eunapius' first edition of his *"History"*. The traditional date, ca. A.D. 395, would make it impossible for the *Epitome* to have used Eunapius' work. Barnes' thesis has made considerable impact,<sup>55</sup> but the traditional date still has its supporters.<sup>56</sup>

On the whole, this particular sector of "Quellenforschung" is complicated, but the possibility of an influence from Nicomachus Flavianus' lost *Annals* and/or Eunapius ought to be kept in mind.

The sources of the Byzantine chroniclers present no lesser problems. The difficulties in determining how pseudo-Symeon and his predecessors acquired their material are manifold. Pseudo-Symeon is a compilation from many previous chroniclers, above all Theophanes and Georgios Monachos, who also dealt with the Roman emperors.<sup>57</sup> Theophanes (ca. 760–818) wrote a chronicle starting in A.D. 285, while the chronicle of Georgios Monachos covered the period from Adam to A.D. 842.<sup>58</sup> The passages in both these chronicles dealing with Constantine are, however, known, and the epithet Trachala does not appear.

As recently stressed by Bruno Bleckmann, many Byzantine chroniclers up to Zonaras in the 12th century made use of a good source containing historically valuable information about the Roman Empire. This source is identical with or very closely related to the Chronicle of Petros Patrikios.<sup>59</sup> Through an intermediary source (the so-called "*Epitome*", not to be confounded with the *Epitome de Caesaribus*) the so-called "*Good Source*" provided material for, among others, pseudo-Symeon and Kedrenos.<sup>60</sup>

54 Barnes, *CPh* 71 (as in n. 52) 265–268; idem, *The Sources of the Historia Augusta* (Bruxelles 1978) 114–123, esp. 119f.

55 Blockley, *Historians* (as in n. 52) 4f. and 24. Matthews, *Empire* (as in n. 52) dates Ammianus Marcellinus, who according to him used Eunapius (*op. cit.*, 161–175. 504 n. 67), earlier, to ca. 390 (*op. cit.*, 476 n. 6). This earlier dating of Ammianus' work is independently argued also by C. W. Fornara, "Studies in Ammianus Marcellinus I: The Letter of Libanius and Ammianus' Connection with Antioch", *Historia* 41 (1992) 328–344, esp. 338. Various opinions on whether Ammianus used Eunapius are also recorded by B. Bleckmann, *Die Reichskrise des III. Jahrhunderts in der spätantiken und byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung (Untersuchungen zu den nachdionischen Quellen der Chronik des Johannes Zonaras)* (München 1992) 397 n. 10.

56 The question has been especially forcefully argued by François Paschoud in a number of writings, see most recently his *Zosime III.2* (ed. & comm.) (Paris 1989) 90f.; cf. Paschoud, *Valentinien* (as in n. 53), 68.

57 Hunger, *Literatur* (as in n. 43) 355.

58 See Hunger, *Literatur* (as in n. 43) 334–339 and 347f., respectively.

59 On the relation between Petros Patrikios and the so-called "Anonymus post Dionem" (or "Continuator Dionis") see Bleckmann, *Reichskrise* (as in n. 55) 51–53; for a different view D. S. Potter, *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire. A Historical Commentary on the 'Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle'* (Oxford 1990) 395–397.

60 Bleckmann, *Reichskrise* (as in n. 55) 44.

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Concerning Kedrenos' sources (in the case of "Trachala", identical to those used by pseudo-Symeon), Bleckmann supports the idea that our specific passage may have derived, through intermediaries, from the so-called "Leoquelle" (which gives a fuller version of the "Good Source" than the Byzantine "Epitome"). This again points to Petros Patrikios.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, as a possible source for the passage mentioning "Trachala" in the *Epitome de Caesaribus* we have the "Annals of Nicomachus Flavianus" (rather than Eunapius), while the corresponding passages of pseudo-Symeon and Kedrenos might derive from the "Chronicle of Petros Patrikios". Is there any way in which these findings can be correlated?

The *Epitome de Caesaribus* and the work of Petros Patrikios ("Anon. post Dionem"), known only from fragments, share at least one passage, the claim that Constantine called Trajan *herba parietaria* (*Epit. de Caes.* 41.13 and *FHG* IV, ed. Müller, 199 no. 15,2 = U. Boissevain [ed.], *Excerpta de sententiis* [Berolini 1906] 271 Petr. Patrikios fragm. 191: βοτάνη τοίχου). Fragment 191 of Petros contains mocking characterizations of other emperors besides Trajan, all said to have been used by Constantine. Such a context would have been suited for presenting also the popular dictum "Trachala" about Constantine himself.

There is also another passage in the *Epitome* that shows unmistakable affinities with the tradition to which Kedrenos belongs: the way of presenting the death of the emperor Florianus (*Epit. de Caes.* 36.2) is similar to the version concerning the emperor Quintillus' suicide that has influenced Zosimus, Zonaras, and Kedrenos. The passage is absent from other late fourth century historical works, which shows that the *Epitome* and the tradition used by Kedrenos at least occasionally based their narrative on a common source.<sup>62</sup>

Petros Patrikios may have derived the passage in fragm. 191 directly or indirectly from Eunapius.<sup>63</sup> But more likely, there is another explanation. According to the recent conclusions by Bleckmann, the "Annals of Nicomachus Flavianus" were one source of Petros Patrikios, either directly, or more probably, through a Greek intermediary (of the fourth century). This Greek intermediary was used by Eunapius, which explains certain parallelisms. Petros Patrikios, in turn, provided valuable material for the Byzantine "Epitome" and the

61 B. Bleckmann, "Die Chronik des Johannes Zonaras und eine pagane Quelle zur Geschichte Konstantins", *Historia* 40 (1991) 343–365, esp. 354 n. 49 for the possible origin of the above passage of Kedrenos in the "Leoquelle". On the "Leoquelle", the "Epitome", the "Anon. post Dionem" and Petros Patrikios see now Bleckmann, *Reichskrise* (as in n. 55) 43–53. For Petros Patrikios, see also Hunger, *Literatur* (as in n. 43) 301.

62 Thus Schlumberger, *Epitome* (as in n. 4) 167; doubted by Bleckmann, *Reichskrise* (as in n. 55) 296.

63 Barnes, *CPh* 71 (as in n. 52) 267. Hunger, *Literatur* (as in n. 43) 301 also conjectures that Petros Patrikios made use of Eunapius.

"*Leoquelle*" (whence pseudo-Symeon and Kedrenos).<sup>64</sup> Thus, the "*Annals of Nicomachus Flavianus*" can be seen as a source common to the *Epitome de Caesaribus* and the Byzantine chroniclers pseudo-Symeon and Kedrenos. Perhaps these "*Annals*" are therefore the ultimate origin of Constantine's epithet "Trachala".

A broader investigation of Latin/Greek and Byzantine "Quellenforschung" and imperial epithets may produce a more conclusive result. One would for instance like to know why, besides the two imperial nicknames Trachala and *herba parietaria* that provide connections between the *Epitome de Caesaribus* and other texts, there are three other imperial nicknames that appear in no other ancient source. The *Epitome* refers to Maximinus "Thrax" (25,1),<sup>65</sup> Licinius Valerianus "cognomento Colobius" (32,1),<sup>66</sup> and "Equitius" Probus (36,2).<sup>67</sup> From our particular point of view, it is noteworthy that they are all absent from Kedrenos' text.

As things stand now, we must return to the discussion of the epithet Trachala itself without having been able to trace its provenance with any certitude. However for the time being, the lost "*Annals of Nicomachus Flavianus*" seem to provide the best common denominator explaining the appearance of the nickname Trachala.<sup>68</sup>

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7. Two alternatives to Alföldi's explanation for "Trachala" present themselves,<sup>69</sup> both permitting the interpretation that Trachala may well be a compli-

64 See Bleckmann, *Reichskrise* (as in n. 55) 398f. for a categorical refutation of the influence of Eunapius, and pp. 396–415 for an analysis of the relations between the sources.

65 See also Schlumberger, *Epitome* (as in n. 4) 137.

66 Schlumberger, *Epitome* (as in n. 4) 145f.: „Ohne jegliche Parallele ist die Nachricht über einen Beinamen *Colobius* ... Die Forschung weiß nichts damit anzufangen“, but see now Bleckmann, *Reichskrise* (as in n. 55) 110 "*Colobius* = der Verstümmelte", from Gr. κολοβός, referring to P. Michelotto, "A proposito di *Epit. de Caesaribus* 32,1, *cognomento Colobius*", *RIL* 114 (1980) 197–205 (*non vidi*). In his forthcoming study "Fiction in the *Epitome*?" in the *Papers from the Historia-Augusta-Colloquium in Barcelona 1993*, A.R. Birley suggests that the nickname is spurious and that it originated from a misunderstanding of the Greek original used by the writer of the *Epitome de Caesaribus*. I am most grateful to Prof. Birley for kindly showing me a copy of his forthcoming paper.

67 According to Schlumberger, *Epitome* (above n. 4) 166, the name is derived from "glaubwürdiger Überlieferung".

68 A different suggestion is put forward by Baldwin, "Descriptions" (as in n. 14) 12, who suggests that Kedrenos derived the epithet Trachala from Greek historians such as Bearchius or Praxagoras, contemporaries of Constantine. But Baldwin was unaware of the fact that Trachala is first mentioned by the *Epitome de Caesaribus*.

69 There is also a third alternative interpretation, which will only be mentioned here. O. Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt* I (3rd ed. Berlin 1910) 52 interpreted

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mentary epithet. The other passage where the author of the *Epitome* uses the word *blandus* is important here. Concerning Helvius Pertinax, the *Epitome* says: *Blandus magis quam beneficus, unde eum Graeco nomine χρηστολόγον appellavere* (*Epit. de Caes.* 18.4).

Pertinax is called Chrestologus ("he who talks nicely") also in the *Historia Augusta*. Here the two above statements, which are found united in the *Epitome*, appear separately: *SHA Pert.* 12.1: *eloquentia mediocri et magis blandus quam benignus nec umquam creditus simplex*, and *SHA Pert.* 13.5: *omnes, qui libere fabulas conferabant, male Pertinacem loquebantur, Chrestologum eum appellantes, qui bene loqueretur et male faceret*. In a study involving these passages, Jacques Schwartz stated that *Epit. de Caes.* 18.4 "a uni, par un *unde* mal justifié, deux éléments de la description de Pertinax dont le premier ne s'applique qu'à un trait de caractère", concluding that the *Epitome* must have been the source for the *Historia Augusta* on this occasion.<sup>70</sup> Regardless of whether this conclusion is correct (it seems more likely that the *Epitome* had been drawing together two separate passages in the *Historia Augusta* or in a common source<sup>71</sup>), it opens up the possibility that we may be dealing with another "*unde* mal justifié" in the passage dealing with Constantine. The Epitomator may have combined two passages that originally had no strictly logical connection.<sup>72</sup>

*Epit. de Caes.* 41.16 to mean that when Constantine tried to be pleasantly entertaining, those present experienced his words as jests and contempt. On "Trachala" Seeck wrote: „Das noch nicht genügend erklärte Wort *trachala* ist wohl nichts anderes als die onomatopoeische Nachbildung eines kurzen heiseren Auflachens (vgl. καγχάλαω)" (*op. cit.*, Anhang Bd. I [4th ed. Stuttgart 1922] 469). Halkin, "Règne" (as in n. 44) 11 calls this a "commentaire fantaisiste", but it is referred to by A. Piganiol, *L'Empire chrétien* (325–395) (2nd ed. Paris 1972) 77 n. 7.

70 J. Schwartz, "Histoire Auguste et Epitome", *BHAC 1977/1978* (Bonn 1980) 219–224, esp. 221. Before him, a similar opinion was advocated by F. Kolb, *Literarische Beziehungen zwischen Cassius Dio, Herodian und der Historia Augusta* (Bonn 1972) 63 n. 332, who however did not exclude "Enmann's Lost Kaisergeschichte" (= *EKG*) as the source for the passage on Pertinax. The complex character of the passages of the *Epitome* dealing with Pertinax is also noted by Schlumberger, *Epitome* (as in n. 4) 110–112, who regards Marius Maximus as the ultimate source, in part reworked by the *EKG* and the "Hauptquelle".

71 Schlumberger does not think that the *Historia Augusta* made use of the *Epitome*. This is specifically argued for the passages on Pertinax in Schlumberger, *Epitome* (as in n. 4), 110f., where it is argued that the information in *Epit. de Caes.* 18.4–6 ultimately derives from Marius Maximus, through an intermediary source. Cf. also J. Schlumberger, "Die Epitome de Caesaribus und die Historia Augusta", *BHAC 1972/1974* (Bonn 1976) 201–219, esp. 205.

72 This is indeed the view held by Neri, "Fonti" (as in n. 2) 255, and Neri, *Princeps* (as in n. 4) 184, although with a different explanation than that offered here. As shown by Barnes, *CPh* 71 (as in n. 52) 267, chapter 41 in the *Epitome*, dealing with the life and times of Constantine, is to a high degree a mix of material of different provenience. Blockley, *Historians* (as in n. 52) 101 considers *Epit. de Caes.* 41.4 and 41.22f. as deriving from Eunapius.



Therefore we must consider the possibility that the passage *Constantinus ... proverbio vulgari Trachala ... nominatus* has been separated from its context. It may originally not have appeared in such an ambiguous or even negative context as it now does in the *Epitome*.<sup>73</sup> If we take as a starting point the obvious meaning of *Trachala*, it should derive from the Greek word for neck, ὁ τράχαλος.

Firstly, the Greek verb τραχηλιάω, "to arch the neck proudly", may therefore be of relevance here (although it was not mentioned by Alföldi).<sup>74</sup> The word was used by late antique writers, and seems to provide a neat explanation for the epithet *Trachala* in the passage in *Epit. de Caes.* 41.16: *Irrisor potius quam blandus. Unde proverbio vulgari Trachala ...*

If the Greek verb τραχηλιάω gave rise to Constantine's epithet *Trachala*, it might well mean that the epithet was intended in a non-complimentary way. Not "slimy snails", but the emperor's *superbia* would explain his nickname *Trachala*. This was also suggested by Bleckmann, who wrote that Kedrenos' Byzantine sources „könnte hier die Notiz aus einem antiken Autor mißverstanden haben, in der nur im übergetragenen Sinne von einem 'steifen Nacken' des hochmütigen Konstantin die Rede war".<sup>75</sup>

But the ancient evidence involving metaphorical references to the neck is not unambiguous. To be sure, in Latin texts, references to the neck (*collum* or *cervix*) were sometimes used in describing unrestrained and immoderate behaviour, as in *per cervices enim superbia significata est eorum, qui in nullo se reprehendi volunt* (*Prosp. in psalm* 128.4) or *si manumissus ... cervices adversus eum [scil. patronum] erexerit* (*Cod. Iust.* 6.7.2 pr.). On the other hand, carrying the head high on an upright neck is a sign of *libertas*, as testified by Gregory the Great: *sicut in malis cervix superbiam, sic in bonis libertatis erectionem signat* (*Greg. M. mor.* 13.18).<sup>76</sup> By comparison, the prisoners in the triumphal procession described by Ovid (*Tr.* 4.2.21–24) bow their heads: *vinclaque captiva reges cervice gerentes / ante coronatos ire videbit equos. / et cernit vultus aliis pro tempore versos ...*<sup>77</sup>

73 On the sequence in *Epit. de Caes.* 41.16 following the introduction of the epithet *Trachala*, Barnes, *CPh* 71 (as in n. 52) 267, writes "[it] clearly reflects the judgement of an eastern pagan, for whom Constantine's war against Licinius (316–17 and 324) marked significant points in his reign".

74 See Liddell-Scott-Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 1811; cf. *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* VII, 2370: τραχηλιάω = *collum sive cervicem attollo, superbio, ferocio*.

75 Bleckmann, "Chronik" (as in n. 61) 354 n. 49.

76 See *ThLL* III (1907) 1658. 1663 s.v. *collum* (Probst) and *ThLL* III (1907) 946. 950 s.v. *cervix* (Probst), whence the examples have been borrowed. *Superbia* appears occasionally also in descriptions of the neck by ancient physiognomists, see R. Foerster, *Scriptores Physiognomonici Graeci et Latini* (Lipsiae 1893) vol. II, e.g. 72, 74, 99f.

77 "Beholding the kings with chains upon their captive throats marching before the garlanded horses, seeing some countenances turned to earth as becomes captives." (transl. A. L. Wheeler, Loeb Class. Libr.).

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In this context, it is also interesting to read a passage by the anonymous Arian commentator on the *Gospel of S. Matthew*, dating from about the 5th century: *Unde et homini, quia acceperant a Deo scientiam Dei, erecti creati sint ... Sicut ergo gibbus cameli, qui videtur esse erectio sublimitatis corporis eius, ipse est magis depressio ejus, et deformitas: ideo nec collum eius sursum erigere potest gibbo depressus: sic idolatria gentium ...*<sup>78</sup>

These observations on the importance of an upright neck and head are supported by some remarks by Quintilian on gesturing: *Praecipuum vero in actione sicut in corpore ipso caput est cum ad illum, de quo dixi, decorem, tum etiam ad significationem. Decoris illa sunt, ut sit primo rectum et secundum naturam. Nam et deiecto humilitas et supino arrogantia et in latus inclinato languor et praeduro ac rigente barbaria quaedam mentis ostenditur ...* (Quint. inst. 11.3.68f.).<sup>79</sup>

But interpreting a gesture of the head is unfortunately not always that straightforward. A somewhat different interpretation of a head held low appears from the translation by R. C. Blockley of a passage from Olympiodorus concerning Constantius III, emperor for a short period in A.D. 421: "In public processions Constantius was downcast and sullen, a man with bulging eyes, a long neck and a broad head, who always slumped over the neck of the horse he was riding, darting glances here and there out of the corners of his eyes, so that all saw in him "a mien worthy of 'a tyrant'", as the saying goes. But at banquets and parties he was so cheerful and affable ..."<sup>80</sup>

Regardless of whether some words might be given a different interpretation – e.g., is Constantius III described as having "big" or "bulging" eyes (μεγαλόφθαλμος), a "long" or a "thick" neck (μεγαλαύχην)? – in this case we have not a prisoner but a ruler lowering his head in a gesture which is given a negative interpretation.

But a ruler may bow his head also as a sign of benevolence. From passing mentions in the well-known work based on pictorial sources by Richard Bril-

78 For the text, see PG 56, 810 (wrongly attributed to Johannes Chrysostomos); for the text and its date see M. Simonetti, "Note sull' *opus imperfectum in Mathaeum*", *Studi medievali* ser. 3, 10 (1969) 117–200, esp. 117–120.

79 "The head, being the chief member of the body, has a corresponding importance in delivery, serving not merely to produce graceful effect, but to illustrate our meaning as well. To secure grace it is essential that the head should be carried naturally and erect. For a droop suggests humility, while if it be thrown back it seems to express arrogance, if inclined to one side it gives an impression of languor, while if it is held too stiffly and rigidly it appears to indicate a rude and savage temper." (transl. H. E. Butler, Loeb Class. Libr.).

80 Blockley, *Historians* (as in n. 52) 186f. fragment 23: Ἦν δὲ Κωνσταντῖος ἐν μὲν ταῖς προόδοις κατηφής καὶ σκυθρωπός, μεγαλόφθαλμός τε καὶ μεγαλαύχην καὶ πλατυκέφαλος, νεύων διόλου ἐπὶ τὸν τράχηλον τοῦ φέροντος αὐτὸν ἵππου, καὶ οὕτω τῇδε κάκεισε λοξὸν ἐκτέμπων τὸ ὄμμα, ὥς (τὸ τοῦ λόγου) πᾶσι φαίνεσθαι εἶδος ἄξιον τυραννίδος. ἐν δὲ δείπνοις καὶ συμποσίοις τερπνὸς καὶ πολιτικός, ...

liant one can, for instance, gather one further interpretation of a head held low: it can indicate benevolence on the part of the ruler.<sup>81</sup> Thus, we have a diametrically opposite interpretation to that suggested by Olympiodorus.

Perhaps a wider investigation of gestures involving the head in classical antiquity might enable us to discern a clearer pattern in this question.<sup>82</sup>

Returning to Constantine's epithet *Trachala*, we can say that it might have been derived from a metaphorical reference to the neck indicating *superbia*. But there is also the possibility that an upright neck might have positive connotations, indicating e.g. *libertas*. This somewhat unsatisfactory outcome prompts us to look further.

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8. The second alternative is to consider that when discussing physical traits in antiquity, physiognomic theories are clearly relevant. We must ask what importance ancient physiognomists attributed to the neck, in order to understand better what intentions or concepts may lie behind ancient descriptions focussing on the neck.<sup>83</sup> The answer is quite clear. Having a strong, thick, and not too short neck was considered a virtue. A thin and curved neck, or a short and thick one, was considered a negative quality. A passage from Juvenal (3.86–89) will illustrate this point:

*Quid quod adulandi gens prudentissima laudat  
sermonem indocti, faciem deformis amici,  
et longum invalidi collum cervicibus aequat  
Herculis Antaeum procul a tellure tenentis.*<sup>84</sup>

One part of the physiognomic "science" was based on comparisons with animals that were considered to have certain qualities. In the third century B.C. *Physiognomonika* of the so-called pseudo-Aristotle, the lion is considered the most noble of animals; it has a neck of good length and moderate thickness. In

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81 R. Brilliant, *Gesture and Rank in Roman Art. The Use of Gestures to denote Status in Roman Sculpture and Coinage* (New Haven Conn. 1963) passim (containing however no particular treatment of the gestures of the head).

82 On this topic, there are only some brief mentions in J.-C. Schmitt, *Il gesto nel medioevo* (Bari – Roma 1990; French orig. 1990) 21–42, "L'eredità antica".

83 On the subject in general, see E. C. Evans, *Physiognomics in the Ancient World*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Soc. n.s. 59,5 (Philadelphia 1969).

84 "What of this again, that these people are experts in flattery, and will commend the talk of an illiterate, or the beauty of a deformed friend, and compare the scraggy neck of some weakling to the brawny throat of Hercules when holding up Antaeus high above the earth." (transl. G. G. Ramsay, Loeb Class. Libr.).

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contrast, the panther, a much inferior animal, has a very long and thin neck.<sup>85</sup> Incidentally, both pseudo-Symeon and the anonymous author of Guidi's "*Life*" compare Constantine to a lion when describing his eyes and face: τὸ δὲ ὄμμα παραπλήσιον λέοντος, and εὐόφθαλμος τὸ ὄμμα παραπλήσιον λεόν-  
τειον καὶ ξανθοφύης τοῖς θριξί.<sup>86</sup>

The second-century physiognomic writer Polemo and the fourth-century Anonymus Latinus present many references to the neck. Polemo states in his description of the Greek race, considered superior to all others: *Est autem purus Graecus ... nec parvi nec magni capitis, cuius in collo crassitudo et fortitudo*.<sup>87</sup> Common to both writers (the Anonymus admits to using Polemo) is that the neck is given considerable importance. The eyes are by far the most important features, followed by the rest of the face, and followed in turn by the neck.<sup>88</sup> They devote considerable space to an analysis of various types of necks. The ideal neck is characterized by Polemo thus: *ubi collum moderatae longitudinis et brevitatis et angustiae et crassitiei atque eius in stirpe locum moderatum esse vides cum simul robustum est, eius possessorem ob strenuitatem intellegentiam docilitatem omnesque lauda virtutes*.<sup>89</sup> Having a neck too short and thick, or too long and thin, or too rigid, or too unstable, are all indications of various defects in character.<sup>90</sup>

It would require a separate study to deal in detail with every passage pertaining to features of the neck in the writings of the physiognomists, imperial biographers and historians. Here it must suffice to point to one late antique instance, the emperor Julian. We find his neck described in several sources. These passages bear out the notion that focussing on the powerful neck of a ruler may indeed be a compliment (while describing his neck as weak is derogatory).

In the imperial panegyric delivered in A.D. 362 on the occasion of his consulate, Claudius Mamertinus describes Julian's arrival, and makes special

85 Foerster, *Scriptores* (as in n. 76) I, 50–53. Similarly the second century A.D. writer Polemo, see *ibid.* p. 172; p. 196 *collo crasso cervice robusto* (lion); p. 198 *collo angusto* (panther). Polemo's text is preserved only in an Arabic version. References are throughout to the Latin translation by G. Hoffmann.

86 Halkin, "Règne" (as in n. 44) 11 and Guidi, "βίος" (as in n. 48) 319.

87 Foerster, *Scriptores* (as in n. 76) I, 242 = Polemo ch. 35.

88 Foerster, *Scriptores* (as in n. 76) I, 166–168; II, 62 (ch. 45).

89 Foerster, *Scriptores* (as in n. 76) I, 218–222, esp. 220. The corresponding passage of the Anonymus Latinus is in Foerster, *Scriptores* (as in n. 76) II, 72–77, esp. 72f. (ch. 53): *Quae ergo moderate et proluxa et vasta cervix est ac minus rotunda, et virtutem animi approbat et habilis est corpore*.

90 For passages in Polemo not mentioned above, see Foerster, *Scriptores* (as in n. 76) I, 128. 160. 194. 218–222. 258. 262. 270. 274. 276. For the Anonymus, see Foerster, *Scriptores* (as in n. 76) II, 72–77. 96. 99f. 112. 120f. 123. 129. 137. 139. 141–143. For conclusions similar to those advanced here, see also R. Asmus, "Vergessene Physiognomonika", *Philologus* 65 N.F. 19 (1906) 410–424, esp. 410–412.

mention of the emperor's strong neck: *sudorum rivos per fortia colla manantes* (Paneg. lat. 3 [11].6.4 [ed. Mynors]). Whether Julian really had a strong neck is another matter. Gregory of Nazianzus gives a totally different description of Julian: Οὐδενὸς γὰρ ἐδόκει μοι σημεῖον εἶναι χρηστοῦ ἀνὰ χεῖρ ἀπαγῆς ... (Greg. Naz. or. 5.23 in PG 35, col. 692B), i.e. his neck was unsteady. The physiognomists repeatedly stressed *cervicis laxitas signum adfectionis*,<sup>91</sup> and the neck is clearly described in a way that is intended to show Julian in a negative light. Other passages show that Gregory was indeed familiar with physiognomical thought.<sup>92</sup> This explains why Gregory on another occasion gives a very different description of Julian's neck, which, however, once again must be given a negative interpretation, in terms of physiognomy: *cervix inflexibilis* (mentioned by Cassiod. *hist. tripart.*, PL 69, col. 1065C).

Ammianus Marcellinus also was undoubtedly familiar with physiognomical theories.<sup>93</sup> This is transparent from, among other things, his description of Julian's appearance (Amm. Marc. 25.4.22), which is shown in a highly positive light and contains many features that are reminiscent of the lion.<sup>94</sup> Among these features, one notices that his neck was thick and somewhat bent (*opima et incurva cervice*). According to E. C. Evans, "although this may be regarded as indicative of affectation, and is generally a very unfavourable sign, a thick neck is also a sign of a fierce temper, as in bulls".<sup>95</sup> Considering the overall aim of Ammianus' description, the latter and more positive interpretation is likely to be correct.

This brief survey leads to the conclusion that we must not be uncritical when encountering descriptions, even eyewitness-descriptions, of late antique rulers. To a large degree, physiognomical theories and the writer's bias may account for the features highlighted in the descriptions.

This fourth-century physiognomical interest may well account for the focus on Constantine's neck, which presumably gave rise to the epithet *Trachala*.

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9. It is time to sum up. Giving Constantine's epithet *Trachala* the sophisticated interpretation "snailman" or "slimy like the head of a snail", as suggested by Alföldi, has little to recommend itself.

The epithet "*Trachala*" is presumably derived either from the Greek word *τραχηλιάω* (to arch one's neck proudly) or from *ὁ τράχηλος / τράχαλος* (neck). In the first case, it may stigmatize an unrestrained behaviour. The

91 As stressed by Asmus, „*Physiognomonika*“ (as in n. 90) 412.

92 Asmus, „*Physiognomonika*“ (as in n. 90) 410. On Gregory and physiognomy see also Evans, *Physiognomics* (as in n. 83) 77–80.

93 See Amm. Marc. 15.8.16 and Evans, *Physiognomics* (as in n. 83) 75f.

94 Evans, *Physiognomics* (as in n. 83) 76.

95 Evans, *Physiognomics* (as in n. 83) 76.

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textual context where the nickname Trachala appears seems to speak in favour of this. However, a detailed analysis shows that the passage in question may have been excerpted from a different context.

We are therefore left with the possibility that Trachala refers to a powerful neck, either in the literal sense (as has been shown above, there are portraits of Constantine that might well have caused such an epithet), or metaphorically. We have seen that attention was paid both to the form and the shape of the neck when describing good or bad rulers in antiquity. The appellation Trachala may have been intended not in a pejorative sense, but as a sign of respect. Nevertheless, the possibility that it denoted unrestrained behaviour, *superbia*, cannot be ruled out.

Finally we need to consider when, by whom, and why the epithet was introduced. These questions are important, not least when studying the nicknaming of Roman emperors in general.

The *Epitome de Caesaribus*, written towards the end of the fourth century, is our only ancient source for Constantine's nickname. Our survey of "Quellenforschung" indicates that the *Epitome* may have found the epithet in the *Annals* of Nicomachus Flavianus. However, since these *Annals* must have been written only a short time before the *Epitome de Caesaribus* and some 50 years after the death of Constantine, they can hardly be the original source of the dictum.

The *Epitome* declares that a *proverbium vulgare* had introduced the nickname; the inference is that it occurred during Constantine's lifetime. The claim that the common people had invented the nickname may be a piece of literary convention, or it may be true. There is evidence for contemporary popular nicknames and epithets of a pejorative kind directed at emperors during the fourth century.<sup>96</sup> Concerning Constantine, some passages by Zosimos imply critical attitudes towards the emperor among the people of Rome (Zos. 2.29.5; 2.30.1), and Libanius is quite outspoken about such occurrences (Liban. *or.* 19.19; 20.24). The consul Ablabius, although a man trusted by the emperor, is claimed to have affixed secretly the following satirical verses to the door of the palace: *Saturni aurea saecla quis requirat? / sunt haec gemmea, sed Neroniana* (Sid. Apoll. *ep.* 5.8.2).<sup>97</sup>

It would be no surprise if an emperor as controversial as Constantine had received pejorative epithets in some circles. It need not even have been rivals for the purple throne or disappointed pagans among the people or the senate that used pejorative epithets. Among the Christians, the African Donatists must have felt resentment that Constantine did not support their case. In fact, the

96 Matthews, *Empire* (as in n. 52) 162f. and 504 n. 72 on invectives against Jovian after the retreat from Nisibis. See also J. G. Kempf, *Romanorum sermonis castrensis reliquiae*, Jahrb. f. class. Philologie Suppl. Bd. 26 (Leipzig 1901) 354–362.

97 "Who would now want the golden age of Saturn? Ours is a diamond age – of Nero's pattern" (transl. W. B. Anderson, Loeb Class. Lib.).

story of how the Donatists for over three years (312–315) tried to get access to Constantine in order to present their case against their Catholic opponents, only to have his verdict turn against them in the end, might even fit the first sentence in *Epit. de Caes.* 41.16: *irrisor potius quam blandus*.<sup>98</sup>

Still, the use of a nickname among the common people in some part of the Roman world would not automatically mean that it was recorded for posterity. It needs someone to record it.

If the nickname is a pejorative one, someone hostile to the object is presumably needed in order for it to be recorded. In Constantine's case, the pagan senator Nicomachus Flavianus would be just such a man.<sup>99</sup> Another eminently hostile writer was, of course, Eunapius. But the existence of these hostile writers does not necessarily mean that the name Trachala was intended originally as a pejorative epithet. On the contrary, precisely because there is a possibility that Trachala was recorded by a writer with anti-Constantinian bias, the name may have been adapted for the writer's own needs.

Since we have seen that Trachala can also be given various positive explanations, the possibility that this nickname, when and if used during Constantine's lifetime, was intended in a complimentary way must be seriously considered. It might have been merely descriptive ("someone with a strong neck"), but it might also have been used metaphorically or from a physiognomic point of view ("strong, good, upright ruler").

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98 On the Donatists and Constantine, see recently e.g. Millar, *Emperor* (as in n. 8) 584–588; K. M. Girardet, „Die Petition der Donatisten an Kaiser Konstantin (Frühjahr 313) – historische Voraussetzungen und Folgen“, *Chiron* 19 (1989) 185–206; idem, „Das Reichskonkizil von Rom (313) – Urteil, Einspruch, Folgen“, *Historia* 41 (1992) 104–116; J. Bleicken, *Constantin der Große und die Christen* (München 1992) 43–52. According to Optatus (ed. C. Ziwsa 1893, *CSEL* 26) 1.23 Constantine answered the Donatists *pleno livore*, and later (Opt. 1.25): *et tamen Donatus appellandum esse credidit. ad quam appellationem Constantinus imperator sic respondit: "o rabida furoris audacia! sicut in causis gentilium fieri solet, appellandum episcopus credidit ..."*. Regardless of whether the version by Optatus is an accurate description of the proceedings (doubted by Girardet, „Petition“ [as above] 189), his work was published ca. 366/67 and its content could therefore have been known to the writer of the *Epitome de Caesaribus*.

99 On the intellectual milieu in which Nicomachus Flavianus wrote, see recently Grünewald, „Kampf“ (as in n. 51).

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