Roman Ludi Saeculares from the Republic to Empire

by

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Abstract

This dissertation provides the first comprehensive analysis of the Roman Ludi Saeculares, or "Saecular Games", from their mythic founding in the sixth century BCE until their final celebration in 248 CE. The Ludi Saeculares were a series of religious celebrations held at Rome every saeculum ("age", "generation"), an interval of 100 or 110 years. The argument contains two major threads: an analysis of the origins and development of the Ludi Saeculares themselves, and the use of the term saeculum in imperial rhetoric in literary, epigraphic, and numismatic sources from early Republic to the fifth century CE.

First, an investigation into Republican sacrifices that constitute part of the lineage of the Ludi Saeculares reveals that these rites were in origin called "Ludi Tarentini", and were a Valerian gentilician cult that came under civic supervision in 249 BCE. Next, it is shown that in his Saecular Games of 17 BCE, Augustus appropriated the central rites of the Valerian cult, transforming them into "Ludi Saeculares" through a new association with the concept of the saeculum, and thereby asserting his role as restorer of the Republic and founder of a new age.

The argument then turns to the development of saeculum rhetoric throughout the imperial period, intertwined with the history of the Ludi Saeculares. The fragmentary evidence for the Games of Claudius, Domitian, Antonius Pius, Septimius Severus, and Philip is analysed in greater detail and in the context of the wider history of the Ludi Saeculares. At the same time, a close study of saeculum references across various media demonstrates that in years in which the Saecular Games could not be held, an emperor could refer to the saeculum of his reign in official coinage and inscriptions as an expression of imperial identity and authority over time. The study ends with an investigation of the cessation of these Games
under Constantine I, likely due to the influence of Christianity, and shows that the Ludi Saeculares ceased to be held after 248 CE: references to the Saecular Games in the reigns of later emperors are shown to be misinterpretations of ancient texts or coin legends.
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# Contents

1 Introduction 1

2 The Ludi Saeculares in the Republic 5
   2.1 Ancient sources for Ludi Saeculares in the Republic 5
   2.2 Chronologies of Republican Ludi Saeculares 15
   2.3 Textual problems in Censorinus and Zosimus 17
   2.4 Modern scholarship on Republican Ludi Saeculares 22
   2.5 Re-evaluation of the origin of the rites at the Tarentum: The Valerian connection 26
   2.6 Re-evaluating the Ludi Saeculares in the Republic 32
   2.7 Conclusion 36

3 The Ludi Saeculares of Augustus 37
   3.1 Ancient sources for the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE 38
   3.2 Augustus and saeculum rhetoric 38
   3.3 The gens Valeria in the age of Augustus 44
   3.4 Recreating the Republican tradition 47
   3.5 Constructing the ritual sequence of the Ludi Saeculares 49
   3.6 Officiating the Augustan Ludi Saeculares 55
   3.7 Commemorating the Augustan Ludi Saeculares 59
   3.8 Conclusion 60

4 The Development of Saeculum Rhetoric and the Ludi Saeculares of Claudius 62
   4.1 Discussion of methodology and evidence for saeculum rhetoric 63
   4.2 Saeculum rhetoric in the Augustan period 71
   4.3 Claudius’s new saeculum and the Ludi Saeculares of 47 CE 74
   4.4 Conclusion 80

5 The Ludi Saeculares of Domitian 82
List of Tables

2.1 Dating of early Ludi Saeculares in surviving sources .................................................. 16

4.1 References to/surviving from the Ludi Saeculares ......................................................... 64
4.2 Occurrences of *saeculum* without direct reference to the Ludi Saeculares .................. 65
4.3 Ludi Saeculares and *saeculum* references, combined ................................................ 66
4.4 Dating of *saecula*/Ludi Tarentini/Ludi Saeculares, Augustan and Claudian calculations . 77
List of Figures

3.1 Denarius of Augustus, 17 BCE (RIC 1^2.338) ........................................ 43
3.2 Aureus of Augustus, 18–16 BCE (RIC 1^2.138) .................................. 58
4.1 Literary references to the Ludi Saeculares and the saeculum ............... 67
4.2 Epigraphic references to the Ludi Saeculares and the saeculum ........... 68
4.3 Numismatic references to the Ludi Saeculares .................................. 69
4.4 Numismatic references to the saeculum ......................................... 70
5.1 Sestertius of Domitian, 88 CE (RIC 2.1^2.615) .................................. 88
5.2 Quinarius of Domitian, 88 CE (RIC 2.1^2.599) .................................. 89
5.3 Sestertius of Domitian, 88 CE (RIC 2.1^2.613) .................................. 90
6.1 Aureus of Hadrian, 119–122 CE (RIC 2.136) .................................... 100
6.2 Denarius of Antoninus Pius, 159–160 CE (RIC 3.309) .......................... 102
6.3 Aureus of Clodius Albinus, 194–195 CE (RIC 4.10) ............................ 106
6.4 Aureus of Septimius Severus, 202 CE (RIC 4.181b) ............................ 107
7.1 Sestertius of Philip I, 248 CE (RIC 4.3.157a) .................................... 124
7.2 Double Sestertius of Trajanus Decius, 249–251 CE (RIC 4.3.115) ........ 126
7.3 Coin of Philip the Arab, 248 CE (RIC 4.3.20) .................................... 127
7.4 Antoninanus of Gallienus, 264–265 CE (RIC 5.1.656) ....................... 128
7.5 Solidus of Constantine, 314–317 CE (RIC 7.185) ............................... 132
7.6 Porfyrius, C. 19. .............................................................................. 134
Chapter 1

Introduction

The Ludi Saeculares, or "Saecular Games", are unique among the religious performances of ancient Rome. From their mythic founding in the sixth century BCE until their final celebration in 248 CE, the Ludi Saeculares took place in the city of Rome once every saeculum. No other Roman festival was celebrated at such wide intervals – or underwent so dramatic a transformation in its history. Succeeding generations altered the character of the Games radically: a ritual once performed by the gens Valeria as an act of propitiation to chthonic deities became a civic celebration of Rome's prosperity under the emperors, until the Games ceased to be held under Constantine I. The term saeculum, from which the name of the festival was derived during the Augustan period, came to function as form of rhetoric that allowed for the creation of imperial authority and identity, first in the context of the Saecular Games, and then in epigraphic and numismatic formulas. This dissertation will offer a comprehensive analysis of the history of the Ludi Saeculares, bringing to light the religious frameworks and political attitudes underlying their development, and demonstrating in turn how the Games themselves help us to better understand religious experiences and socio-political change at Rome.

Despite a steady stream of scholarship on the subject, beginning in the Renaissance with the works of Panvinio and Taffin, there exists no modern study that thoroughly examines the Ludi Saeculares and their significance for our understanding of Roman history and religion. Basiner's lengthy discussion of the Ludi Saecuales is written in Russian and is therefore inaccessible to most scholars; the numerous reviews of his work reveal that his reconstruction of the origins of the Games and the early identities of deities associated with the rites is highly speculative. Nilsson's oft-cited encyclopaedia entry gives only a limited sketch of the Games' entire history. Gagé sets out preliminary ideas for a full study of the subject in several articles, but his works fails to present a cohesive and in-depth analysis. Pighi gathers most of the ancient evidence

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1 Panvinio (1538); Taffin (1641).
2 Basiner (1901). Reviews: Enmann (1902); Lezius (1902); Blanguernon (1903); Liebenam (1904).
3 Nilsson (1920).
4 Four articles collected in Gagé (1934); further articles in (1938) and (1974).
relating to the Games with a commentary, but his work is mainly intended as a sourcebook and needs updating in many respects; for example, his text of the *Acta* of the Games of Augustus is now superseded by the editions of Moretti and Schnegg-Köhler.\(^5\) New approaches to the study of Roman religion render obsolete many earlier conclusions about the significance of the Games, which had concentrated on their role as a “state cult.”\(^6\) Thus, an accessible study of the Ludi Saeculares that would provide a fresh analysis of the ancient evidence in light of recent scholarship is long overdue.

This situation is highly unsatisfactory, as the Ludi Saeculares are frequently cited not only in studies of Roman religion,\(^7\) but also in other areas of classical scholarship. For example, a common practice among philologists is to discuss the relationship between Roman religion and literature by giving particular emphasis to the *Carmen Saeculare*, a song written by Horace that was performed during the Games of 17 BCE, but scholars fail to explain how and why such hymns came to be connected with the Ludi Saeculares.\(^8\) Historians hypothesize about the origins of the Ludi Saeculares and their later associations with the anniversaries of Rome’s foundation, but their theories are conjectural and do not give proper attention to the Imperial Games, nor do they fully explain the divergent chronologies associated with their celebrations.\(^9\)

This dissertation remedies this situation by providing a thorough investigation of the entire history of the Ludi Saeculares at Rome. My enquiry has three objectives: to present and analyse all source material relating to the Games; to reconstruct the history and details of the Games themselves from fragmentary material; to discuss the earliest associations of the Games with the concept of the *saeculum* and examine the use of this term in later imperial rhetoric; and to demonstrate the significance of the Games for understanding religious development in Roman society during the Republican and Imperial periods. I centre my analysis around the sources that attest to performances of the Ludi Saeculares, particularly the inscribed *Acta* of the Games of Augustus, Claudius, and Septimius Severus; coinage commemorating imperial celebrations; and many literary texts. The ancient evidence for the use of the term *saeculum* also appears in a variety of media – literary, epigraphic, and numismatic. I also utilize modern resources for the study of Roman religion, such as Rüpke’s lists of religious officials at Rome.\(^10\)

My investigation of the history of the Ludi Saeculares at Rome began with the premise that we can best understand how a religious performance functioned at any particular moment in an ancient society only when we have thoroughly studied the full record of its development across many years. Such a methodology may seem so intuitive as to be obvious to all, but when the surviving evidence for a rite is highly fragmentary or perplexing, it is tempting to avoid the difficult task of sifting through ancient sources from eras far removed from the historical context of the period in question in order to complete the task at hand. For example, in his study of the Augustan Ludi Saeculares Feeney has encouraged the approach of concentrating on what a religious performance is doing in a specific historical context, rather than engaging in the wild

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\(^5\) Pighi (1965); Moretti (1982–1984); Schnegg-Köhler (2002).
\(^7\) Cf. Scheid (2005).
\(^8\) Cf. Feeney (2008); Putnam (2000); Lowrie (2009); Thomas (2011).
speculation about the origins of rites that has plagued the study of religion at Rome in general, and of the Saecular Games in particular. His approach has borne fruit in his analysis of Horace’s *Carmen Saeculare*, revealing an interplay between Greek and Roman elements in the ritual sequence of the Games of 17 BCE, but his intriguing analysis is of limited helpfulness for advancing our understanding of the Games in other centuries. Nor does it permit us to answer the questions of why Augustus and Ateius Capito chose to construct the Games in such a fashion (and a closer investigation reveals that the “Greekness” of these ritual elements is not at all straightforward). In fact, the instruction to refrain from investigating origins limits the ventures of the historian, who should only avoid this question when it becomes clear that there are no further sources to attest to the early state of a subject.

In this dissertation, I begin by offering up a theory about the origins of the Ludi Saeculares that reassesses old literary evidence and breaks new ground with additional source material. I argue that the Ludi Saeculares were, in origin, a Valerian gentilician cult: while this idea has been suggested elsewhere, no study has systematically examined all evidence from the Republic to late Empire to demonstrate this, or addressed the question of how a family’s religious traditions could come to be adopted by the state. Through a diachronic approach, conclusions drawn from my analysis of fragmentary Republican material are strengthened by looking ahead to evidence from the Augustan and later imperial periods. In this respect, my methodology is somewhat similar to the process of internal reconstruction in historical linguistics, in which the analysis of words confirmed in surviving texts or speech allows one to work backwards in order to reconstruct older forms of the language. This argument is laid out in Chapter Two, which focuses on the Republican sacrifices and games that constitute part of the lineage of the Ludi Saeculares. According to tradition, these sacrifices were instituted by the first consul of Rome, Valerius Publicola, in the sixth century BCE and were held at an altar in a region of the Campus Martius called the Tarentum. I discuss ancient sources for these rituals, showing their relationship through the discrepancies in the chronologies of the Games that they present and their textual problems. I argue that the Games and sacrifices held at the Tarentum in 249 BCE, called “Ludi Tarentini”, were the first civic performance of a cult once privately celebrated by the Valerian clan, but that these Games were not yet associated with the concept of repetition once every *saeculum*.

In Chapter Three I examine the process by which Augustus and Ateius Capito, his advisor on law and religion, transformed disparate Republican religious performances into the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE. I begin with an analysis of the numerous connections between Augustus and members of the Valerian clan, arguing that Augustus appropriated the central rites of the Ludi Saeculares from the Valerii for his own purposes in constructing his Games. The original rites of the Ludi Tarentini were altered and expanded, incorporating new ritual elements such as offerings to different deities, a hymn sung in procession, and new locations on the Palatine and Capitoline hills. In addition, Augustus revised the old chronology of the Republican sacrifices at the Tarentum and instituted the concept of repeating the Games once every 110 years, a span of time defined as a *saeculum*, from which the rites derived their new name of Ludi Saeculares.

Once this diachronic analysis has generated information about the origins of the Saecular Games, new

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Doors are opened, and questions arise of how the term *saeculum* functioned in the Republican and imperial periods, before and after its association with Tarentum sacrifice. In Chapter Four, I argue that the use of *saeculum* from the Augustan period onward came function as a form of imperial rhetoric. Through a series of graphs and charts of literary, numismatic, and epigraphic evidence for references to the *saeculum* and the Ludi Saeculares, I show how the use of *saeculum* in documents and monuments pertaining to imperial authority was originally strongly associated with celebrations of the Games, but diverged from the festivals in the second and third centuries to form a kind of imperial rhetoric that emphasized an individual emperor’s authority, establishment of a new dynasty, and power to secure prosperity for the Roman empire. In the second half of the chapter, I provide the fullest investigation to date of the Games of Claudius, who constructed yet another chronology for the Games by calculating 100-year *saecula* from the founding of Rome, with Antoninus Pius and Philip I following his reckoning.

Chapters Five and Six show how the Augustan reworking of Republican religious tradition and the use of *saeculum* rhetoric, at once innovative and conservative, would be repeated by emperors in later centuries who altered the Ludi Saeculares to fit the needs of their new regimes and concomitant social, political, and religious upheavals. Domitian and Septimius Severus, however, adhered to the Augustan chronology; the epigraphic and numismatic evidence for their Games suggests that they followed closely the ritual elements of the Augustan performance, while adapting them for their own needs and contexts. New evidence for an enduring connection between celebrations of the Ludi Saeculares and the Valerian clan appears in lists of members of the college of the *quindecimuiri*, the officials in charge of organizing the Games.

Finally, in the seventh chapter I discuss the Games of Philip I in 248 CE, as well as the cessation of the Games under Constantine I in the fourth century CE, due to the influence of Christianity. I also argue that references to Games held under Honorius in 404 CE can be traced to a Renaissance misinterpretation of a panegyric of Claudian. I conclude with a summary of the argument, demonstrating the significance of the Ludi Saeculares and the *saeculum* for our understanding of religious change, the periodization of time, and the creation of imperial identity and authority in the Roman world.
Chapter 2

The Ludi Saeculares in the Republic

The history of the pre-Augustan Ludi Saeculares constitutes a highly fragmentary and partially fabricated tradition, as is the case with much of our information concerning Roman religious practices in the Republic. This chapter provides a close analysis of the extent sources on Republican religious performances that form the “lineage” of the Ludi Saeculares, tracing their development from aetiological myths of the Valerian gens set in the Rome of the sixth-century BCE to the period immediately before Augustus’s games of 17 BCE. The scholarship of the past two centuries has failed to produce any account of this process that is both sound and comprehensive, although numerous articles and references to the history of the Republican Ludi Saeculares reveal an enduring interest in the subject throughout this period.

I begin with a detailed survey of the ancient sources for Republican traditions of the Ludi Saeculares, with emphasis on the treatment of the Valerian legend of the sacrifices at the Tarentum and the potential influence of one source upon another. Next, I examine discrepancies in chronologies for these Republican celebrations, and give a close analysis of textual problems in the major sources, Censorinus and Zosimus, followed by an overview and criticism of modern scholarship on the Republican Ludi Saeculares. Finally, I elucidate the relationship between the Valerian gens and the tradition of sacrifices at the Tarentum, which permits a re-evaluation of all religious performances described as “Ludi Saeculares” or associated with them during the Republic.

2.1 Ancient sources for Ludi Saeculares in the Republic

An examination of ancient sources that attest to the tradition of the Ludi Saeculares in the Republic is not at all straightforward. No literary accounts contemporary with the Republican celebrations survive that provide details of their ritual sequences, nor anything resembling the building programs, commemorative coins, or inscriptions that attest to later or are connected with celebrations of these Games in the Augustan and imperial periods. Our most valuable source for the Republican Ludi Saeculares is Censorinus, who
in his *De die natali* (16.7–17.13) provides us with information and quotations that he or an earlier source gleaned from Roman historians of the second and first centuries BCE: Cassius Hemina,¹ Lucius Calpurnius Piso Frugi,² Gnaeus Gellius,³ Valerius Antias,⁴ as well as the antiquarian Varro.⁵ These Republican sources are of great value, since they offer us information about the Ludi Saeculares that was recorded before the Augustan celebration, even though Censorinus wrote in the third century CE. Yet the evidence from the earliest historians – Hemina, Piso, Gellius, and Antias – is scant, amounting to the dates of several early celebrations and the names of the consuls for those years, without any longer description of how the rites were celebrated.

Among Censorinus’s sources, of particular interest is a citation from Antias asserting that Valerius Publicola instituted the first Saecular Games in the first year of his consulship, 509 BCE (17.10). Many have accused Antias of inventing such pieces of information in order to glorify his own gens, yet Rich and Jehne have suggested that Antias may not be the exceptional liar that Livy makes him out to be in his own history.⁶ In fact, many scholars from the nineteenth century onward have agreed that Antias fabricated much of the tradition of Valerian achievement during the Republic. In his survey of the Valerian gens, for example, Münzer is confident that much of this tradition is Antias’s attempt to enrich his family history.⁷ Rich argues that Antias may have had access to state archives, which permitted him to compose a history of Rome in far greater detail than there had been previously;⁸ even if this were the case, there is no concrete evidence to confirm that written records of civic cults and gentilician traditions were available to Antias. Both Rich and Jehne agree that Antias could easily have embellished his accounts, but Jehne wonders if this may be his attempt at formulating conjectures from fragmentary material.⁹ There are some textual difficulties with this passage in Censorinus, which will be discussed in detail below. Lastly, Censorinus also cites Livy for the dates of the third and fourth Republican Saecular Games, again with no additional information beyond the names of the consuls in those years; he also includes a brief quotation from Livy’s lost Book 136 concerning the Augustan games: *Eodem anno ludos saeculares Caesar ingenti apparatu fecit, quos centesimo quoque anno – his enim terminari saecula – fieri mos erat.*¹⁰

Only in Censorinus’s citation of Varro do we find a description of the rituals and purpose of the *ludi*...
In this fragment, Varro provides us with the earliest surviving account of certain ritual elements that later authors would associate with the Ludi Saeculares, although the rites are described as “Ludi Tarentini”. There are three elements that were particularly associated with the Saecular Games: first, the ludi fall under the governance of the quindecimuiri (described as such anachronistically, although they would have been decemuiri in this period), who consult the Sibylline books in response to prodigies; second, the rite entails the sacrifice of black animals to Dis Pater and Proserpina in the Campus Martius, presumably in the area called the Tarentum, and involves some kind of ludi; and lastly, “games” are to be held “every hundredth year”. Varro’s use of ludi is rather ambiguous: in all likelihood, he means that the both the ludi and the sacrifices associated with the Ludi Tarentini were to be repeated every one hundred years, taking the games and the sacrifices together as a single performance, but this is not entirely clear from the phrasing.12 This summary of the celebration shows important similarities with the description of the ritual sequence in the Acta of the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE, where the quindecimuiri oversee the ceremony, the sacrifices are still held at the Tarentum, and the games are to be held once every saeculum of one hundred and ten years.

But the fact that Varro calls these games “Ludi Tarentini” invites the question of how precisely the Augustan Ludi Saeculares are related to the Republican celebrations listed in Censorinus, a question to which we will return below. Varro is cited as evidence for dating of the fourth Games, the last to be celebrated before the Augustan ludi in 17 BCE, but even as late a source as he does not refer to them as “Ludi Saeculares”, at least in this surviving fragment. The greatest question is the source of Varro’s information on the rites at the Tarentum: it is impossible to identify with any certainty a single author or record that Varro consulted, but there is some chance that Varro may have used a lost passage of Valerius Antias, who had described Valerius Publicola’s founding of rites at the Tarentum. Rich argues persuasively that Antias’s writing should be dated to 80–60 BCE and notes several instances where he and Varro agree.13 This may be the result of

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11 “For thus it was instituted, that [the Ludi Saeculares] should be held every hundredth year. So Antias and other historical writers thought, and also Varro, who in the first book, de Scaenicis originibus, writes thus: ‘When many portents appeared, and both the wall and the tower which are between the Colline and Esquiline Gates were struck from heaven, the quindecemuiri [sic] consulted the Sibylline books and announced that the Ludi Tarentini must be held for Dis Pater and Proserpina in the Campus Martius for three nights, and black victims should be immolated, and that the games should happen every hundredth year’” (Censorinus 17.8, ed. Sallmann 1983; cf. Cardauns 1968, 59.)

12 I thank Jarrett Welsh for pointing out the ambiguity inherent in this passage, and its implications for Augustan interpretation of the text.

Varro following Antias, or both authors following another source.

Three later authors provide evidence of a different sort for the early history of the Ludi Saeculares. The first, Valerius Maximus, gives a detailed account of the origins of the Ludi Saeculares that appears to be an aetiological legend associated with the gens Valeria. Valerius Maximus describes how a certain Valesius, who lived in the Sabine region, prayed for a cure for his three sick children:

Et quia ceteri ludi ipsis appellationibus unde trahantur apparat, non absurdum uidetur saecularibus initium suum, cuius generis minus trita notitia est, reddere. cum ingenti pestilentia urbs agrique uastarentur, Valesius uir locuples rusticae uitae, duobus filiis et filia ad desperationem usque medicorum laborantibus aquam iis calidam a foco petens, genibus nixus lares familiaris ut puorum pericum in ipsius caput transferrent orruit. ora deinde uox est, habiturum eos saluos si continuo flumine Tiberi deuectos Tarentum portasset, ibique ex Ditis patris et Proserpinae ara petita agua recreasset. eo praedaicto magnopere confusus, quod et longa et periculoa nauigatio imperabatur, spe tamen dubia praesentem metum uauiroque ad ripam Tiberis protinus detulit – habitabat enim in uilla sua propriam Sabinae regionis Eretum –, ac linte Ostiam petens nocte concubia ad Martium campum appulit, sitientibus aegris succurrere cupiens, igne in nauigio non suppetente ex gubernatore cognouit haud procul appare fumum, et ab eo iussus egredi Tarentum – id nomen ei loco est –, cupide adrepto calice, aquam flumine haustam eo unde fumus erat obortus iam laetior pertulit, diuinitus dati remedi quasi uestigia quaedam in propinquu nanctum se existimans, inque solo magis fumante quam ullas ignis habente reliquias, dum tenacius omen adprehendit, contractis leuibus et quae fors obtulerat nutrimentis pertinaci spiritu flammam euocauit, calefactamque aquam pueris bibendam dedit. qua potata salutari quiete sopiti diutina ui morbi repente sunt liberati, patrique indicauerunt uidisse se in somnis a nescio quo deorum spongea corpora sua pertergeri et praecipi ut ad Ditis patris et Proserpinae aram, a qua potio ipsis fuerat allata, furuae hostiae immolarentur lectisterniaque ac ludi nocturni fierent. is, quod eo loci nullam aram uiderat, desiderari cre dens ut a se constitueretur, aram empturus in urbem perrexit, relictis qui fundamentorum constituentur arma solidum terram ad solidum foderent. hi domini imperium exsequentes, cum ad uiginti pedum altitudinem humo egesta peruenissent, animaduerterunt aram Diti patri Proserpinaeque inscriptam. hoc postquam Valesius nuntiante seruo accepit, omisso emendae arae proposito hostias nigras, quae antiquitus furuae dicebantur, Tarenti immolauit, ludosque et lectisternia continus tribus noctibus, quia totidem filii pericum liberati erant, fecit. cuius exemplum Valerius Publicola, qui primus consul fuit, studio succurrendi ciuius secutus aequo et pacifice et omnibus femis Proserpinae, lectisternioque ac ludi trinoctio factis, aram terram, ut ante fuerat, obruit.14

14 “And since from whence the other games are derived is apparent in their names themselves, it does not seem absurd to recount the beginning of the Saecular Games, whose origin is less well-known. When the city and its territory were being devastated by a great plague, Valesius, a rich man who lived in the country, with his two sons and a daughter suffering an illness to the despair of the doctors,
Valesius was told to give them water from the altar of Dis Pater and Proserpina at (the) Tarentum; thinking that he was supposed to travel to Tarentum in Apulia, he prepared to sail down the Tiber. Along the way, he heard of a place called the Tarentum in the Campus Martius, and immediately boiled water for his children at a place where the ground was smouldering. The children recovered, fell asleep, and awoke to tell their father that a god had instructed them in the rites that should be celebrated at the Tarentum in the future. These rites included the sacrifice of black animals at an altar to Dis Pater and Proserpina, lectisternia, and nocturnal ludi. Valesius made preparations to build an altar there, but his workmen discovered an altar with an inscription to Dis Pater and Proserpina twenty feet below the earth. Valesius therefore celebrated the ludi at that altar for three nights before covering it again. Later, Valerius Publicola, the first consul of Rome, “in eagerness to help his fellow citizens” (studio succurrendi ciuibus), celebrated the same rites at the Tarentum.

The precise location of this Tarentum in the Campus Martius was debated in the early twentieth century, but most scholars today situate it in a region near a bend in the Tiber River where fragments of imperial inscriptions erected to commemorate the Ludi Saeculares were found. It is unlikely that the altar used for sacrifices in the imperial period was the same as that mentioned in Republican accounts, or that remnants of altars to Dis and Proserpina or other chthonic deities from either period have been discovered, despite the claims of Lanciani.\(^\text{15}\) The legend of the burial of this altar at the Tarentum may be due to the frequent flooding of that region of the Campus Martius in antiquity.\(^\text{16}\)

Valerius Maximus’s narrative describes the performance of ludi at the first celebration of the Ludi seeking hot water for them from the hearth, prayed down on his knees that the family Lares would transfer his children’s danger onto his own head. Then a voice came forth, saying that his children would be safe if he would bring them at once down the river Tiber to Tarentum, and there he would restore them with water taken from the altar of Father Dis and Proserpina. He was confused by this prediction, because a long and dangerous journey was commanded, but with doubtful hope conquering present fear he brought the children to the banks of the Tiber immediately – he lived in his farmhouse near the village of Eretum in the Sabine region – and setting off for Ostia by boat, he landed at the Campus Martius early at night. He desired to help his sick children, who were thirsty; and with no fire available on the ship he learned from the captain that smoke was visible not far away, and from this he told him to disembark at the Tarentum – that was the name of the place. He eagerly grabbed a cup, filled it with water from the river, and brought it to the place where the smoke had risen, already more cheerful, believing that he had come close on the tracks as it were of the remedy granted by the gods. He came on smouldering ground rather than any remains of a fire, but he held stubbornly to the omen, picked up light kindling that chance presented, and produced a flame with constant blowing, and gave the heated water to his children to drink. When they had drunk it, they fell into a healthful sleep and were suddenly freed from the influence of their long illness, and they revealed to their father that they had seen some god in their dreams wipe their bodies all over with a sponge, and that they were instructed that at the altar of Father Dis and Proserpina, from which the drink had been brought to them, dark victims should be sacrificed and lectisternia and nocturnal games should be performed. Because he had seen no altar in that place, he thought that he was asked to build it, and he went off into the city to buy an altar. He left men there to dig down to solid earth for laying the foundations. They followed their master’s instruction, but when the earth was dug up and they had reached a depth of twenty feet, they found an altar inscribed to Father Dis and Proserpina. Valesius heard of these later from a slave bearing the news, and he gave up the plan of buying an altar and sacrificed black victims, which were called “dark” victims in former times, at the Tarentum, and performed games and lectisternia for three nights in a row, since that was how as many of his children had been freed from danger. Valerius Publicola, who was our first consul, out of eagerness to help his fellow citizens followed his example. On behalf of the state, he made sacred vows at the same altar and slaughtered black cattle, bulls for Dis and cows for Proserpina, and performed lectisternia and games for three nights, and the altar was buried, as it had been before.” (Valerius Maximus 2.4.5.)

\(^{15}\) Boyancé (1925) and Wuilleumier (1932) wanted to situate the Tarentum in a place to the southwest of where the Acta inscriptions were found, but Gagé (1934) strongly argued in favour of locating the altar near the inscriptions. Lanciani (1896, 75–78) claimed to have found the remains of the Ara Ditis in 1887, although on a subsequent visit to the site found that the monument had disappeared during construction; this identification was supported by Boyancé (1925), but should be regarded as highly suspect.

\(^{16}\) On floods of the Tiber river in antiquity, see Aldrete (2006).
Saeculares, as well as sacrifices to Dis Pater and Proserpina in the Campus Martius, echoing the narrative of Varro. He also describes the holding of lectisternia, a ritual appearing in the form of sellisternia in the Augustan games, but not in Varro’s account of the Ludi Tarentini. It appears that the ludi are associated with times of distress: privately, in the case of Valesius’s children, and publicly, with Valerius’s desire to assist the Roman people, even though the precise problem is not specified. There is no indication that the games are to be repeated every one hundred years, and Valerius Maximus records that Valesius, a private individual and legendary ancestor of the Valerii, instituted the games, rather than Valerius Publicola or a college of religious officials working in consultation with the Sibylline books.

The Tarentum legend of Valerius Maximus provides an important contrast to the descriptions of the Augustan Ludi Saeculares preserved in the records of the quindecimuiri. Even though it was written during the reign of Tiberius, not long after the celebration of 17 BCE, this is the first surviving account after Antias that explicitly links the origin of the games with the Valerian family, making no mention of Augustus. As with Varro, it is difficult to identify Valerius Maximus’s source for the legend, because there is no general consensus concerning which historians he used. Helm, Humm, and Wiseman argue that Valerius Maximus had access to Antias, but Bloomer is sceptical of this. Albrecht suggests that Varro as well as Antias may have served as sources, while Maslakov thinks that Valerius Maximus did not derive the Tarentum legend from Livy or Varro, and perhaps not Antias; he follows Taylor and looks for a source in other antiquarians such as M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus, who composed a work on the Roman nobility in the Augustan period. Those in favour of a connection between Antias and Valerius Maximus point to the fact that both were members of the gens Valeria, making it attractive to argue that Valerius Maximus adopted the legend of the most famous member of his gens from a fellow Valerius. Maslakov and Taylor look to other authors, and hesitate to credit Antias with the aetiological legend simply on the basis of family relation, since it has often been taken for granted that Antias sought to promote his clan in his writing, and they wish to avoid assigning all pro-Valerian material to him alone.

A fragment of Verrius Flaccus, who was tutor to Augustus’s grandsons, may echo Antias and also identify Valerius Publicola as the founder of the Tarentum sacrifices, but the passage is badly mangled; the identity of the consul in the first line is lost.

(Saeculares ludi) Tarquini Superbi regis i— Marti consecravit — cos., quod populus Rom— nus in l— aram quoque Diti ac (Proserpinae — in) extremo Mart(io campo quod Tarentum ap)pellatur, demissam (infra terram pedes circi— ter) uiginti, in qua — (populus) Romanus fa— cere sacr(a — nono) et nonagensi(ximo anno ante M. Valerio Coruino et M.) Popilio Laenate (consulibus — ho)stis furuis est — (tribus diebus totidem) que noctibus, ac de — (cen)tum

19 Howard (1906, 165) notes that a Valerius is only mentioned once in the surviving passages of Antias, at fr. 17 Peter = fr. 21 Cornell, and points out that while it is highly likely that Antias promoted the fame of his gens in his history of Rome, there is no firm evidence to prove that he did so.
Chapter 2. The Ludi Saeculares in the Republic

post annos ut — (sae)culares appella — saeculi habetur.\(^2\)

The Popilius Laenas mentioned in this text was consul with Valerius Corvus in 348 BCE, so this passage may also follow Antias and indicate the performance of the ritual in that year (the significance of which will be discussed below), but it is difficult to restore the sense of these lines with certainty. The fragmentary de — (cen)tum post annos should probably be restored as de(cem et cen)tum post annos, as a reference to an Augustan saeculum of one hundred and ten years; this is likely due to the influence of Augustan innovation on Verrius Flaccus’s research, since he would have been intimately acquainted with the revised history of the Ludi Saeculares created by Ateius Capito and the princeps, and promulgated through the commentarii of the quindecimviri. The picture becomes increasingly complicated with a citation of Verrius Flaccus in Pseudo-Acro:

Verrius Flaccus refert carmen saeculare et sacrificium inter annos centum et decem Diti et Proserpinae constitutum bello Punico primo ex responsu decemuirorum, cum iussi essent libros Sibyllinos inspicere ob prodigium, quod eo bello accidit. Nam pars murorum urbis fulmine ictu ruit. Atque ita responderunt: bellum aduersus Kartaginenses prospere geri posse, si Diti et Proserpinae triduo, id est tribus diebus et tribus noctibus, ludi fuissent celebrati et carmen cantatum inter sacrificia. Hoc [autem] accidit consulibus P. Claudius Pulcro L. Iunio Pullo.\(^2\)

Verrius Flaccus’s account of ludi and sacrifices to Dis and Proserpina held during the First Punic War is in many respects similar to that of Varro (the lightning striking the walls, the consultation of the Sibylline books by the decemuir)\(^\)\(^s\), but some of the details found nowhere in pre-Augustan sources align closely with the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE: the singing of the Carmen Saeculare, the celebration of the rites after a span of one hundred and ten years. Did Verrius Flaccus use both Varro and Antias in his research, and amend parts of the historical narrative to correspond to Augustan practice? If Verrius Flaccus did have access to Antias for the account of the origin of the Games with Publicola, there is the possibility that this work was still available to Valerius Maximus.

The next clear association that we find between the Ludi Saeculares and the Valerii appears in a much later source, the Byzantine historian Zosimus. Writing at the end of the fifth century CE and the beginning of the sixth, Zosimus gives an overview of the history of the Ludi Saeculares that contains an account similar

\(^{20}\) "Saecular Games: ... of king Tarquin the Proud ... consecrated to Mars ... consul, which the Roman people in ... altar also to Dis and Proserpina ... in the extreme part of the Campus Martius, which is called the Tarentum, sunk around twenty feet below the earth, in which ... the Roman people to perform sacrifices ... in the ninety-ninth year before M. Valerius Corvinus and M. Popilius Laenas were consuls ... was with dark victims ... three days and three night, and ... after a hundred years so that ... they should be called "Saecular" ... is considered ... of an age [or generation]" (Festus, 440 L).

\(^{21}\) "Verrius Flaccus recounts the Saecular hymn and sacrifice established in the course of one hundred and ten years to Dis and Proserpina in the first Punic War from the response of the decemuir, when they were commanded to inspect the Sibylline Books on account of a prodigy that occurred in this war. For a portion of the walls of the city collapsed from a lightning strike. And thus they replied that war could be waged favourably against the Carthaginians, if games were celebrated for Dis and Proserpina for a triduum, that is for three days and three nights, and a hymn sung amidst sacrifices. This happened when P. Claudius Pulcher and L. Junius Pullus were consuls." (Pseudo-Acro, gloss on Horace’s Carmen Saeculare v. 8, Keller 1902, 471.)
Chapter 2. The Ludi Saeculares in the Republic

12
to that of Valerius Maximus concerning the founding of the Ludi Saeculares by a Valesius (2.1–3). In fact, Zosimus agrees with Valerius Maximus in many of the details of the story; notably, the instructions that the children receive from the gods are somewhat different. The children dreamt that they had sacrificed black victims to Dis and Proserpina in a three-night festival of dance and song; there is no mention of lectisternia. Valesius still performs the sacrifices to the gods at the Tarentum on an altar found below the earth, but Zosimus provides additional information about the origin of this altar, created in response to a prodigy during a war between Rome and Alba Longa, inscribed “To Dis and Proserpina”, and hidden beneath the earth at a depth of twenty feet. This detail concerning the depth of the altar recalls the accounts of Valerius Maximus and Verrius Flaccus above, and helped to inspire Lindsay’s reconstruction in Festus. Because of his role in establishing the sacrifices at Tarentum, Valesius’s name became Manius Valesius Tarentinus. Zosimus also describes the context in which Valerius Publicola reinstituted the rites of his ancestor: during his first consulship, he sacrificed a black ox and a black heifer to Dis and Proserpina at the altar in the Tarentum, adding a new inscription, and held “spectacles” (θεωρίας, 2.3), in order to save Rome from a plague. Like Censorinus, Zosimus’s text is at times corrupt; the significance of this will be discussed in detail below.

It is difficult to determine Zosimus’s source for the legend: Wirth and Paschoud suggest that he may be following Eunapius here, as he does for so much of his history, and that Eunapius’s information on the Saecular Games comes from Phlegon of Tralles, who composed a treatise on Roman festivals, according to the Suda. Mendelssohn suggests that Phlegon’s ultimate source is Valerius Antias, via perhaps Verrius Flaccus and/or Varro; the details about the depth of the altar may indicate a common lineage. Valerius Maximus has not been considered among Zosimus’s sources, whether direct or indirect, which would account for the variances between them. If Zosimus and Valerius Maximus did not edit or embellish their versions of the Publicola legend, it would suggest that at least two versions of the story were extant in the imperial period. It is tempting to speculate that Valerius Antias was the source for a first account, and that Varro (or perhaps Valerius Messalla Corvinus, as will be discussed in Chapter Three) was responsible for another, later retelling, but it is not possible to demonstrate this with certainty.

Pascal observed that Valerius Maximus is the only source to describe the earth at the Tarentum as being “smouldering” (solo ... fumante), and in a careful analysis, contrasts his account with that of Zosimus. He demonstrates that Zosimus describes the Tarentum soil with a different adjective, as a πῡροφόρον πεδίον, in an inscription on the altar created by Valerius Publicola:

Πόπλιος Βαλέριος Ποπλικόλας τὸ πυροφόρον πεδίον Ἅιδῃ καὶ Περσεφόνῃ καθιέρωσα καὶ θεωρίας ἠγαγόν Ἅιδῃ καὶ Περσεφόνῃ ὑπὲρ τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἐλευθερίας.

Pascal argues strongly for the presence of a long upsilon in πῡροφόρον, since it has numerous literary precedents when paired with πεδίον, yielding the translation “wheat-bearing plain”, rather than “fire-bearing plain”, and

22 Wirth (1990), 299–300 n.4; Paschoud (1971), xl–xli.
23 Mendelssohn (1887), xxxvii and note to p. 54, l. 11; Suda Φ 527 4.745 (Adler). Pighi (1965, 43) agrees with Mendelssohn.
24 Pascal (1979).
25 “Publius Valerius Poplicola dedicated the wheat-bearing plain to to Hades and Persephone and performed sacrifices to Hades and Persephone for the sake of the freedom of the Romans” (Zosimus 2.3.3).
could refer to a myth concerning the dedication of a field of Tarquinius Superbus to Mars by throwing grain into the Tiber River.\textsuperscript{26} He also notes that the pairing forms an elegiac hemistich that corresponds neatly with the joining of the names Άϊδη καὶ Περσεφον(εία), the end of a dactylic hexameter; he fails to note that in order to achieve the final foot, he has adjusted the form of Persephone’s name as it occurs in Zosimus (Περσεφόνη) to match a line from a fragment of Hesiod (Περσεφον(εία)).\textsuperscript{27} Pascal argues that Valerius Maximus (or another Latin source) misunderstood a Greek source that used πῡροφόρον, but this word was interpreted correctly by Zosimus later. He does not state whether or not Zosimus worked directly from Valerius Maximus to make this correction, or had access to the original or later Greece sources. Pascal’s interpretation is attractive, so long as it applies to a reference to the Tarentum or the Campus Martius itself in a Greek source, which Valerius Maximus may have consulted as background on the general region. It is more difficult to account for an early Greek source for the Publicola legend, for which no other evidence exists.

The last major source for the origins of the Ludi Saeculares is found in Plutarch’s biography of Valerius Publicola, written at the end of the first century CE. Plutarch provides yet another description of Valerius Publicola’s role in performing rites to save the city of Rome from pestilence:

\begin{quote}
Τῷ δ’ ἑξῆς ἔτει πάλιν ὑπάτευε Ποπλικόλας τὸ τέταρτον· ἦν δὲ προσδοκία πολέμου Σαβίνων καὶ Λατίνων συνισταμένων. καὶ τις ἅμα δεισιδαιμονία τῆς πόλεως ἡγατο· πᾶσαι γὰρ αἱ γυναῖκες ἔξεβαλλον ἀνάπηρα, καὶ τέλος οὐδεμία γένεσιν ἔσχεν. ὅτεν ἐκ τῶν Σιβυλλείων ὁ Ποπλικόλας ἱλασάμενος τὸν Άϊδην, καὶ τινὰς ἀγῶνας πυθοχρῆστος ἀναγών, καὶ ταῖς ἐλπίσι πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἡδίονα καταστήσας τὴν πόλιν, ἤδη τοῖς ἀπ’ ἀνθρώπων φοβεροῖς προσεῖχε.\textsuperscript{28}
\end{quote}

Plutarch does not connect his account of Valerius Publicola’s games with the Ludi Saeculares, but the description of the rites bears close similarities with the other histories that we have examined. As in Zosimus, Publicola performs the rites in response to a pestilence in the city; as in Varro, the games are held at the instruction of the Sibylline books (with the additional detail that the games had already been instituted at the command of the oracle at Delphi). Plutarch states that Publicola made some kind of propitiation to Hades, who could be identified as the Greek equivalent of Dis Pater, the recipient of the black victims in Varro, Valerius Maximus, and Zosimus. This third version of the origins of the rites at the Tarentum complicates further attempts to locate the source of the legend. We may note that Plutarch links the ludi with the Sibylline oracles, calling to mind the Ludi Tarentini in Varro, without explicitly identifying the rites as predecessors of any later games.

Could Varro be Plutarch’s ultimate source? Recent scholarship has not demonstrated a firm connection

\begin{footnotes}
\item[26] Cf. Livy 2.5.2, Dionysius of Halicarnassus 2.13.2–4, Plut., Popl. 8, Florus 1.2, Serv., Aen. 9.272.
\item[27] Hes., Cat. frg. 185.4 (Merkelbach/West 1970, 170, Pascal).
\item[28] “In the following year, Publicola was consul again for the fourth time, when there was expectation of a war with the Sabines and Latins allied together. At the same time, a superstitious fear gripped the city, for all of the women who were pregnant at that time bore malformed offspring, and no birth reached its full term. For this reason Publicola, from the instruction of the Sibylline books, propitiated Hades and renewed certain games that had been appointed by the Pythian oracle, and after he made the city more cheerful in its hopes towards the gods, he immediately turned his attention to what was feared from men.” (Plutarch, Publicola 21.)
\end{footnotes}
between Varro and Plutarch, but Rich notes that Plutarch directly cites Valerius Antias on three occasions, while Freyburger and Jacquemin note two references to Valerius Maximus; thus it is clear that he had direct access to these two authors or used an intermediary source.²⁹ Affortunati and Scardigli argue that Valerius Antias could have provided material for Plutarch’s biography of Valerius Publicola, who is portrayed in a highly favourable light, but given the emphasis on Publicola’s support for the common people, they postulate an intermediary author with “democratic” leanings.³⁰ In support of this claim, we may note that in the biography of Publicola, the founding of the rites for Hades occurs in the chapter just after Plutarch has described how the doors of Publicola’s brother’s house were fitted to open outward to the public, a passage that closely mirrors a fragment of Antias preserved in Asconius.³¹ The proximity of the two stories suggests that Antias is the source for both.

If Antias is the source for Valerius Maximus and Zosimus’s accounts of Valerius Publicola, which contain so much more detail than the version in Plutarch, one key to reconciling the differences among the accounts lies in Plutarch’s statement that Publicola “renewed [or celebrated] certain games that had been appointed by the Pythian oracle” (πινακάς ἀγώνας παισικρήστους ἀναγών). The introduction of Delphi is probably an addition from Plutarch or another Greek source, since the institution of new cults in the Greek world were often authorized by this oracle. If ἀναγών is translated as “renewed”, we can assume Plutarch had access to an intermediary author with “democratic” leanings or used an intermediary source. Either author could have been used by Plutarch, for it is strange to think that he could have had access to Antias and not to Varro, or could not have had both authors before him (or an intermediary source) as he wrote.

Further support for the influence of Varro on Plutarch may be observed in his reference to a plague of miscarriages among Roman women, which is not mentioned in Valerius Maximus or Zosimus. In these sources, Publicola’s sacrifices to chthonic deities are only connected with Valesius’s cure of his sick children from fever (Zosimus 2.1–3, Valerius Maximus 2.4.5), Valerius Publicola’s cure of Rome’s “plague” (λοιμός, Zosimus 2.3.2–3), and the Senate’s later response to “diseases” (νόσοι, Zosimus 2.4.1). In Valerius Maximus, Publicola’s sacrifices are performed only to help citizens (studio succcurrendi ciuibus); no plague or disease is mentioned. Plutarch may have derived this reference to miscarriages (directly or indirectly) from the Augustan Ludi Saeculares, in which the propitiation of various deities connected with women and childbirth

²⁹ Rich (2005), 146 n.35 (he does not identify the passages, but they are fr. 3, 7, and 12 Peter = fr. 5, 9b, 20 Cornell); Freyburger/Jacquemin (1998), 158–159 (see Plutarch, Marcellus 30.5 and Brutus 53.5).
³⁰ Affortunati/Scardigli (1992), 120. The authors recognize (at 123 n.6) that this would imply that Plutarch had a fairly strong knowledge of Latin, which is controversial.
³¹ Plutarch, Publicola 20; Valerius Antias fr. 17 Peter = fr. 21 Cornell.
(such as Juno, Diana, and the Ilithyiae) was of particular significance, especially since Augustus's daughter Julia had borne a child a few months prior to the games.

The emphasis on childbirth and young children in the Augustan Ludi Saeculares may be due to the accidental or intentional conflation of the sacrifices at the Tarentum with the Ludi Taurii, which were also associated with childbearing and included sacrifices to di inferi in the Campus Martius. Immediately following the entry for “Terentum”, an alternative spelling of “Tarentum”, Festus records that the Ludi Taurii were sacrifices to di inferi made in the Circus Flaminius in the Campus Martius to avert pestilence in pregnant women; Varro is cited as an authority for some of this information (478 L). The relationship of the Ludi Taurii to the tradition of the Saecular Games is addressed in more detail in the following chapter. For the purpose of identifying the influence of sources on one another, it is possible that Varro distinguished between the Ludi Tarentini and Ludi Taurii, but Plutarch derived his Publicola account from a post-Augustan intermediary who had reworked Varro’s account. Münzer suggests that Plutarch himself may have made an error on his own by confusing the Ludi Tarentini with the Ludi Taurii.

2.2 Chronologies of Republican Ludi Saeculares

The same confusion that we face in establishing the history of the rituals of the Ludi Saeculares appears when we try to make sense of the conflicting dates of the games in the Republic: there seems to be a general agreement that games were held in 249 and 146 or 149 BCE, but there is more diversity in dates that are recorded for earlier games, and they do not fall neatly into celebrations separated by consistent saecula, from which the Ludi Saeculares were supposed to derive their name. It is clear that the dates for Republican Ludi Saeculares recorded by the Augustan quindecimuiri are entirely fictitious. In the commentarii of the quindecimuiri the Augustan games were preceded by celebrations in 456, 346, 236, and 126 BCE. No surviving history prior to 17 BCE has any record of Saecular Games in these years. Our earliest sources – Cassius Hemina, Calpurnius Piso, and Gnaeus Gellius, all preserved in Censorinus – agree that games were held in 146 BCE, during the consulate of Gaius Cornelius Lentulus and Lucius Mummius Achaicus. If this were the only source of disagreement, a reconstruction would be fairly simple: Augustus had decided to hold games in 17 BCE, but needed to have the old sequence adjusted, in order for each celebration to be separated by a span of one hundred and ten years. But the sources are much more complicated, as tbl. 2.1 illustrates.
Hemina, Piso, and Gellius all agree on the year 146 BCE as the date for the third celebration of games, but Censorinus does not tell us whether they have recorded dates for the two previous games. Censorinus has preserved variant dates from other Republican historians: Valerius Antias claims that *ludi* were held in 509, 348, 249, and 149, and Varro gives dates of 249 and 149 BCE. These sources are of particular interest to us, because they would have been available to Augustus and to Capito in their preparation for Ludi Saeculares in 17 BCE. Next, in 7.27, Livy records that some sort of supplication took place in 348 BCE (the significance of which will be discussed below), while Censorinus preserves Livy’s dates of 249 and 149 BCE for the third and fourth celebrations. Plutarch has assigned the first celebration of the rites to the fourth consulship of Valerius Publicola, in 504 BCE. Finally, several centuries later, the historian Zosimus gives us a record of the ritual’s prehistory in its celebration by a certain Valesius, then its first civic celebration in 509, perhaps again
in 348, and then in 249, and 149 BCE.

We can conclude several things from this examination of the surviving accounts of the Ludi Saeculares up until the time Augustus. First, all accounts of the development of the Ludi Saeculares reveal a broad agreement on the ritual that was considered to be the kernel of the ceremonies: the sacrifices of black victims to Dis Pater and Proserpina at the Tarentum. Second, the three post-Republican sources – Valerius Maximus, Zosimus, and Plutarch – emphasize the roles of members of the Valerian gens in instituting the rites, which is alluded to in the fragment of Antias preserved in Censorinus, but not in what survives of Hemina, Piso, Gellius, Varro, or Livy. Next, there appear to be two “founding myths” about the rite in these sources, in the first of which Valesius is the founder of the Tarentum rites, and in the second, the founder is Valerius Publicola. Valerius Maximus may have adopted the first myth from an unknown source and joined it to the second, which could have been disseminated by Antias and Varro and may survive in Plutarch. Finally, we can note three possibilities for Antias’s contribution to the historical tradition: Antias is completely responsible for creating an account of the Valerii performing sacrifices to Dis and Proserpina, or Antias is passing on an account of Valerian religious practices that another source (possibly another member of the Valerian gens, but not necessarily) has invented, or Antias does in fact preserve a record of a Valerian gentilician cult (known from oral or written tradition, or even first-hand experience?). The gaps and inconsistencies in the descriptions of how and why the games were instituted is partly due to the fragmentary and sometimes corrupt nature of the texts, as will be discussed in the next section.

2.3 Textual problems in Censorinus and Zosimus

In addition to the contradictions among ancient sources for the chronology of the Ludi Saeculares, it is important to bear in mind that there are textual issues in the relevant passages from Censorinus and Zosimus. The corruptions in Censorinus’s text are particularly significant, because they occur during his discussion of the earliest celebrations of the Ludi Saeculares:

The first Ludi Saeculares were instituted by Valerius Publicola after the kings were expelled in the 245th year from the foundation of Rome (following the edition of Puteanus Bamelrodius, 1628) has supplied Valerius Antias as the source for the fifth games were celebrated by Caesar Augustus and Agrippa in the year 737, in the consulate of C. M. Valerius Corvus, who had as colleague C. Poetilius, in the 408th year after the foundation of Rome, but Piso Censorinus and Cn. Gellius, and also Cassius Hemina, who were living at that time, affirm that they were performed three years later, in the consulate of Cn. Cornelius Lentulus and L. Mummius Achaicus, that is, in the year 60 (8); in the commentarii of the quindicesimarii, however, they are noted under the year 628, in the consulate of M. Valerius Lepidus and L. Aurelius Orestes. The fifth games were celebrated by Caesar Augustus and Agrippa in the year 737, in the consulate of Cn. Cornelius Lentulus and L. Mummius Achaicus.

In this passage, the greatest problem occurs with the sources for the dating of the first and second Ludi Saeculares; a number of editors have noted that our texts of Censorinus give no source for these. Sallmann (following the edition of Puteanus Bamelrodius, 1628) has supplied Valerius Antias as the source for the
games instituted by Valerius Publicola, and a number of editors have supplied Antias as the source for the second games in the second consulate of Marcus Valerius Corvus, as well. These emendations are reasonable, given that Censorinus always cites Antias first in his list of sources for the third and fourth celebrations, but Rapisarda is much more cautious in his edition, and merely indicates lacunae in the text. In addition, the present texts of Censorinus only preserve the names of other Republican authors in the discussion of the first and second Saecular Games (aside from the revised tradition of the quindecimuris); Livy is cited only for later celebrations. Manutius (1581) suggested that Censorinus cites Livy for information on the second celebration, but Livy does not directly identify any kind of ritual as Ludi Saeculares in his seventh book, which narrates the events of the 340s BCE, during which M. Valerius Corvus was consul for the second time. It is likely that this conjecture is based on Livy’s mention of a leictisternium held in 348 BCE at 7.27, but as we will examine below, we cannot identify this as a celebration of Ludi Saeculares with any certainty.

But Sallmann and other editors may have another reason for attributing information for the first and second Saecular Games to Antias: Censorinus records that both celebrations were held during the consulate of a Valerius. Thus Antias, as a member of the gens Valeria, could be passing on some kind of family tradition (of recent invention or derived from older accounts) about the origins of the games, perhaps via oral transmission, family records, or the memory of celebrations of a gentilician cult. This second argument is compelling, but stands in danger of becoming circular if not buttressed by further evidence: “Antias is the source for early Ludi Saeculares because only he would have had access to a Valerian family tradition; this Valerian tradition is observed in Antias’s accounts of the early Ludi Saeculares”. Yet we can find additional support for the restoration of Antias as the missing source in the confusion of dates that follow for the latter Ludi Saeculares.

The dates that Censorinus gives for the second celebration seem to be incorrect: according to him, they are held in the consulate of Marcus Valerius Corvus and Gaius Poetilius, 408 years from the foundation of Rome, that is, 346 BCE. According to the Commentarii of the quindecimuris, the second games occurred in 410 ab urbe condita, in 344 BCE. Lachmann corrected the dates to 348 and 346 BCE, while Hultsch merely indicated that the text was corrupt. Sallmann and Rapisarda have let the error stand. Censorinus may be responsible for the error, but it could also stem from his source (most likely Antias). What is clear is that the first source indicated that the second games were held during the consulate of Marcus Valerius Corvus, while the quindecimuris had arrived at their date by calculating backwards from 17 BCE in intervals of 110 years.

Here we find further support for supplying Antias in the lacunae: in the years of the first and second celebrations, the first consul mentioned is a member of the gens Valeria. The later Republican Ludi Saeculares all occur during the consulates of members of other gentes, and the names of multiple sources for these

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36 Rapisarda (1991), 207. Grafton (1985) criticizes Sallmann’s edition of Censorinus, and Winterbottom (1993) sees Rapisarda’s edition as a partial improvement upon Sallmann. I have used Sallmann for the passages in question because his conjectures are logical and complete the narration, whereas Rapisarda has not attempted any reconstructions and lets the lacunae stand.

37 Since the interval between the fourth Ludi Saeculares (in 126) and the fifth (in 17) is truly one hundred and nine years, according to the tradition of the quindecimuris, why did Augustus not arrange the sequence to be 127, 237, etc., or hold his games in 16 BCE, in order to allow for perfect intervals of one hundred and ten years? This question will be addressed in more detail below.
celebrations do survive: Hemina, Piso, Gellius, Antias, Varro, and Livy. It is likely that Antias alone records two early Ludi Saeculares held during the consulates of Valerii, while Piso, Gellius, and Hemina precede him, but make no mention of celebrations before 146 BCE. Antias records games in 249 and 149, but not 146 BCE; his dates of 249 and 149 BCE are separated by one century precisely, and the celebration of 249 BCE falls nearly one hundred years after 348 BCE, the date that Sallmann wishes to attribute to him. Do Antias’s conflicting dates derive from a tradition unknown to early historians that emphasized some kind of Valerian connection with the first two celebrations of the Ludi Saeculares, a connection that was emphasized by later games held in the following centuries? Or has he simply invented the first two celebrations to enhance the reputation enjoyed by his gens? There is not enough evidence to confirm one theory or the other. It is important to remember that Censorinus may not have had access to Antias directly, but may have used citations of his history in another author, perhaps Varro. Like Varro, it is highly likely that Antias would not have identified the rites performed by Valerius Publicola as Ludi Saeculares, given that Varro calls the games of 249 BCE “Ludi Tarentini”. Like us, Censorinus would have read Antias in the light of the Augustan Ludi Saeculares and the tradition passed down by the quindecimviri, which associated the games of 17 BCE with the earliest Valerian rites at the Tarentum.

The text of Zosimus also appears to be corrupt, or in error. Zosimus opens his discussion of the history of the Ludi Saeculares with an aetiological myth that describes how a certain Sabine named Valesius, the ancestor of the Valerian gens, instituted the first rites to Dis and Proserpina by an altar at the Tarentum in the Campus Martius, as a response to the healing of his children. During his consulate, Valerius Poplicola (Publicola) repeated the same sacrifices at the Tarentum in order to liberate Rome from a plague.38 According to Zosimus, these rites would be resumed in times of pestilence and distress at intervals during the Republic:

38 Zosimus 2.1–3.

39 "After these events [during Valerius Publicola’s consulate], when diseases and wars had broken out in the five hundred and second year after the founding of the city, the Senate, wanting to find relief from these evils from the Sibyline oracles, commanded the decemviri,
When Zosimus states that games were held 502 years from the foundation of the city, in the fourth consulate of Marcus Popillius, he would seem to be indicating 252 BCE. Censorinus’s sources (Antias, Varro, and Livy) record rites in 249 BCE, which falls close to Zosimus’s date. But as many editors have noted, Marcus Popillius was consul for the fourth time in either 350 or 348 BCE. So it would appear that there is a lacuna before Μάρκου (as Paschoud indicates), or that Zosimus or his source has conflated the celebrations in 348 and 249 BCE, the dates of Ludi Saeculares supported by Antias. (Varro and Livy both attest to celebrations in 249 BCE.) Later, Zosimus records that Augustus revived the Ludi Saeculares “after certain unhappy events, when Lucius Censorinus and Manius Manilius Puelius were consuls”. It appears that here the text is again corrupt: Lucius Censorinus and Manius Manilius were consuls in 149 BCE, and Manilius is nowhere else found with the cognomen “Puelius”. (This may be an error on Zosimus’s part.) Also, it is difficult to identify the “unhappy events” that preceded the celebration: if it should be understood as referring to the Augustan games, is Zosimus describing the chaos of the late Republic that preceded Augustus’s reign? For in 17 BCE, Rome had been at peace for a number of years. If we understand it as referring to events before 149 BCE, is the war with Carthage being indicated? It is impossible to arrive at any firm conclusion here.

This analysis of key passages in Censorinus and Zosimus reveals that their textual difficulties are not insurmountable. We have good evidence for attributing Censorinus’s information for the first and second games to Valerius Antias. Censorinus may have read Antias through an intermediary source influenced by the memory of the Augustan Ludi Saeculares, and thus we should not hastily assume that Antias would
have viewed the rites performed by Publicola as the first in a series of celebrations called by that name. The conflicts between dates and consuls in Zosimus can be resolved (for the most part) into a sequence of games in 509, 348, 249, and 149 BCE, which aligns with dates supplied by Antias in Censorinus.

2.4 Modern scholarship on Republican Ludi Saeculares

Having established a foundation for understanding the conflicts in the sources for the Republican Ludi Saeculares, I will now give an overview of previous attempts to make sense of the Republican material and establish a coherent account of the tradition and chronology of the games. I concentrate on the most original and challenging arguments that interpret the sequence of the Games in the period before Augustus.

One of the clearest and most careful studies of the Republican Ludi Saeculares remains that of Lily Ross Taylor, from 1934.\(^{41}\) Writing shortly after the discovery of new fragments of the *Acta* of the Severan Ludi Saecuales in 1930, she argues that the Republican games were first celebrated in 348, not 249 BCE, as Gagé and others have asserted. She bases this argument on certain prayers from the Severan games in 204 CE, which make the highly anachronistic request for the obedience of the Latins, and which mirror language used in the Augustan *Acta* and in Horace’s *Carmen Saeculare*. Taylor argues that Ludi Saecuales could not have been held any earlier than 348 BCE, because the *ludi scaenici*, the sort of games associated with the Ludi Saecuales, were not introduced into Rome until 364 BCE, when, according to Livy (at 7.2), they were joined with a *lectisternium* to avert a pestilence. The prayer could not date from 249 BCE, she claims, because the loyalty of the Latins was not an issue at that point during the First Punic War. She ignores the distinct possibility that the Severan prayers were derived from prayers composed during the Augustan period for the Ludi Saecuales and were designed to sound archaic.

Jean Gagé composed several articles on the Ludi Saecuales in the 1930s. He distinguishes between the tradition of Saecular Games celebrated under the direction of the *quindecimuiri* and a series of “Jubilees” celebrated to mark the centenaries of Rome. Unlike Taylor, he is less optimistic about the evidence surrounding the games of 348 BCE, and argues that the first games that can be deemed part of the “lineage” of the Ludi Saecuales were held in 249 BCE. In this he is supported by a number of scholars, including Wueilliumier, Latte, and Orlin.\(^{42}\) He follows Wueilliumier in arguing that the sacrifices at the Tarentum were derived from the city of Tarentum in southern Italy.\(^{43}\) He also suggests that the games of 249 BCE were in origin closely associated with the Valerian *gens*, established in that year as a civic ritual.

Weiss’s article from 1973 is the most extreme argument for the fabrication of Republican history of the Ludi Saecuales. He thinks that the sequence of the Ludi Saecuales was mainly the invention of Valerius Antias, who created the idea of games in 509 and 348 BCE to glorify his Valerian ancestors, who were consuls in those years. He argues that disparity in dates between Antias and the other Annalists (Calpurnius Piso, Piganoli (1936) and Castagnoli (1948) arrive at similar conclusions.

\(^{41}\) She notes that her argument is somewhat similar to that of Roth (1853), 365–376 (1934, 113). Piganiol (1936) and Castagnoli (1948) arrive at similar conclusions.

\(^{42}\) Wueilliumier (1938); Latte (1967), 246–248; Orlin (2010), 67–71.

\(^{43}\) Gagé (1932), 127–146. The origin of the term “Tarentum” is discussed in greater detail below.
Gnaeus Gellius, and Cassius Hemina) is also the result of Antias’s efforts to associate games with the consulships of his gens. Earlier Annalists had recorded some kind of games in 146 BCE, but Antias moved the date to 149 BCE, in order to identify it with the Valerian tradition by having it occur one hundred years after the ludi of 249 BCE. According to Weiss, Varro followed Antias’s fictitious sequence and was the first to make the association between ludi with rites to Dis and Proserpina and the concept of a saeculum, a new age or century, since he wrote at a time when the Etruscan concept of saecula was taking hold on Rome. Weiss concludes that Augustus and Capito relied on Varro in creating the ludi of 17 BCE, but in doing so, they were in fact constructing the entire tradition of Ludi Saeculares, which never existed in the Republic.

Brind’Amour’s lengthy but unhelpful analysis of the history of the Ludi Saeculares places great emphasis on the concept of a saeculum and its connection to the Roman games. While the development of various definitions of saeculum is important to our understanding of the Ludi Saeculares, Brind’Amour’s study is highly speculative, finding parallels for the concept of a saeculum in Egyptian texts and its associations with a festival to Apollo in the traditions of the island of Delos. There are also a number of instances where he seems to strain the calculation and interpretation of dates for various sequences of the Saecular Games and Delian festivals. As such, I have found it to be of little use for interpreting the conflicts among the Republican sources for the history of the Saecular Games.

Bernstein’s discussion of the Ludi Saeculares, within his much longer work on the history of ludi in the Republic, offers a more fruitful analysis of Valerius Antias’s dates and the general chronology of the Ludi Saeculares. He believes that Antias played a major role in constructing the chronology of the games not because he was fabricating dates of festivals to glorify his ancestors, but because he was working with a family tradition that had been transmitted orally. His early date of 509 BCE for the first celebration of the games is nothing other than the family’s aetiological myth concerning the father of the gens Valeria. The early Valerian rites would have included only sacrifices to Dis and Proserpina, no ludi. The cult came under civic supervision in 249 BCE at a time of crisis; the games in 146 BCE may or may not have been held by the Valerii, but when the story was told to Antias, the dates could have been confused. Bernstein then concludes that Varro followed Antias, and Augustus followed Varro in creating his Ludi Saeculares.

Lipka devotes much space to discussion of the Ludi Saeculares in his monograph because he uses them as a “test case” for his “conceptual approach” to Roman religion. Lipka’s methodology is limiting and is therefore not particularly useful or fruitful for the study of Roman religion; he believes that religious performances can be best understood by assigning their elements to six “concepts”: space, time, personnel, function, iconography, and ritual. In his examination of the Ludi Saeculares, he argues that the key “concepts” of the performance were the Sibylline oracles, nocturnal sacrifices, sellisternia, the location of the sacrifices at the Tarentum, the performance of the Carmen Saeculare, and the three-day duration of the

44 Weiss (1973), 214–216.
47 Weiss (1973), 140.
48 Lipka (2009), 147–166.
49 Lipka (2009), 8.
Forsythe has provided the most recent study on the Republican origins of the Ludi Saeculares. He follows Bernstein, Gagé and others in arguing that the Ludi Saeculares were in origin a gentilician cult of the Valerii, but drawing on Taylor he looks for the origin of the games in the mid-fourth century BCE. His argument becomes far more speculative than Taylor’s, however, for while he believes that the prayers for the obedience of the Latins point to celebrations prior to 338 BCE, he argues that rites at the Tarentum were held, not in 348, but in 362 BCE, when they were conflated with the account of M. Curtius’s ride into the Lacus Curtius in the Forum during a time of plague and flooding at Rome. When four dictator years are subtracted from the period, 362 becomes 358 BCE by our modern reckoning, and thus 249 BCE fell 110 years afterwards. This span of time served as the inspiration for the Augustan saecula of 110 years. Further, he seriously considers (but does not support outright) a theory of Wagenvoort, who compared the myths recorded in Valerius Maximus and Zosimus with the Lapis Satricanus, which seems to indicate a Valerian cult of Mars at Satricum, as well as scenes on a cista from Praenea and two Etruscan mirrors. Wagenvoort concluded that the early rites at the Tarentum had been performed in honour of Mars until they were replaced by Dis and Prosperina in 249 BCE.

Other scholars like Wagenvoort have made many attempts to identify the “original” deities who were recipients of a cult at the Tarentum, with the assumption being that the story of Dis Pater and Proserpina as the deities connected with the site was a later development. Versnel had also advanced Wagenvoort’s theory, which places great emphasis on the aforementioned cista and mirrors. These objects depict Minerva bathing one or more small children in a vessel of boiling water; the children are identified as “Mars” or “Maris”. In a later work, Versnel states that Valerius Maximus and Zosimus tell how Valesius was instructed to bathe his children with water heated on the altar “at Tarentum”. This is incorrect, since the two authors both state clearly that the children were given the water to drink, but is probably an oversight due to identifying the legends too closely with the scenes on the material evidence. Aronen offers an even more tenuous argument, rejecting Versnel’s explanation and arguing that Faunus was the original deity receiving a cult from the Valerian gens at the Tarentum. Bernstein provides a critique of all three studies. Coarelli similarly argues that the Lapis Satricanus points to a gentilician cult of Mars among the Valerii, which gave the Campus Martius its name. Schnegg-Köhler rightly criticizes Wagenvoort, Versnel, and Coarelli, pointing out that the Lapis Satricanus can only provide information about the Valerii at Satricum; it is too great of a stretch to use it for the study of the city of Rome. Pinza argued for an association between the pairings of the gods Soranus and Feronia and Dis Pater and Proserpina, while Wuilleumier tried to

50 Forsythe (2012), 49–76.
connect Dis Pater with an infernal Volcanus who was a paredros of the Mater Lararum, an ancestress of Terra Mater.\(^{57}\)

While it is possible that the Valerii performed a cult to a deity at the Tarentum other than Dis and Proserpina at an early stage, the arguments put forward by Wagenvoort and Versnel are unconvincing; they do not fully address the question of why Mars would be replaced by other deities in the cult in later periods. Until more solid evidence is found relating to the ancient history of sacrifices at the Tarentum, such speculation on the earliest origins of the rites should not carry significant weight in our interpretation of the relationship between the sacrifices and the Ludi Saeculares.

Russo’s 2008 article situates the Republican Tarentum sacrifices with the context of the First Punic War, concentrating on the relationship between the performance of 249 BCE and Roman military difficulties in that year. He suggests that the Tarentum sacrifices were in origin associated with the Valerii before they came under civic control. Like Taylor (and following Coarelli), he sees the prayers for the obedience of the Latin as deriving from an earlier celebration in 348 BCE, but argues that the prayers were highly relevant to Rome’s military situation in 249 BCE during the war with Carthage.

Thus, recent scholarship on the Ludi Saeculares offers a number of differing views on the chronology and development of the games. Taylor’s date for the origin of the Ludi Saeculares in 348 is the earliest, based on petitions in prayers for the obedience of the Latins from the Severan games, but her article (and that of Russo) fail to consider the possibility that these prayers were an Augustan archaizing innovation, given that the Sibylline oracle from which the prayers were derived was edited prior to the celebration of 17 BCE; nor does she examine in detail why the Valerii are so strongly associated with the early history of the games. Weiss is too sceptical in denouncing Antias’s “fabrication” of traditions pertaining to the Ludi Saeculares: he does not allow for the possibility that Antias was following some kind of earlier tradition, even of recent origin, and his analysis makes it difficult to look for continuity between the Valerian legends of rites at the Tarentum and the games of 17 BCE. Lipka’s “conceptual approach” is problematic for a variety of reasons, but its lack of ability to account for and explain change and variation in religious tradition over time is particularly serious when applied to the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE, which included elements of ritual that were rooted in several different Republican religious traditions, but were joined together to produce a new religious performance. Forsythe’s theory about the conflation of games in 362 BCE and the legend of M. Curtius is too highly speculative to be methodologically sound, as are the theories of Versnel and Wagenvoort to which he refers.

Gagé and Bernstein lead us in the right direction with their cautious examination of the Republican evidence, assigning the first civic celebration of the games to 249 BCE. Bernstein in particular presents an alternative to Weiss’s radical conclusion and emphasizes the recurring associations between the Valerii and the Republican festivals that Censorinus cites as precedents of the Augustan Ludi Saeculares as evidence for a historical, non-fabricated Valerian tradition of rites to Dis and Proserpina at the Tarentum. He, and others such as Russo, demonstrate a new “general consensus” of the most sound scholarship on the subject;

\(^{57}\) Pinza (1896); Wuilleumier (1932b). Gagé (1934, 20–21) found Wuilleumier’s explanation preferable to that of Pinza.
they argue that the Ludi Saeculares originated in a cult of the Valerian gens. All of these studies have addressed the question in footnotes or brief subchapters, but none has fully addressed the question of how, when, and why this gentilician cult passed from familial to civic supervision, and how this would affect our interpretation of the well-documented games of the Augustan period.

In the sections following, I argue that an emphasis on the role of the Valerian gens in the development of the Ludi Saeculares will prove to be most a fruitful approach for evaluating the degree of continuity between the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE and early Republican celebrations. I will demonstrate how the rites at the Tarentum correspond well with other ancient evidence for gentilician cults, examining the process by which the familial cult became a civic celebration. Next, I will examine in detail how and why Augustus chose to adopt the Tarentum rites for his Ludi Saeculares, and in doing so, I will analyse what evidence we have of interactions between Augustus and the Valerii at the end of the first century BCE. Finally, I will discuss the specific ways in which Augustus and Ateius Capito adapted, edited, and innovated upon the traditions of the rites at the Tarentum, as well as other Republican rituals that they had inherited.

2.5 Re-evaluation of the origin of the rites at the Tarentum: The Valerian connection

A number of scholars have identified the rites at the Tarentum as in origin a gentilician cult celebrated by the Valerii, as has been discussed in the previous section, but no study has examined in detail the significance and plausibility of this claim. It is significant that Münzer’s detailed account of the Valerian gens makes only passing reference to the tradition of sacrifices at the Tarentum, particularly when the legend seems to have been so important to the creation and maintenance of the identity of the clan, at least in the later Republic and during the Imperial period. Bernstein is correct that the key to interpreting the Ludi Saeculares is to look to some kind of evolving, non-static tradition of the Valerian gens, whether it be a ritual or recorded tradition preserving (or inventing) family lore from the early or middle Republic, or a later development among the Valerii in the first and second centuries CE. Yet Bernstein’s thesis only provides the starting point for further examination of the accounts in Antias, Valerius Maximus, Plutarch, and Zosimus. These sources indicate that the earliest rites to Dis and Proserpina could in fact be considered a gentilician cult, having parallels with private rites performed by many other Roman gentes, and just as susceptible to change and development (and fabrication) as any civic religious ritual at Rome. What makes the Tarentum rites unique is that, if they truly did exist as a private cult, they gradually came to be associated with other Republican rituals in a civic context, forming the lineage of Augustus’s Ludi Saeculares.

If the only surviving evidence for a connection between the Valerii and the founding of rites to Dis

59 Münzer mentions the sacrifices at the Tarentum and the Valerian association with the Ludi Tarentini/Saeculares only briefly when discussing the Sabine origin of the clan (1891, 5–7).
and Proserpina at the Tarentum were the narratives of Valerius Maximus, Plutarch, and Pliny, we might conclude that the legend of Valesius was an entirely post-Augustan invention, designed to gain honour for the gens by their association with an important imperial festival. Yet the fragments of Valerius Antias preserved in Censorinus bear witness to links between the Valerii and the Tarentine rites that existed in the early first century BCE. Weiss has claimed that these records are Antias’s own inventions, and we should not reject that hypothesis outright. But a survey of religious rituals associated with other gentes during the Republic and later periods shows that it would not be extraordinary for the Valerii to have had a private cult to Dis and Proserpina from an early date.

There are at least nine surviving references to gentilician cults in sources from the Republican period and later: a cult of Sol among the Aurelii,60 a cult of Hercules among the Pinarii and Potitii,61 Claudian sacrifices,62 Fabian sacrifices on the Quirinal (to Vesta?),63 Horatian rites at Tigillum Sororium,64 the cult of the Lares Hostilii,65 the Julian cult of Vediovis,66 a cult of Minerva among the Nautii,67 sacrifice to a copper coin among the Servilii,68 gentilician sacrifices in the temple of Diana on the Caelian disturbed by L. Piso.69 In addition, the Lapis Satricanus may preserve evidence of a Valerian cult of Mars, as will be discussed further below.70 A number of ancient sources mention the existence of rituals that are unique to a clan or family, often distinguishing them from “public” rituals.71 Cicero lays great emphasis on the need to maintain and hand down to future generations ritus familiae, “rites of the family”, and sacra priuata, “private” or “non-civic rituals”:

priuatuim colunto [deos], quos rite a patribus cultos acceperint … ritus familiae patrumque seruanto … quoque haec priuatum et publice modo rituque fiant, discunto ignari a publicis sacerdotibus … ex patriis ritibus optuma colunto … sacra priuata perpetua manento … iam ritus familiae patrumque seruare id est, quoniam antiquitas proxume accedit ad deos, a dis quasi traditam religionem tueri.72

60 Paulus ex Festo 22 L.
61 Livy 1.7.12–14, 9.29.9–11; Vergil, Aeneid 8.268–305; Servius, auct. ad Aen. 8.270; Diodorus Siculus 4.21.2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1.40.3–5; Cicero, De Domu sua 134; Macrobius, Saturnalia 1.12.28, 3.6.12–14; CIL VI.313; Plutarch, Quaestiones Romanae 60 = Moralia 278e; Festus 270 L; Valerius Maximus, 1.1.17; De Viris Illustribus 34.3.
62 Festus 218 M = 274 L.
63 Livy 2.46.2–3 and 3.52.3, Valerius Maximus 1.1.11; Cassius Dio fr. 25.5–6; Cassius Hemina fr. 19 Peter = fr. 22 Cornell.
64 Livy 1.26.13.
65 Paulus 102 M = 90 L.
67 Servius, auct. ad Aen. 2.166, 3.407, 5.7040.
68 Pliny, Historia Naturalis 34.137.
70 See Versnel (1980).
71 See, for example: Cato, in Festus 466 L; Cicero, De Domu sua 35, De Haruspicum 32, Arnobius 3.38; Festus 298 L; Macrobius, Saturnalia 1.16.7. The distinction between civic and familial religious performances is not always straightforward, however; Livy (10.22) records the story of Verginia, who dedicated an altar to Pudicitia Plebeia in a section of her own house for the sake of plebeian women barred from worshipping at the temple to Pudicitia Patricia in the Forum Boarium.
72 ‘Let them worship privately those gods whose worship they have duly received from their ancestors’ … ‘Let them preserve the rites of their families and fathers.’ … ‘Let non-civic rituals endure forever.’ … ‘Next, ‘Let them preserve the rites of their families and
Two fragments concerning gentilician cults found in Festus belong to Ateius Capito and overlap in terminology with Cicero: the one attributed to him discusses the difference between civic and non-civic religious rituals: *publica sacra*, *qua publico sumptu pro populo fiunt, quaeque pro montibus, pagis, curis, sacellis: at privata, quae pro singulis hominibus, familias, gentibus fiunt.*73 The other identifies him as its source, describing a sacrifice peculiar to the Claudii (274 L).74 These fragments are highly significant, as will be observed below, because they demonstrate that Augustus’s most important consultant on the Ludi Saeculares was well versed in the study of gentilician religious practices and laws associated with them.

The significance of the theory that the rites at the Tarentum were in origin a Valerian cult has not been fully recognized, perhaps because there is only one commonly cited example of a gentilician cult being transformed into a civic religious ritual in the Republic. This appears in Livy’s account of the cult of Hercules, originally celebrated by the Pinarii and the Potitii. According to Livy, the censor Appius Claudius Caecus had the Potitii transfer the rites to civic supervision:

*eodem Appio auctore Potitia gens, cuius ad Aram Maximam Hercules familiare sacerdotium fuerat, servus publicos ministerii delegandi causa sollemnia eius sacri docuerat. traditur inde, dictu mirabile et quod dimouendis statu suo sacris religionem facere posset, cum duodecim familiae ea tempestate Potitiorum essent, punderes ad triginta, omnes intra annum cum stirpe extincticos; nec nomen tantum Potitiorum interisse sed censorem etiam [Appium] memori deum ira post aliquot annos luminibus captum.*75

In Livy’s account, it is clear that the movement of a family cult to a civic setting had tragic consequences. The angered gods sent some kind of disaster to kill the entire clan of the Potitii, and struck the censor blind. The transference of the cult from the oversight of the *gens* to the civic sphere is only achieved by the insistence of Claudius, whose role in initiating the innovation is depicted by Livy as an act of foolishness and impiety.

Bendlin identifies a second instance of a gentilician cult that passed from familial to civic supervision during the Republic in Suetonius: sacrifices of the Octavii to Mars at Velitrae:

gentem Octauiam Velitris praecipuam olim fuisse multa declarant. nam et uicus celeberrima

73 “Civic rituals are those which are performed for the people at public expense, and those which are for the hills [of Rome], the countryside, courts, and shrines; and non-civic rituals are those which are for single men, families, and clans [gentes].” (Festus 284 L.)

74 *propudialis porcus dictus est, ut ait Ateius Capito, qui in sacrificio gentis Claudiae uelut piamentum et exsolutio omnis contractae religionis est.* "The *propudialis porcus*, as Ateius Capito says, is the name for that which in the sacrifice of the Claudian clan is an expiation and absolution of all contracted obligation of religion." (Festus 274 L.)

75 "Because of Appius’s action the Potitian clan, whose family priesthood had been at the Ara Maxima, had taught public slaves the duties of their sacrifice for the sake of delegating the office. There is a tradition derived from this, strange to recount, that could instil a sense of religious duty in those who intend to do away with their institution of sacrifice, that although when this change was made there were twelve families of the Potitii, to the sum of thirty adults, all were destroyed with their line within a year. And not only did the name of the Potitii perish, but even the censor [Appius] was deprived of his sight after some years by the mindful wrath of the gods.” (Livy 9.29.) Livy 1.7.12–14 provides an explanation of how the *gentes* of the Pinarii and Potitii were entrusted with the sacrifices to Hercules. Cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 1.38–40.
parte oppidi iam pridem Octauius uocabatur et ostendebatur ara Octauio consecrata, qui bello dux finitimo, cum forte Marti rem diuinam faceret, nuntiata repente hostis incursione semicruda exta rapta foco prosecuit atque ita proelium ingressus victor reedit. decretum etiam publicum exstabat, quo cauebatur, ut in posterum quoque simili modo exta Marti redderentur reliquiaeqae ad Octauios referrentur.\textsuperscript{76}

Suetonius describes the cult at an earlier stage when an Octavius performed the rituals, but then describes a decree of the people of Velitrate concerning the maintenance of the cult, giving no indication that there had been any negative reaction to the movement of the cult into the civic sphere. If the Valerii did indeed oversee private sacrifices at the Tarentum, how would the cult have been placed under civic supervision, and would their adoption as civic rituals have been viewed in a favourable or unfavourable light?

Valerius Antias, however, does not seem to hesitate to associate two early celebrations of Tarentum sacrifices with years in which Valerii served as consuls (509 and 348 BCE). If Antias were aware of the legends of Valesius and Valerius Publicola preserved in later sources, it would seem that he either believed that these two celebrations were family affairs, or that he found it natural that the rites at the Tarentum would become a civic matter at a time when the Valerii would have held more political influence than usual. Valerius Maximus, Plutarch, and Zosimus all describe how Valerius Publicola performed the rites to Dis and Proserpina in order to assist Rome in a time of distress; there is no surviving trace of any negative response to the civic performance of the ritual. If Antias had thought that transferring a gentilician ritual to the civic sphere was somehow impious, he would have been unlikely to elaborate on (or invent) his gens’ relationship with the cult. In addition, the theory that Antias was attempting to gain glory for his gens by recording early celebrations of the ritual held during the consulates of Valerii implies that Antias believed that the Valerii had particular influence in those years, and that any influence the consuls might have had on the performance of the ritual would have been deemed a sign of piety and source of pride for the clan.

Most importantly, given that the later forms of the Tarentine rites and the Ludi Saeculares were held under the oversight of the \textit{decemuiri}, it should not be assumed too quickly that a Valerian consul would necessarily be the magistrate responsible for bringing about a civic performance of a gentilician cult. If the cult had become a civic obligation through consultation of the Sibylline books, the influence of a Valerius in the college of \textit{decemuiri} may have played a greater role. Given that rituals overseen by the \textit{decemuiri} were instituted in response to prodigies, the transference of a gentilician cult to the civic sphere would, under such circumstances, have been viewed in a positive light, as a remedy for restoring proper relations with the gods.

It may be objected that the sacrifices at the Tarentum only came to be associated with the Valerii later

\textsuperscript{76} “Many things indicate that the Octavian gens was of old a distinguished one at Velitrate, for not only was a street in the most frequented part of the town called ‘Octavian’ long ago, but an altar was on display there consecrated by an Octavius, who was a commander in war with a neighbouring town. When he happened to be performing a sacrifice to Mars and the sudden onset of the enemy was announced to him, he seized the entrails of the victim from the hearth \textit{focus} and offered them up half raw, and thus he went forth to battle and returned a victor. A public decree was also extant, in which it was advised that in the future as well the entrails should be offered to Mars in a similar way, and the remainder handed over to the Octavii.” (Suetonius, \textit{Augustus} 1.1.) See Bendlin (1998), 304.
in the Republic, after they had been introduced to Rome in some manner. This problem is tied to the question of the strangeness of the name of the Tarentum itself. Following several ancient authors, Weinstock suggested that the Tarentum at Rome derived its name from Tarquinia or Gaia Taracia, who were supposed to have donated this area of the Campus Martius.77 Verrius Flaccus used the spelling Terentum, a variant form of the name appearing in the Acta of the Severan Ludi Saeculares, and associated it with Latin terra.78 Wagenvoort associates Terentum with the similar terrosum.79 Wueilliumier believed that Terentum was the original Latin, and became known as Tarentum because the Ludi Saeculares came from the Greek city. Gagé and Pighi followed this hypothesis.80 Latte and Taylor did not dismiss this possibility, but were more cautious.81 If the Roman Tarentum does indeed derive its name from the city, this need not exclude the Valerian connection, for it is not impossible that a Roman gens could adopt a cult from southern Italy for its own use. But there is no thorough and convincing explanation for why a cult to Dis and Proserpina should be associated with and originate in Greek Tarentum, beyond the similarity of the names for altar and city.

Another possibility may be found in Vetter’s reading of Varro, L.L. 6.23–4, where he argues that the reading tarentum Accas should be retained in the text: Larentinae ... ab Acca Larentia ... + qui atra dicitur diem tarentem accas tarentinas. hoc sacrificium fit in Velabro ... ut aiunt quidam ad sepculum Accae .... Vetter emends it to read Larentinae ... ab Acca Larentia ... qui atra dicitur die(s ad locum dictu)m Tarentum Accas Larentinas. hoc sacrificium fit in Velabro ... ut aiunt quidam ad sepculum Accae.82 Thus, he understands tarentum Accas to be followed by a gloss with a modernized feminine genitive, ut aiunt quidam ad sepculum Accae. According to Vetter, tarentum is simply an old word for “grave, tomb”.83 Watkins follows Vetter and argues that the Tarentum in the Campus Martius had the same meaning originally, and that the form Tarentum must be older than Terentum, although he does not provide an explanation of how the second form developed phonologically.84 Leaving aside Watkin’s further investigation of the linguistic history of tarentum and Indo-European religion, this explanation provides a useful (but not entirely conclusive) alternative to previous attempts to explain the odd name. It is not difficult to see how an old tomb, perhaps belonging to a member of the family, could become associated with offerings to gods of the underworld.

While we may conclude that the existence of a Valerian cult at the Tarentum is conceivable, the hypothesis requires further evidence for a connection between legends of Valerius Publicola recorded in the Empire, the dates provided by Antias for celebrations of rites at the Tarentum, and the evolution of the Ludi

77 Plut., Popl. 8; Gellius 7.7.4; Pliny NH 3.4.6.11; Weinstock (1933), 40ff.
78 Under the entry for Terentum: quod eo loco ara Dictis patris terra occultaretur, “because in that place the altar of Dis Pater used to be hidden in the earth” (Festus 479 L). See Severan Acta 52.47, Pighi (1965), 162 (curiously, the night when sacrifice was offered to Terra Mater); it is spelled Tarentum at 3.15. The Tarentum is not referred to by name in the Augustan Acta.
79 Wagenvoort (1965), 197–204.
80 Wueilliumier (1932), 127–146; Gagé (1932), 44ff.; Pighi (1965).
81 Latte (1960), 247; Taylor (1934), 115.
82 The corrupt passage is left to stand in the Teubner edition of 1910, by Goetz and Schoell. Mommsen emended it to “qui ab ea dicitur dies Parent(ali)um Accas Larentinas”. (Vetter 1958.)
83 Vetter (1958), 374–376.
84 Watkins (1995), 347–356. Great caution must be taken with his explanation of Latin tarentum as originating in an Indo-European term for a “crossing place”, with parallels in Sanskrit and other languages, and further speculation on religious performances in other Indo-European societies that he believes parallel the Ludi Saeculares.
Saeculares. There is one additional source that might testify to a Valerian cult becoming a civic performance in the early Republic: an odd reference in Livy 7.27 to a *lectisternium* held in a time of plague in 348 BCE, during the consulate of M. Valerius Corvus.

> exercitibus dimissis, cum et foris pax et domi concordia ordinum otium esset, ne nimis laetae res essent, pestilentia ciuitatem adorta coegit senatum imperare decemuiri ut libros Sibyllinos inspicerent; eorumque monitu lectisternium fuit.\(^8^5\)

Censorinus preserves Antias’s record of a celebration of the second Ludi Saeculares during the same year and consulate, but he does not describe the nature of the celebration.\(^8^6\) It is difficult to determine what to make of the ritual in Livy, which is only identified as a kind of supplication; could it be a vague description of a ritual held at the Tarentum? There is no mention of sacrifices to Dis and Proserpina and the involvement of Valerii, and there is certainly no mention of *ludi* included in the ritual, or that the games had any association with *saecula*. There are only two elements that could connect the ritual with the history of the Ludi Saeculares: the role of the *decemuiri*, and the *lectisternium*. These two elements both appear in the Augustan Ludi Saeculares (although the *lectisternia* have become *sellisternia*), but Varro is our only source for the role of *decemuiri* in the Ludi Tarentini, and Valerius Maximus records that Valerius Publicola celebrated a *lectisternium* in conjunction with rites at the Tarentum.\(^8^7\)

This suggests that even if Livy were describing a ritual at the Tarentum, he has not used Antias as his primary source, because the description of the rite is so different from what we might expect from the historian taking pains to preserve his family traditions. Perhaps Antias and Livy were relying on the same source that contained a vague reference to a civic *suplicatio* in 348 BCE. If Antias believed that the Valerii had a tradition of offering sacrifice to Dis and Proserpina in times of plague from an early date, he could have assumed that the *lectisternium* held during the consulate of a Valerius should be identified with the Valerian ritual against plague; Antias would then have invented the games of 348 BCE.

But Antias may be correct that the ritual in 348 BCE included sacrifices to Dis and Proserpina as well as a *lectisternium*. This could be due to the influence of the Valerian consul in that year, yet it is interesting that this ritual fell under the oversight of the college of *decemuiri*, who consulted the Sibylline oracles: although there are many references to Republican plagues and prodigies that were averted by rites planned in accordance with the oracles’ instruction, the role of the *decemuiri* became a characteristic of later celebrations that were identified as Ludi Saeculares. The size of the college had been recently increased in 367 BCE from two members to ten, and while no evidence to testify to the presence of a Valerius in the college has been preserved, the new openings in its membership would have been attractive to many high-ranking families at Rome. With the changes to the structure of the college, further religious innovations would have been

\(^8^5\) “Once the armies were dismissed, when there was both peace abroad and leisure at home thanks to *concord* among the orders (*concordia ordinum*), lest the state be too joyful, a pestilence that assailed the city compelled the Senate to command the *decemuiri* to inspect the Sibylline books; at their instruction, there was a *lectisternium*.”

\(^8^6\) Censorinus 17.10.

\(^8^7\) Varro in Censorinus 17.7–8; Valerius Maximus 2.4.5.
likely to follow; for example, ludi scaenici had been introduced into Rome in 364 BCE in response to a similar situation of pestilence. A Valerian consul or decemuir might have suggested that a family ritual become a civic celebration in a time of distress and pestilence, particularly since the later myths of Valesius associated the rites at the Tarentum with the cure of sick children.

We may even go so far as to ponder the possibility of ludi being coupled with the lectisternium of 348 BCE, which would demonstrate an even closer connection with the Ludi Saeculares, but again, there is no direct testimony for this. To counter such speculation, one might argue that the decemuiiri were primarily concerned with rites perceived as “non-Roman”, such as the cult of Mater Magna, since some of the sacrifices of the Augustan and Severan Ludi Saeculares were celebrated Achiuo ritu, with the head uncovered, it makes sense for them to be associated with the instructions of the Sibylline books, but on the other hand, could the cult of a Roman gens be considered foreign? Yet the situation is more complicated, since there is no evidence to prove that gentilician cults had to be celebrated in any particular fashion.

In sum, we have good evidence that the sacrifices at the Tarentum formed an ancient gentilician cult that was in fact performed by the Valerii. We lack further evidence for locating in 348 BCE a situation in which this Valerian cult came under civic supervision, and while we should recognize the possibility that a Valerian consul performed such rites in that year, the vagueness of references to rituals in that year could equally support the view that Valerius Antias or another author could have invented the Tarentum rites of 348 BCE. In the next section, I argue that we can be sure that the rites (of whatever age) became a civic cult in 249 BCE. Whether or not the “Ludi Saeculares” of 348 BCE were fact or fiction, a creation of Antias or another, matters less than how the rites were interpreted and utilized by the Valerii, Augustus, and historians in later centuries.

2.6 Re-evaluating the Ludi Saeculares in the Republic

A survey of the performances of sacrifices at the Tarentum held in the mid to late Republic reveals how evidence for a relationship between the Valerii and rites related to the tradition of the Saecular Games becomes ever greater, and, as will be discussed in the following chapter, culminates with an unprecedented number of Valerii as members of the college of quindecimuiri during the early Augustan period and the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE. During this period, ludi scaenici become attached to the Tarentum sacrifices (if they had not already been). In addition, we may observe an increasing close association between the

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88 Livy 29.10–11. M. Valerius Laevinus led the delegation to bring the image of Mater Magna to Rome, but there is no record of him being a decemuir in that year.

89 Acta of Augustan Ludi Saeculares 91 (to the Moerae), perhaps 119 (to Juno Regina), and 114 (to Terra Mater) (Schnegg-Köhler 2002, 34, 38, 40); Acta of Severan Ludi Saeculares 4.6 (to Juno Regina) (Pighi 1965, 156). At line 119, Schnegg-Köhler (2002) has supplied Achiuo ritu after in Capitoliun omoluit Iunoni reginae bouem femin[am] to describe Agrippa’s daytime sacrifice to Juno, but Pighi (1965) and Moretti (1995) have supplied variations on Imp. Caesar Augustus, ibidem alteram.

90 Scheid (1995) has argued that festivals celebrated Graeco or Achiuo ritu are more instructive for understanding Roman (rather than Greek) religion. Glinister (2009) demonstrates that the picture is far more complex: the practice of veiling the head was not unique to Romans, nor was an unveiled head unique to Greeks, but examples of both practices may be found throughout Italic and Etruscan towns, independent of Roman influence.
Tarentine rites and the repetition of the sacrifices approximately every one hundred years until the first century BCE, when evidence from many sources points to Roman interest in the succession of saecula, perhaps in part from Etruscan influence. Much ink has been spilled in attempts to address the discrepancy between the roughly hundred-year intervals between celebrations of the "Ludi Tarentini" in the Republic and Augustus's saecula of one hundred and ten years, but the solution to this problem is to found in the Augustus's relationship to the Valerian tradition, as I argue in the next chapter.

It has been shown above that there is little definite evidence for an early form of the Ludi Saeculares celebrated in 348 BCE, despite Taylor's arguments to the contrary. We can be confident that the tradition of sacrifice to Dis and Proserpina was fully joined together with ludi for a civic performance during the crisis of 249 BCE, as Varro reports. The "Ludi Tarentini" of 249 BCE appear to have been perceived as a foreign cult with Greek origins, since the festival came under the regulations of the decemvir and the Sibylline books, which instructed that they be repeated every one hundred years. If the sacrifices at the Tarentum were originally a Valerian cult, this celebration could be another moment in which the gentilician cult became a civic festival, yet no Valerii were consuls in that year, and there is no record of them serving as decemviri in that time.

We should exercise caution in identifying the kind of ludi performed in 249 BCE, since Varro only identifies them through the name of the entire performance, "Ludi Tarentini", in his work De scaenicis originibus, on the origins of the ludi scaenici. As has been mentioned above, ludi scaenici were first performed in Rome in 364 BCE, but were comprised of pantomime dances to flute music until 240 BCE, when plays were introduced at the Ludi Romani by Livius Andronicus. This would lead us to assume that the ludi of 249 BCE would have been pantomimes.

Erkell's discussion of terms for ludi in the Acta of the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE (ludi latini, ludi latini saeculares) attempts to trace their use to the earlier tradition of the Saecular Games are ingenious but somewhat problematic. He notes that the Acta distinguish between the ludi latini saeculares performed on a stage without seating, while the ludi latini were performed in a wooden theatre (Acta ll. 100–101, 108–110). He suggests that the ludi latini saeculares were related to the φλύακες ("farces") of southern Italy; after Rome conquered the Greek city of Tarentum in 272 BCE, there was a strong Greek influence at Rome, and the quindecimuiri [sic] in 249 BCE combined the Greek φλύακες with the separate tradition of the sacrifices at the Tarentum of the city of Rome. This is not implausible, but he goes on to link the Dis Pater of the Campus Martius with Dionysos, who was associated with the φλύακες. He follows Schauenburg in arguing that the image of Dionysos with a cornucopia on a Faliscan skyphos from the fourth century demonstrates an ancient identification of Dionysos with Pluto. It is difficult to find further evidence to support or disprove such a claim, since there is no surviving trace of any overt association with Dionysos or Bacchus in

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91 She bases her theory on prayers for the obedience of the Latins from the Severan celebration of the games, but I have grave doubts about our ability to trust these texts, which had passed through the editing of Capito and Augustus's quindecimuiri. (See Beard/North/Price 1998, 205, and Davis 2001, 113.)
92 All names and dates for the composition of religious colleges are derived from Rüpke (2005), vol. 1.
93 See Erkell (1967).
any performance of the Ludi Saeculares. In addition, the desire to link the ludi of 249 BCE with φλύακες from Tarentum in particular, as opposed to another Greek city in southern Italy, seems to be motivated by the similarity between the names of the city and the ludi.

The instruction that the Ludi Tarentini of 249 BCE be repeated every century is unusual, the first explicit association of rites at the Tarentum and the concept of a saeculum (although Varro does not use the word, writing centesimo ... anno, "every hundredth year"). Censorinus records that Antias had deemed previously that the games were to be repeated every century, but he does not cite the passage in Antias’s history itself, so it is unclear whether he stated this explicitly, or Censorinus inferred it from Antias’s chronology, which placed the celebrations at roughly one-hundred-year intervals.95 Weinstock believed that this indicated that the celebrations of 249 and 146 BCE were linked to a new age, but nowhere is this expressly stated.96 Varro’s term for the games, "Ludi Tarentini", highlights the sacrifices to Dis and Proserpina as the focus of the festival, and indicates that the name “Ludi Saeculares” was unknown in his day. These games were the direct precursors of the Augustan celebration, and may be counted as part of the “lineage” of the Saecular Games. Varro does not record any celebration of lectisternia/sellisternia or hymns with processions, which characterize the Augustan celebration in 17 BCE, but it is clear that some kind of ludi were held, and would continue to be in all future performances of the Ludi Saeculares.

Our oldest Republican sources – Hemina, Piso, and Gellius – state that the Ludi Saeculares were held next in 146 BCE, at the end of the Third Punic War. Contrary to this, Antias’s records state that games were held in 149 BCE. Many have concluded that this disagreement over the year indicates that 146 BCE is the correct date, and that either Antias or family tradition moved the date of this festival to 149 BCE, in order for the celebration to fall exactly one hundred years after the games of 249 BCE, and almost two hundred years after the games supposedly held in 348 BCE. Valerii did not serve as consuls in either 149 or 146 BCE, but this period does provide the first record of a member of that clan serving as decemuir: M. Valerius Messalla was a member of the college from at least 172–146 BCE.97 The Valerii may have had a tradition, real or imagined, that the games of 249 BCE were repeated in 146 BCE with the urging or guidance of this Valerius Messalla. The significance of these ludi would have changed greatly, for the original games of 249 BCE were held at a time of crisis during the First Punic War, whereas in 146 BCE Rome defeated Carthage after a long siege. The ritual may have been performed precisely because of the completion of the conquest in that year, recalling the ritual of 249 BCE that was deemed to have provided a successful outcome to the war against Carthage. If the ludi were held before the end of the war, they could have been intended as a supplication to the gods for victory, whereas if the ludi were held afterwards, the city would likely have been in a more festive mood.

There is no record of Ludi Saeculares or civic rites to Dis and Proserpina in 46 or 49 BCE; the city was embroiled in a civil war during this period, and even if the authorities remembered the games of the previous century, it would have been too difficult to make the necessary preparations for the celebration. This may be the period in which the “Ludi Tarentini” acquired their associations with saecula, and not merely repetitions

95 Censorinus 17.8.
96 Weinstock (1971), 193, 196.
97 Rüpke (2005), 90–100, 1351.
once per century. There are indications that Romans were becoming increasingly aware of the Etruscan concept of a *saeculum*: Plutarch records that in 88 BCE, Etruscans claimed that the conflict between Marius and Sulla indicated the coming of a new age or, and Heurgon argues that a prophecy attributed to the Etruscan nymph Vegoia dates to the same period. Vettius, who lived at the same time as Varro, calculated the age and duration of the city of Rome, while in the 60s BCE, Varro composed his *de Saeculis*. Vergil’s fourth *Eclogue*, composed c. 40 BCE, also celebrates the arrival of a new age. It could be that this sudden surge of interest in *saecula* proves that Varro invented the association between the “Ludi Tarentini” and repetition of the games each century; the games of 249 BCE were not intended to be repeated, but this was done in 146 BCE only in order to ensure the victory of Rome against Carthage.

Another possibility is that the idea of repeating the games each century only appeared when the Valerii or authorities in charge of the “Ludi Tarentini” absorbed ideas about *saecula* from the general speculation on the subject, and, finding a tradition of games held in 348, 249, and 146/149 BCE, they assumed that the ritual was meant to mark the change of *saecula*. But even Antias seems to have been concerned to mark the passing of centuries by adjusting the date of the games of 146 to 149 BCE, to better align with the games in 249 BCE. Finally, there continue to be indications of a Valerian connection with the *quindecimuirii*: Lactantius records that L. Valerius Flaccus, a *quindecimuir* from about 80–54 BCE, was a member of the delegation sent to Erythraea in 76 BCE to bring back new copies of the Sibylline books after they had been destroyed in 83 BCE by a fire on the Capitoline, where they were stored. He was the first Valerius in the college for whom we have record in over sixty years. Then in 45 BCE, a L. Valerius Acisculus minted coins, some of which bear images of the Sibyl and Apollo, others of which have a different image of the Sibyl on the reverse. Perhaps the Valerii desired to hold games in the 40s BCE, but were prevented by the conflicts at Rome during that period; it is also possible that the young Octavian was aware of the rhetoric surrounding the coming of a

99 Censorinus 17.11.
100 Servius, *auct. ad Aeneid* 8.526.
101 Diehl (1934) provides an analysis of the concept of the *saeculum* at Rome, particularly with respect to the history of the Ludi Saeculares; Blumenthal (1936) offers further discussion. Neither of these authors gives a convincing solution to the problem of Augustan *saecula* of 110 years in celebrations of the Ludi Saeculares. I discuss this in greater detail in the next chapter.
102 Fenestella diligentissimus scriptor de quindecimuiris dicens ait "restituto Capitolio rettulisse ad senatum Gaium Curionem consulem, ut legati Erythrae mitterentur, qui carmina Sibyllae conquisita Romam deportarent; itaque missos esse Publim gabinium, Marcus Otacilium, Lucium Valerium, qui descriptos a priuatis uersus circa mille Romam deportarunt." idem dixisse Varronem supra ostendimus.
“New Age” at Rome, and bided his time for an opportunity to capitalize on the idea once his authority was established.

2.7 Conclusion

In this examination of the early history of the Ludi Saeculares, I have demonstrated that celebrations of these Games in the Republican tradition were called “Ludi Tarentini” rather than “Ludi Saeculares”, deriving their name from the Tarentum in the Campus Martius. I have shown that a very real connection between the Valerii and the Tarentum sacrifices existed before the time of Augustus, and while it is difficult to reach a conclusive answer as to how early this association developed, the historian Valerius Antias assumed this relationship, which he either inherited or invented. Groundless speculation concerning the identity of “original deities” receiving cult at the Tarentum has hampered some previous attempts to trace the early history of the rites, and has been avoided. Post-Augustan accounts of the cult offered to Dis and Proserpina at Tarentum, performed by an ancestor of the Valerian clan, sometimes allude to ludi scaenici as part of the performance, but it is clear that the oldest and most distinguishing rites were the nocturnal sacrifices of dark victims. I have identified important features in these aetiological myths surrounding the Tarentum sacrifices and argued that various versions of the legend were in circulation in the late Republic and early Augustan period, influencing later historians. Ludi were attached to these rites by 249 BCE at the latest, when the gentilician cult of the Valerii was performed in the civic sphere during the crisis of the First Punic War as the “Ludi Tarentini” under the supervision of the quindecimuiri sacris faciundis. It is possible, but very unlikely, that the Tarentum sacrifices were performed at the civic level in 348 BCE, accompanied by a lectisternium. This transition of sacra priuata to state control was a rare occurrence, and its positive role as a remedy for Rome’s crisis during the First Punic War stands in contrast with Livy’s account of divine wrath at the transference of the Potitii’s cult to public slaves.

My examination of the divergent chronologies of celebrations of the Tarentum sacrifices reveals confusion over dates going back to the Republican period, when Antias seems to have re-invented or passed on a family tradition concerning celebrations during the Punic Wars. While the religious performances at the Tarentum were not described as saeculares during the Republic, I have shown that these sacrifices had begun to be identified with repetitions every hundred years as early as the time of Antias, and perhaps earlier. Yet this span of time was not described as a saeculum until Augustus and Capito created a new chronology for the Games, as will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 3

The Ludi Saeculares of Augustus

The Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE proved to be a radical transformation of their Republican predecessors, the Ludi Tarentini. Under Augustus, the sacrifices and games that had been associated with supplications of chthonic gods in periods of distress were repurposed to form a unique festival celebrating the end of civil wars, the restoration of the Republic, and the advent of a new age, thanks to the achievements of the princeps.

In this chapter, I argue that Augustus gave new significance to the Ludi Tarentini by associating their celebration with the change of a saeculum, thereby capitalizing on Roman fascination with the concept of succeeding ages in the first century BCE. Next, I demonstrate that in this period the Valerii still maintained a strong sense of gentilician identity and a connection to ancestral traditions, including the sacrifices at the Tarentum. Certain members of a patrician branch of this gens, the Valerii Messallae, were able to communicate information about the Ludi Tarentini to Augustus and his advisors due to their positions of political and religious authority. Augustus and Ateius Capito were then able to merge rituals associated with the Ludi Tarentini with many other kinds of Republican religious performances, creating a ritual sequence more complex than any other at Rome and emphasizing Augustan continuity with and restoration of the Republic.

In order to connect his games with Republican precedents, Augustus chose to rewrite history and produce a new chronology of their performances. Thus, Augustus was able to appropriate Valerian myths concerning the founding of the Tarentum sacrifices and apply them to his own family situation, thereby moving the former gentilician cult from the realm of state supervision and civic interests to the newly-created imperial sphere, in which the fortunes of the emperor’s family and their relationship with the gods were intimately linked with the welfare of the Roman state. I end with a discussion of how epigraphic and numismatic commemoration of the Ludi Saeculares enabled Augustus to leave his imprint on Rome’s future as well as its past.
3.1 Ancient sources for the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE

The Augustan Ludi Saeculares are better attested than any other of the Games, Republican or imperial, and evidence for their performance and commemoration survives in a variety of media. We are fortunate to have significant portions of the inscription that recorded the Acta of the Games (CIL 6.32323), including senatorial discussions surrounding preparations for the festivities, summaries of the prayers, sacrifices, and other rites for each day of the celebration, and lists of the members of the college of quindecimviri sacris faciundis who were in charge of the games. A fragment of the Acta had been discovered in the sixteenth century, but more of the inscription was unearthed in 1890, and was edited in 1899 by Mommsen. More recent editions of and commentaries on the Acta of 17 BCE have been composed by Pighi, Moretti, and Schnegg-Köhler. Two other prominent Augustan inscriptions briefly mention the Ludi Saeculares. The records of the sequence of dates for games according to the reckoning of the quindecimviri appear in a fragment of the Fasti Consulares. In addition, Augustus’s Res Gestae (22.2) include the Ludi Saeculares among his great achievements. Several coins issued in 17 BCE bear legends commemorating the games and show images of the festivities: RIC 1 350 and 354, RIC 2 138, and RIC 2 338–340.

The Saecular Games of 17 BCE are well-attested in literary sources, including a fragment from Livy 136, Suetonius Aug. 31, Cassius Dio 54.18, Tacitus, Ann. 11.11, Censorinus 17.11, and Zosimus 2.4–6. The Sibylline oracle that gave explicit directions for the performance of the games is preserved in Phlegon of Tralles (37.5.2–4) and Zosimus (2.6). Horace’s Carmen Saeculare was performed on the third day of the festivities after the last of the sacrifices were completed, and the poet reflected on the significance of his role in composing the poem and training the chorus in Ode 4.6.

3.2 Augustus and saeculum rhetoric

The character of the Ludi Tarentini was greatly altered when Augustus and Ateius Capito applied the concept of the saeculum to the chronology of their performances. For the first time, these games were firmly connected with the celebration of the arrival of a new age after a fixed span of years, rather than simply being repeated at the command of an oracle. The Augustan decision to alter the purpose of the Ludi Tarentini in this way was influenced by first-century BCE speculation about the change of a saeculum in times of political upheaval, which was in turn adopted (at least in part) from Etruscan theories about the ages of their civilization.

Our pre-Augustan evidence for the repetition of the Ludi Tarentini after a long span of time is limited, but it does appear that the games were supposed to be repeated once every hundred years after they came

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2 See Pighi (1965), Moretti (1985), and Schnegg-Köhler (2002).
4 See Dressel (1899), Scheid (1998a), and Schnegg-Köhler (2002), 216–220.
5 See Thomas (2011) for text and commentary.
under state supervision. Censorinus records that Antias and other historians were of the opinion that they were to be held *centesimo quoque anno*, "every hundred years". This language closely matches that of Varro, whom Censorinus cites immediately afterwards, in which he records that when the *decemuiiri* consulted the Sibyline books in 249 BCE, they were commanded *utique ludi centesimo quoque anno fierent*, "that [the games] should happen again every hundred years".6 The phrase is repeated a third time in a quotation from Livy concerning the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE: *eodem anno ludos saeculares Caesar ingenti apparatu fecit, quos centesimo quoque anno – his enim terminari saecula – fieri mos erat.*7 It would not be surprising if Livy took the phrase *centesimo quoque anno* from Varro, and Censorinus followed suit. These three references suggest that the Republican games were linked to the concept of repetition at fixed intervals, the probability of which is reinforced by Valerius Antias’s manipulation of the chronology of the Ludi Tarentini to a sequence of 348–249–149 BCE.

It is especially notable that in the fragment above, Varro refers to repetition of the *ludi* "every hundred years", rather than at the end of a *saeculum*, and calls the games performed in 249 BCE *Tarentini* rather than *Saeculares*. His language does not clearly indicate that the same *ludi*, Ludi Tarentini, are to be held again after this period, although his text could have readily been interpreted this way. Additionally, if the Ludi Tarentini had been connected with a repetition every *saeculum* of one hundred years, it would make sense for Varro to use the term here, given that he wrote a separate treatise on the subject of the length of ages, *De saeculis*.8 This ambiguity in the text would have provided Ateius Capito and Augustus with maneuvering room in their adaptation of these Republican sacrifices at the Tarentum: they could situate the new Ludi Saeculares in the tradition of the Ludi Tarentini, even adopting and adapting its central sacrifices, but at the same time give greater emphasis and significance to their repetition after a defined interval of time, the *saeculum*.

For Varro, a *saeculum* held greater significance than merely acting as a consistent unit of time. In Censorinus’s discussion of the term, which is derived from Varro, there are two Roman conceptions of *saecula*: natural and civil. Natural *saecula* vary in length, being the longest span of human life in a generation, while civil *saecula* are calculated from the foundation of a city. The distinction between the two is obscured in Varro’s description of the Etruscan concept of *saecula*, in which the first *saeculum* begins with the foundation of a city and ends with the death of the oldest person born on the day of founding, which is revealed by portents from the gods. Varro recorded that the Etruscans of his day believed that they had entered

6 Censorinus 17.8. Varro’s language and description of the circumstances at Rome are similar to Livy’s description of the origin of the *Ieiunium Cereris* ("Fast of Ceres") in 191 BCE (36.37.4): *eorum prodigiorum causa libros Sibyllinos ex senatus consulo decemuiiri cum adissent, renuntiaverant ieiunium instituendum Cereri esse, et id quinto quoque anno seruandum; et ut nouendiale sacrum fieret et unum diem supplicatio esset; coronati supplicarent; et consul P. Cornelius quibus dis quibus que hostiis edidissent decemuiiri sacrificaret.* ("On account of these portents the *decemuiiri* were directed by a decree of the senate to consult the Sibyline books, and they reported that a fast in honour of Ceres should be held and this repeated every fifth year; also that a nine-day festival should be celebrated and a period of prayer for one day; that those who offered the prayers should wear garlands; and that the consul Publius Cornelius, in honour of whatever gods and with whatever victims the *decemuiiri* should announce, should offer sacrifice.").

7 "In the same year Caesar performed the Saecular Games with magnificence, which it was the custom to hold every hundred years, since by these years ages are delimited." (Censorinus 17.9)

8 Servius, auct. ad. Aen. 8.526.
the eighth \textit{saeculum} of their nation and would perish in the tenth. For Varro, the passing of \textit{saecula} was also associated with the Roman nation: he tells a story of an augur named Vettius who interpreted the twelve vultures that appeared at the foundation of Rome as signifying that the city would endure for twelve hundred years. At least one Republican historian, Calpurnius Piso, seems to have made reference to this system of marking time according to \textit{saecula}: Roma condita anno d\textit{ci} \textit{saeculum} occipit his consulis, qui proximi sunt consules: M. Aemilius M. filius Lepidus, C. Popilius ii absens.

Thus, while the idea of associating the longevity of the Roman state with \textit{saecula} was present as early as the second century BCE, we have no Republican examples of the concept of a \textit{saeculum} being linked to the performance of the Ludi Tarentini. Censorinus brings the games and the \textit{saeculum} together in his treatise because he writes from a post-Augustan perspective, which indicates that the attempt to reconstruct the history of the Ludi Tarentini as Ludi Saeculares was successful. In the same way, much of our evidence for first-century BCE speculation about the arrival of a new or “Golden” age at Rome comes from later, imperial sources, so that it is difficult to find texts in which rhetoric concerning a \textit{saeculum}-change is not associated with a new age of Augustus. Some examples do exist: Plutarch records that in 88 BCE, Etruscans told the Senate that various portents had indicated that a change to a new generation was imminent; this was connected with Sulla’s rise to power. A strange text known as the “Prophecy of Vegoia” warned that the eighth \textit{saeculum} was coming to a close, and while it has often been identified as a translation of an Etruscan text into Latin from the first century BCE, Adams argues that its style situates it in the imperial period. In other sources for the first century, such as Cicero (\textit{Cat. 3.9}) for 63 BCE and Cassius Dio (41.14.5) for 49 BCE, the authors describe various portents as signs of political change and turmoil, without explicitly identifying these phenomena as omens presaging a new \textit{saeculum}.

The most explicit references to a \textit{saeculum} change at the end of the Republic are connected with Octavian’s ascendancy at Rome, but they are complicated by their association with the comet that appeared in July 44 BCE while Octavian was celebrating funeral games for Julius Caesar. Pliny describes the appearance of the comet and Augustus’s later interpretation of its significance in his autobiography:

\begin{quote}
cometes in uno totius orbis loco colitur in templo Romae, admodum faustus Diuo Augustus iudicatus ab ipso, qui incipiente eo apparuit ludis, quos faciebat Veneri Genetrici non multo post obitum patris Caesaris in collegio ab eo instituto. namque quis uerbis in \{…\} gaudium prodit is: ipsis ludorum meorum diebus sidus crinitum per septem dies in regione caeli sub sep-
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
9 Censorinus 17.7–16.
10 Censorinus 17.20.
11 “In the 601st year from the foundation of Rome an age \textit{[saeculum]} began, with these men as consuls, who formed the next consular pair: Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, son of Marcus, and Gaius Popilius for the second time, in his absence.” (Censorinus 17.19) For a discussion of textual difficulties with this passage, see Cornell et al. (2013), 213–217, and Baudou (1995). Baudou connects this fragment of Piso with the others cited by Censorinus concerning the dates of the third and fourth Ludi Saeculares, but his argument is problematic, because he assumes that the pre-Augustan Ludi Tarentini were called Ludi Saeculares and associated with the passage of \textit{saecula} at Rome.
12 Plutarch, \textit{Sulla} 7.3.
13 Vegoia’s prophecy is found in the \textit{Gromatici Veteres} at 1.350; see Heurgon (1959), who promotes a first-century BCE date, and Adams (2003), 182.


tentrionibus est conspectum. id oriebatur circa undecimam horam diei clarumque et omnibus e terris conspicuum fuit. eo sidere significari uulgus credidit Caesaris animam inter deorum immortalium numina receptam, quo nomine id insigne simulacro capitis eius, quod mox in foro consecrauimus, adiectum est. haec ille in publicum; interiore gaudio sibi illum natum seque in eo nasci interpretatus est. et, si uerum fatemur, salutare id terris fuit.14

Thus, when Augustus published his autobiography in the 20s BCE, he attributed the comet’s association with the deification of Caesar to a belief of the common people. Pliny, on the other hand, writes that Octavian believed that the comet signalled his own rise to power; it is difficult to identify what source he might have used to identify Octavian’s private view, but he may be inferring this based on the worship of the comet at Rome. A saeculum change is not specifically mentioned in this passage, but Servius’s interpretation of the appearance of the comet of 44 BCE refers to another story, in which an Etruscan haruspex links the comet directly to a new saeculum:

cum Augustus Caesar ludos funebres patri celebraret, die medio stella apparuit. ille eam esse confirmavit parentis sui … Baebius Macer circa horam octauam stellam, amplissimam, quasi lemniscis, radiis coronatam, ortam dicit. quam quidam ad inlustrandam gloriam Caesaris iuuenis pertinere existimabant, ipse animam patris sui esse uluit eique in Capitolio statuam, super caput auream stellam habentem, posuit: inscriptum in basi fuit ‘Caesari emitheo’. sed Vulcanius15 haruspex in contione dixit cometen esse, qui significaret exitum noni saeculi et ingressum decimi; sed quod inuitis dis secreta rerum pronuntiaret, statim se esse moriturum: et nondum finita oratione in ipsa contione concidit. hoc etiam Augustus in libro secundo de memoria uitae suae complexus est.16

According to Servius and to Baebius Macer, Octavian greeted the sight of the star/comet as proof of Caesar’s deification, which led him to set up a statue of Caesar with a star affixed to his forehead. Servius’s account

14 “A comet is worshipped in only one part of the world, in a temple in Rome, having been judged by the Divine Augustus as highly propitious to himself; it appeared at the beginning of his career, at games which he was holding for Venus Genetrix not long after the death of his father Caesar, and in the college which Caesar had founded. (94) In fact he made clear his joy in these words in (...) : On the very day of my games, a comet was visible for seven days in the northern region of the sky. It rose around the eleventh hour of the day, and was both clear and visible from all lands. The common people believed that by this star it was signified that Caesar’s spirit had been received among powers of the immortal gods, for which reason this symbol was added to the image of his head, which we soon afterwards consecrated in his forum. This is what he said in public; with inward joy he interpreted it as having been born for him, and that he was born in it; and, to tell the truth, it was beneficial for the world." (NH 2.93–94)
15 Bechtold (2011) and Cornell et al. (2013) follow the manuscript’s reading of Vulcanius, but Santangelo (2013, 116 n.4) argues for the use of the form Vulcatius.
16 “When Augustus Caesar was celebrating funeral games for his father, in the middle of the day a star appeared. He confirmed that it was of his father ... Baebius Macer says that the star rose around the eighth hour, very full, crowned with rays like ribbons on a victor’s crown. Some thought it pertained to the illumination of the glory of the young Caesar, but he maintained it was his father’s spirit and put up a statue to him on the Capitol with a golden star above its head; inscribed on the base was ‘To the Demigod Caesar’. But Vulcanius the haruspex in a public meeting said that it was a comet to signify the end of the ninth age and the beginning of the tenth, but that because he was revealing the secrets of things against the will of the gods, he was about to die; and in that public meeting, with his speech not yet complete, he fell down dead. This even Augustus includes in the second book of the memoirs of his life.” (Serv. auct. ad Ecl. 9.46 = Cornell 2013, Augustus F2) Weinstock (1971, 195) believes that Vulcanius’s death was a sign that he was the last Etruscan in his generation, and his death brought it to a close.
gives Octavian an active role in propagating the idea that the deceased Caesar ascended to the stars in order to avoid the interpretation that the star signalled his rise to power (as the “young Caesar”), while in his autobiography Augustus avoids claiming direct responsibility for setting up the statue of Caesar with the star. But Vulcanius’s prophecy in the public setting of a contio17 gave the star a wider and more negative significance, since it heralded the beginning of the tenth saeculum, which was often connected with conflict and political upheaval.18 Any fears derived from this prophecy concerning the imminent end of Rome may have been quelled in 43 BCE, when twelve vultures were said to have appeared during the sacrifices held after Octavian was elected consul.19 If the twelve vultures were interpreted as signifying saecula of one hundred years, as in Vettius’s interpretation of the vultures that appeared to Romulus, then Rome’s tenth saeculum was not its last.20

At some point in the following decades the two interpretations of the sidus Iulium were reconciled, so that the star would come to be perceived as a sign of Caesar’s deification and the arrival of a new age of peace and prosperity under Augustus’s governance. The sidus Iulium could easily have been associated with the star of Venus Genetrix, ancestress of Caesar and Octavian, in whose honour the games of 44 BCE were held.21 The star appears on the obverse of a coin issued by Agrippa in 38 BCE above the head of youthful bust, either Caesar or Octavian, with the legend IMP DIVI IVLI F (RRC 534.1). In the late 20s BCE, a Spanish mint issued several coins depicting the comet on the reverse and bearing the legend DIVVS IVLIVS (RIC 127a–b, 38a–b, and 102). By 17 BCE, the sidus Iulium would reappear on three coins issued by M. Sanquinius (RIC 127b 338–340) for the celebration of the Ludi Saeculares, each bearing the bust of Caesar on the obverse or reverse with the star/comet above his brow (see fig. 3.1).22 This was perhaps an effort to link the new saeculum of the games with the commemoration of the apotheosis of Augustus’s adopted father.23 One of the moneys for 17 BCE, C. Licinius Stolo, was also a quindecimuir in that year, which points to a means of communication between the moneyers and the college concerning imagery designated to advertise and commemorate the games.24

17 Information about preparations for the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE was also communicated to the Roman public through a contio, according to the Acta 24–28 (Schnegg-Köhler 2002, 28); cf. Bendlin (1998), 298 and (2000), 127.
18 A similar story of an Etruscan prophesying political change in a negative light is recounted in Appian’s Bellum Civile 4.1.4, in which a number of portents are seen at Rome while Octavian, Antonius, and Lepidus made arrangements to consolidate their rule: ἑφ’ οἷς ἡ μὲν βουλὴ θύτας καὶ μάντεις συνῆγεν ἀπὸ Τυρρηνίας· καὶ ὁ πρεσβύτατος αὐτῶν, τὰς πάλαι βασιλείας ἐπανήξειν εἰπών, καὶ δουλεύσειν ἅπαντα χωρὶς ἑαυτοῦ μόνου, τὸ στόμα κατέσχε καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα, ἕως ἀπέθανεν (“Because of these things the Senate sent for diviners and soothsayers from Etruria, and the oldest of them said that the monarchy of the past was coming back, and that they would all be slaves except himself alone, and he closed his mouth and held his breath until he died”). Bechtold (2011, 214–215) believes that the Servian account of the haruspex’s prophecy is a variation on Appian.
19 Suetonius, Aug. 95.2, Obs. 69; App. B. Civ. 3.94; Dio 46.46.1–3.
21 Bechtold (2011) argues that the Augustan star imagery is rooted in Republican rather than Hellenistic practice. Coins issued by Valerius Acisculus in 45 BCE depict a bust of Apollo with a star above his forehead (RRC 474.1–3), which may...
There are a number of theories that attempt to explain Augustus’s response to the comet throughout his lifetime, but the best arguments describe his reconciliation of the two interpretations, apotheosis and saeculum change, as a process. It is improbable that Octavian had begun making detailed plans to use the comet/star in official imagery and hold ludi to celebrate a new saeculum immediately after seeing the phenomenon in 44 BCE. But the appearance of the sidus Iulium on Caesar’s forehead on the coinage of 17 BCE must look back to the comet of 44 BCE, because there is no convincing evidence for the appearance of a comet in that year. The star is connected with a new saeculum in literature from this period, as well. The quotation from Servius above forms a commentary on Vergil, Ecl. 9.46–47: Daphni, quid antiquos signorum suspicis ortus? / ecce Dionaei processit Caesaris astrum (“Daphnis, why do you look up to the old risings of constellations? / Behold, the star of Dionaean Caesar is appearing”). Vergil’s fourth Eclogue spoke of the return of a new Golden Age according to a Sibylline prophecy, language which is echoed in the Aeneid with have inspired the later Augustan coins.  

25 See Gurvall (1997), Ramsey and Licht (1997), Bechtold (2011), Smith (2013), Pandey (2013). Pandey argues that Augustus did not in fact have control over interpretations of the comet early in his reign, but that Ovid’s account of Caesar’s apotheosis in Met. 15.745–851 presents Augustus as having the power to manipulate the meaning of the portent. Thus, the poet’s subversive portrayal of the event inspired later sources (like Pliny) to describe Augustus as having been in control of the interpretation of the comet from the beginning. Her argument does not give adequate attention to the appearance of the comet on coins of the 20s and 17 BCE: Augustus must have had some measure of control over the official portrayal of the sidus Iulium in order for it to appear in this context associated with the new saeculum, long before Ovid’s Metamorphoses appeared in 8 CE.  

26 Ramsey and Licht (1997) corroborated the appearance of the comet of 44 BCE with Chinese sources, but found no such evidence for a comet in 17 BCE; cf. Bechtold (2011). Bicknell (1991) suggests that the descriptions of a “fiery torch” appearing at night in late 17 BCE in Julius Obsequens 71 and Cassius Dio 54.19 could be references to a bright meteor or fireball, which would not have been documented by the Chinese. Boyce admits the possibility that the references could have been invented based on the appearances of coins from that year (1965, 3 n.7). Sutherland does not comment on the date of the comet appearing in Augustan coinage, and only suggests vaguely that it “may have helped stimulate the holding of the Ludi Saeculares” (1984, 48 n.102).
the prediction that Augustus would “found again the golden ages [saecula] in Latium through fields once ruled by Saturn” (\textit{aurea condet / saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arua / Saturno quondam}).

Given the power of the \textit{saeculum}, it is unsurprising that Augustus and Ateius Capito would find great potential in the application of the term to the obscure Republican sacrifices at the Tarentum. The Ludi Tarentini were already associated with repetition once per century, according to the regulations in the Sibylline books, and their chronology could be easily reworked to suit Augustus’s needs. It was found useful to reinterpret the \textit{saeculum} as an interval of 110 years, for reasons that will be discussed below, and the strange new measurement was stated clearly in the \textit{Acta} of the Games and in Horace’s \textit{Carmen Saeculare}.

But something of the older Etruscan view of the \textit{saeculum} was retained: the \textit{Acta} of the games record that these festivities were a once-in-a-lifetime event: line 54: \textit{tali spectaculo [nemo iterum intereit]} (“no one will ever be present at a spectacle of this sort again”), and line 56: \textit{neque ultra quam semel ulli mortalium eos spectare licet} (“it is not permitted that any mortal see them more than once”).

Augustus’s efforts at associating his reign with the new \textit{saeculum} were highly successful, as demonstrated by Suetonius’s account of Rome’s grief after his death: \textit{fuit et qui suaderet, appellationem mensis Augusti in Septembrem transferendam, quod hoc genitus Augustus, illo defunctus esset; alius, ut omne tempus a primo die natali ad exitum eius saeculum Augustum appellaretur et ita in fastos referretur.} Rather than emphasizing fixed centuries from the foundation of the city of Rome or the lifespan of an individual within a generation, the \textit{saeculum} of the Ludi Saeculares celebrated the achievements of a single man and looked forward to a smooth transition of his influence as his authority was passed down to his heirs. Thus, the application of the \textit{saeculum} to the Ludi Tarentini eventually changed the significance of the term itself as it became closely associated with imperial dynasties, as will be discussed further in the following chapter.

### 3.3 The gens Valeria in the age of Augustus

Augustus’s close ties to powerful members of the Valerian clan influenced his decision to rework the Republican tradition of the Ludi Tarentini into the Ludi Saeculares. In the first century CE, members of this ancient \textit{gens} were numerous at Rome, and one particular branch, the Valerii Messallae, rose to positions of prominence under Augustus. In an age that saw the rise of \textit{noui homines} in the political sphere, the Messallae esteemed highly their ancestry and took pains to study their gentilician traditions, thereby creating yet another opportunity for the ancient religious practice of sacrifices at the Tarentum to come to the attention of Augustus and Ateius Capito.

M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus (c.64 BCE–8 CE), the son of M. Valerius Messalla Niger (consul in 61

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29 Schnegg-Köhler (2002), 32.

30 “There was also one who urged that the name of the month of August be transferred to September, because in the latter month Augustus was born, and in the former month he died; another, that the entire period of time from the first day of his birth to his death should be called the ‘age [\textit{saeculum}] of Augustus’ and so recorded in the calendar.” (Suetonius, \textit{Aug.} 100.3)
became one of the most powerful men at Rome after a series of timely alliances during the conflicts after Julius Caesar’s death. Corvinus had fought against Octavian at Philippi, transferred his allegiance to Marcus Antonius, and finally offered his support to Octavian, who pardoned him and appointed him co-consul in 31 BCE (in place of Antonius) prior to the battle of Actium. At some point Augustus gave Antonius's old house on the Palatine to Messalla and Agrippa. After a victory over the Aquitani, Messalla celebrated a spectacular triumph in 27 BCE. Octavian made him prefect of Rome c.20 BCE, a post that he held briefly. He became augur in 36 BCE and held this position until 13 CE, and was one of the first members of the Fratres Arvales. In 2 BCE, Corvinus moved in the Senate that Augustus receive the title \textit{Pater patriae}. In all likelihood he would have taken pride in his ties to illustrious ancestors, given that his cognomen linked him to M. Valerius Messalla Corvus, the famous consul and dictator of the fourth century, and it may be that poets associated him with the first consul, Valerius Publicola.

The Valerian sense of gentilician identity and continuity is also apparent in the case of M. Valerius Messalla Rufus (c.102–26 BCE), who was a relative of Messalla Niger. Messalla Rufus had eventually sided with Julius Caesar in the civil wars and served as consul in 53 BCE; he also became augur in 81 BCE and held this position until 26 BCE. Pliny the Elder records that late in life Messalla Rufus wrote a treatise called \textit{De familiis}, a study of old Roman \textit{gentes}. He appears to have mentioned the ancestral cults associated with these clans: Pliny cites his description of the Servilii offering sacrifices to a coin, and he is also likely to have included references to legendary founders of \textit{gentes}, some of which may be preserved in Verrius Flaccus. If this is the case, it is tempting to speculate that some version of the Valesius myth was included in a section in \textit{De familiis} that described the origins of the Valerian clan, and that this passage was later adapted by Valerius Maximus, but given the lack of actual evidence this must remain a conjecture.

The sons of Corvinus and Messalla Rufus were also given influential positions during the Augustan period and appeared prominently in the college of \textit{quindecimuiri sacris faciundis}. Rufus’s son, Potitus Valerius Messalla, had joined the college in 39 BCE, the same year that Octavian and Agrippa appear in the membership lists, and served as a member until 11 BCE. M. Valerius Messalla, the elder son of Messalla Rufus, was added in 35 BCE, and continued to serve until his death shortly before 19 BCE. The choice of Valerius Messalla was significant, because it contravened Republican precedent to have more than one member of the same \textit{gens} in a sacerdotal college. This same Messalla was also a member of the Sodales.

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31 Dio Cassius 51.27.
32 Tib. 1.7.5–9, 2.1.33; \textit{Inscr. Ital.} 13.1.86; \textit{App. l.c.}
33 Tacitus, \textit{Annales} 6.11; Dio Cassius 50.10.
34 Rüpke (2005), 146–176, 1352.
36 Horace, \textit{Sat.} 1.10.28; [Vergil], \textit{Catalepton} 9.39–40. Cf. Cornell et al. (2013), 1.463 n.3. In \textit{Pliny, NH} 35.7, Corvinus suggests (with Augustus’s approval) that a young relative of his who was born dumb be trained as a painter; Pliny connects this story with that of M. Valerius Maximus Messalla, who displayed the first painting at Rome in 490 BCE, giving the impression that Corvinus’s suggestion was motivated in part by the \textit{exemplum} of an ancient ancestor.
37 Rüpke (2005), 118–145, 1353.
40 Rüpke (2005), 118–156, 1352.
41 Rüpke (2005), 140–149, 1352.
Titii between 30 and 21 BCE. By this point in time, Augustus had been appointed to all major religious positions at Rome (aside from that of the Pontifex Maximus), and, significantly, the new member of the college whom he chose to replace Valerius Messalla in 20 BCE was M. Valerius Messalla Messallinus, son of Corvinus, who would be consul in 3 BCE. Thus, he intentionally maintained the number of Valerii in the college. While Augustus may not have had full responsibility for enrolling new members in these positions, certainly these appointments would have been made with his approval, for by 29 BCE he had been granted the power to name any priest himself.

Clearly, these Valerii enjoyed some measure of favour from Augustus, and their presence in the college in 17 BCE was a sign that he acknowledged the Valerian origin of the games. The number of Valerii who appear as quindecimurii in this period is surprising: even if we allow for the fragmentary nature of the surviving ancient evidence, it is not likely to be a coincidence that three Valerii were members between 39 BCE and 21 CE, a greater number than that seen at any point until the end of the college in the fourth century CE. In no other period do so many members of any clan serve in the college at once. It is particularly intriguing that the three Valerii who were quindecimurii during the celebration of the Ludi Saeculares in 17 BCE were sons of Messalla Rufus and Corvinus, men who valued Valerian tradition and identity. Their presence in the college provides a missing link for the process by which Augustus and his advisors could have reshaped the Ludi Tarentini into a festival celebrating a new saeculum. As quindecimurii, these Valerii would have been in charge of the Sibylline Books that contained oracles for various religious performances, including those of the Ludi Tarentini. Additionally, the college of quindecimurii probably kept written records or commentarii of the details of the religious performances derived from the oracles in the Sibylline Books, as argued by Scheid and by Liberman. If Augustus and Ateius Capito had desired to create some kind of festival for the saeculum by reworking Republican traditions, they would have had ample opportunity to gain information about the odd, infrequent Tarentum sacrifices from interactions with the Valerii, who would have had knowledge of the rites from their professional duties as well as family tradition.

But Augustus may have learned of Valerian traditions through sources other than records of the quindecimurii. Messalla Rufus’s De familiae could have served as a resource for specialists at Augustus’s court, including Ateius Capito (fl. 17 BCE–22 CE), whose expertise in legal and religious matters extended to gentilician cults, as discussed in the previous chapter. It would be surprising if Capito did not have access to De familiae, since it dealt with many subjects that he studied, but it is unclear whether or not the two authors could have met one another. Messalla Rufus died in 26 BCE, and we do not know when Capito first became acquainted with Augustus before he assisted him in planning the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE. Works on Roman gentes were certainly in circulation among scholars in the Augustan period: in the surviving fragments of De significatu uerborum, the author Verrius Flaccus (c.60 BCE–after 14 CE), who was tutor to

42 Rüpke (2005), 143–149, 151.
43 Rüpke (2005), 150, 153. Tibullus 2.5 was written for Messallinus’s entrance into the college, shortly before the poet died in 19 BCE.
44 Dio Cassius 51.20.
45 Cf. Birley (1999), 159.
46 Scheid (1998b) and Liberman (1998, 66) argue that the religious performances that fell under the supervision of the quindecimurii would have been too complex for oral transmission, and therefore must have been preserved in written records.
Gaius and Lucius, Augustus’s adopted heirs, discusses religious practices of Roman gentes that he cites from Capito and, likely, from De familiis.

### 3.4 Recreating the Republican tradition

Augustus, presumably with the guidance of Capito, appears to have taken pains to establish a new chronology of the Ludi Saeculares that would still acknowledge the mythical origins of the rites as a Valerian cult. For obvious reasons, Augustus did not want to wait to celebrate the next Saecular Games one hundred years from the missed celebration in 46 BCE, but if he held it earlier, he would disrupt the relatively even sequence of dates for the previous games (348 – 249 – 146 – [46] BCE). He was not compelled to select 17 BCE for the date of his celebration, but after choosing that date, he could have easily revised the chronology by counting backward in sequences of one hundred years in order to arrive at a founding date of 417 BCE.

Instead, Augustus chose to calculate the intervals of the games in 110-year saecula, which allowed him to situate the first Ludi Saeculares in the consulate of M. Valerius Maximus in 456 BCE, and the second games in the consulate of M. Valerius Corvus in 346 BCE. This was an important decision, the significance of which has been overlooked in scholarship: it allowed Augustus to preserve the Valerian legend of the foundation of the rites in the consulate of a Valerius, accord honour to Messalla Corvinus by maintaining the celebration of the games during the consulate of his ancestor and namesake, and adapt the remainder of the chronology for his own needs. The dates for the next games in the sequence – 346, 236, 126 BCE – neatly skim by the traditional dates of 348, 249, and 149/146 BCE, and, perhaps most brilliantly, avoid altogether the awkward date of 46, when no celebration of any kind occurred. The 110-year saeculum is therefore an Augustan creation, invented purely for the convenience of connecting games in 17 BCE to Valerian consulates in the Republic. Thus, any attempts to look for a prior tradition of 110-year saecula at Rome or elsewhere will be misguided.\(^\text{47}\)

Why, then, did Augustus choose to celebrate the Ludi Saeculares in 17 BCE, when a saeculum of 110 years from the invented date of 126 BCE points to a date of 16 BCE? If there is a link between the membership of the quindecimuiri and the planning of the Ludi Saeculares, as I have argued, the entry of Messalla Messallinus in 20 BCE indicates that Augustus had been contemplating the games for several years previous to 17 BCE. Schnegg-Köhler suggests that the choice of 17 rather than 16 BCE could simply be a mistake that occurred in an attempt to calculate between two systems of reckoning Roman dates from the foundation of the city, a Varronian and a “Capitoline” scheme.\(^\text{48}\) Bernstein proposes that a comet appearing in 17 BCE may have influenced Augustus, recalling the comet that appeared in 44 BCE, after Caesar’s death: Augustus may not have wanted to miss the opportunity to celebrate a new saeculum in conjunction with the symbol of his deified father, so he may have rescheduled the games for an earlier date, after it was too late to change the

\(^{47}\) Santangelo, for example, implies that were pre-existent traditions of holding the games according to 100 and 110-year saecula, and that Augustus simply chose the latter for his celebration (2013, 120, 248–249). Brind’Amour (1978) is a particularly speculative attempt to looks for parallels in saeculum lengths in Greece and Egypt.

\(^{48}\) Schnegg-Köhler (2002), 158–159.
new “official” sequence.\textsuperscript{49} But as discussed above, the appearance of a comet in 17 BCE is highly unlikely, and even if some kind of meteor were sighted in that year, it would likely have appeared at the end of the year as a brief flash in the sky, not before the Ludi Saeculares were held in late May/early June.\textsuperscript{50}

In her forthcoming work on the cult of the Lares Compitales, Flower argues that Augustus chose 17 BCE to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Senate’s conferral of the title Augustus in 27 BCE; in the same way, his reform of the Lares Compitales and renaming of them as Lares Augusti in 7 BCE celebrates a twentieth anniversary of that event. If this were the case, then Augustus’s choice of 456 BCE to be the year of the first celebration of the Ludi Saeculares is particularly striking, because he could have easily set the sequence to begin in 457 BCE. Yet the fact that a Valerius was consul in 456 BCE may have been more important to Augustus than creating regular cycles for the games.

Schnegg-Köhler offers another possibility: in Valerius Maximus’s account of founding of the Tarentum rites, Valesius had two sons and one daughter, and shortly before the \textit{ludi} of 17 BCE, his daughter Julia and heir Agrippa had their third child. Thus they had two sons, Gaius and Lucius, and one daughter, Julia, in all.\textsuperscript{51} The date of birth of Julia’s third child is not certain: it may be that Lucius was not born until later in June, after the Ludi Saeculares had ended. Thus, the sex of the child would have been unknown, but with Julia clearly pregnant at the time of the games and with the survival of the infant uncertain due to high infant mortality rates, the imperial family may have decided not to wait until the child was born to hold the games, preserving the parallel between Agrippa and Valesius (although with one child \textit{in utero}).

Augustus may have viewed 17 BCE as the ideal time to draw a parallel between his family and that of Valesius, in addition to celebrating recent or imminent birth of the new child, which was closely preceded by the passing of the \textit{Leges Iuliae} in the previous year. This matter is discussed in more detail in section vi below. We cannot be sure of this, but there are two other indications that the plans were rushed: Horace’s \textit{Carmen Saeculare} states that Diana and Apollo received white cattle in sacrifice (47–49), but the \textit{Acta} record that they received cakes (139–146); the \textit{Acta} indicate that Terra Mater was worshipped at the festival (134–137), but in the \textit{Carmen Saeculare} she is addressed as Tellus (29–30).

Some think that Augustus intended to hold the games in 23 BCE, but evidence for this is slim. Those who argue in favour of 23 BCE appear to arrive at this date by calculating backwards from the date of the next celebration of the Ludi Saeculares that follow the Augustan sequence, the games of Domitian in 88 CE, and suggest that plans for the games in 23 BCE were interrupted by some kind of disturbance.\textsuperscript{52} Barnes demonstrates the unlikeliness of this situation.\textsuperscript{53}

In any case, Augustus and Capito’s creation of a new set of dates for the Saecular Games was intended to supersede and replace all previous references to their chronology. The new dates appeared in the \textit{commentarii} of the \textit{quindecimuiri} and were duly noted by Censorinus (17.10–11). Revised records for

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{51} Schnegg-Köhler (2002), 183.
\textsuperscript{52} See Hirschfeld (1913), 443–445; Mattingly (1934), 161–165; Syme (1939), 339; Merkelbach (1961), 90–99; Birley (1999), 156.
\textsuperscript{53} Barnes (2008), 265–266.
\end{flushright}
Republican celebrations of the games were included in the Fasti Consulares alongside the record for 17 BCE. Domitian and Septimius Severus would calculate the dates of their games based on the Augustan reckoning, and Severus stated that his games were the seventh in the series at the beginning of the Acta commemorating his celebration.

3.5 Constructing the ritual sequence of the Ludi Saeculares

If Augustus was inspired to integrate Etruscan conceptions of saecula that arose in the first century BCE into his adaptation of a Republican festival, what other religious sources did he and Capito turn to in order to create his Ludi Saeculares? The main Republican source would certainly have been the sacrifices at the Tarentum that had originally been performed in times of distress, but their additions also include Republican ceremonies such as lectisternia/sellisternia, and the singing of hymns in processions in response to prodigies. Augustus and Capito worked with pre-existing rituals set in significant locations to compose the Saecular Games of 17 BCE, but adapted them to suit the new circumstances and purpose of the celebration.

The celebration of the “Ludi Tarentini” in 249 BCE was held under the governance of the decemvir and the Sibylline books; black oxen and cows were offered to Dis Pater and Proserpina on one altar in the Campus Martius for three nights, ludi scaenici were held, but there is no mention of other deities being worshipped or other rituals being performed. Augustus adopted the framework of this rite for the ritual sequence of his Ludi Saeculares, but with certain adjustments. The games were celebrated according to the Greek rite under the authority of the quindecimvir, and in theory followed the directions laid down by the Sibylline oracle:

\[
\text{\'Alli ópótan múdo to ıkhi krónos ántheýposi}
\text{ζωής, eis étewv ékatón déka kúklon òdeówv,}
\text{mêmnēsbaí, Rōmaí, kai ou mála lîsai eautón,}
\text{mêmnēsbaí tâde pánta, theósi mên áthanástous}
\text{rēzein en pediwa para Thúbrio dos apleto n òdor, (5)}
\text{óppa stevnótaton, vux ënkaigai épelthé}
\text{hēlios krōýanatos én fāos- ënba su rēzein}
\text{ièra pantogyñoos Moirais ìrnaa te kai áiga}
\text{kuanēas, êpi taïc ës' Eileithyias árēsasthai}
\text{páidotókos xwēsston, ëpê thēmuws- aúthi dè Gaia (10)}
\text{plēthoúmenh xórois ës rēuðo ìte melaina.}
\text{Pánleukoi tābri dè Dīos para bimôn ãgésthwn}
\]

54 cit. 1.17, p. 29, and Pighi (1965), 41–52.
55 Pighi (1965), 140 l. 1.
56 Verrius Flaccus’s quotation on the Games of 249 BCE (discussed above) had claimed that a song was sung on the Capitol by children of nobles, and that Dis and Proserpina received sacrifice through the day and night, but this is likely a conflation with later practices. See Pseudo-Acro, gloss on Horace’s Carmen Saeculare (v. 8 Keller 1902, 471).
The text of the oracle aligns closely with the performances recorded in the Acta of the Ludi Saeculares.

57 "Indeed, whenever the longest span of human life has come, travelling around its cycle of one hundred and ten years, remember, Roman, even if it escapes your notice, remember to do all these things, to sacrifice to the immortal gods in the field beside the boundless water of the Tiber where it is narrowest, when night comes upon the earth after the sun has hid its light. Then perform offerings to the all-generating Moirai, both lambs and dark female goats, and gratify the Eileithyiai, favourable to child-birth, with burnt offerings in the proper way. In that place let a black sow pregnant with young be sacrificed to Gaia. Let all-white bulls be led to the altar of Zeus by day, not by night: for to the heavenly gods sacrifices are performed in the daylight. Let the temple of Hera receive from you a young heifer and a cow beautiful in form. And let Phoibos Apollo, who is also called Helios, son of Leto, receive equal victims. And let Latin paeans sung by youths and maidens fill the temple of the immortals. Let these same maidens have a separate chorus, and let the boys, the male progeny, be apart, but all with living parents, the stock still flourishing on both sides. Let women tamed by the yokes of marriage sit bent-kneed on that day beside Hera’s altar, famous in song, beseeching the goddess. Give materials for purification to all men and women, especially to the females. Let everyone carry from their house all that it is proper for mortals to bear who are offering first-fruits of their substance, propitiations for gracious spirits and blessed Ouranian gods. And let all these things lie in store in order that you may remember to provide them for seated females and men. During the following days and nights let there be a numerous gathering at seats fit for the gods. Mix zeal with laughter. Remember to keep these things always in mind, and all Italian land and all the land of the Latins will always bear the yoke upon its neck under your sceptre.” (Zosimus 2.6; also in Phlegon 37.5.2–4.)
but it is unlikely that this is because Augustus and Capito took pains to follow an ancient Republican text: the Sibylline books had almost certainly been edited before 17 BCE, and this passage must be the product of Augustan planning for the games. Cassius Dio records that Augustus had ordered the quindecimiuri to recopy the Sibylline books in 18 BCE, just prior to the games: καὶ τὰ ἔπη τὰ Σιβύλεια ἐξίτηλα ὑπὸ τοῦ χρόνου γεγονότα τοὺς ιερέας αὐτοχειρίᾳ ἐκγράψασθαι ἐκέλευσεν, ἵνα μηδεὶς ἕτερος αὐτὰ ἀναλέξῃ. When he became pontifex maximus in 12 BCE, Augustus gathered up and selected texts credited to the Sibyl, which had previously been kept in the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline, and stored them in two golden chests beneath the statue of Apollo in his newly-built Palatine temple. The new location of the books may be commemorated in two coins from 16 BCE, RIC i 365–366, which according to Gagé and Sutherland depict Apollo sacrificing on a platform decorated with three foruli, the cases for the books. This movement of the authoritative oracular text between the two hills looks backward to the role of these two locations in the ritual sequence of the Games. There is other evidence that Augustus and Capito assembled the ritual sequence of the Ludi Saeculares from a number of Republican sources: the consuls were unable to find information about the budget for the Games in “ancient books” (antiqueis libris), perhaps a reference to senatorial archives. Thus, the authenticity of the antiquity of passages in the Sibylline books, particularly the oracle concerning the Ludi Saeculares, must be questioned, and cannot be used for making inferences about Republican performances of the games.

Evidence for the rituals performed in the Ludi Saeculares in the Acta of 17 BCE reveal that the oracle’s prescriptions were closely followed. The games were to be held every saeculum of 110 years. Materials for purification, called suffimenta in Latin and λύματα in Greek, were distributed to the people by the quindecimuiri, and first-fruits (fruges) were collected, to be used in the sellisternia offered to the gods. Chthonic deities received sacrifices at the Tarentum at night: the Moiraes received black lambs and goats, the Ilithyiae received cakes, and Terra Mater was offered a black pregnant sow. Jupiter and Juno were worshipped during the day at their ancient temple on the Capitoline, and received white cattle, two apiece.

58 “... and he commanded that the priests should write out by hand the Sibylline verses, which had become obsolete through time, so that no one else might read them.” (54.17.2)
59 Suetonius, Aug. 31.1.
60 Gagé (1955), 545; Sutherland (1984), 69n.
61 Scheid (1998b), 19–20; Augustan Acta A/B 1–2, Schnegg-Köhler (2002), 24. At p. 39 n.18, Scheid seems to think that books sought for information concerning the budget would have dated to the last celebration of the Ludi Saeculares in 126 BCE, without making it clear that this date was an Augustan invention, and that the last celebration of the Ludi Tarentini had been in 146 BCE.
62 See Davis (2001), 113, Beard/North/Price (1998a), 205, and Santangelo (2011), 137–138. Kienast believes that the content of the Sibylline books would not have been changed by Augustus’s involvement with them, and that they were not in fact moved from the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline (1982, 196 n. 103).
Apollo and Diana received twenty-seven cakes each, according to the Acta, but the oracle only indicates that they were to receive “equal sacrifices”. A hymn was to be sung by a double chorus of boys and girls with both parents living; the oracles states only that “Latin paeans” are to be sung “at the temples of the gods”, but the Acta clarify that this hymn was sung at the temple to Jupiter and Juno on the Capitoline and the new temple to Apollo on the Palatine. Matronae were to offer a supplicatio to Juno. The oracle indicated that some kind of merriment was to be included, and this must have been interpreted as an instruction to perform ludi scaenici and other forms of entertainment and to ban mourning. The careful construction of the ritual sequence is evident: the numbers of children in the choirs correspond to the numbers of cakes offered to Apollo and Diana, and the colours of the animals for sacrifices are suitable for the deities receiving them: black victims for chthonic gods, white for “heavenly” deities. Augustus and Capito, far from slavishly adhering to ancient Republican models, introduced a number of innovations that made the original rite of the Valerian clan almost unrecognizable.

We have good evidence, however, that Augustus’s additions were judiciously selected from Republican precedents. One of the major differences between the Ludi Tarentini and the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE is an emphasis on mothers, children, and childbirth in terms of participants and deities receiving worship. Married women participated in the sellisternia and supplicatio. The Sibyline oracle expressed a concern that women in particular receive the suffimenta. Most of the deities were associated with marriage and childbirth: the Fates, the Illithyiae, Terra Mater, Juno, and Diana. The children who participated in the choruses to sing the Carmen Saeculare were required to have both parents living. These themes were likely to have been prominent in the games because they were a particular concern of Augustus, as illustrated by the Leges Iuliae of the previous year. But Augustus and Capito’s decision to include these rituals in the context of the Tarentum sacrifices was not intended to be a radical invention of a new religious performance. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the position of these rituals and deities in the Saecular Games could result from a conflation of the Tarentine rites with the Ludi Taurii, which were also celebrated in the Campus Martius. The Ludi Taurii had been distinguished from the Ludi Tarentini in Varro’s time, at least, and were also associated with childbearing and included sacrifices to di inferi in the Circus Flaminii to avert pestilence in pregnant women.

Another apparent addition to the rites at the Tarentum was the distribution of materials for purification, suffimenta, to the people of Rome. The word used to describe them in the Sibyline oracle, λύματα (l. 25) is

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72 Augustan Acta 139–146 (Schnegg-Köhler 2002, 42). According to Blumenthal (1918, 240), offerings of such cakes were associated with chthonic deities and the cult of Helios.
73 Oracle 16–18.
74 Augustan Acta 20–21, 147–148 (Schnegg-Köhler 2002, 28, 42); oracle 20–22.
75 Oracle 18–20.
76 Augustan Acta 147–149 (Schnegg-Köhler 2002, 42).
78 Oracle 34.
81 Verrius Flaccus cites Varro as an authority for some of this information, immediately following the entry for “Tarentum” (Festus 478 L).
associated with water used for washing, but *suffimentum* in Latin refers to something that purifies through
fumigation. This may be connected with the act of fumigating sheepfolds with sulphur and herbs in the
Parilia festival, which traditionally marked the birthday of Rome, as described in Ovid, *Fasti* 4.721–862. The
reason for including the distribution of *suffimenta* in the Ludi Saeculares is not clear, but if the practice of
purging a household with sulphur were genuinely connected with the commemoration of the founding of
Rome, the decision to include this element would make sense. Bendlin points out that distributing the
*suffimenta* for free would have played a role in advertising the games to freeborn Romans, encouraging them
to participate in the ritual in their homes and attend the civic ceremonies later. As he observes, the Romans
were so willing to come to the temples of Jupiter Optimus Maximus and Jupiter Tonans to receive the
*suffimenta* that the *quindecimuiri* ran out of their supplies and were forced to make another proclamation,
declaring that people could not come back for additional supplies, nor send their spouses.  

This latter detail is curious, because the oracle had specified that the *suffimenta* be given to women. Were women
collecting the supplies and sending their husbands back for more, or vice versa?

The performance of the *Carmen Saeculare* following the completion of the major sacrifices was also
rooted in Republican tradition. The hymn was to be sung twice, once on the Palatine and once on the
Capitoline; Fowler and Gagé attempted to reconstruct the movements of the chorus of children to see if
they would have sung as they walked between the two hills, although it is difficult determine such details
in this performance with any certainty.  

Hymns to Juno Regina were a regular practice for averting the
appearance of an *androgynus* and other prodigies: Livius Andronicus composed a hymn for twenty-seven
girls to sing to Juno Regina after lightning struck her temple (Livy 27.37); this practice appears again in
Livy (31.11), and in Julius Obsequens (*Liber de Prodigii at 27a, 34, 36*); there is also mention of hymns to
Ceres and Proserpina sung by twenty-seven girls in Julius Obsequens 43 and 46.  

Catullus 34 and Horace
*Odes* 1.21 attest to at least a literary practice of hymns to Apollo and Diana. These hymns and processions
serve as a precedent for the *Carmen Saeculare*, even though this kind of performance is not attested for the
Ludi Tarentini.  

Horace’s hymn was thoroughly integrated into the ritual sequence of the Ludi Saeculares and, far from acting as merely an ornament to or commentary upon the preceding performances, the hymn
served as another offering to the gods. Like the sacrifices of animal victims with their accompanying prayers,
the performance of the *Carmen Saeculare* constituted a visual and verbal offering of praise and thanksgiving
to the gods for Rome’s present prosperity in a new age, as well as a set of petitions for the preservation of
good fortune in the future.  

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83 Fowler (1910); Gagé (1934).
84 I thank Jarrett Welsh for pointing out the connections between Horace’s hymn and earlier expiatory hymns.
85 Suerbaum (2002, 96) suggests that Livius Andronicus wrote a *Carmen Saeculare* for the Ludi Tarentini of 249 CE, but this is highly
improbable. For more information on Republican hymns, see Welsh (2011) and Weis (2011).
86 The bibliography on Horace’s *Carmen Saeculare* is extensive: see, for example, Vahlen (1892), Mommsen (1905), Fowler (1910), Gagé
(1911), Altheim (1932), Wagenvoort (1936), Fraenkel (1957), Galinsky (1967), Barker (1996), Feeney (1998) and (2003), Putnam
in Norden (1927), wonders whether Augustus intended Vergil to write the *Carmen Saeculare* before his death in 19 BCE, given the
frequency with which his poetry refers to the arrival of a new Golden Age ushered in by the princeps. The poet Horace appears to
The locations of individual performances and activities were also highly significant, combining traditional centres of religious activity with areas that had been developed through Augustus's building and restoration programmes. The distribution of *suffimenta* and the reception of *fruges* that preceded the festivities took place at the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus and the Temple of Jupiter Tonans on the Capitoline, as well as the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine and the Temple of Diana on the Aventine; the two ancient temples to Jupiter and Diana were thus juxtaposed with Augustus's newly-built temples to Jupiter Tonans and Diana.\(^87\) The nocturnal sacrifices and *ludi scaenici* were all held at the Tarentum in the Campus Martius, following the Republican tradition of the Ludi Tarentini, but the daytime sacrifices were held on the Capitoline and Palatine, another contrast of new and old. The procession of children who sang the *Carmen Saeculare* at the Capitoline and Palatine (and perhaps between) may have passed beneath the Arch of Augustus, which was built in 20 BCE. *Sellisternia* were offered on the Capitoline to Juno and Diana. The Theatre of Marcellus was still under construction in 17 BCE, but was in a finished enough state to allow *ludi scaenici* to be held there,\(^88\) and Gorrie notes its proximity to other building projects, the Porticus Octavia and the restored Porticus Octaviae and Philippus.\(^89\) Athletic competitions (foot-races and boxing) were also held nearby in the Theatre of Pompey, and *ludi latini* (Roman dramas?) were performed in a temporary wooden theatre near the Tiber.\(^90\) It has been overlooked that the Theatre and the three portici were all located in the vicinity of the Capitoline and the Tiber, and were positioned along an easy route to the Tarentum. From this evidence, we can see that all the major locations of the Saecular Games featured examples of Augustan constructions or repairs, and would have formed highly visible and memorable settings for the religious events.

Thus, the elements that Augustus and Capito added to the Ludi Tarentini all followed Republican models. The deities that Augustus introduced for the daytime sacrifices – Jupiter, Juno, Apollo, and Diana – were worshipped according to Republican precedents, and the goddesses that replaced Dis and Proserpina – the Moerae, the Ilithyiae, and Terra Mater – were still suitably chthonic deities and received sacrifices of black animals at night. The practice of combining many different types of rituals into one celebration follows a Republican pattern, as well. For example, Livy describes the changes made to the Saturnalia following a series of portents in 217 BCE, which entailed consultation of the Sibylline books, *lectisternia*, sacrifices, and offerings of money to Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva (22.1.8–20). Augustus presented himself in all religious matters, including the Ludi Saeculares, not as an innovator, but as the renewer of ancient

\(^{87}\) Poe argues that the Aventine played an important role in the Republican Games of 249 CE, because he sees this celebration as a model for or influence on the hymn sung in procession up to the temple of Juno Regina in 207 BCE (1984, 60–64). As I argue in this chapter, it is far more likely that Augustus and Capito were the first to adopt the Republican practice of hymns sung to Juno and Diana and add them to the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE.

\(^{88}\) Augustan Acta 157 (Schnegg-Köhler 2002, 42).

\(^{89}\) Gorrie (2002), 462.

\(^{90}\) Jacobs/Conlin (2014), 82–83.
traditions at Rome.

3.6 Officiating the Augustan Ludi Saeculares

If Augustus desired to found a festival celebrating his role as the leader to usher in a Golden Age at Rome, it might seem strange that he chose to adapt rituals associated with the traditions of so ancient a gens as the Valerii. He might have created a completely new festival, arranging a series of rituals and spectacles that Rome had never experienced, in order to parade his authority and close relationship with the gods before the entire city. He might have adapted the gentilician cult of his family, the Octavii, which was celebrated at Velitrae, or a cult of his adopted father’s gens, the Julii. Instead, Augustus, in consultation with Capito, saw fit to adapt pre-existing rituals to a new kind of celebration in order to emphasize his complete authority at Rome; the admixture of tradition and innovation was not unusual in Roman society, and an important aspect of Augustus’s self-promotion. The princeps derived new power and influence by officiating the major religious performances of the Ludi Saeculares and mobilizing Rome’s inhabitants, both the elite and common citizens, to attend and participate in the festival. In the process, Augustus was able to direct attention to his heir, Agrippa, and to appropriate the Valerian myth of the founding of the Tarentum rites, applying it to his family’s situation.

The Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE placed Augustus in a position of prominence at the major sacrifices, which were held over three days and nights. At the nocturnal sacrifices offered at the Tarentum, the oldest ritual of the Games, Augustus alone performed the sacrifices and prayers to the Moerae, the Ilithyiae, and Terra Mater, as the Acta record:

Nocte insequenti in campo ad Tib[erim deis Moeris imp(erator) Caesar Augustus inmolauit agnas feminas ix | prodigiuas Achiuo ritu eodem| que modo capras feminas ix prodigiuas].

Augustus’s heir Agrippa accompanied him in the sacrifices to Jupiter Optimus Maximus and to Apollo and Diana on the first and third days:

K(alendis) Iun(iis) in Capitolio bouem m[a]rem Ioui optimo maximo proprium inmolauit imp(erator) Caesar Augustus ibidem | alterum M. Agrippa.

Thus, the image of the sacrificing emperor was a powerful reminder of his role as mediator between the gods and the Roman people. Imagery of Augustus offering sacrifice was so ubiquitous during his reign that it became uncommon for other individuals to be portrayed in this way.

Augustus’s religious authority in the Saecular Games of 17 BCE was derived from his own accumulated power, and the fact that he lacked the title of pontifex maximus held no significance for his ability to take the central roles in the celebration. In 17 BCE, Lepidus still held the position, and it may seem surprising

91 For the cult of the Octavii, see Suetonius, Aug. 1.1 and Bendlin (1998), 304; for Julian cults of Vediovis, see the inscription on an altar at Bovillae: 11.5 2988 = Degrassi 270, and Weinstock (1971), 4–12.
92 See, for example, Zanker (1988), 167–263.
93 “On the following night [May 31], in the Campus [Martius] beside the Tiber, the emperor Caesar Augustus sacrificed nine female lambs as whole burnt offerings to the goddesses, the Moerae, according to the Greek rite, and in the same manner he sacrificed nine female goats as whole burnt offerings.” (Augustan Acta 90–91; Schnegg-Köhler 2002, 34.)
94 “On 1 June, on the Capitoline, the emperor Caesar Augustus sacrificed a bull to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, for his own, and in the same place Marcus Agrippa sacrificed another bull.” (Augustan Acta 103–104; Schnegg-Köhler 2002, 36.)
that such an important religious figure is nowhere to be found in the Acta of the Ludi Saeculares. He was, in fact, absent from Rome, and Ridley argues that this was an embarrassment for Augustus during his Saecular Games.\textsuperscript{96} This was clearly not the case, because the pontifex maximus did not have any leading role in the Saecular Games, which had been under the supervision of the quindecimviri since 249 BCE. We have no concrete evidence of how the roles of officiating the Tarentum sacrifices were distributed in the later Republican period, but it was only natural for Augustus to assume this role as a magister and leading member of the college, a position that he held by virtue of the authority that he had already accumulated. Although Augustus did not become pontifex maximus until Lepidus died in 13 BCE, he did not need this final title of religious authority to assert his prominence in the Ludi Saeculares, and other rituals, too.

The princeps’ role in the Saecular Games had a deeper significance that is revealed only by Agrippa’s participation in the daytime sacrifices. Augustus was careful to assign officiating roles to Agrippa, in order to emphasize his heir’s legitimacy and the continuity of imperial authority across the generations. Agrippa appears as Augustus’s equal, providing Jupiter with an identical offering of a white bull, and reciting the prayers with him. Curiously, it appears that on the second day of the celebration, Agrippa was permitted to celebrate the sacrifice to Juno Regina alone: (A(n)te d(iem) iun nonas Iun(ias) in Capitol[ia iammolauit Iunon reginae bouem femin[am propria Achiuo ritu - - - ] M. Agrippa.\textsuperscript{97} Pighi had believed that Augustus joined Agrippa as co-officiant, with his name being lost from the inscription, but Schnegg-Köhler convincingly demonstrates that Agrippa alone performs the sacrifice and the prayer, because the inscription uses singular forms of the verbs, immolauit and precatus est, when plural forms appear for sacrifices to Jupiter, Apollo, and Diana.\textsuperscript{98}

It seems strange for Augustus to step out of the spotlight at this moment, but Schnegg-Köhler argues that it was fitting for Agrippa to be the central actor in the sacrifices offered to Juno, goddess of marriage, because his position as heir to the princeps was sealed by his marriage to Augustus’s daughter, Julia. After the sacrifice, Agrippa also led the prayer in the supplicatio offered by one hundred and ten matronae. As discussed above, the importance of marriage and the production of legitimate offspring were major concerns of the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE. In addition, Augustus’s marriage legislation, the leges Iuliae, had come into effect in 18 BCE and earlier in 17 BCE, and these laws were commemorated in the Carmen Saeculare. Thus, Agrippa’s visibility in this sacrifice to Juno underlined his Augustan virtues: his marriage to Augustus’s daughter and their three children could serve as models for the citizens of Rome to emulate.

If Augustus wanted to emphasize Agrippa’s authority his heir, why did he not permit him to assist with the nocturnal sacrifices at the Tarentum? It may be that Augustus was more interested in creating another kind of authority for himself. One solution may lie in the fame and legends surrounding Valerius Publicola, friend of the Roman people and “founder” of rites to Dis and Proserpina at the Tarentum. Augustus emphasized his descent from Aeneas and Romulus, founders of the city, throughout his reign, and

\textsuperscript{96} Ridley (2005).
\textsuperscript{97} “On 2 June, on the Capitoline, Marcus Agrippa sacrificed to Juno Regina a cow, for her own, according to the Greek rite” (Augustan Acta 119–120; Schnegg-Köhler 2002, 38).
\textsuperscript{98} See Pighi (1965) and Schnegg-Köhler (2002).
compared himself to Numa, the founder of religious practice at Rome. In the Ludi Saeculares, Augustus also
connected himself with Publicola, a founder of the Republic. For the princeps, carefully planned association
with Publicola would have been a powerful statement of his own achievements. Publicola, like Brutus, had
won fame for establishing a new Republic after putting an end to a corrupt monarchy, but unlike Brutus,
he had no family connections to the leader of the plot against Julius Caesar. In 17 BCE, construction of the
temple of Mars Ultor and the new Forum was under way, and the statues that eventually filled the Forum
included not only the great men and gods that were his ancestors, but also Republican heroes, which may
have included Publicola.99

In the legend of the first sacrifices at the Tarentum, the mythical Valesius offers sacrifices on behalf
of his sick children, a role that is associated with Publicola in later sources (such as Plutarch) as he offers
sacrifice on behalf of Romans assaulted by plague. In the Ludi Saeculares, Augustus alone performs the
nocturnal sacrifices that mirror the old Valerian rites; he becomes the “friend of the people”, I argue, by
giving offerings to the gods for their wellbeing and preservation. By comparing his own accomplishments
with those of Publicola, Augustus reiterated his desire to rule as “first among equals”, not as their superior,
winning the affection of the entire population. In addition, the combination of old and new elements in
the ritual sequence of the Ludi Saeculares perfectly expressed Augustus’s presentation of himself as the
“renewer” of Republican religion.

It is not known whether other members of Augustus’s family participated in the rituals of the Ludi
Saeculares. Cooley and Rantala have suggested that Livia may have led the matronae in their supplicatio
and sellisternia, but this guess is based on Julia Domna’s role in 204 CE.100 If Livia were one of the matronae,
then why not Julia? Would Julia and Agrippa’s children have been present? These questions enter the realm
of speculation; the only children specifically mentioned in the Acta are those who sing Horace’s hymn,
and all three would have been too young to participate in the lengthy procession from the Palatine to the
Capitoline.

The mention of Horace and the chorus of children serves as a reminder of the vast number of contributors
to the Games from outside the Imperial family. The performance of Horace’s hymn lent the poet’s famous
name to the imperial cause, and the imperial inscription added to the poet’s own glory. The children who
sang the hymn likely came from elite senatorial families, and their parents may have included the matronae
who held sellisternia for Juno and Diana, and the quindecimuiiri who supervised the planning of the Games.
Of all the performers from outside the emperor’s family, the quindecimuiiri would have acquired a certain
amount of public prominence, because they were in charge of accepting fruges and distributing suffimenta to
citizens so that they could purify their houses before the start of the Games. The full list of the quindecimuiiri
appears several times in the Augustan Acta, demonstrating that they were present (and likely visible) at

99 There is no concrete evidence that would provide definitive proof that a statue of Publicola was placed in the Forum, but given the
scarcity of the elogia and statuary fragments, there is no reason to dismiss this hypothesis. Geiger notes that the elogia for the statue of
M. Valerius Maximus (dictator in 494) survives (CIL VI.83 40930), stating that he was princeps senatus, and Gellius (9.11.10) refers to a
statue of M. Valerius Corvus (cos. 348, 346, 343) (2008, 138–141). This demonstrates that the Valerian clan was represented in the
Forum.
100 See Cooley (2007) and Rantala (2013).
all the major events, and when the college made a proclamation at the end of the games, this is set off with larger lettering: **XV VIR S F DIC**. Only one *quindecimuir* apart from Augustus and Agrippa is singled out for a special task: Potitus Valerius Messalla was given the minor role of sending out the *desultores*, leapers-on-horseback, on the third day of the Games: *Ludis scaenicis dimissis h(ora) [- - - ] iuxta eum locum ubi sacrificium erat factum superioribus noctibus et theatrum positum et scae[ae] na metae positae quadrigaeq(ue) sunt missae et desultores misit Potitus Messalla.* The assignment of this supervisory role to Potitus Messalla may be a nod to the Valerii’s traditional association with the Games.

Numerous non-elite individuals must have played visible roles in the Ludi Saeculares: slaves to kill the animals, athletes in the contests, actors in the plays. An *aureus* from 17 BCE (*RIC* 1.2.138) shows a figure that is variously identified as one of the *praecones* or heralds who announced the games, or a *ludio*, some kind of player in the games themselves (fig. 3.2). He stands beside a figure, likely the emperor, who is offering sacrifice over an altar labelled *LVDI SAECLV*. Thus the coin commemorates not only the chief role of the *princeps* in performing the major sacrifices, but also the more minor roles of individuals whose names are lost to us, who may have proved more memorable to the inhabitants of Rome.

Figure 3.2: **Aureus of Augustus, 18–16 BCE (RIC 1.2.138)**

In this way, Augustus was able to assert his authority in the Ludi Saeculares not only through his roles as chief officiant of civic religious performances, but also through his ability to command and mobilize so many different participants in grand ritual sequences. Far from detracting from the emperor’s visibility, the

101 *Augustan Acta* 162 (Schnegg-Köhler 2002, 44).
102 “After the *ludi scaenicici* were dismissed at the [- - - ] hour, beside the same place where the sacrifice had been held on the previous nights and the theatre was erected, and a stage, the goal-posts were put away and the four-horse chariots were dismissed, and Potitus Messalla sent out the leapers-on-horseback.” (*Augustan Acta* 153–154; Schnegg-Köhler 2002, 42.)
inclusion of elite Romans in the Ludi Saeculares served to reinforce imperial power over all aspects of civic life. The process of situating power within the imperial family, begun in the time of Augustus, would be completed in later performances of the Ludi Saeculares. For the Romans, the rites perceived as an ancient gentilician cult of the Valerii, originally celebrated at the founding of the Republic by the first consul on behalf of the people, had been transformed into the festival of the rebirth of that same Republic, whose fortunes were now bound up with the fortunes of the imperial family.

3.7 Commemorating the Augustan Ludi Saeculares

Individual performances in the ritual sequence of the Ludi Saeculares were held at different locations in Rome, but the inscriptions set up at the Tarentum highlight the centrality of that space in the ceremony. The act of commemorating the Games through inscriptions in this particular corner of the Campus Martius constituted an essential part of their performances, memorialized imperial achievements, and influenced later literary descriptions of Republican Ludi Saeculares.

The presence or tradition of a Republican altar at the Tarentum lay behind the Augustan decision to commemorate the games in that same space, which was already associated with sacrifices to chthonic deities, a key ritual in the Ludi Saeculares. In their accounts of the origins of the Games, Verrius Flaccus, Valerius Maximus, and Zosimus describe an altar buried at a depth of twenty feet dedicated to Dis Pater and Proserpina discovered by Valesius or Valerius Publicola at the Tarentum. Zosimus adds the details that altar discovered by Valesius bore the inscription "To Dis and Proserpina", while Publicola added a new inscription: Πόπλιος Βαλέριος Ποπλικόλας τὸ πυροφόρο πεδίον Άιδη καὶ Περσεφόνη καθιέρωσα καὶ θεωρίας ἤγαγον Άιδη καὶ Περσεφόνη ὑπὲρ τῆς Ρωμαίων ἐλευθερίας. An Augustan version of this altar might be portrayed on the obverse of the aureus from 17 BCE mentioned above (RIC 15.138), in which a sacrificing figure and a herald or ludio stand next to an altar that bears the legend lvdi saecvl. The Augustan Acta record that, even before the Games were held, plans were made to set up bronze and marble inscriptions at the Tarentum to preserve their memory. The decision to place inscriptions in the Campus Martius rather than near the temples on the Capitoline or the Palatine was motivated by Augustan respect for the Valerian and Republican traditions bound up in this location.

The Ludi Saeculares inscriptions served as permanent offerings and reminders for the gods of ephemeral religious performances in a fashion similar to the Acta of the Fratres Arvales in the grove of Dea Dia. Beard states that the inscriptions recording the sacrifices of the Arval Brethren were set up as part of the ritual of honouring the goddess, addition to the written commentarii described above that were archived for later consultation. Likewise, the Augustan inscriptions served as offerings to the gods who had received temporary performances of devotion, but they may have acted as records establishing precedents for future

104 "Publius Valerius Poplicola dedicated the wheat-bearing plain to to Hades and Persephone and performed sacrifices to Hades and Persephone for the deliverance of the Romans" (Zosimus 2.3).
celebrations of the games. It is unclear whether or not the inscriptions were intended to be read: Scheid argues that passers-by would not have been able to read the inscriptions without a ladder, despite their massive size.\footnote{Scheid (1998a), 14 n.2.} Since the Ludi Saeculares were held so infrequently when compared with the annual rituals of the Arval Brethren, their inscribed Acta may have played a greater role in preserving details of their performances along with their edicts, and that further decrees pertaining to the Ludi Saeculares were kept in the sentorial archives.\footnote{Scheid (1998b); Liberman (1998).} These inscriptions can be linked with other, later Augustan memorials in the Campus Martius, such as his Res Gestae at his Mausoleum (which list the Ludi Saeculares as one of the princeps’ great achievements), or the Ara Pacis, and would have stood as a visible reminder to a human and divine audience of the majestic spectacle that had taken place.

Lastly, the commemoration of the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE alongside the revised dates of Republican games in the Fasti Consulares demonstrates how thoroughly Augustus desired to revise the former sequence in order for it to accord with his needs.\footnote{CIL 1.1², p. 29, and Pighi (1965), 41–52.} Feeney notes that Augustus placed his name at the top of the entry for his Games in the Fasti in order to assert his prominence among the quindecimuiri. By rewriting the chronology of the Ludi Saeculares, Feeney argues, Augustus was able to appropriate Rome’s past and direct its future.\footnote{Feeney (2007), 181–182.} The new chronology was indeed successful: Domitian and Septimius Severus would abide by the 110-year saeculum established by Augustus with only slight deviations, and only one emperor, Claudius, would choose to create a new sequence of celebrations based on his own calculations.

### 3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE were the first occasion in which sacrifices originally offered to Dis and Proserpina at the Tarentum were brought into association with the concept of the saeculum. Augustus and Ateius Capito’s decision to adapt the gentilician cult of the Valerii was likely influenced by Republican narratives prescribing the repetition of the Ludi Tarentini after one hundred years, according to the directions of the Sibylline books as interpreted by the quindecimuiri, as well as Roman fascination with the concept of a saeculum change in the late Republic. The princeps may have been advised in these rites by important members of the Valerian clan who rose to prominent positions in this period. While several defining characteristics of the Ludi Tarentini were retained – sacrifices of black victims at the Tarentum over three nights, the performance of ludi, the supervision of the rites by the quindecimuiri – the ritual sequence of the Augustan Ludi Saeculares included many new elements rooted in other Republican religious performances, such as the singing of the Carmen Saeculare. This innovations also entailed rewriting the traditional chronology of the Republican celebrations in the Fasti and in the commentarii of the quindecimuiri; I have argued that Augustus was the first to create a carefully calculated saeculum of one hundred
and ten years that permitted an association with Valerian consuls for early celebrations of the Games.

I have demonstrated that the Saecular Games of 17 BCE were also very different in character from the expiatory performances offered at the Tarentum during the crisis of the First Punic War: they celebrated Augustus’s success and establishment of peace at Rome after long civil wars. Augustus and his advisors moved the former gentilician cult of the Valerii from the civic realm into the imperial sphere, in which the emperor and his family played the central role in establishing good communications with the gods to ensure Rome’s peace and prosperity. Within this new context, I have argued that Augustus compared his own accomplishments with those of Publicola in order to communicate his desire to rule the Romans as “first among equals”, not as their superior, winning the affection of the elite and common citizens. The combination of old and new elements in the ritual sequence and character of the Ludi Saeculares perfectly expressed Augustus’s presentation of himself as the “renewer” of Republican religion. The Augustan Games also set a standard for the performance of the complex ritual sequence that would be closely imitated in the following centuries. Since the performance of games that associated a new ruler with the arrival of a golden age held great promise for establishing imperial authority at Rome, Augustus’s success at recreating a Republican tradition can be measured by future emperors choosing to respect the lengthy intervals between the games, rather than holding lesser “saecular” celebrations more frequently in order to enhance the glory of their own dynasties.
Chapter 4

The Development of *Saeculum* Rhetoric and the Ludi Saeculares of Claudius

The Ludi Saeculares of Augustus in 17 BCE were the first occasion on which sacrifices at the Tarentum were brought into association with the concept of Rome’s entering a new age, or *saeculum*, as discussed in the previous chapter. From this new association Augustus and Capito renamed the Ludi Tarentini as Ludi Saeculares, the name that they would bear in all future celebrations. But in turn, the altered name of the Games influenced the very use of the term *saeculum* throughout the imperial period, imbuing it with a new significance that gradually developed in a variety of media, including literature, coinage, and inscriptions.

The use of *saeculum* in imperial documents and monuments was originally strongly associated with celebrations of the Ludi Saeculares, but diverged from the games in the second and third centuries CE to form a kind of imperial rhetoric that emphasized an individual emperor’s authority, establishment of a new dynasty, and power to secure prosperity for the Roman Empire. Scholarship on the relationship between the Ludi Saeculares and the rhetoric of the *saeculum* has tended to concentrate on literary allusions to Augustus’s new “golden age”, as found in Vergil or Ovid, for example, but has not extended to literary use in later centuries, or the use of the term in imperial coinage and inscriptions. This approach does not provide any interpretation of how members of Roman society after the Augustan period would have interpreted the term *saeculum*.

Some studies have made reference the use of formulas relating to the “happiness of the age” using the terms *saeculum* or *tempus*, without connecting the development of these formulas to the *saeculum* of the Saecular Games. Noreña makes preliminary connections between language relating to time and happiness in Seneca, Tacitus, and coin legends, but he does not distinguish between the use of *saeculum* or *tempus*, nor does he give more than a hasty sketch and a handful of examples of the use of such formulas in the imperial
period. Saastamoinen observes in his study of building dedications from North Africa that nine percent of all of his data used some variation on this formula, but that most of the examples were concentrated in the fourth to fifth centuries CE. He situates what he perceives as the earliest example of such language, *cil* 8.4514, at the end of the second century CE, and makes little comment on the nature of these formulas, apart from arguing that they are likely to be propaganda derived from imperial officials, and that their variation and ornamentation increased over time.

In order to investigate the relationship of the *saeculum* and the Saecular Games, I have compared references to the Ludi Saeculares with references to the concept of *saeculum*, limited in sense to a “new age”, from the Republican to Imperial period. I utilize epigraphic and numismatic evidence in addition to literature, summarizing surviving evidence through a series of charts and graphs. This survey of the data demonstrates that evidence for *saeculum* rhetoric was initially confined to the reigns of emperors who celebrated the Ludi Saeculares, even to the very years in which the Games were held. A close connection between the Games and the *saeculum* was maintained until the reign of Septimius Severus, after which *saeculum* rhetoric was adopted into common imperial usage, even in years and reigns when no Ludi Saeculares were celebrated.

After discussing the summarized evidence, I examine the first examples of *saeculum* rhetoric during the reign of Augustus, before I go on to discuss the Ludi Saeculares of Claudius in detail. In the following chapters, I show how the use of *saeculum* rhetoric together with and, eventually, independently of the Ludi Saeculares allowed imperial control to be asserted over time, not merely space, and was particularly useful in provincial contexts far from the location of the Games’ performance. When *saeculum* rhetoric was used in conjunction with celebrations of the Games, this authority was associated with the centrality of Rome, the continuity of the imperial family, and the establishment of good relations with the gods through religious performances.

### 4.1 Discussion of methodology and evidence for *saeculum* rhetoric

Several criteria have been used to select inscriptions, coins, and literary texts that reference the term *saeculum* for analysis. All inscriptions have been found through a comprehensive search of the Clauss-Slaby online database, while literary texts were located through the Brepols Library of Latin Texts database, examining all Latin authors up until the end of the fifth century CE. Dates for the literary evidence are derived mainly from the *Neue Pauly*; for inscriptions, they are based on the modern sources for the texts, or emperors or authorities mentioned in the inscriptions. Coins have been identified through a comprehensive search of all volumes of the *ric*; their dates have been drawn from the same source. Coins and inscriptions mentioning *saeculum* have been limited to those proceeding from imperial or civic authority at Rome or in the provinces.

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2 Saastamoinen (2010, 93–97), especially responding to Warmington (1954, 31), who had described this language in four dedicatory inscriptions as “genuine enthusiasm” for an emperor’s beneficence in a happy age. Other brief discussion of such formulas appear in Mrozewicz (1980), 110; Kotula (1985), 459; and Christol/Magioncalda (1990), 919.
3 Feeney (2008); Noreña (2011).
Many funerary inscriptions from private individuals have thus been excluded from the data set, and in fact they tend to use *saeculum* in a different fashion, as referring to “the world of the living” or “this life”, opposed to the realm of the dead (or heaven, in Christian contexts). Inscriptions in which the occurrence of *saeculum* is dubious due to partial or complete reconstruction of the relevant portions of text have been excluded from the data set, as have those inscriptions for which dates cannot be confirmed with any precision.

Unlike the epigraphic and numismatic evidence, literary texts cannot be easily attributed to political authority, and thus are limited to instances in which *saeculum* is used in the sense of an “age”, “era”, or “generation” that is distinct from all others, or as a unit for measuring time (although that measurement is usually not defined explicitly as a set number of years). In the literary context, *saeculum* is often modified by adjectives such as *novum, aureum, felix,* etc., and may be paired with the idea of imperial possession of or association with a particular age (“the age of Augustus”).

This data set is not exhaustive, given that many digital search tools are still works in progress, but it can be concluded that during the Republican period there was little to no use of the term *saeculum* according to the above criteria. Further research on related terms (such as *tempus*, observed by Saastamoinen and others as described above, as well as *aeuum, aetas*) would be helpful and could shed light on the development of Roman conceptions of divisions of time. Saastamoinen’s analysis of the *saeculum/tempus* phrases in North Africa suggests that *tempus* formulas followed a similar pattern to *saeculum* rhetoric: in grouping the two terms together, he finds no evidence for such formulas before the end of the second century CE, whereas this study will reveal earlier occurrences dating as far back as the Augustan period. But an analysis of all Latin temporal terms in epigraphic formulas is beyond the scope of this study, and is not necessary for understanding the history of the term *saeculum* itself, from which the Ludi Saeculares derive their name.

The evidence is presented in two forms, a series of tables and a series of graphs. In the tables, data for each medium appear in separate columns. References to the Ludi Saeculares themselves are presented in tbl. 4.1, then references to the term *saeculum* in tbl. 4.2; in tbl. 4.3, evidence from tbl. 4.1 and tbl. 4.2 is combined. Inscriptions and literary texts have been sorted according to their dates either into the reigns of emperors who celebrated Ludi Saeculares, or situated as closely as possible into fifty-year intervals.

In tbl. 4.1, direct references to the Ludi Saeculares tend to cluster around the reigns of emperors who held the games and minted coins and inscriptions to commemorate them. Later literary references to the Games occur in historians such as Censorinus and Zosimus, but there is little surviving evidence that the Ludi Saeculares were specifically mentioned outside the historical context of their celebrations.

**Table 4.1: References to/surviving from the Ludi Saeculares**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Inscriptions</th>
<th>Coins</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st cent. BCE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augustus (LS 17 BCE)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-50 CE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
In tbl. 4.2, references to a change in a *saeculum* or a *saeculum* associated with the reign of an emperor appear increasingly throughout the imperial period, especially in coins and inscriptions. Note that the use of *saeculum* rhetoric occurs initially in literary sources, and is rare in coinage and inscriptions until the reign of Septimius Severus, when the term appears early on in his reign, looking forward to the Ludi Saeculares of 204 CE. After Philip I, *saeculum* rhetoric ceases to be associated strictly with the Ludi Saeculares, a development that will be discussed in greater detail below. This rhetoric endured far longer in the formulas of imperial inscriptions, even into the fifth century CE, whereas the last use of *saeculum* rhetoric on coinage appears during the reign of Gratian in the latter half of the fourth century CE.

Table 4.2: Occurrences of *saeculum* without direct reference to the Ludi Saeculares
### Table 4.3: Ludi Saeculares and saeculum references, combined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Inscriptions</th>
<th>Coins</th>
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<tr>
<td>1st cent. BCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Augustus (LS 17 BCE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1–50 CE</td>
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<td>100–150 CE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Antoninus Pius (LS 148 CE)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150–200 CE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Septimius Severus (LS 204 CE)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200–250 CE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip I (LS 248 CE)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250–300 CE</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantine</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300–350 CE</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>350–400 CE</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400–450 CE</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>450–500 CE and on</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When tbl. 4.1 and tbl. 4.2 are combined in tbl. 4.3, we may observe that *saeculum* rhetoric and references to the Ludi Saeculares were intimately related from the first century BCE to the second century CE. While the Ludi Saeculares received little mention in any medium after they were last held under Philip I in 248 CE, *saeculum* rhetoric continued to be used long after.
Since date ranges often overlap in the tables, four graphs according to medium (literature, inscriptions, and coinage: figs. 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4) are provided, in which date ranges for each item appear as a line connecting two points. Hollow dots are references to the Ludi Saeculares, while dark dots are *saeculum* references. Each item is assigned a number in four appendices corresponding to each graph; these appendices can be consulted for more precise information about dates, locations, texts, etc.

Figure 4.1: Literary references to the Ludi Saeculares and the *saeculum*

Fig. 4.1 shows the appearance of *saeculum* rhetoric in literary texts. The earliest references appear in Republican authors who refer to *saeculum* change during the civil wars at Rome, and then later the coming of a "golden age"; authors such as Vergil and Ovid associate this *saeculum aureum* with Augustus's reign. Later literary *saeculum* rhetoric tends to cluster in years following the celebrations of the Games, especially after the Games of Claudius and Domitian. A similar pattern is found in references to the Ludi Saeculares.
Figure 4.2: Epigraphic references to the Ludi Saeculares and the *saeculum*
Figure 4.3: Numismatic references to the Ludi Saeculares
Figure 4.4: Numismatic references to the *saeculum*
themselves, which are indicated by hollow points. After Domitian, *saeculum* rhetoric is uncommon until the reign of Constantine, from which point onward it is utilized mainly in poetry or referenced in commentaries.

Fig. 4.2 summarizes epigraphic evidence for the *saeculum*. There is no Republican use of the term *saeculum* according to the above criteria until Augustus’s Games of 17 BCE. Inscriptions mentioning the *saeculum* or the Ludi Saeculares are closely tied to the reigns of emperors who celebrated the Games until the latter half of the third century CE, after they ceased to be held. *Saeculum* rhetoric endured in the formulas of imperial inscriptions longer than in any other medium, even into the fifth century CE.

The numismatic evidence for the *saeculum* is extensive, and is thus divided into two graphs. In the first (fig. 4.3), we may observe that coins bearing legends that explicitly name the Ludi Saeculares were for many years only produced in the immediate contexts of the celebrations of the Games. Only in the reign of Septimius Severus did the Ludi Saeculares continue to be commemorated in years after their celebrations, and finally in the latter half of the third century CE legends mentioning the Games began to be used in the reigns of emperors who never performed the rites. The use of the *saeculum* rhetoric did not appear in coinage until the reign of Hadrian (fig. 4.4), and is rare until the reign of Septimius Severus, when the term appears early on in his reign, looking forward to the Ludi Saeculares of 204 CE. The last use of *saeculum* rhetoric on coinage appears during the reign of Gratian in the latter half of the fourth century CE.

Thus, direct references to the Ludi Saeculares tend to cluster around the reigns of emperors who held the games and minted coins and inscriptions to commemorate them. *Saeculum* rhetoric and references to the Ludi Saeculares were intimately related from the first century BCE to the third century CE. After Philip I, *saeculum* rhetoric ceases to be associated strictly with the Ludi Saeculares, a development that will be discussed in greater detail below. While the Ludi Saeculares themselves received little mention in any medium after they were last held under Philip I in 248 CE, *saeculum* rhetoric continued to be used long after.

### 4.2 *Saeculum* rhetoric in the Augustan period

The first appearance of *saeculum* rhetoric may be situated in the Late Republic, with references to a *saeculum* change associated with the political ascents of Sulla or Julius Caesar. As discussed in Chapter Three, Octavian gradually appropriated the vaguely defined *saeculum* rhetoric surrounding Caesar’s career and the appearance of a comet at his funeral games, eventually creating the concept of the “*saeculum* of Augustus”, which would serve as a model for imperial rhetoric in the future. References to the *saeculum* from the Augustan period are few, but because they are found in prominent texts and inscriptions, they carry much weight in demonstrating the importance of the concept for the development of Augustus’s image and legacy.

Our earliest evidence for Augustan *saeculum* rhetoric is primarily literary. The surviving fragments of the *Acta* of the Ludi Saeculares do not mention the *saeculum* by name, but the occurrence of phrases such as *centesimo et decimo anno, tali spectaculo [nemo iterum intererit]*, or *neque ultra quam semel ulli mor[talium eos spectare licet - - - ludos]* (“in the hundred and tenth year; such a spectacle no one will see again; it is not permitted more than once for any mortals to see these games”) indicate that the definition of *saeculum* as a
period of one hundred and ten years had been established, and that it was associated with the longest span of a human life; it may be that the term itself was used elsewhere in the original text. Yet the Acta identify the games as saeculares, and the sacrifices are saeculare, demonstrating a clear link between the religious performances and the concept of the saeculum. Horace does not use the term in his Carmen Saeculare, and his roundabout expressions (l. 4: tempore sacro, “in a sacred time”; l. 21: undenos deciens per annos, “one hundred and ten years”; ll. 67–68: alterum in lustrum meliusque semper/proroget aeuum; “ever prolong the age into another, better lustrum”) suggest that he may have studiously avoided it in the poem. The term saeculum also does not appear on coinage issued to commemorate the Ludi Saeculares, nor in fact on any coins issued during Augustus’s reign.

The first use of saeculum in the sense of a “new age of Augustus” is found in Vergil’s Aeneid, at 6.792–794 (Augustus Caesar, diui genus, aurea condet/saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arua/Saturno quondam). It is significant that Vergil links the new age with the princeps’ divine ancestry; as diui genus, Augustus alone is able to usher in a golden age, which Vergil characterizes chiefly by the extent of Roman authority over conquered lands. Horace refers to the saeculum in his fourth book of Odes, published in 13 BCE: at 6.42, saeculo festas referente luces (“when the age brough back the festal days”) serves as an allusion to the Ludi Saeculares. In 2 CE, Ovid may be gently mocking earlier references to an Augustan golden age at Ars Amatoria 2.227, as he described the usefulness of gold for buying female attention: Aurea sunt uere nunc saecula. After his exile in 9 CE, Ovid explicitly links the saeculum with Augustus’s authority and divinity: hoc duce si dixi felicia saecula, proque / Caesare tura pius Caesaribusque dedi, / si fuit hic animus nobis, ita parcite, diui! Here Ovid describes Augustus as the dux of the present age, but also as the recipient of song and incense offered on his behalf, thereby avoiding addressing Augustus as a god outright while still associating him with divinity. Ovid’s use of felix is significant: the word would come to be used frequently in saeculum rhetoric of the imperial period. Suetonius had Valerius Messalla Corvinus pray for perpetua felicitas rei publicae (“perpetual felicity of the state”) when he moved in the Senate that Augustus receive the title of pater patriae. While Suetonius may have adopted imperial rhetoric from his own day to create Corvinus’s speech, it is possible that Ovid’s poetry attests to the association of felicitas with Augustus’s reign at an early date.

Augustan saeculum rhetoric was not limited to literary evidence: an altar from Gallia Narbonensis, cit. 12.4333, attests to the appearance of this rhetoric in inscriptions beyond the city of Rome. The people of Narbo had constructed an altar for sacrifices to the numen of Augustus diui filius on significant days, including his birthday, September 23, qua die / eum saeculi felicitas orbi terrarum / rectorem edidit (“on which day the felicity of the age brought him forth as the ruler of the whole world”, ll. 14–16). The altar was

4 Augustan Acta Fr. C.16; Fr. D–M.54, 56 (Schnegg-Köhler 2002, 26, 32).
5 “Augustus Caesar, son of a god, who will found again a golden age in Latium amid fields once ruled by Saturn.”
6 “If I sang of happy ages with you as leader, and for Caesar and the Caesars I, pious, offered incense, if this has been my intent, then spare me, gods!” (Ovid, Tristia 1.2.103–105.)
7 Suetonius, Aug. 58.
8 The inscription also notes that sacrifices were offered on the day before the Kalends of June, May 31, as the day when Augustus reconciled the city’s decurions and people. May 31 was also the first day of the performance of the Ludi Saeculares in 17 BCE, but the
initially set up in 12/13 CE and re-engraved in the second century CE; its inscription describing a sacrifice to the numen Augusti parallels the language of the Ara Numinis Augusti, which Tiberius dedicated at Rome c. 6 CE.9 The connection between the saeculum and Augustus's divinity recalls the language of Vergil and Ovid, but the phrase saeculi felicitas, "the felicity of the age", is imbued with greater agency than in the poets: this felicitas produces Augustus and his authority, while in Vergil, Augustus will "found" (condet) the saeculum, and in Ovid, Augustus is leader (dux) of the saeculum. The language of the Narbo altar marks an important turning point in saeculum rhetoric: felicitas saeculi appears with increasing frequency in inscriptions and coinage, and this Felicitas of the age becomes personified as a female figure on coinage throughout the imperial period, beginning in the reign of Antonius Pius.

The Res Gestae of Augustus, cii 3.774, may also provide an example of saeculum rhetoric. In section 8, the princeps describes his restoration of traditions that had fallen into disuse, such as conducting the lustrum: legibus noui [s] m[e auctore ]atis m[ulta e ]xempla maiorum exolessentia / iam ex nostro [saeculo red[uxi et ipse] multarum rer[um ex]mpla imi]tanda pos[teris tradidi].10 Most editions have supported the restoration nostro saeculo, "our age", the only instance in which the saeculum would be mentioned directly in the monument (although the Ludi Saeculares are described in section 22).11 The use of the plural possessive, however, weakens the force of saeculum: as first citizen, Augustus does not claim the age for his own, and in doing so appears reverts to the older sense of saeculum as "generation". Yet the term is coloured by its context: once again, the reference to the saeculum appears closely associated with religion. Sections 7–13 describe priesthoods that Augustus held and religious performances that he conducted, but section 9, immediately following the passage above, describes the quinquennial vows and prayers for Augustus's health offered by the consuls, priests, and Roman citizens:


Thus, Augustus's age is characterized by prayers for his wellbeing, but here a different emphasis is placed on his own initiatives to restore "ancient" religious traditions in the city of Rome.

The evidence for saeculum rhetoric from Augustus's lifetime demonstrates that while the term was originally defined as the newly established 110-year interval between celebrations of the Ludi Saeculares, it shared date is likely only a coincidence.

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9 See Fishwick (1987), 377–380. The dedication is recorded in the Fasti Praenestini, Insctt 13.2.115. While some restored the text to read that the altar was dedicated to Felicitas (aram q]uam dedicauit Ti. Caesar / Fe]licitat]i), Degrassi restored the line to begin as Fe[riae ex s]e]natus c') (cf. Taylor 1937, 187–189).
10 "With new laws that I authored I restored many precedents of our ancestors which were then falling into disuse in our age, and I myself established precedents in many things to be imitated by posterity." (Res Gestae 8.5; Cooley 2009.)
12 "The Senate decreed that every fifth year vows for my health were to be taken by the consuls and priests. In fulfilment of these vows games were often held while I was alive, sometimes by the four most esteemed colleges of priests, sometimes by the consuls. Additionally, the entire body of citizens unanimously, both individually and by municipalities, supplicated continuously at all the couches for my health." (Res Gestae 9.1–2; Cooley 2009.)
came to be linked with Augustus’s religious authority and span of life. These associations would outlive Augustus: Suetonius’s description of the death of Augustus records that among the suggestions for accolades offered to his memory, a nameless Roman proposed that the span of Augustus’s life be called the *saeculum Augustum*, “Augustan age”.

4.3 Claudius’s new *saeculum* and the Ludi Saeculares of 47 CE

After the death of Augustus, no *saeculum* rhetoric is to be found in any source until the reign of Claudius, who held Ludi Saeculares in 47 CE. These games were not supposed to be celebrated for some time, but Claudius chose to reinvent the length of the *saeculum* as one hundred years and start his reckoning from the foundation of the city of Rome. With these calculations, games commemorating the eight hundredth birthday of the city could be held and be legitimately described as *saeculares*, but the extent to which these celebrations were similar to those of Augustus is unclear.

There is little ancient evidence to attest to the nature of Claudius’s celebrations: if any coins were issued to commemorate the Games, none survive, and there are only a handful of literary references, which will be discussed below. Several small fragments of the *Acta* of the Games of 47 CE, *cīl* 6.32324, 32325, and 32336, have been identified, which provide the names of several members of the *quindecimuiri*, but with little information about how the performances were organized or the types of ceremonies, prayers, or games that were held. The *Acta* fragments were found at the Tarentum in the Campus Martius, like those of the Augustan inscription, which suggests strongly that the original Claudian *cippus* had been set up in that location. Thus, it seems likely that Claudius and the organizers of the Games viewed the Tarentum as an important commemorative space for celebrating the *saeculum*. There is no direct evidence that sacrifices or other performances may have been held here, but among the fragments of the Claudian *Acta*, we find that sacrifices were offered to Jupiter Capitolineus and to Juno Regina, which probably corresponds to the Augustan sacrifices offered to these deities on the Capitoline during the third day of the festivities. Pliny the Elder mentions that chariot races performed during Claudius’s Saecular Games were held in a Circus (*circensibus*), which could refer to the Circus Flaminianus in the Campus Martius, where various spectacles had been performed in the Augustan Games, such as plays in wooden theatres and chariot races. If Claudius held sacrifices on the Capitoline, used the Circus Flaminianus for races, and left a monument at the Tarentum, then it is possible (but not certain) that sacrifices were also offered at the Tarentum, and that the ritual sequence of his Ludi Saeculares followed closely the Augustan pattern. There is little evidence to

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13 Suetonius, Aug. 100.3.
14 Sutherland (1984, 117) suggests that six *officinae* were in operation from 46–47 CE to issue gold and silver coinage for expenses relating to Claudius’s Ludi Saeculares, but he does not attempt to link the imagery of any types from these years with the events of the Games.
15 Pighi (1965) identifies these three fragments with the *Acta* of 47 CE. Cavallaro (1979) and Moretti (1982–1984) demonstrate that *cīl* 6.877a does not belong to the Claudian inscription; Buongiorno (2011) agrees and discusses palaeographical and prosopographical evidence for the inclusion of *cīl* 32325a–c with the Claudian fragments.
show that Claudius engaged in a building or restoration programme in significant locations similar to that of Augustus in preparation for his Games, but there may have been some development along the banks of the Tiber near the Tarentum.\footnote{See Coarelli (1997), 81, and Gorrie (2002), 464.}

Another hint at the types of ludi performed at Claudius’s Saecular Games can be found in Tacitus’s brief allusion to the *lusus Troiae*, in which young boys of noble birth fought a mock-battle representing the Trojan War:

\begin{quote}
sedente Claudio circensibus ludis, cum pueri nobiles equis ludicrum Troiae inirent interque eos

Britannicus imperatore genitus et L. Domitius adoptione mox in imperium et cognomentum

Neronis adsitus, favo plebis acrior in Domitium loco praesagii acceptus est.\footnote{“While Claudius was attending the circus games, when young noblemen began to perform the Trojan game and among them was Britannicus, the emperor’s son, and L. Domitius, who soon was known by his adoption in the empire with the surname of Nero, the stronger favour of the people was taken to presage Domitian’s place” (Tacitus, *Annales* 11.11).}
\end{quote}

The presence of Claudius’s son, Britannicus, as well as the young Nero, who would be adopted as an heir in 50 CE, recalls the prominent position of Augustus’s heir Agrippa in his own Games of 17 BCE. It is difficult to determine if the boys’ participation in the *lusus Troiae* was intended to display publicly their ties to the imperial family; as youths, they could not play as visible a role as Agrippa in leading sacrifices. But Tacitus’s comment on the popular applause favouring Nero suggests that, at least in hindsight, Claudius’s Ludi Saeculares served as an opportunity to showcase the continuity of his dynasty.

The surviving fragments of the Claudian Acta reveal that the Ludi Saeculares of 47 CE were still held under the supervision of the college of *quindecimuiri sacris faciundis*, another indication that Claudius was not attempting to depart from Augustan tradition to create an entirely new festival. Among the *quindecimuiri* of 47 CE we find an Atticus, whom Rüpke and Buongiorno identify as Atilius L.f. Valerius Marius Coronius Atticus.\footnote{Rüpke identifies this Atticus with the individual mentioned in *CIL* 6.41074, an honorific inscription (2005, 796), and also in *CIL* 6.312344 (2008); see also Buongiorno (2011), 144.} This Atticus was the first individual in the college to bear the name Valerius since the death *c.*21 CE of M. Valerius Messalla Messalinus, who was co-opted *c.*19 BCE, shortly before the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE. The absence of any Valerii in the college until the Claudian period, and the sudden appearance of a Valerius just before the Games of 47 CE, recalls the careful planning of Augustus and Ateius Capito to ensure the presence of two Valerii among the *quindecimuiri* at religious performances derived from their ancient gentilician traditions. It is difficult to determine the extent to which the old Valerian connection with the Ludi Saeculares could have continued under Claudius, who continued to appear in prominent positions at his court. In 38 CE Claudius had married Valeria Messalina, a member of the Valerii Messallae who had been important supporters of Augustus. Messalina was executed and suffered *damnatio memoriae* in 48 CE after her alleged infidelities were exposed; the year previous, Messalina had a wealthy Gaul named Valerius Asiaticus, consul in 46 CE, sentenced to death for conspiring against Claudius. The *quindecimuiri* Valerius Atticus was likely not a blood relation of Messalina or Valerius Asiaticus, however, so his presence in the college could have been suggested by the other members in consultation with records for planning...
the Games from the Augustan period, and not necessarily as a favour to an influential family to which the emperor’s wife belonged.

There is no reason to assume that Claudius’s antiquarian interests did not extend to knowledge of the Republican history of the Valerian sacrifices that preceded the Ludi Saeculares, and he or his advisers may have had access to texts (such as those of Antias or Varro, or even earlier historian) preserving dates for the Games that preceded the emendations of Augustus set up prominently in the Fasti Capitolini. While Augustus’s carefully calculated *saeculum* of 110 years allowed for the first Games in his reckoning to have been held during the consulate of a Valerius in 456 BCE, most scholars agree that Claudius redefined the *saeculum* as a span of one hundred years, beginning with the foundation of Rome in 753 BCE. Claudius’s decision to reckon each age from foundation of the city echoes Varro’s description of the Etruscan idea that the first *saeculum* begins with the foundation of a city and ends with the death of the oldest person born on the day of founding, which is revealed by portents from the gods.20 Since Claudius composed a history of the Etruscans, this concept of the *saecula* could easily have been derived from his antiquarian studies.21 According to this new reckoning, new *saecula* would have begun in 653, 553, 453, 353, 253, 153, and 53 BCE; some of these dates come close to those of Ludi Tarentini held by tradition or in actuality in 348, 249, and 146/149 BCE, which would have brought Claudius’s sequence of *saecula* more in line with the Tarentum sacrifices than the Augustan records of the *quindecimviri*.22 There is no evidence that Claudius attempted to fabricate yet another series of official celebrations of Ludi Saeculares held in each century of the Republic, or to obliterate the memory of the Augustan Games, but his new *saeculum* allowed him to celebrate the eight hundredth birthday of Rome.23 Claudius’s precedent would be followed by Antoninus Pius, who celebrated a new *saeculum* in 148 CE, and Philip I, whose Games of 248 CE marked Rome’s millennium.

But Claudius’s new *saeculum* could also have been reconciled in another way with the intervals of Valerian sacrifices in the Republic. Barnes, following Hirschfeld, argues that Claudius had in fact accepted the Augustan redefinition of the length of a *saeculum* as being 110 years, but calculated the date of Ludi Saeculares of the consul Valerius Publicola as 504 BCE; thus, the Claudian Games would have been held five *saecula* of 110 years later.24 This calculation could explain Plutarch’s reference to an expiatory ritual performed by Publicola in his fourth consulship in 504 BCE, whereas Valerius Antias and Zosimus had assigned a date of 509 BCE, during Publicola’s first consulship, to his sacrifices at the Tarentum.25 Hirschfeld’s argument was founded on the belief that there was no ancient evidence before Aurelius Victor in the fourth century CE to attest that Claudius had celebrated Rome’s eight hundredth anniversary;26 this does not take

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20 Censorinus 17.7–16.
22 Brożek (1961) argues that festivals commemorating Rome’s *saecula* had been held once every one hundred years during the Republic as the Ludi Saeculares (as he calls them) of 149 and 149 BCE (and possibly in earlier centuries); thus Claudius’s decision to hold his Games in 47 CE was influenced by these earlier centennial celebrations. He does not consider the fact that the term *saeculum* was not used in conjunction with the Ludi Tarentini by Republican authors.
23 See, for example, Levick (1990), 87, 121; Price (1996), 837.
24 See Barnes (2008), 262–263; Hirschfeld (1913), 442–443.
25 Plutarch, *Publicola* 21; Valerius Antias fr. 21 (Cornell 2013); Zosimus 2.1–2.4.
26 According to Hirschfeld, Aurelius Victor highlights Claudius’s Games as the eight-hundredth birthday of Rome, and Antoninus Pius
into account Tacitus’s and Cassius Dio’s descriptions of Claudius’s Games as occurring eight hundred years after the foundation of Rome. In addition, *Ric.* 4.3.157, a coin issued to commemorate the Ludi Saeculares of Philip I in 248 CE, bears the legend *miliarivm saecvlvm,* which demonstrates that the Games of 248 CE were intended to celebrate Rome’s millennium. Similar evidence is found in a coin of Pacatianus from 249 CE, *Ric.* 6.6 var, which includes the legend *romae aeter an mill et primo.*

Yet Hirschfeld’s hypothesis concerning the Claudian *saeculum* does not necessarily exclude a decision to celebrate at the same time the anniversary of Rome’s foundation. It may be that Claudius attempted to merge two systems with a date that could be calculated as the beginning of a ninth *saeculum* of one hundred years, counted from the foundation of Rome in 753 BCE, or of a sixth *saeculum* of one hundred and ten years, counted from sacrifices performed at the Tarentum by Publicola in 504 CE, as tbl. 4.4 demonstrates. By combining the two *saeculum* systems, Claudius’s departure from the Augustan chronology would have appeared far less radical: Claudius was not completely rejecting the 110-year interval permanently established in the *Acta* of Augustus’s Games and in Horace’s *Carmen Saeculare,* but recalculating the historical sequence to more accurately reflect both the myth of its Valerian origins and his desired emphasis on commemorating each century since Rome’s foundation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.4: Dating of <em>saecula</em>/Ludi Tarentini/Ludi Saeculares, Augustan and Claudian calculations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Republican Ludi</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tarentini</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Valerius consul)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Augustus:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>110-year saeculum</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Valerius consul)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and Philip’s Games as the nine-hundredth in 148 CE and one-thousandth in 248 CE, in order to criticize Christian emperors for failing to hold the eleven-hundredth anniversary in 348 CE: _huius anno sexto, cum quattuordecim regnarit, octingentesimus Vrbis mire celebratus, ususque apud Aegyptum phoenix, quam uolucrem ferunt anno quingentesimo ex Arabis memoratos locos aduolare._ (“In the sixth year, when he had reigned fourteen years, the eight-hundredth anniversary of the City was celebrated splendidly, and the phoenix was seen in Egypt, the bird that, they say, every five hundred years flies to renowned places from Arabia.”) (*Cæs.* 4.12, 15.4, 28.1.)

27 *Idem consulibus ludi saeculares octingentesimo post Romam condition, quarto et sexagesimo quam Augustus ediderat, spectati sunt* (“During this consulship, in the eighth-hundredth year after the foundation of Rome, and the forty-sixth year after Augustus performed them, the Ludi Saeculares were shown.”) (*Tacit.*, *Annales* 11.11.) *Ἐν δὲ τῷ ἑξῆς ἐτεύ τῶν Κλαύδιος τὸ τέταρτον καὶ Οὐιτέλιος Λούκιος τὸ τρίτον, ὑπάτευσαν.* (“In the following year, which was the eight-hundredth year of Roma, Claudius became consul for the fourth time and Lucius Vitellius for the third time.”) (*Cassius Dio* 60.29.)
Chapter 4. The Ludi Saeculares of Claudius

Claudius: 100-year saeculum (foundation of Rome)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year BCE</th>
<th>753</th>
<th>653</th>
<th>553</th>
<th>453</th>
<th>353</th>
<th>253</th>
<th>153 BCE</th>
<th>53 BCE</th>
<th>47 CE</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Claudius: 110-year saeculum (Valerius consul)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year BCE</th>
<th>504</th>
<th>394</th>
<th>284</th>
<th>174</th>
<th>64 BCE</th>
<th>46 CE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The motivation behind Claudius’s careful calculations for these Games may be found in a passage of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who after describing various sources for the founding date of Rome, cites the special authority of records kept by the censors:

δηλοῦται δὲ ἐξ ἄλων τε πολῶν καὶ τῶν καλουμένων τιμητικῶν ὑπομνημάτων, ἃ διαδέχεται παῖς παρὰ πατρὸς καὶ περὶ πολοῦ ποιεῖται τοῖς μεθ᾽ ἑαυτὸν ἐσομένοις ἱερὰ πατρῷα παραδιδόναι: πολοὶ δ᾽ εἰσὶν ἀπὸ τῶν τιμητικῶν οἴκων άνδρες οἱ διαφυλάττοντες αὐτά. 28

Dionysius would have been present at Rome during Claudius’s youth, perhaps even after 7 CE, when, allegedly, Livy was employed to serve as a kind of tutor to Claudius. 29 Such a passage may have served as inspiration for Claudius, whose famous ancestors included the famous censor Appius Claudius Caecus, and who became censor in 47 CE after the office had long been vacant; he also held the consulship for the fourth time in that year. As censor, Claudius took on an office that Augustus had not assumed, permitting him to define his reign with a new measure of authority. The Saecular Games occurred in the same year as his census of 47/48 CE, which allowed him to extend the pomerium in 49 CE; the Tarentum and Mausoleum Augusti in the Campus Martius remained outside the new boundaries. 30 The timing of Claudius’s census and extension of the pomerium is intimately tied to the date of his Ludi Saeculares, and provides another hint that the Tarentum continued to be a significant location for the Games.

Claudius took care to advertise the saeculum change even outside of the city of Rome: in an inscription from Herculaneum describing the Senatus Consultum Hosidianum, cit 10.1401, which dealt with construction regulations, the new saeculum is referenced in the phrase felicitati saeculi instantis (“for the

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28 “This is made clear in many other ways and by the records of those we call censors, which a son receives from his father and takes much care to hand over to posterity, just like family cults; and there are many outstanding men of censorial houses who preserve these records.” (Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 1.74.5.)
29 Suetonius, Claud. 41.1
30 For a discussion of Claudius’s extension of the pomerium, see Poe (1984).
felicity of the approaching age”). This inscription from September 47 CE would have been created after the Ludi Saeculares were held at the end of May and beginning of June, assuming that Claudius followed Augustan practice. Noreña points to the inscription’s language of prouidentia and aeternitas as references to the performance of the Games in that year, but he neglects the significance of this phrase felicitati saeculi instantis, which indicates the arrival of the new saeculum connected to the Ludi Saeculares. The appearance of saeculum rhetoric outside of Rome so soon after the celebration of Claudius’s Games contrasts with the phrase saeculi felicitas found in CIL 12.4333, which was created in 12/13 CE, long after the Games of 17 BCE. This suggests that Claudian saeculum rhetoric was used more intentionally than in the Augustan period either to promote or to commemorate the new age, and could appear in contexts not explicitly connected to the Ludi Saeculares, as with this inscription regulating building demolition.

The close association between the saeculum and felicitas suggests that references to a “happy age” were becoming formulaic, calling to mind the association between the Saecular Games and the emperor’s role of ushering in the new age. Criticism of the new imperial rhetoric appears in Seneca’s Apocolocyntosis, which opens: Quid actum sit in caelo ante diem iii idus Octobris anno nouo, initium saeculi felicissimi, uolo memoriae tradere. In this parody of Claudius’s apotheosis, Seneca describes Claudius’s death, not his birth or Saecular Games, as initium saeculi felicissimi, the beginning of a most happy age, mocking Claudius’s attempt at redefining the concept of a saeculum in order to permit one to begin during his reign. But Seneca refers to the saeculum twice more in this work using the adjectives felix and aureum as he describes the Fates spinning out Nero’s lifespan: aurea formoso descendunt saecula filo, and Felicia lassis / saecula praestabit legumque silentia rumpet. The use of a golden line, aurea formoso descendunt saecula filo, draws attention to the separation of aurea and saecula, gesturing towards Vergil’s aurea condet / saecula and Ovid’s Aurea sunt uere nunc saecula.

Once again, Seneca criticizes Claudius by assigning saeculum rhetoric to the new emperor, Nero, thereby implying that Nero’s reign will encompass a truly fortunate age after Claudius’s past abuses. When compared with the language of CIL 10.1401, Seneca’s references to the saeculum create a caricature of imperial rhetoric for a limited audience of educated Romans, including perhaps Nero himself.

Like Seneca, other elite Romans viewed the Ludi Saeculares of 47 CE as an indication of Claudius’s general incompetence. In his discussion of long-lived individuals, Pliny the Elder finds it unremarkable that a dancer named Stephanio performed at ludi in the Saecular Games of both 17 BCE and 47 CE:

minus miror Stephanionem, qui primus togatus saltare instituit, utrisque saecularibus ludi saltiui(s)se, Diui Augusti et quos Cl(audius) Caesar consulatu suo quarto fecit, quando LXIII non amplius anni interfueru, quamquam et postea diu uixit.

32 “What happened in heaven three days before the Ides of October in a new year, the beginning of a most happy age, I want to hand down in memory.” (Apocolocyntosis 1.1.)
33 “A golden age descends from the shapely thread”, and “he will offer a happy age for the weary, and will break through silences of laws.” (Apocolocyntosis 3.)
34 Vergil, Aen. 6.792–793; Ovid, Ars Amatoria 2.227.
35 “I marvel less that Stephanio, who was the first to dance in the fabula togata, should have danced at both Saecular Games, those of the god Augustus and of Claudius Caesar, in his forth consulship, when the years lying in between them were not not more than
Pliny has just described actors who were performing in their nineties or after the age of one hundred, and he does not intend for the reader to be particularly impressed with Stephanio’s age, since the two celebrations were only sixty-three years apart. The implication is that if an actor should live to perform at two Ludi Saeculares held at the proper interval, at least one hundred years apart, that would be a marvel, indeed.

Suetonius is more direct than Pliny in his criticism of Claudius’s innovations to the Saecular Games:

fecit et saeculares, quasi anticipatos ab Augusto nec legitimo tempori reseruatos, quamuis ipse in historis suis prodat, intermissos eos Augustum multo post diligentissime annorum ratione subducta in ordinem redessisse. quare uox praeconis irissa est inuitantis more sollemni ad ludos, quos nec spectasset quisquam nec spectaturus esset, cum superessent adhuc qui spectauerant, et quidam histrionum producti olim tunc quoque producuerentur.  

For Suetonius, Claudius’s decision to hold the Games in his own lifetime is not mere self-serving, but contradictory: he criticizes Augustus for miscalculating the date of his own Ludi Saeculares, but then in his own history he says that Augustus restored the Games after making careful calculations. The Roman people react with laughter to the message of his herald to come and see “the games that no one had seen or would ever see again”, rather than treating it as a solemn occasion. Perhaps following Pliny, Suetonius also records that there were actors present who performed in both the Augustan and Claudian Games. As a further indication of Claudius’s vanity in holding the Games, Suetonius writes in Vitellius’s biography: "Huius et illa uox est: "saeculam ruitis ludos, claudio gratularetur."  

Vitellius’s flattering hope that Claudius will "often" hold Saecular Games is absurd, but it draws attention again to the fact that holding Games outside of the sequence established by Augustus was cause for censure.

4.4 Conclusion

The overview of the development of saeculum rhetoric from the Augustan period onwards will be fleshed out more thoroughly in the second half of this dissertation, but in this chapter I have demonstrated the connection between performances of the Ludi Saeculares and the use of saeculum in connection with imperial regimes, which has received little attention in previous scholarship. Initially, the relationship between the Games and saeculum rhetoric was intimately bound together: the reign of an emperor could be described as the beginning of a new saeculum usually only in instances in which that ruler had celebrated sixty-three years, and nevertheless he lived a long time afterwards.” (Pliny, Nat. Hist. 7.159.)

36 “He also held the Saecular Games, acting as if they had been anticipated by Augustus and not reserved for a legitimate time, although he himself relates in his histories, that after they had been neglected Augustus, brought them back into their order with very great and diligent calculation. For this the voice of the herald was mocked when he was inviting people in the usual way to the Games that no one had ever seen or would see again, when some were still living who had seen them, and some of the actors who had once acted then were brought forth.” (Suetonius, Cl. 21.2.)

37 Cf. above Augustan Acta: tali spectaculo [nemo iterum intereit]; neque ultra quam semel alli mor[tum eos spectare licet - - - ludos]. (L.L. 54, 56; Schnegg-Köhler 2002, 32.)

38 “His was that famous remark: ‘May you often hold them’, when he was congratulating Claudius who was holding the Ludi Saeculares.” (Suetonius, Vit. 3.5.)
the Saecular Games. Over time, however, *saeculum* rhetoric became detached from the Ludi Saeculares through the use of formulas in years in which the Games were not performed, particularly in epigraphic and numismatic evidence.

This chapter has also shown that Claudius's celebration in 47 CE was the first and last time that the *saeculum* of the Ludi Saeculares would be reinvented. The Games held enough significance in the first century CE to be the object of study, and it was clearly desirable to perform them to enhance the Claudius's reputation. Future emperors would adhere faithfully to either the Augustan or the Claudian reckoning, but would not further adapt the span of the *saeculum* to allow for the Games to be held during their reigns: the performance would lose its meaning if its chronology were repeatedly manipulated and held too often. I have argued that Claudius's new chronology for his Games was a compromise between the Augustan *saeculum* of one hundred and ten years and the celebration of the anniversaries of Rome's foundation, calculated according to one hundred year intervals. It seems likely that Claudius performed the Games according to the Augustan model, offering sacrifices and setting up a commemorative cippus at the Tarentum. The negative reception of the Claudian Games in literary texts is certainly coloured by the ill-favour in which this emperor was held by later authors. While the celebrations of Antoninus Pius and Philip followed the Claudian model and escaped such criticism, the ritual sequences and associations of their Ludi Saeculares appear to have diverged more significantly from the tradition established by Augustus than their Claudian precursor, as will be discussed in Chapters Six and Seven.
Chapter 5

The Ludi Saeculares of Domitian

After the performance of Claudius’s Ludi Saeculares in 47 CE, the position of the festival in Roman society and religious practice was less clearly defined: a new explanation of the significance of the festival, derived from the age of the city of Rome, had been set against the tradition established by Augustus. Domitian’s celebration of the Games in 88 CE could not, therefore, be a simple matter of fulfilling expectation by following precedent: the decision to hold the Games aligned the performance with Augustan tradition, but placed them in a difficult situation: Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares could either reduce the weightiness and importance of the Claudian Ludi Saeculares, or run the risk of losing their own significance by comparison with Games held within recent decades and living memory. Yet this was not the case: ancient sources confirmed the legitimacy of Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares over and against those of Claudius.

In this chapter, an analysis of literary and numismatic evidence for the Saecular Games of 88 CE demonstrates that Domitian and his advisors (such as Tacitus) strove to present his celebration as a close imitation of the Augustan model in terms of their chronology and ritual sequence. Such a strategy necessitated a rejection of the Claudian Games: as discussed above, Seneca’s application of saeculum rhetoric to Nero’s reign in his Apocolocyntosis reveals an early negative reaction to Claudius’s appropriation of the language of a “new age”. Domitian’s efforts to secure the legitimacy of his Ludi Saeculares were so successful that it outlived his own reputation: after his damnatio memoriae, Tacitus also adopted negative saeculum rhetoric to criticize Domitian’s reign.

Domitian’s performance of the Ludi Saeculares will also be set within the wider context of the Flavian dynasty, who had come to power after the chaos of civil wars at Rome following the death of Nero. Recent scholarship has highlighted the efforts made by Vespasian and his sons to establish their authority through imitation and restoration of Augustan expressions of influence: building programmes, coinage, concern for religious practices and morality. As will be seen, Flavian participation in these legitimizing efforts was not limited to emulation of Augustan practice, but could include innovation on or even competition with earlier models, such as a new emphasis on offices of priesthoods, the association of the emperor with divinity,
and Domitian’s assumption of the office of censor perpetuus. Domitian’s celebration of the Ludi Saeculares is shown to contain representative elements of imitation and innovation, which would in turn serve as a model for Septimius Severus, the next emperor to hold the Games according to the Augustan sequence.

5.1 Literary sources for Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares and their chronology

Epigraphic evidence for the Ludi Saeculares held by Domitian in 88 CE is limited, perhaps as result of the damnatio memoriae decreed by the Senate immediately after his death, which saw the destruction or editing of monuments and inscriptions bearing his name. Additionally, there is no trace of fragments from a cippus at the Tarentum recording the Acta of his Games; if the inscription recorded the events of the ritual sequence of the Games in a manner similar to that of the Augustan or Severan Acta, it should have been a simple matter to erase Domitian’s name. While it is possible that the text of Domitian’s inscription was perceived as being closely tied to the emperor’s fame, and was destroyed for this reason, it is more likely that the inscription was lost in the ravages of time or never actually erected. Flower notes that Domitian’s name was erased from the record of the Ludi Saeculares in the Fasti Capitolini, demonstrating that the commemoration of the Games could be preserved despite its dissociation from Domitian.1 It is also difficult to locate any instances of saeculum rhetoric appearing in imperial inscriptions from Domitian’s lifetime, which may suggest that it was not commonly used in epigraphic formulas, or that these inscriptions were in fact completely destroyed. Allusions to Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares and saeculum rhetoric appear in a few literary texts, but the best source for Domitian’s Games is his coinage issued in late 88 CE to memorialize the celebration. These commemorative coins present detailed images of ceremonies that appear to mirror closely the ritual sequence of the Augustan Games, but they must be used with caution in any attempt to recreate Domitian’s performances due to inherent limitations of the numismatic medium, as will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Domitian’s decision to hold Ludi Saeculares in 88 CE has caused great consternation for scholars who compare the date of his celebration to that of Augustus. If Domitian had scheduled his Games exactly one hundred and ten years after those of 17 BCE, he should have held them in 94 CE. Some have tried to argue that Augustus had intended to hold the Ludi Saeculares in 23 BCE, which would justify Domitian’s decision to celebrate them in 88 CE, but various factors such as a state crisis forced him to postpone them until 17 BCE.2 Barnes, following Swan, demonstrates that there is no evidence of a crisis occurring in 23 BCE.3 It is difficult to determine what motivated Domitian to choose 88 CE for his Games, but his slight divergence from the Augustan pattern is not criticized by ancient authors, and perhaps was viewed as too negligible to be worth correction. Domitian’s Games were presented and perceived as being more legitimate than those of Claudius: the Fasti Capitolini recorded in Domitian’s lifetime state that his Ludi Saeculares were the sixth

in their series, when the Augustan Fasti had counted his celebration as the fifth, thereby completely ignoring the Games of 47 CE. 4 Zosimus describes Claudius’s departure from the Augustan pattern in negative terms, while Domitian “maintained” or “guarded” (φυλάττειν) the traditional calculations:

Μετὰ δὲ τὸν Σεβαστὸν Κλάυδιος ἠγάγεν τὴν ἑορτὴν, οὐ φυλάξας τὸν τῶν ὀρισμένων ἔτων ἁριθμόν·
μεθ’ ὃν Δομιτιανὸς τὸν Κλάυδιον παραπεμψάμενος, καὶ τὴν περίοδον τῶν ἔτων ἀφ’ οὗ τὴν ἑορτὴν
ὁ Σεβαστὸς ἐπετέλεσεν ἁριθμήσας, ἔδοξεν τὸν ἐξ ἀρχῆς παραδοθέντα φυλάττειν θεσμόν. 5

Only Censorinus includes Claudius’s celebration in a continuous succession of Ludi Saeculares, calling the Games of 47 CE the “sixth” and those of 88 CE the “seventh” in the series: sextos autem fecit Ti. Claudius Caesar se iii et L. Vitellio iii cons. anno dccc, septimos Domitianus se xiiii et L. Minucio Rufo cons. anno dcclxii. 6

The favourable reception of Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares is often linked with their chronology and contrasted with that of Claudius in surviving literary texts. This may appear somewhat surprising, because the authors, as members of the elite classes that were most antagonistic towards Domitian, express reservations elsewhere concerning the emperor’s character and abuses of authority. Additionally, Vespasian and Titus had attempted to legitimize their reign by looking back to Claudius, rather than Nero. But it may be that Domitian did not need to rely as heavily as his father and brother on Claudian example to secure his position, and that he himself did not actively strive for the Games of 47 CE to be discredited. The positive response to Domitian’s Games, at the expense of those of Claudius, may be due to influential individuals involved in their planning and commemoration, particularly Tacitus. In a passage describing Nero’s Ludi Saeculares, Tacitus interrupts his narrative describing Claudius’s celebration in order to recall his own role in organizing Domitian’s Games:

Isdem consulibus ludi saeculares octingentesimo post Romam conditam, quarto et sexagesimo
quam Augustus ediderat, spectati sunt. utriusque principis rationes praetermitto, satis narratas
libris quibus res imperatoris Domitiani composui. nam is quoque edidit ludos saeculares iisque
intentius adfui sacerdotio quindecimuirali praeditus ac tunc praetor; quod non iactantia refero
sed quia collegio quindecimuirum antiquitus ea cura et magistratus potissimum exequabantur
officia caerimoniarum. 7

4 CIL 12, p. 29.
5 “After Augustus Claudius held the festival, not preserving the defined number of years in the interval; after which Domitian, having overlooked Claudius, and counted up the span of years from which Augustus had celebrated the festival, was seen to preserve the rite as was handed down from the beginning.” (Zosimus 2.4.)
6 “Yet Tiberius Claudius Caesar, consul for the fourth time, celebrated the sixth [Games] when L. Vitellius was consul for the third time in the year 800, and Domitian held the seventh as consul for the fourteenth time when L. Minucius Rufus was consul in the year 841.” (Censorinus 11.) The Games of Domitian are briefly mentioned in [Aurelius Victor] Ep. de Caes. 11, but their relationship to any longer sequence is not described.
7 “When these men were consuls, in the eight-hundredth year after the foundation of Rome, and the sixty-fourth year after Augustus had held them, the Ludi Saeculares were displayed. I pass over the calculations of either leader, enough was narrated in the books in which I recorded the deeds of the emperor Domitian. For he also held the Ludi Saeculares, and I assisted very attentively endowed with quindecimviral priesthood, and then as praetor; which I do not relate as boasting, but because this duty has belonged to the college of the quindecimviri from ancient times, and the magistrate performed above all the offices of the ceremonies.” (Tacitus, Annales 11.11.)
Hausmann sees Tacitus’s reference to the Augustan Games as an ironic comparison of the first princeps with Domitian, complementary to neither ruler, as well as an opportunity to belittle Claudius’s Ludi Saeculares. But it is not all sarcasm: Tacitus here restrains himself from his usual irony as he describes how, as a quindecimuir and praetor in 88 CE, it was his duty to oversee the ceremonies. It appears that he took his role as a member of the college seriously, to the point that he studied the calculations used for determining each series of saecula and discussed them in a lost portion of his Histories. Tacitus’s role in planning Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares ties his own reputation to that of the performance and their chronology: Domitian’s Games must be legitimate in his own view, or else his care and effort appear as a form of flattery and cooperation in the distribution of imperial propaganda. While Tacitus’s presentation of events was likely not the only source to emphasize the legitimacy of the Ludi Saeculares of 88 CE, it certainly would have helped influence the interpretations of later authors such as those listed above or Suetonius, who would write with approval of Domitian’s reckoning of dates: Fecit et ludos saeculares, computata ratione temporum ad annum non quo Claudius proxime, sed quo olim Augustus ediderat. Thus, these attitudes towards Domitian’s Games in the years following their performance set the tone for their acceptance as the legitimate successor to the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BCE, as seen in the passage of Zosimus above.

It is attractive to assume that because the date of Domitian’s Saecular Games was linked closely with an Augustan precedent, their function, ritual sequence, and forms of commemoration must have imitated the Augustan Games, as well. An examination of literary evidence suggests that this was indeed the case. Statius and Martial use saeculum rhetoric glorifying Domitian on four occasions, and in three of these passages the new saeculum is associated with religious performances held at an altar at the Tarentum. Statius mentions a Tarentum altar in Siluae 1.4.19–20: nec tantum induerint fatis noua saecula crimen / aut instaurati peccauerit ara Tarenti. In Ep. 4.1, Martial alludes to Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares in conjunction with the emperor’s birthday:

Caesaris alma dies et luce sacratior illa,
Concia Dictaeum qua tulit Ida Iouem,
Longa, precor, Pylioque ueni numerosior aevo
Semper et hoc uoluit uel meliore nite.
Hic colat Albano Tritonida multus in auro
Perque manus tantas plurima quercus eat;
Hic colat ingenti redeuntia saecula lustro
Et quae Romuleus sacra Tarentos habet.
Magna quidem, superi, petimus, sed debita terris:
Pro tanto quae sunt inproba uota deo?

8 Hausmann (2009), 199.
9 “He also celebrated the Saecular Games, reckoned not from the calculation of times close to the year in which Claudius held them, but from the time when Augustus performed them.” (Suetonius, Dom. 4.3.)
10 “The new age will not impute such a crime to the Fates, nor will the altar of restored Tarentum sin.” (Statius, Silvae 1.4.16–18.)
11 Martial, Ep. 4.1.
Once again, *saeculum* rhetoric is tied to the lifespan of the emperor, whose role in initiating the new age is characterized by religious responsibilities: leading sacrifices to Minerva and at the Saecular Games. At line 8, Martial describes *sacra* associated with a “Romulean Tarentos”, as if the location of the Tarentum were treated as a mythical hero. It would be tempting to associate Tarentos in some way with one of the Valerian ancestors, but it is unlikely that Martial is preserving some ancient gentilician myth, because the only epithet connecting a Valerius to the Tarentum was *Tarentinos*, applied to Valesius in Zosimus. This personification permits Martial to ask ambiguously “what prayers are excessive for so great a god?” (l. 10), which could be interpreted as referring to Tarentos or Domitian.

The last reference to the Tarentum from this period appears in Martial *Ep. 10.63*, the epitaph for a respectable matron:

\[
\text{Marmora parua quidem, sed non cessura, uiator,}
\text{Mausoli saxis pyramidunque legis.}
\text{Bis mea Romano spectata est uita Tarento,}
\text{Et nihil extremos perditid ante rogos ...}^{13}
\]

In narrating the virtues of her life, the matron says that she has seen spectacles twice at “Roman Tarentum”, which indicates that she had lived long enough to see both the Games of Claudius as well as of Domitian. The solemnity of the epitaph recalls the tone of Horace’s *Ode* 4.6, in which another matron looks back on her participation in the chorus of children who sang his *Carmen Saeculare*. Yet even though the epigram appears to innocently celebrate a life well lived, Martial is able to point out the undesirable fact that someone could have seen the Ludi Saeculares performed twice, a subtle critique of Domitian’s Games reminiscent of Suetonius and Pliny’s descriptions of the laughter that greeted the herald who announced the celebration in 47 CE.\(^{14}\)

The literary evidence shows that Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares were held at the Tarentum in the Campus Martius, following the example of Augustus and Claudius. Further support for Domitian’s dedication to the Augustan model may be seen in his own building programme following the fire of 80 CE, in which he undertook repairs and constructions on the Palatine and Capitoline, and in the Campus Martius, where his Odeum came to serve as the location for the *ludi honorarii* in the Severan period and perhaps in his own day.\(^{15}\) Repairs to the Porticus Octaviae, which lay on the route between the Capitoline and the Tarentum, may also have been conducted under Domitian’s authority. The location and purpose of the Ludi Saeculares of 88 CE indicate that the ceremony was intended to usher in a new age through distinctive religious performances, at least some of which were held at an altar at the Tarentum.

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12 Zosimus 2.3.
14 Suetonius, *Cl. 21.2; Pliny, NH 7.159.*
5.2 Numismatic evidence for Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares

Beyond this literary evidence for Domitian’s Saecular Games, we must turn to a set of fifteen coin types issued across all denominations in 88/89 CE to commemorate the festival. On the one hand, these coins appear to be a rich and invaluable witness to the ritual sequence of the Games, since the coins depict the central religious performances in seemingly careful detail, and the unique scale on which they were minted invites interpretations that emphasize the extent of their distribution and importance for memorializing the rites. Thus, the coins have played a significant role in scholarship on the Ludi Saeculares since the Renaissance. On the other hand, we should be careful to understand the limitations of medium when interpreting these images: according to Sobocinski, whose 2006 article constitutes the best treatment of the subject to date, the coins should not be read as perfect records of precisely how and where rites were celebrated. She argues instead that the coins were intended to stress the relationship between Augustus’s and Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares, highlighting the care with which Domitian undertook to preserve each aspect of the Augustan ritual sequence. This message could be conveyed through individual coins, because only a limited audience would have had the ability to examine the entire set of coin types at the same time.

Sobocinski shows that Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares coins imitate Augustan types, which were far less varied than the issue of 88 CE. She suggests that Domitian’s moneyers had access to dies or coins themselves from the Augustan Games that were used to create the designs for the Games of 88 CE; this would not be a novel decision, because Vespasian and Titus had also reused earlier coin types. Domitian’s coins imitated all of Augustus’s types, apart from two coins minted in Spain (RIC 1².138 and 139). A cippus inscribed lvd saec fec appears on several coins of Domitian, RIC 2.1².600–605, and 617, which are similar in appearance to the Augustan coin RIC 1².354. Sobocinski suggests that this could indicate that an inscription was erected to commemorate the Games of 88 CE. The use of a cippus in numismatic iconography is relatively rare, but does appear in the Ludi Saeculares coinage of Septimius Severus and Philip, as well; since the Acta of Severus’s Games do survive, it does seem unlikely to depict a cippus on a coin if one were not in fact created. If such a column were set up at the Tarentum near the cippi of Augustus and Claudius, it was likely destroyed following the damnatio memoriae decreed after Domitian’s death.

The coins of 88 CE also imitated Augustan coins depicting the distribution of suffimenta. While RIC 2.1².609 is similar to its Augustan model (RIC 1².350), the adult male dressed in a toga who comes to receive the purificatory materials is accompanied by a child, rather than by a second adult male. Sobocinski compares this coin to RIC 2.1².615 and 616 (fig. 5.1), which she identifies as showing two boys and a girl in procession, and suggests that they could be interpreted as a reference to the importance of children and

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16 Panvinio (1558); Rainssant (1685); Taffin (1698); Dressel (1899); Hild (1909); Welin (1954); Hill (1965); Carlson (1972a and b); Di Manzano (1984); Coarelli (1993) and (1997), 87–92; Stewart (2003); Scheid (2008). Breglia (1968, 108–115) provides an overview from an artistic perspective of the design of several of Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares coins.


18 Sobocinski (2006), 583.

fertility, recalling similar emphases in the Games of 17 BCE.  

The depiction of children in procession invites the comparison of this image with the chorus of boys and girls who sang Horace’s *Carmen Saeculare* in 17 BCE, hinting that another such hymn was performed for Domitian’s Games. If Sobocinski is correct about the children’s genders, the choice to show two boys and a girl could be a subtle reference the Valerian aetiological myth concerning the Tarentum sacrifices, when Valesius came to the Tarentum to save his own children, two sons and a daughter. The second adult male accompanying the children cannot be identified. There is no further evidence that Domitian tried to use the ceremony to call attention to the imperial family or strengthen his relationship with a proclaimed heir; his only son had died in 83 CE and was later deified, but this child does not appear on any coins pertaining to the commemoration of the Ludi Saeculares.

Other coins of 17 CE had depicted a herald bearing a shield with a star and a caduceus (*RIC* 1.².339–342). Domitian’s coins replace the herald with a *ludio* carrying a straight wand as well as a shield with a helmeted head (*RIC* 2.¹.595–602; fig. 5.2). These changes make sense if we assume that the star on the herald’s shield referred to the *sidus Iulium* (as discussed in Chapter Three), while the helmeted head could depict Domitian’s patron goddess, Minerva. On *RIC* 2.¹.600–602, the *ludio* appears with the *cippus* and with an object that Sobocinski identifies as a candelabrum, which might indicate the types of lighting used to

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21 Sobocinski (2006), 587.
illuminate nocturnal sacrifices and *ludi scaenici* at the Tarentum.\(^{23}\)

Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares coinage far surpassed that of Augustus in its presentation of individual religious performances that make up the ritual sequence of the Games. The distribution of *fruges* is illustrated and identified by the legend in *RIC 2.i².606–608*. The *supplicatio* offered by the *matronae* to Juno appears in *RIC 2.i².610–611*. Domitian’s *adlocutio* is shown in *RIC 2.i².612*. Some of the sacrifices can be identified by the species of victim: a pig was offered to Terra Mater (*RIC 2.i².612–614; fig. 5.3*), sheep and goats to the Moirae (*RIC 2.i².618–619, 628*), and a bull was given to Jupiter (*RIC 2.i².620, 625, 626*).\(^{24}\)

Sobocinski identifies *RIC 2.i².621* and *627* as the sacrifice to the Ilithyiae, a victimless sacrifice in which a male figure appears reclining; this figure is usually understood to be the personification of the Tiber, which would make sense, because the offering of cakes to the Ilithyiae took place at the Tarentum near the river. By the process of elimination, she identifies a second depiction of a victimless sacrifice, *RIC 2.i².623, 624*, as the offering of cakes to Apollo and Diana.\(^{25}\) Sobocinski wonders if the oracle concerning the Ludi Saeculares from the Sibylline Books (described in Chapter Two) served as a “template” or “source of inspiration” for the images on Domitian’s coins, because of the visual emphasis on the sacrifices and types of offerings. She observes that the Sibylline oracle makes no direct reference to the celebration of *ludi*, and these do not appear in the coins; the only religious performance from the oracle not depicted is the *sellisternia*.\(^{26}\) But there is no particular reason why the oracle alone should have guided the choice of iconography, since

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\(^{23}\) Sobocinski (2006), 589. Dressel (1899), Sutherland (1994) and Hill (1965) had identified the object as an incense burner (*turibulum*), and Tagliafico (1994, 55) thought it was a tripod.


\(^{25}\) Sobocinski (2006), 592.

\(^{26}\) Sobocinski (2006), 599.
Domitian’s *quindecimuiri* must have relied on other sources beyond the Sibylline Books to reconstruct a religious performance that followed so closely the pattern established by Augustus. Their *commentarii* and other records of edicts and decrees pertaining to the Games could have provided more detailed instructions for how the celebration was to be financed, what prayers were to be said, what types of sacrifices were to be made, etc.\(^{27}\) The Sibylline oracle by itself is somewhat vague in its descriptions of how the performances were to be carried out: as described in Chapter Two, Apollo was to receive “equal victims” (*ἶσα θύματα*). In Horace’s *Carmen Saeculare*, Apollo and Diana’s offerings were cattle, but we know from the Augustan *Acta* that they truly received cakes, which seems to be the depiction on *RIC* 2.1.623 and 624. Without more specific instructions, the ambiguous Greek hexameter could have been interpreted in several ways.

These depictions of religious performance on Domitian’s coinage are often accompanied by images of temples in the background, which Sobocinski convincingly demonstrates cannot be linked with the actual buildings that would have stood near the scenes. She shows how performances that were held in the same locations, such as the Tarentum or the temple to Jupiter and Juno on the Capitoline, depict different architectural structures in the background.\(^{28}\) These inconsistencies were not due to any change in the locations of these ceremonies or the existence of unattested buildings, she argues. For example, in the coin types that depict a victimless sacrifice with the Tiber reclining below the altar, there are a number of differences in how the façade in the background appears across five variant types. Coarelli tried to use one of these variants together with fr. 672 of Septimius Severus’s *Forma Urbis* to argue for the existence

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\(^{28}\) Sobocinski (2006), 592.
of two temples at the Tarentum; since there is no other evidence that would attest to such structures, it
seems unlikely that his conclusion was correct. An alternative theory offered by Hill and La Rocca stated
that the façade represented a temporary theatre constructed at the Tarentum for the ludi scaenici, such as
that described in the Acta of 17 BCE. Sobocinski suggests that if the façade were temporary and were
dismantled after the end of the Games in June, the different appearances on the coin types could result from
the fact that they were minted beginning in September 88 CE, and the artists were working to create the
scene from memory.

Other variations in architectural design Sobocinski assigns to the audience of the coins: the iconography
that follows Augustan models appears in silver and gold, while the types showing religious performances
appear in bronze, a pattern that Metcalf had observed across imperial coinage until the third century CE.
The coins minted in silver and gold were more likely to have been seen by elite Romans, whereas the bronze
narrative types appear to have been produced in smaller quantities for use in Italy. The only bronze coin
minted on a larger scale was the depiction of a victimless sacrifice to Apollo and Diana, which Sobocinski
argues could have served to summarize the entire ritual sequence of the Ludi Saeculares. Few people would
have seen the coins brought together or noticed the inconsistencies in architectural details; the purpose of
the coins was to advertise Domitian’s role in leading the religious performances of the Ludi Saeculares on
behalf of Rome. Thus, Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares coinage served a commemorative function, like that of
Augustus, and was not intended to serve as a detailed description of the activities and their locations like
written notes or an inscription.

5.3 Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares and creation of imperial identity

If studied in isolation as a source for the Ludi Saeculares of 88 CE, Domitian’s coinage from that year could
give the impression of strict adherence to the Augustan model in all respects, not merely in the details
of the ritual sequence of the Games. But the relationship between the Games of Domitian and Augustus
becomes more complex when viewed in light of expressions of imperial identity developed under the
Flavians. Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian certainly imitated Augustan precedent with their construction
projects (such as the Flavian Amphitheatre) and repair of old buildings (such as the Capitol and Forum
Transitorium) following civil wars. Domitian’s emulation of the reverses of coins issued to commemorate
the Saecular Games of 17 BCE seems to accord well with the numerous “restoration” coin types issued by

Boyancé (1925), 145.
31 Sobocinski (2006), 595–596. She assumes that Domitian’s Games were held at the end of May and beginning of June, following the
pattern recorded in the Acta of the Augustan Games. Carradice/Buttrey (2007, 251) assume that Domitian’s Games were held in
October of 88 CE, coinciding with the issue of his coinage depicting the events of the celebration. Sobocinski’s dating seems more
plausible, given that the Ludi Saeculares of 204 CE were also held in May/June.
33 Sobocinski (2006), 598–600.
Yet the Flavians were also innovators, and, like Augustus, could create new forms of authority by adapting models from the past. Boyle, Gunderson, and Rüpke show how the figure of the emperor became increasingly important (and visible) through the use of spectacles and games, particularly under Domitian.36 Rüpke describes how the new emphasis on the role of the emperor as pontifex maximus changed the way he wielded religious power: previously, the image of the emperor sacrificing alone was not linked to this particular office, given that emperors held all important priesthood at Rome. From the time of Titus, however, the pontifex maximus was associated with even greater moral responsibility and prestige; as pontifex maximus, Domitian sought out highly visible expressions of his religious authority, e.g. the policing of the morals of the flamen dialis and Vestal Virgins, the establishment of a new college of priests for the worship of his patroness Minerva, and other innovations such as changes to priestly attire.37

These Flavian innovations in the representation of the emperor and his religious authority help us to interpret the centrality of the figure of Domitian on his Ludi Saeculares coinage. Domitian’s cippus coins depart from their Augustan models by adjusting the legends to highlight the emperor and his titles. Augustus’ coins record the name of the triumvir, Mescinius Rufus, and bear the legend xv sf, indicating the quindecimuiri sacris faciundis. These names are replaced by a wreath and a reference to Domitian’s consulate in the coins of 88 CE. Sobocinski, following Jones, cites this change as evidence that Domitian wanted to emphasize his personal role in leading the performances, rather than sharing this authority, even if, according to Tacitus, most of actual labour was left to the quindecimuiri.38 The problem with this interpretation is that coins from this period almost always display the emperor in a position of prominence; the Flavian emphasis on the visibility of the emperor at games and religious events is at work in these representations of the most important events of the Ludi Saeculares.

Domitian was able to augment his authority and surpass his predecessors by becoming censor perpetuus in 85 CE, an unheard-of extension to the old office. The connection between Claudius’s censorship and Saecular Games has been discussed above, and seems not to have been lost on Domitian, who unlike Claudius did not extend the pomerium. But by assuming this title, Domitian set himself apart from Claudius and Augustus, the emperors he would otherwise seem to be imitating in holding the Ludi Saeculares. The title censor perpetuus was placed on coins in an irregular fashion, but does appear on some of his Ludi Saeculares coins, such as RIC 2.1² 606.39 Domitian’s exercise of his authority as pontifex maximus through the regulation of religious specialists can also be linked with the duties associated with censorship: these two offices placed the emperor over and above other power structures at Rome, and would reinforce the

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36 Boyle (2003), 41; Gunderson (2003); Rüpke (2012), 10.

37 Rüpke (2012), 11–20, which is tied closely to his dating of the Epistle to the Hebrews and interpretation of Domitian’s punishment of Vestal Virgins.

38 Sobocinski (2006), 587; Jones (1994); Tacitus, Ann. 11.11.1.

image of the emperor acting alone in performing the Ludi Saeculares, rather than as an equal member of the college of quindecimuiri sacris faciundis.

There exists slim evidence that Domitian may have incorporated the worship of a new deity into his Saecular Games, based on numismatic imagery. While some coins of 17 BCE had depicted a herald bearing a shield with a star and a caduceus (RIC i² 339–342), the corresponding coins of 88 CE replace the herald with a ludio carrying a straight wand, as well as a shield with a helmeted head (RIC 2.1² 595–602). These changes make sense if we assume that the star on the herald's shield referred to the sidus Iulium (as discussed in Chapter Two), while the helmeted head could depict Domitian's patron goddess, Minerva. Given the uncertainty in identifying the bust, we must exercise caution in attributing any significance to its appearance; if it is indeed Minerva, her placement on the shield could simply indicate the new association of the Saecular Games and the new saeculum with Domitian's reign. In Chapter Six, however, it will be shown that Septimius Severus's coins clearly show images of his patron deities Liber and Hercules, who were associated with Caracalla and Geta, and who are mentioned in the fragmentary Carmen Saeculare of 204 CE. We might speculate that some reference to Minerva in Domitian's Games could have served as inspiration for the presence of the Severan deities, but this innovation could also derive ultimately from Augustus, who included sacrifices to his patron deity, Apollo, as well as Artemis, in his Ludi Saeculares.

5.4 Commemorating Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares

Domitian's Ludi Saeculares coinage issued in late 88 CE forms our main evidence for efforts to commemorate the celebration, but there is no reason to assume that a set of bronze and stone inscriptions would not have been set up at Tarentum to provide record of the details of the Games, following the models of Augustus and Claudius. Tacitus's description of the efforts of the quindecimuiri to study the tradition and chronology of the Games suggests that commentarii were still available to this college, and could have been handed down for use in future generations.

But without a surviving inscription recording the Acta of the Ludi Saeculares of 88 CE, it is difficult to know how Domitian intended the event to be commemorated. We know little about who participated in the ceremonies, and we cannot know if the apparent emphasis on the role of the emperor gained from a study of numismatic evidence would have been replicated in an inscription, or if the assignment of duties would have looked similar to that found in the Augustan Acta. We cannot know if anyone accompanied Domitian in performing the sacrifices, for example, or if any individuals were singled out for other special contributions, such as composing a hymn or leading the matronae performing the supplicatio.

It may be that Domitian continued to include the Valerii in the preparations for the Ludi Saeculares. Rüpke provides the list of religious officials at Rome for 88 CE, and thus the list of members of the quindecimuiri sacris faciundis for that year can be reconstructed together from various sources. Among the

40 Sobocinski (2006), 587.
41 Rüpke (2005), 245–246.
names appears that of the famous poet C. Valerius Flaccus Setinus Balbus, about whose life we know almost nothing. He is believed to have died before 95 CE, and the basis for assigning him to the college of quindecimuiri rests with the reference in the *Argonautica* to the Sibyl’s tripod in his house (because of the connection with the Sibylline Books), and the Bath of Cybele (a rite that fell under the supervision of the quindecimuiri). Rüpke recognizes that there is no definitive evidence for assigning him to the college. It is curious that tradition had assigned the poet this position, however, because he would have appeared in the college as a Valerius after a long interval without any member bearing such a name. The last Valerius for which there is any evidence was the Atticus who appears in the *Acta* of 47 CE; once again, Valerii seem to appear in the college just in time for the celebrations of the Saecular Games, without holding seats continuously as if the gens was considered entitled to such a position. If Valerius Flaccus were truly a quindecimuir, it would seem that the Ludi Saeculares continued to be associated with his clan, however loosely defined the gens Valeria was at that point. It may be tempting to speculate as to whether or not a *Carmen Saeculare* was performed in 88 CE, and who the composer might have been – Valerius Flaccus? Statius? But such groundless conjectures are unhelpful.

As has been observed in this section, Domitian’s use of coinage as a commemorative device is exceptional. Why would Domitian have gone to such trouble to have coins issued across so many denominations that would place the Ludi Saeculares in the spotlight? Sobocinski argues that Domitian needed to make his Saecular Games as memorable as possible in order to distract attention from Claudius’s recently held Games, which many people at Rome would have remembered. Domitian had also presented himself as the new founder of Rome, just as Augustus had; by issuing a series of more detailed and diverse coins than Augustus, he could surpass his example. Even if few people had access to the entire set of Ludi Saeculares coins, the sheer number of types in circulation would have stood out against previous issues. Given his close imitation of the religious performances of the Augustan Games, it is likely that Domitian’s coins were not meant to provide the only commemoration of the celebration, but were intended to accompany other forms of commemoration, such as a cippus at the Tarentum. If Domitian’s damnatio memoriae did extend to this monument, it could give an indication of the perceived purpose of such an inscription: to glorify the emperor, rather than serving as the sole record for the performance a solemn religious festival.

### 5.5 Domitian and *saeculum* rhetoric

As discussed above, Domitian’s damnatio memoriae resulted in the loss of inscriptions referring to him by name, leaving us no surviving examples of epigraphic *saeculum* rhetoric from his reign. The *saeculum* is not named or directly referenced on Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares coinage. But *saeculum* rhetoric does seem to have played some kind of role in Domitian’s lifetime. The poet Statius could make use of *saeculum* rhetoric

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43 Rüpke (2008), 918 n.2.
44 Sobocinski (2006), 586.
in order to echo that of Vergil describing Augustus’s founding of a new age, speaking through the voice of Janus:

salue, magne parens mundi, qui saecula mecum
instaurare paras, talem te cernere semper
mense meo tua Roma cupit; sic tempora nasci,
sic annos intrare deceat. da gaudia fastis
continua …
… manet insuper ordo
longior, et totidem felix tibi Roma curules
terque quaterque dabit. mecum altera saecula condes,
et tibi longaeui renouabitur ara parentis;
mille tropaea feres, tantum permitte triumphos … 46

Domitian’s task is to “prepare” (para) and “found” (condes) “another age” (altera saecula), echoing aurea condet / saecula at Aen. 6.792–793. 47 Just as for the age of Augustus, Domitian’s new age will be characterized by the emperor’s military conquests, and Rome will be felix, the adjective so typical of literary and epigraphic saeculum rhetoric.

After Domitian’s death, however, saeculum rhetoric continued to be flexible in its use; just as Seneca’s Apocolocyntosis had mocked Claudius’s reign by describing the age after his death in glowing terms superlatives, Tacitus would also refer to the saeculum in order to criticize Domitian’s regime. In his biography of his father-in-law, Tacitus applied saeculum rhetoric to the reigns of Nerva and Trajan:

Nunc demum redit animus; et quamquam primo statim beatissimi saeculi ortu Nerva Caesar res olim dissociabilis miscuerit, principatum ac libertatem, augeatque cotidie felicitatem temporum
Nerua Traianus, nec spem modo ac uotum securitas publica, sed ipsius uoti fiduciam ac robur adsumperit, natura tamen infirmitatis humanae tardiora sunt remedia quam mala … 48

Neither Nerva nor Trajan would celebrate any kind of festivity connected with a change in saeculum, nor is there any evidence that they encouraged this rhetoric on an official level in coins or inscriptions. Rather, Tacitus’s references to “most blessed” (beatissimus) saeculum and the “felicity of the times” (felicitas temporum) served to praise Nerva and Trajan at the expense of Domitian. Tacitus later lamented the fact

46 “Hail, great father of the world, you who prepare with me to restore the age, your Rome always desires to see such as you in my month; so it is fitting for the times to be born, for the years to enter. Give continual joys to the calendar … a longer degree remains above, and just as many as three times, four times, happy Rome will grant you the curule chair. With me you will find another age, and the altar of your ancient parent will be renewed. You will bear a thousand trophies, allow as many triumphs …” (Statius, Silvae 4.1.17–21, 35–39.)
47 Hulls (2010), 96–97.
48 “Now at last our spirit returns, and although just at the first dawn of a most blessed age Nerva Caesar blended things once incompatible, sovereignty and liberty, and Nerva Trajan now daily increases the felicity of the times, public security assumes not only our hope and prayer, but the pledge and strength of the prayer itself, nevertheless by the nature of human infirmity the remedies are slower than the diseases …” (Agricola 3.1.)
that his father-in-law was not able to live to see “this time of the most blessed saeculum”, after Domitian’s “tyranny” had passed away:

nam sicut (e)i (non licuit) durare in hanc beatissimi saeculi lucem ac principem Traianum uidere, quod augurio uotisque apud nostras aures ominabatur, ita festinatae mortis graue solacium tuit euasisse postremum illud tempus, quo Domitianus non iam per interualla ac spiramenta temporum, sed continuo et uelut uno ictu rem publicam exhaustum.\footnote{49 “For although it was not permitted to him to survive until this dawn of the most blessed age and to see Trajan as its ruler, which he used to predict in the augury and in prayers to my ears, nevertheless he bore in this way a great solace for his premature death, that he escaped that later period in which Domitian without any pause or breathing-space of time, but as if with a single, continuous blow, drained the life of the state.” (\textit{Agricola} 44.5.)}

For all of Tacitus’s efforts to ensure the legitimacy of Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares, he had no qualms about dissociating the last of the Flavian emperors from the happiness of a new saeculum. The new age had begun, but Tacitus removed Domitian from it; it is less clear if he intended to situate Nerva and Trajan within the saeculum that began in 88 CE, or if he assigned them their own ages, corresponding with the beginnings of their reigns.\footnote{50 For further discussion of praise of Trajan at the expense of Domitian, see Flower (2006), 262–270.} This ambiguity concerning the relationship between saeculum and the reign of an individual emperor would continue to evolve in future centuries, as will be discussed in the following chapter. The use of felix and beatum, especially in superlatives, would continue to characterize saeculum rhetoric throughout the imperial period. The fact that Quintilian could use the phrase saeculum felix to illustrate metonymy demonstrates how commonplace this language had become before and during the reign of Domitian.\footnote{51 Quintilian, \textit{Inst. Or.} 8.6.24.}

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares followed the Augustan pattern of conservatism blended with innovation. While epigraphic and literary evidence is of little use for determining the ritual sequence of Domitian’s Games, a large issue of coins in 88 CE, some even based on Augustan types, reveal a close adherence to the rites and ceremonies recorded in the Augustan \textit{Acta}. Sacrifices to chthonic deities seems to have been offered at Tarentum, and a commemorative cippus may have been erected there, although no trace of such an inscription has survived. Domitian’s building programme in the Campus Martius in 80 CE, his decision to issue Ludi Saeculares coins on a grand scale, and his assumption of the title censor perpetuus reveal a desire to surpass the Augustan and Claudian models for the celebration of these Games. This pattern of emulation and competition with earlier emperors was repeated in later performances of the Saecular Games, as I will show in the following chapters.

Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares were secured as the legitimate successor to the Augustan Games despite the emperor’s damnatio memoriae, thanks to the efforts of elites such as Seneca and Tacitus who discredited the Claudian celebration, as well as Tacitus’s emphasis on his own role in organizing the performance according
to precedent and careful calculation. However dissatisfied the Roman Senate may have been with the emperor, Domitian's representation of his authority through his central roles in the Ludi Saeculares did not diminish their validity and significance, but likely had the opposite effect, conveying the message that Domitian had properly celebrated these Games on behalf of Rome.

But Domitian's celebration lacked a key element found in most of the imperial Saecular Games: the opportunity to identify the arrival of the new saeculum with the continuity of his dynasty through a living heir. Augustus, Claudius, Septimius Severus, and Philip were able to present their heirs to Rome at their Ludi Saeculares; Domitian's child with Domitia had died years before his Games. In Chapter Six, it will be shown that the association between the imperial family and the new saeculum grew more clearly defined, especially in the Games of Septimius Severus, the next in the Augustan sequence.
Chapter 6

Saeculum Rhetoric in the Second to Fourth Centuries CE and the Ludi Saeculares of Septimius Severus

This chapter provides an overview of the development of saeculum rhetoric during the second to fourth centuries CE. Evidence for saeculum rhetoric immediately following the Ludi Saeculares of Domitian is sparse until the Games of Antoninus Pius in 148 CE. Antoninus’s coin types laid greater emphasis to the arrival of a new saeculum; the performance of Ludi Saeculares is never recorded in their legends, perhaps out of concern to dissociate any festivities from Claudius’s Games and their blackened reputation. This use of saeculum rhetoric raises the question of whether or not Antoninus Pius’s celebration of the birthday of Rome should in fact be classified as a performance of the Ludi Saeculares, although it was understood to be such by later authors. Saeculum rhetoric continued to be used sporadically by Antoninus’s heirs and successors until the reign of Septimius Severus, who capitalized on the arrival of the next Augustan saeculum with careful advertisement and commemoration of his Saecular Games in 204 CE in coinage and inscriptions.

The greatest portion of this chapter provides an examination of the Games of Septimius Severus in 204 CE and the imperial use of saeculum rhetoric to establish an identity for the Severan dynasty. The splendour of the Severan Games seems to have far surpassed the celebrations of Antoninus, indicating that the festival for the arrival of an Augustan saeculum was still perceived as more legitimate and authoritative than one commemorating a Claudian age. Severus followed Domitian’s pattern of emulating the Augustan model for the Ludi Saeculares, while at the same time introducing significant innovations into the ritual sequence of his Games, allowing him to create an imperial identity distinct from that of his predecessors.
6.1 Development of *saeculum* rhetoric in the early second century CE

Before the second century CE, all occurrences of *saeculum* rhetoric had been confined to periods in which emperors celebrated the Ludi Saeculares, or appeared in literature describing the context of their reigns. Even as late as 111 CE, Pliny the Younger could contrast Domitian’s reign with that of Trajan:

> Videor ergo summam uti mei consequitus, cum inter initia felicissimi principatus tui probaueris me ad peculiarem indulgentiam tuam pertinere; eoque magis liberos cupiscio, quos habere etiam illo tristissimo saeculo uolui, sicut potes duobus matrimonii mei credere.¹

Pliny leaves Domitian nameless but describes the former regime as a “most unhappy age” (*tristissimo saeculo*), while Trajan’s reign is “most felicitous” (*felicissimi*).

The earliest form of imperial *saeculum* rhetoric outside of the immediate context of the Saecular Games appears on an *aureus* from Hadrian’s reign, *RIC* 2.136, issued between 119 and 122 CE (fig. 6.1). On the reverse, a nude figure steps through a circle or wheel, holding a bird usually identified as a phoenix in his left hand on a globe, with the legend *PM TR P COS III // SAEC AVR.*² The nude figure may possibly be a personification of Aion or the Saeculum Aureum;³ Strack (and later Poe) hesitatingly identified it as some kind of Genius.⁴

The connection between the phoenix, the Ludi Saeculares, and the *saeculum* seems to have gone back to the time of Claudius. Tacitus had recorded the sighting of the phoenix in Rome in 34 CE; Pliny the Elder says that the bird was caught in 36 CE and brought to Rome to celebrate the city’s eight hundredth year, 47 CE, while Aurelius Victor only mentions that it appeared in Egypt in 47 CE.⁵ During Domitian’s reign, and perhaps inspired by the Claudian example, Martial compares Rome’s partial destruction after a fire to the flaming death and rejuvenation of the phoenix.⁶ Poe argues that this coin could date from 121 CE, the year in which Hadrian reinvented the Parilia to celebrate the birthday of the city; on the legend of another *aureus* from 121 CE, the age of Rome was calculated as being 874 years old.⁷ This rather arbitrary number points to Rome’s eight hundredth year, which Poe discerns as being two Pythagorean cycles of 440 years allowing for the renewal of life.⁸ Poe perceptively notes that Hadrian was not able to celebrate the Ludi Saeculares according to any kind of calculation, Augustan or Claudian, and he could not extend the *pomerium*, but he

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¹ "I see myself, therefore, as having obtained my greatest wish, when you approved at the beginning of your most happy reign that I have claim to your special indulgence; I desire children all the more, which I wanted to have even in that most unhappy age, as you can believe from my two marriages." (Pliny, Ep. 10.2.)

² Image from Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Münzkabinett Online Catalogue, http://smb.museum/ikmk/object.php?id=18204693. I thank Naomi Neufeld for pointing out the similarities between the image on Hadrian’s coin and other depictions of Aion. For further discussion of representations of Aion in Greek and Roman art and coinage, see Levi (1944), esp. 294–295. For discussion of Aion in the Eastern and Western Empire, see Zuntz (1989); at 56–67, Zuntz argues that Augustus equated Aion with Salus and the Saeculum.

³ See Strack (1931), 100–108, who also mentions in passing a potential connection between Hadrian’s *saeculum aureum* and the Ludi Saeculares of previous centuries, and Poe (1984), 78.

⁴ Tacitus, Ann. 6.28; Pliny, NH 10.2; Aurelius Victor Caes. 4.14. The earliest reference to the phoenix in Greek literature appears in Hesiod fr. 304 M.-W.; and later in Herodotus 2.73, Solinus 3.14, Lactantius, *Carmen de aevo Phoenice*, Anth. Lat. 485; Claudianus, *Carmina minora* 27: Phoenix.

⁵ Martial, Ep. 5.7

⁶ RIC 2.144

still wanted to distinguish himself from his predecessors, and thus he chose to transform another religious 
performance and create a new way of reckoning time that would recall the Augustan saeculum (440 years = 
4 saecula of 110 years). Thus, Hadrian was able to appropriate saeculum rhetoric to refer to the period of his 
own reign, grounding his authority in a supernaturally ordained conjunction of his power and the arrival of 
a new age.

figure 6.1: aureus of hadrian, 119–122 ce (ric 2.136)

6.2 the celebration of antoninus pius in 148 ce

the reign of antoninus pius appears to be an important turning point in the use of saeculum rhetoric. some 
have thought that the emperor held ludi saeculares 148 ce, following claudius, but no coins or inscriptions 
directly attest to their celebration. pighi, for example, chooses to discuss antoninus’s poorly attested 
festivities together with philip’s games of 248 ce, and describes both celebrations as “ludi saeculares”.

the application of this name is misleading: it seems that antoninus chose instead to commemorate the 
arrival of a new age without attempting to link it specifically to the augustan tradition of the ludi saeculares 
themselves. by following the claudian sequence, which had combined the saeculum intervals of one hundred 
and one hundred and ten years, antoninus’s festival would have most clearly recalled the games of 47 ce, 
following them as the beginning of a tenth saeculum of one hundred years counted from the foundation of 
rome, or of a seventh saeculum of one hundred and ten years, counted from valerius publicola’s sacrifices

9 pighi (1965), 87–94.
in 504 BCE. Aurelius Victor, writing two centuries after the period in question, provides the only evidence that Antoninus held or reinvented some other kind of religious performances, as Hadrian had done with the Parilia: *celebrato mirifice Vrbis nongentesimo* (“he celebrated magnificently the nine hundredth birthday of Rome”). Pighi himself admits that *mirifice* most likely refers to spectacles of some sort, rather than sacrifices. Thus, greater attention was paid to Antoninus’s ties to Claudian tradition: Aurelius Victor overlooked any association with Augustan *saecula*.

Censorinus and Zosimus do not include any celebrations from Antoninus’s reign among their lists of the Saecular Games, and no trace of any kind of inscription commemorating such games in 148 CE has been found in the Campus Martius, perhaps because one was never created. It may be that Antoninus chose to avoid the negative connotations surrounding Claudius’s games as departures from the Augustan model. A member of the Valerian gens does appear among the *quindecimuiri* in 148 CE: L. Valerius Propinquus Granianus Grattius Geminus Rectus, who was likely proconsul of Asia in that year. Rüpke thinks that he may have been co-opted in the 120s CE, when Hadrian was emperor. As the first Valerius to appear in the college since (possibly) Valerius Flaccus in the reign of Domitian, Hadrian may have had an interest in co-opting him in preparation for some kind of *saeculum* celebration in 148 CE, although Hadrian died before this could be held. There is little concrete evidence that Antoninus attempted any kind of vast building programme in preparation for his celebration, but it may be that his repairs to the Pons Agrippae, located somewhat south of the Tarentum, in 147 CE were intended to serve this purpose.

*Saeculum* rhetoric appears in coins later in Antoninus’s reign, bearing the legend **FELIC SAEC COS III** (*RIC* 3.297, 298, 309; fig. 6.2). These coins depict the figure of Felicitas holding a caduceus on the reverse, a departure from her representation on his other coins, where she holds a globe and cornucopia (cf. *RIC* 3.299). The decision to show Felicitas with a caduceus only on coins mentioning the *saeculum* could indicate that she is to be interpreted as the herald of a new age, recalling a similar depiction of heralds on the Ludi Saeculares coinage of Augustus and Claudian. A coin from some period during Antoninus’s reign, *RIC* 3.509, and later from the reign of Marcus Aurelius, *RIC* 3.709–712 and 1665–1666, carries a portrait of Faustina Minor on the obverse, and on the reverse a throne on which are seated two infants with stars above their heads, with the legend **SAECVL FELICIT**. Faustina was the wife of Marcus Aurelius, Antoninus’s heir, who had received *tribunicia potestas* in December 147 CE, while his wife received the title of Augusta. Antoninus’s decision to declare Marcus Aurelius as heir in this year may have been intended to associate his succession with the arrival of the new age.

No inscriptions bearing *saeculum* rhetoric survive in the period after Claudius’s rule, until the time of Antoninus. An honorific inscription from a statue base dedicated to M. Sulpicius Felix from Sala, Mauretania Tingitana, dated to 144 CE, refers to the *saeculum as augustissimum: aput nos Sulpicium Felicem...*
Figure 6.2: Denarius of Antoninus Pius, 159–160 CE (RIC 3.309)

eum praef (ectum) qui augustissumo saeculo sub sanctissima Uttedi Honorati disciplina (sic!) esse debuerit (“among us Sulpicius Felix, the same prefect who was indebted to be under the most reverend discipline of Utteius Honoratus in this most august age”). In addition, four inscriptions from Cirta in Numidia describe the erection of a bronze statue of Securitas Saeculi: CIL 8.7095–7098. The personification of Securitas is not unique to these monuments, also appearing in numerous inscriptions mentioning Securitas Augusti, Securitas publica, Securitas perpetua, etc. Hamilton describes a Republican distinction between securitas, wellbeing effected on an individual level, and salus, wellbeing nurtured by the state, that was gradually blurred from the Augustan period onward, when the personal securitas of the emperor became linked to the safety of the state and its population. This echoes the movement of the Ludi Saeculares rites from the more individual sphere of the gens to that of the state, and ultimately to the imperial sphere. The personification of securitas can be seen loosely associated with saeculum rhetoric as early as Tacitus: in a passage described in the previous chapter, he contrasts the reign of Domitian with those of Nerva and Trajan, but he goes on to note the role of securitas publica in inspiring hope for a better age, as well as the accomplishment of such prayers:

Nunc demum reedit animus; et quamquam primo statim beatissimi saeculi ortu Nerua Caesar res olim dissociabilis miscuerit, principatum ac libertatem, augeatque cotidie felicitatem temporum
Nerua Traianus, nec spem modo ac uotum securitas publica, sed ipsius uoti fiduciam ac robur

17 Hamilton (2013) 58–59. He notes that this connection is made in Seneca, De Clementia 1.19.5–6, and Ep. 73.2.
Thus, the appearance of Securitas Saeculi in these inscriptions demonstrates the overlap of two spheres of imperial rhetoric: the connection of the emperor with the new age, and the role of the emperor in effecting public security across the empire.

### 6.3 Saeculum rhetoric in the later second century CE

After Antoninus Pius, the saeculum rhetoric lingered on coins and inscriptions across the empire. From Collippo in Lusitania, a dedication from a local patron in 167 CE still bears a connection to the arrival of a new saeculum in 148 CE, since it is presented to the deified Antoninus, ruler “of all ages”: *Diuo Antonin[o]/ Aug(usto) Pio p(atri) p(atriae) / Optimo ac Sanctis/simo omnium saecu/lorum Principi.* But this rhetoric is detached from the immediate context of the “official” saeculum sequences in a dedicatory inscription from Bracara Augusta in Spain from 177–180 CE, announcing “the most happy age of the emperors” Marcus Aurelius and Commodus: *Saeculo Felicis/simo Inspe(eratorum) / M(arci) Aureli Antoni/ni et / L(uci) Aureli Commo/di Augg (ustorum).* Marcus Aurelius does not appear connected with saeculum rhetoric outside of this inscription, but it is frequently employed in the coinage of Commodus. Coins from 184–186 CE include the legends *saec fel* and a figure of Victory (*RIC* 3.113, 135, 449a–b, 472, 482); from 190 CE, *saecvli felic* with a caduceus between a pair of cornucopiae (*RIC* 3.565–573); and an unusual coin from 191–192 CE with the legend *I O M SPONSOR SEC AVG* (*RIC* 3.255), depicting Commodus holding a globe and sceptre while Jupiter stands near with his right arm on the emperor’s shoulder, holding a thunderbolt. It may be that Commodus or his officials found it suitable to adopt saeculum rhetoric to his regime, because he is likely one of the infants depicted on his mother Faustina’s coinage. Commodus could have legitimized his own authority by situating his reign in the context of the felix saeculum of Antoninus Pius, which he maintains and even protects as sponsor. The reappearance of the caduceus, together with the cornucopiae, indicates that this iconography had come to represent the saeculum itself, and not merely the heralding of its arrival.

After the assassination of Commodus in 192 CE, saeculum rhetoric continued to be used in the coinage of his short-lived successors. A coin from the reign of Pertinax in 193 CE, *RIC* 4.12, bears the legend *saecvli frvrigfero* with the image of a caduceus with six ears of corn emanating from it. This legend also appears in the coinage of Clodius Albinus from 193–195 CE, and some think that this is because at Hadrumentum, which the *Historia Augusta* records as being Clodius’s native city, a god called Ἀιών Καρποφόρος was worshipped. Yet Pertinax’s coin almost certainly precedes that of Clodius Albinus, since Pertinax ruled in the first three months of 193 CE until his assassination, while Clodius was not proclaimed Caesar under Septimius Severus.
until later in that year. Pescennius Niger’s coins minted at Antioch between 193–194 CE depict a crescent with seven stars accompanied by saecvli felicitas (RIC 4.73a–c, 74). It is difficult to determine whether the emperors were directly involved with the selection of this iconography, choosing to associate their authority with the reigns of emperors in more stable times, or whether their coins were minted in a hurry using designs and legends at hand. In either case, however, saeculum rhetoric was firmly imbedded in the language of imperial coinage, and would soon undergo its greatest transformation and dispersion with the arrival of another age in the Augustan sequence in 204 CE, during the reign of Septimius Severus.

6.4 The Ludi Saeculares of Septimius Severus

The Ludi Saeculares of Septimius Severus were the last occasion on which the arrival of a new Augustan saeculum would be greeted by religious performances; while Philip would hold a celebration identified as Ludi Saeculae in 248 CE, later authors did not link them to the traditions established by Augustus and Domitian, emphasizing instead their connection to the Games of Claudius and Antoninus. Severus’s decision to hold his Games in 204 CE is indicative of the careful planning behind their entire ritual sequence and commemoration: the date of their celebration fell precisely one hundred and ten years after 94 CE, the year in which Domitian should have held his own Games if he had been following the proper reckoning of Augustus. In all respects, the Severan Games were an attempt to emulate, preserve, and surpass the model created by Augustus (and Domitian), and formed the centrepiece of Severus’s efforts to present himself as the new founder of Rome. The Severan building programme, coinage, and commemorative inscriptions reflect the central role that the Games played in helping him to create his identity as a true heir of the first Roman princeps, and a restorer of traditional values and religious practices. At the same time, Severus’s reinterpretation of tradition allowed for the construction of a new precedent for imperial authority: the scale on which his Saecular Games were held and their association with the saeculum would define the power of the emperor for the rest of the century, firmly cementing saeculum rhetoric in numismatic and epigraphic formulas.

The Severan Games are well attested in ancient sources, and their legitimacy as the successor to Augustus’s Games was never questioned. Censorinus lists them as the eighth in the series of Ludi Saeculares. Zosimus does not assign a number to any of the celebrations and merely records that they were held one hundred and ten years after Domitian’s Games, which is technically incorrect: Severus’s celebration in 204 CE fell two hundred and twenty years after the Augustan Games of 17 BCE, but one hundred and sixteen years after Domitian’s in 88 CE. The opening line of his Acta state that these Saecular Games are the seventh in the series, which acknowledges Domitian’s Games as the sixth, but skips over the celebrations of Claudius and Antoninus Pius. The Games are briefly mentioned by Herodian at 3.8.10, and we are

22 octauos imperatores Septimius et M. Aurelius Antoninus Cilone et Libone cons. anno dccc(c)lvii. (Censorinus 11.)
23 ἐπὶ τούτοις ὁ Σεβῆρος τῶν δέκα καὶ ἑκατὸν ἐνστάντων ἐτῶν ἅμα τοῖς παισὶ Ἀντωνίνῳ καὶ Γέτᾳ τὴν αὐτὴν ἑορτὴν κατεστήσατο, Χίλωνος καὶ Λίβωνος ὄντων ὑπάτων. (Zosimus 2.4.)
24 Severan Acta 1.1 (Pighi 1965, 140).
fortunate to have many fragments of the inscribed cippus detailing their planning and ritual sequence: *cil* 32326–32335. These fragments were found at the Tarentum in the Campus Martius in two excavations, the first from 1890–1891, and the second in 1930, and were edited most recently by Pighi in 1965. In addition, much information about the Ludi Saeculares can be gleaned from coinage issued throughout Severus’s reign: twenty coins were minted to commemorate the Saecular Games themselves, and thirty-eight coins were minted to commemorate the new *saeculum*.

6.5 Planning the Games: *saeculum* rhetoric and the Severan building programme

Severus’s ability to hold the Ludi Saeculares during his reign was equally due to calculated decision and good fortune. Not since the time of Vespasian had an emperor ascended the throne following a civil war at Rome, and thus Severus recognized the necessity of grounding his authority by establishing links to previous legitimate rulers. Gorrie detects hints that even at an early stage Severus intended to authenticate his dynasty through the Ludi Saeculares. She points to Herodian’s record of Severus’s first speech as emperor delivered to the Senate, in which he announces his intention to align his reign with that of Marcus Aurelius, a model ruler. While she is correct to note the significance of Severus’s decision to connect his reign with the Antonines (who had held the last *saeculum* celebration in 148 CE) through adoption as the son of Divus Marcus, she overinterprets Herodian’s language, stating that Severus “aspired to return to the Golden Age”, when the text assigns to Severus only the odd phrase βαρυτάτην εὐδαιμονίαν, “fullest prosperity”. Birley and Gorrie also may stretch their analysis with the suggestion that Severus would have been intrigued by the fact that Saecular Games celebrated in 204 CE would form the seventh, *septimus*, in the Augustan series, a lucky number echoing his own name Septimius. But Severus’s plans for the Games become clearer with the examination of *saeculum* rhetoric in his early coinage and in inscriptions, his building programme, and his connections with the college of the *quindecimuiri sacris faciundis*.

An analysis of Severus’s Ludi Saeculares must begin with an investigation into coins issued early in his reign, because they indicate that Severus had made careful plans for the celebration of a new *saeculum* from the beginning of his reign. At first, Severan coins issued in the 190s CE seem to differ little from their predecessors in their use of *saeculum* rhetoric. Coins issued by mints at Rome and Emesa from 193–198 CE bear variations on the legend *saecvli felicitas*. Those from Emesa and Laodicea depict seven stars and a crescent (Ric 4.360, 629, 416–418), one with Julia Domna on the obverse (Ric 4.629), and some from Rome show Felicitas with a caduceus in various guises (Ric 4.629, 698, 710, 711), including one with Caracalla on the obverse (Ric 4.14). Other coins from Rome have variations on the legend *saecvlo frvgifero* and

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27 Dio 76.9.4.
29 Birley (1999), 174, 185; Gorrie 465 n.25.
depict a woman holding a winged caduceus and a trident (RIC 4.19, 655, 664). These coins are similar to those issued under Clodius Albinus from 193–197 CE at Rome and Lugdunum, three of which have variations on SAECVL FEL that show Felicitas with a caduceus and sceptre (RIC 4.37, 38, 55), and the rest with variations on SAECVLO FRVGIFERO (RIC 4.8–10, 56, 61), depicting the personified Saeculum several ways, including holding a winged caduceus and trident (fig. 6.3).\(^{30}\)

![Image of Clodius Albinus coin](http://smb.museum/ikmk/object.php?id=18203717)

**Figure 6.3: Aureus of Clodius Albinus, 194–195 CE (RIC 4.10)**

It is curious that the iconography on the coins from Lugdunum issued for Clodius (RIC 4.37–38) between 195 and 197 CE seems to be derived from Severus’s coins minted at Rome between 193 and 194 CE (RIC 4.19, 655, 664), in which variations on SAECVLO FRVGIFERO are accompanied by an image of the Saeculum with a radiate crown, holding a caduceus and sceptre. Clodius may have adopted Severus’s iconography for his own use after he rebelled and declared himself Augustus in 195 CE. In any case, while the language and imagery from these coins recalls coinage from earlier periods, the sheer number of coins types bearing saeculum rhetoric indicates its prominent position in Severan imperial ideology from the beginning of this reign.

After the defeat of Clodius, saeculum rhetoric on Severan coinage only occurs with variations on SAECVLI FELICITAS, but this legend is tied to many different reverses on coins bearing busts of the imperial family throughout his reign. Coins with the bust of Julia Domna from Rome, Laodicea, and Mare depict Isis and Horus (RIC 4.645, 577, 865); coins from Rome and Laodicea with the bust of Severus on the obverse depict busts of Caracalla, Geta, and sometimes Julia on the reverse (RIC 4.25a, 512, 159, 175, 181a–c; fig. 6.4).\(^{31}\)


Chapter 6. The Ludi Saeculares of Septimius Severus

*aureus* shows that an emphasis on the unity and harmony of the imperial family was already being associated with the future Saecular Games; the legend *felicitas saeculi* would be echoed in the language of the opening of the *Acta* inscription. 32 Many coins can only be dated to a period between 202 and Severus’s death in 211 CE, but show variations on two reverses: Septimius and his sons seated on a platform behind two figures with an urn nearby (*RIC* 4.126, 128, 263, 469–470, 823), or Felicitas offering fruit to various people out of a cornucopia or the folds of her dress (*RIC* 4.293b, 327, 427, 815, 827).

Figure 6.4: Aureus of Septimius Severus, 202 CE (*RIC* 4.181b)

Thus, we can confidently assign twenty-five Severan coin types with *saeculum* rhetoric to the period before 204 CE and an additional eleven types from 202–211 CE. This is an unprecedented number, and suggests that Severus’s mints were not merely issuing such designs to imitate earlier models. Gorrie and Rubin have noted the importance of Severus’s use of *felicitas* in various legends in his coins, but they do not connect its use with *saeculum* to earlier imperial issues. 33 The coinage of Commodus likely looked backward to his father’s *saeculum* in 148 CE, but the diverse Severan coins looked forward to 204 CE, the celebration of Games that would define Severus’s reign. These coins depict the imperial family as early as 198 CE, and the presence of the emperor’s wife and heirs strongly indicates that Severus intended to situate his Ludi Saeculares in the context of his newly-established dynasty.

Severus’s cultivation of *saeculum* rhetoric in coinage was echoed in inscriptions produced throughout his reign. The term appears in texts from Numidia, a letter from the emperor’s legate Anicius Faustus with *saeculi felicitat[i] (197–201 CE), 34 and the other, perhaps a legion payment, with *Pro felicitate et incolumitate*.

32 Severan *Acta* 1.7–8 (Pighi 1965, 140).
34 AE 1893 +109.


Other texts that may precede the celebration of the Games in 204 CE include two from Mauretania Caesariensis, a dedication with the phrase pro s(a)eculi felicitate (198–209 CE), a boundary indicator with post / [m]ultis maximisque saecu/lis felicissimis temporibus / sui(s) (202–209 CE), as well as a dedication to Mercury from the colony of Thysdrus in Africa proconsularis (203 or 204 CE). Two inscriptions can only be roughly situated in the third century CE, but may also date from the Severan period: a dedication from a college with saeculi / felicitate from Cemenelum, Alpes Maritimae, and a bell inscribed with a prayer for the safety of the emperor and the town of Tarraco in Hispania citerior, asking for a s(a)eculum bonum. This is the first appearance of saeculum rhetoric in inscriptions across North Africa since the dedications to Securitas Saeculi from Numidia under Antoninus Pius, which suggests that the use of the rhetoric underwent a revival in this period due to the inflow of Severus’s saeculum coins.

Together with his coinage, Severus’s construction projects across the empire and especially at Rome in the first years of reign indicate his interest in preparing a monumental backdrop for his Ludi Saeculares. A great fire had destroyed large sections of the city during Commodus’s reign, but repairs could not be made during the chaos of the civil wars that followed his assassination until the period of peace established by Severus. According to Gorrie, Severus’s efforts to rebuild Rome allowed him to align himself with Augustus’s reconstructions after the wars of the late Republic, and position himself as new restorer or founder of the city, a title that appears on his coinage as RESTITVTOR VRBIS. She describes a number of repairs and constructions projects that were completed before 204 CE and were situated in areas where the ceremonies of the Saecular Games would be held. In the Forum Romanum along the Via Sacra, where the procession of children who sang the Carmen Saeculare would pass from the Capitoline to the Palatine, the Aedes Vestae was repaired under the patronage of Julia Domna; a statue of the empress was located along the same route, associating her with the goddess Vesta, as will be discussed below. A bronze equestrian statue of Severus had been set up in the middle of the Forum, and his arch was placed diagonally across from Augustus’s Arch in a section of the Forum in the Comitium where Romulus met Titus Tatius, near the Rostra and the curia of the Senate; the procession passed beneath this arch. Birley suggests that the placement of the arch allowed Severus to align himself with Republican precedents as well as that of Augustus. Severus also repaired the Rostra and may have created the Umbilicus Urbis, both of which lay near his arch. Domitian’s palace on the side of the Palatine and the new Septizodium provided a backdrop for the Games held in

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35 “For the sake of the felicity and safety of the age of our lords.” (CIL 8.23557.)
36 AE 1907 158.
37 “After many and great ages and their most happy times ...” (AE 2006 354.)
38 CIL 8.51.
39 CIL 5.7881.
40 CIL 2.14.1. This bell seems to date from the reign of Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus, or Septimius Severus.
43 Gorrie (2002), 468–480. These are also described in Rantala (2013), 49–51.
44 Severan Acta 5a, 71–73 (Pighi 1965, 166).
45 Birley (1999), 155–156.
the Circus Maximus. Restorations were also made to the Porticus Octaviae that lay along the route to the Tarentum,\(^{46}\) and to the Theatre of Pompey, where the ludi honorarii would be held after the three days of sacrifices. These projects formed part of Severus’s wider programme of building and reconstructing in the city of Rome. Minor restorations were made to the Pantheon (built by Agrippa) and to the Temple of Pax (built by Vespasian) where the Forma Urbis was located. The location of the great temple to the Severan di patrii, Hercules and Liber Pater, remains unknown, and it is not explicitly mentioned in the Acta of his Ludi Saeculares.\(^{47}\)

The preparation for the Severan Ludi Saeculares resembles that of Augustus in other respects. Severus became a quindecimuir, as was the norm, but he was preceded in this by a C. Septimius Severus, who was a member of the college at least as late as 177 CE.\(^{48}\) He may have been able to gain familiarity with the responsibilities of the college through this relative. In addition, Severus issued a number of laws regulating morality and marriage; while it is difficult to determine when these laws were created, they may have preceded the Games of 204 CE, since they recall the Augustan legislation that was instituted to reform Roman morals and restore society after the chaos of the civil wars and immediately before 17 BCE.\(^{49}\) When this evidence is taken together with the Severus’s coinage and construction projects in the first part of his reign, it becomes clear that the decision was planned far in advance to associate his dynasty with a new saeculum and the celebration of the Ludi Saeculares.

### 6.6 Reinventing the Augustan Ludi Saeculares

The Acta and numismatic evidence demonstrate that Severus’s Ludi Saeculares were inarguably modelled upon Augustus’s Games. The opening line of his Acta state that these Saecular Games are the seventh in the series, which acknowledges Domitian’s Games as the sixth, but skips over the celebrations of Claudius and Antoninus Pius.\(^{50}\) Yet it is important to take note of Severus’s innovations to the traditional model: Cooley and Barnes emphasize Severus’s attempt to present himself as an “Augustan” ruler through the Ludi Saeculares, but Lichtenberger and Rantala demonstrate that his celebration was intended to create a new Severan identity and was not limited to close imitation of the Games of 17 BCE.\(^{51}\)

Some have stated that a Severan innovation can be observed in the absence of any Valerii in the college of quindecimuiri; it is noted that two patricians who served as consuls, L. Valerius Messalla Thrasea Priscus and L. Valerius Messalla, were not among its members.\(^{52}\) Yet Rüpke has identified one of the members listed in the Acta as a plebeian named Ofilius Valerius Macedo, who was co-opted around the 170s CE and

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46 Lusnia notes that the repairs were on a large enough scale that the building became known as the Porticus Severi in later years (2014, 101).


49 Digesta 48.5.2.6, 5.1.18; Dio 77.16. See also Birley (1999), 164–165; Gorrie (2004), 61–65; Rantala (2011), 161–163 and (2013), 58–59, 88–89.

50 Severan Acta 1.1 (Pighi 1965, 140).


52 Birley (1999), 159; Rantala (2013), 130–132.
distributed *suffimenta* before the beginning of the Games.\(^{53}\) While it is unlikely that this Valerius could trace his ancestry back to old Republican roots, the fact remains that a Valerius was again present in the college in time for the Games to be held, when no Valerii had preceded him since the time of Antoninus Pius.

The function of the *quindecimuiri* in planning the celebration is also difficult to discern; it is not entirely clear how Severus and the *quindecimuiri* were able to reconstruct the details of Augustus’s Ludi Saeculares. We know little about how or where the *commentarii* of the *quindecimuiri* were kept; Diels believed that they had been stored with the Sibylline Books on the Capitoline during the Republic;\(^{54}\) But the Sibylline Books had been stored in the temple of Apollo on the Palatine since 12 BCE, and if the *commentarii* were still kept in that place, they could have been damaged or destroyed by a fire during Severus’s reign that destroyed many buildings on the hill, including archives.\(^{55}\) Perhaps the oracles and the *commentarii* escaped damage; a copy appears to have been extant in 407 CE, because Rutilius Namatianus records it as being burned by Stilicho.\(^{56}\) While the consultation of written records is the most likely scenario, the college could have utilized information recorded on the *cippus* bearing the *Acta* of the Augustan Games in the Tarentum, and possibly one from Domitian’s Games (if it had in fact been created, or escaped destruction); while that would have proved awkward and required a ladder, the inscribed record of the Augustan Games was thorough, and their ritual sequence is very similar to that of the Severan inscription.\(^{57}\) In fact, the main difference between the Augustan and Severan *Acta* is in their size and detail of description: the Severan *cippus* appears to have been roughly four metres in height, while the Augustan *cippus* was three metres.\(^{58}\) If the two *Acta* inscriptions had been erected close together, the Severan *cippus* would have therefore been noticeably taller, and closer inspection would have revealed a much more detailed text. The length of the Severan text is in part due to the inclusion of names of minor participants, which will be discussed below, but it is also due to lengthy descriptions of the rites, as well as the inclusion of new performances.

Severus made only additions, not deletions, to the central religious performances of Augustus’s ritual sequence. In general, the Severan plan seems to have been to embellish and surpass the original ritual sequence wherever possible. This is apparent even outside of the *Acta*: the reference to the Games in Herodian mentions the appearance of heralds who used the old formula to announce “the games that had not been seen before and would not be seen again”:

> εἴδομεν δὲ ἐπ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ θέας τινῶν παντοδαπῶν θεαμάτων ἐν πᾶσι θεάτροις ὁμοίως, ἱερουργίας τε καὶ παννυχίδας ἐπιτελεσθείσας ἐς μυστηρίων ζῆλον· αἰώνιους δὲ αὐτὰς ἐκάλουν οἱ τότε, ἀκούοντες τριῶν γενεῶν διαδραμουσῶν ἐπιτελεῖσθαι. κήρυκες γοῦν κατά τε τὴν Ῥώμην καὶ τὴν Ἰταλίαν διεφοίτων καλούντες ἦκειν καὶ θέασασθαι πάντας ὡς εἶδον μήτε οἴδοντα. οὕτως ὁ μεταξὺ χρόνος

\(^{53}\) Severan *Acta* 2.13, 52.31, 82.4 (Pighi 1965, 147, 159, 171).

\(^{54}\) Diels (1890), 6 n.4; Scheid (1998b), 20.

\(^{55}\) Dio 72.54; Galen 13.362; Eusebius 2.174; Orosius 7.16.3; Jerome a. Abr. 2208.

\(^{56}\) De reditu suo 2.52

\(^{57}\) Scheid (1998a), 14 n.2.

\(^{58}\) Mommsen (1899), 276; Schnegg-Köhler (2002, 278) notes that this measurement does not take into account the fragments identified by Moretti (1982–1984).
According to Herodian, however, these heralds did not merely pass through Rome, but went out into Italy as well; there is no evidence that any of the previous celebrations were advertised this widely. The Severan Acta record the quindecimuirí’s distribution of suffimenta and reception of fruges took place as usual.\(^59\) As described above, the old locations for the ludi and sacrifices were maintained. The Tarentum remained the centre for the nocturnal sacrifices, while ludi were held in various structures across the Campus Martius. The purification of the Tarentum at the outset of the ceremonies in addition to the Palatine and Capitoline was a Severan addition.\(^61\) Temporary altars were set up for sacrifices at the Tarentum,\(^62\) and a scaena for the nocturnal ludi scaenici; these were perhaps depicted on coins (RIC 4.127 and 293) as the background to a scene of the sacrifice to Terra Mater.\(^63\) Coarelli attempted to identify the structures on the coins as the temple of Dis and Proserpina, but Quilici Gigli has demonstrated the unlikeliness of this claim.\(^64\) Temporary wooden theatres were built to host the ludi Latin and ludi honorarii,\(^65\) and there seems to have been a temporary circus in which sacrifices and races were held.\(^66\) Several scholars have identified sculptural fragments from the area as the figures of Alcestis and Hercules, which perhaps recalled the Severan di patrii; their function is unclear.\(^67\)

The pattern of sacrifices was similar to the Augustan model. Sacrifices of lambs and goats were offered to the Moeræ on the first night, and bulls to Jupiter on the first day. The second night saw sacrifices of cakes to the Ilithyiae. On the second day, the sacrifice to Juno was followed by another sacrifice to Jupiter and a feast for the quindecimuirí; this is a Severan addition.\(^68\) That night, a procession of sacrificial victims to the Tarentum took place, passing a porticus, which may have been the newly-restored Porticus Octaviae.\(^69\) There was a sacrifice of a sow to Terra Mater on the third night,\(^70\) and cakes were offered to Apollo and Diana on the third day. Severus’s respect for the preservation of the central sacrifices of his Saecular Games may be echoed in his coinage issued in commemoration of the festival. Two reverse legends may be distinguished: the traditional saecl fec, which appears on coins in which Hercules and Liber are depicted (see section 6.8 below), and the new legend sacra saecvlaria, which is paired with scenes of

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\(^{59}\) “We saw in his reign every kind of spectacle shown in all the theatres at once, and night-long festivities were celebrated and competed with the Mysteries. They called them then “Saecular Games”, hearing that they would be held once every one hundred years. Heralds went throughout Rome and Italy calling all to come and see the games that they had never seen nor would see again. Thus the span of time that passed between a festival and the one to come was made clear, far surpassing the lifespan of all humans.” (Herodian 3.8.10.)

\(^{60}\) Severan Acta 1.20, 2.7–11 (Pighi 1965, 149, 146–147).


\(^{62}\) Pighi (1965), 297–305.


\(^{68}\) Severan Acta 4.4–9 (Pighi 1965, 155–157).

\(^{69}\) Severan Acta 3.31–37 (Pighi 1965, 151); Gorrie (2002), 476.

\(^{70}\) Rantala connects the sacrifices to Terra Mater with issues of food supply during Severus’s reign (2013, 100–108); the analysis is detailed, but the rite buckles under the weight of the interpretation.
the emperor and Caracalla or Caracalla and Geta offering sacrifice.\footnote{Severus and Caracalla (with Severus on obverse): \textit{RIC} 4.293–a–b, 816a–b, 826a–b; Severus and Caracalla (with Caracalla on obverse): \textit{RIC} 4.462; Caracalla and Geta (with Geta on obverse): \textit{RIC} 4.132, 137–138.}

After the sacrifices to Apollo and Diana, a new \textit{Carmen Saeculare} was sung by a procession of children from the Palatine to Capitoline along the Via Sacra through the Forum, accompanied by a multitude of musicians and dancers as well as \textit{quadrigae}, \textit{bigae}, and \textit{asinarii} who pulled the carts that carried images of deities; these details are not mentioned in the Augustan \textit{Acta}.\footnote{Severan \textit{Acta} 5a.71–76 (Pighi 1965, 166–167); Romanelli (1931), 335–336. On the Severan \textit{Carmen Saeculare} and attempts to reconstruct the verses, see Romanelli (1931b); Diehl (1932); Funaioli (1933); and Pighi (1965), 222–228.} Only fragments of this hymn survive, and the name of the poet who composed the hymn is lost, but the name of Bacchus was preserved, which may suggest that Hercules also received attention.\footnote{Severan \textit{Acta} 5a.60–71 (Pighi 1965, 165–166). Bacchus is mentioned at line 67.} Julia Domna and the \textit{matronae} held a final \textit{sellisternia} on the third day, probably another innovation (although the Augustan \textit{Acta} become fragmentary at this point).\footnote{Severan \textit{Acta} 5a.83–84 (Pighi 1965, 168–169).} The \textit{ludi honorarii} following the main sacrifices were held in three locations, at the wooden theatre, the Odeum, and the Theatre of Pompey; Severus would open each set of \textit{ludi} by going with his entourage from one theatre to another.\footnote{Severan \textit{Acta} 5a.37, 44–46, 84.2 (Pighi 1965, 160, 161–162, 170); Boyce (1937), 43–48.} The \textit{Acta} provide a detailed list of animals used in beast hunts among these \textit{ludi}.\footnote{Severan \textit{Acta} 5a.43 (Pighi 1965, 161). For a discussion of the significance of the beast hunts in the Games, see Rantala (2013), 92–95.}

6.7 Officiants in the Severan \textit{Ludi Saeculares}

As with its ritual sequence, the allotment of officiating roles in the Severan \textit{Ludi Saeculares} roughly followed the Augustan model, with more detailed descriptions of who participated and how, but the assigned roles also differed in striking ways. The \textit{Acta} of 204 CE create a picture of a celebration where the entire imperial family is always at the centre of public attention, attended and assisted by a number of other officials. It is not always clear if these innovations were created after Augustus’ time, or if these were details that the briefer \textit{Acta} of 17 BCE omitted. The first major difference may be noted at the beginning of the \textit{Acta} inscription, with the Senate asking Severus for permission to use public funds to hold the Games; the Senate gives the authority of presiding over the ceremony to Severus, Caracalla, and Geta, not through their authority as leaders of the \textit{quindecimuiri}, but simply through their imperial power.\footnote{Severan \textit{Acta} 1.5–27 (Pighi 1965, 140–143).} This is in contrast with the Augustan model, in which Augustus led the ceremonies as a member of the college of \textit{quindecimuiri}.\footnote{See Rantala (2013), 42.}

The most important roles in the Severan celebration were reserved for the imperial family. Caracalla and Geta joined the emperor in leading the introductory prayers that precede all the sacrifices on the first day. Severus performed all of the main sacrifices during the first three days and three nights of the festival with the assistance of his eldest son and co-ruler, Caracalla, and with the younger Geta playing a more minor role. The description of the sacrifice to Terra Mater demonstrates that while Severus presided over the sacrifices, Caracalla offered the wine and incense, while Geta assisted and continued the prayers.

A similar scene is described for the sacrifice to Juno Regina: Severus made the sacrifice with his sons assisting, surrounded by a number of officials. The Augustan Acta record that Augustus alone offered the nocturnal sacrifices, while he co-officiated with Agrippa at the sacrifices to Jupiter and to Apollo and Diana, but Agrippa alone performed the sacrifice to Juno Regina. The allocation of roles bears witness to underlying familial conflict: Caracalla was given a more prominent and active role during the sacrifices than Geta, and Geta’s name is erased at all occurrences because of his later damnatio memoriae.

Another departure from Augustan precedent may be observed in the roles allotted to Julia Domna. The empress led the matronae in setting the sellisternia for Juno Regina and Diana: Julia Aug. mater castr[or ]um et matronae cv[ili] sel[iste]nia habuerunt lunoni ac Dianae. She interacted with her husband during the prayers offered to Juno Regina, Severus dictating the prayers and she leading the matronae: Ibique Seuerus Aug. Iulie Aug. matri castror. con[iugi imp. et] matronis cv[ili] quibus denuntiatum erat 75 adstantibus Numisia] / Maximilla et Terentia F[la]ula [u]erg. Vest., praeit in haec uerba. Curiously, the head Vestals Numisisa Maximilla and Terentia Flavola are mentioned as being present here and on other occasions and seem to have taken little part in the action of the religious performances, but no Vestals are named as present in the Augustan Acta. Gorrie wonders if the presence of the Vestals illustrates a connection between Julia and Vesta, whose shrine of the Via Sacra had been restored under the empress’s patronage, and which lay near a statue of the empress, the surviving base of which records her title of mater castrorum. Vesta was only given the title of Mater in this period, and appeared as such on Julia’s coins. Hill identifies this statue of Julia with the image on a coin in which a seated female figure holds in her right hand a globe on which a

79 “[At the Tarentum] Severus Augustus made an offering with incense and wine at the third temporary wooden altar constructed beside the Tiber, with his son emperor Antonius Augustus dictating. Then, after setting aside his toga praetexta and putting on a fringed tunic, with Geta --- Caesar and the priests and the others --- and the quindicesimari standing nearby, and having his hands washed by the public slaves of the quindicesimari --- taking in his right hand a sharpened knife slantwise and his left a patera with wine, with Geta Caesar holding the prayer, he sacrificed a pregnant sow as a whole burnt offering to Terra Mater, according to the Greek/Achaean rite.” (Severan Acta 5a.47–49, Pighi 1965, 162.)
80 Severan Acta 4.8–9 (Pighi 1965, 157).
82 “Julia Augusta, mother of the camps, and 109 matrons held sellisternia for Juno and Diana.” (Severan Acta 5a.52; also at 5a.83–84; Pighi 1965, 163, 168–169.)
83 “[At the shrine of Juno Regina] Severus Augustus dictated in these words to Julia Augusta, mother of the camps and spouse of the emperor, and to the 109 matrons who had been designated --- with the Vestal Virgins Numisia Maximilla and Terentia Flavola standing nearby ---.” [prayer follows] (Acta 4.9–10, Pighi 1965, 157.)
phoenix is perched, and in her left hand a sceptre. The imagery of a ruler holding the globe and phoenix should be compared with Hadrian’s coin with the legend saec avs, and may be another attempt to link the imperial family with past uses of saeculum rhetoric.

Rantala argues that Severus and Julia Domna’s presidency over the Games illustrated their roles as pater and mater patriae, encouraging Romans to view themselves as members of the family of the entire community of the Empire under the protection of the emperor and empress. Severus’s connection with Jupiter was not particularly noteworthy, following the pattern of many previous emperors, but his family’s associations with other deities are more significant. Julia’s potential association with Vesta has been described above; Rantala sees her role in leading the matronae and Vestal Virgins at the sellisternia and supplicatio as an indication that she was thereby representing the community of Roman women. Some have also seen a connection between Hercules and Liber and the roles of Caracalla and Geta in the Games. Many of the coins issued to commemorate the Severan Games bear on the reverse the image of Liber and Hercules alone. Two coins depict Severus performing the sacrifice of the sow to Terra Mater, who reclines, while Hercules and Liber stand nearby; since the Acta record how Caracalla and Geta assisted their father at this sacrifice, their association with the gods is particularly significant here. Since the two deities were both deified sons of Jupiter, their connection with Severus’s heirs would emphasize his place at the head of the divine imperial family. If Rantala is correct, the Ludi Saeculares would have been adopted into yet another social sphere: from the familial context of the Valerian gens, then to civic control, then into the imperial sphere (which encompassed the civic but was closely associated with the emperor’s family), and finally into a new kind of sphere that recreated and reinterpreted family relationships on a civic and imperial level. In a sense, the Games had come full circle as an imperial gentilician cult.

The apparent Severan emphasis on family must be understood in the context of an inscription more detailed than that of 17 BCE, as well as a more complex festival. Severus also extended prominent roles to other individuals. The Acta record that the magister of the quindecimuiri led the ritual to purify the Campus Martius before the sacrifices were held: Pompeius Rusonianus, master [of the college], performed the lustration of the Tarentum - - - for the sake of the lustration and purification of the saecular rite and games. (Severan Acta 3.15–17, Pighi 1965, 149–150.)

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86 BMCRE 5, p. 164, no. 58, pl. 28.10.
87 RIC 2.136.
88 Further studies of Julia Domna’s role in the presentation and creation of imperial imagery and identity: Williams (1902), 259–305; Lusnia (1995), 119–139.
89 Rantala (2011), 168–169 and (2013, 59–63). Part of Rantala’s analysis reveals a reluctance to ascribe any “personal connection” to state cults; he states that the Romans engage with the Severan Saecular Games because it has become a “private family cult”, rather than a civic rite (2013, 62–63).
91 Rantala (2011), 158.
93 Obverses with Severus: RIC 4.761; Caracalla on obverse: RIC 4.418. Both bear the legend LVDOS SAEVVL FEC.
94 Severus on obverse: RIC 4.763; Caracalla on obverse: RIC 4.418. Both bear the legend LVDOS SAEVVL FEC.
95 “Pompeius Rusonianus, master [of the college], performed the lustration of the Tarentum - - - for the sake of the lustration and purification of the saecular rite and games.” (Severan Acta 3.15–17, Pighi 1965, 149–150.)
and the praetorian prefect, was present at the major events. The Severan inscription records the full names of the one hundred and ten matronae (first those of the senatorial class, then those of equestrian rank, and finally Julia Domna) and chorus of twenty-seven girls and twenty-seven boys who sang the new Carmen Saeculare (some of whom seem to be children of the matronae), although the poet’s name is lost. The quindecimuiri are always present at the sacrifices, and their full names are recorded in several places.

Thus, the differences between the Augustan and Severan ritual sequences are likely due to two factors. On the one hand, the level of detail in recording the rites of the Severan Games had become customary in the later imperial period, but on the other, the Ludi Saeculares had become more complex with time and with Severus’s innovations. A similar trend may be seen in the Acta of the Arval Brethren, in which the records of the sacrifices become increasingly long and embellished. The concern to preserve and record minor elements of the rites must be understood to operate in conjunction with competition: later emperors wanted to surpass their predecessors, and the enhancement or addition of religious performances (and their subsequent commemoration in stone) would serve as permanent markers of an individual emperor’s success in this respect. Augustus himself introduced new deities to the old Valerian rites, especially Apollo and Diana, and Domitian may have added some emphasis on his patron deity, Minerva. Severus in some way included in his Games his dii patrii, Bacchus and Hercules, from what we can see in coins and the fragments of his Carmen Saeculare; the addition of these deities from his native city of Lepcis Magna placed new emphasis on the identity of the Severan family amid the traditional sacrifices and games. Severus’s Games highlighted the importance imperial family more so than those of Augustus, giving prominent roles to his sons as well as Julia Domna (as recorded in their Acta, and reiterated in Severan coinage), and associating the continuation of their family line with the emergence of a new saeculum. The link between the imperial family and the arrival of the new saeculum with the celebration of the Saecular Games was made more explicit than ever before. The elaboration of the ritual sequence of the Games and the increase of their splendour would only add to a later emperor’s own glory, allowing him to follow Augustus’s tradition and yet outdo him, creating his own religious model for successors to strive to imitate. Furthermore, Severus’s inclusion of elite individuals such as the Vestal Virgins in the ceremonies and the commemoration of their presence in the Acta only serve to increase the authority of the emperor himself, demonstrating his power to mobilize the greatest people at Rome, who all derive their positions of authority from the generosity of the emperor.

Finally, the Augustan and Severan inscriptions in themselves reassert the imperial position. The inscriptions act as records establishing precedents for future celebrations of the games, and also serve as offerings to the gods who had received more ephemeral performances of devotion. As discussed above, the inscriptions could have been consulted for the purpose of planning celebrations in the future, but it is more likely that written commentarii were created for later consultation. Even so, the permanent inscriptions

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could stand as a visible reminder to a human and divine audience of the majestic spectacle that had taken place. Augustus’s inscription was a more functional commemorative gift to the gods, like the inscriptions of the Fratres Arvales, while Severus’s inscription is more like an *ecphrasis*, recording the sights and sounds of solemn rituals and colourful entertainment.

### 6.8 Severan *saeculum* rhetoric in epigraphic evidence

Severus’s Ludi Saeculares seem to have had the greatest effect on the use of *saeculum* rhetoric in the Roman Empire. After his reign, the use of the term *saeculum* in conjunction with imperial authority becomes a common formula in inscriptions and coins, even in the reigns of emperors who did and could not expect to hold the Saecular Games in their own reigns. In Severus’s own reign, inscriptions with *saeculum* rhetoric continued to be produced, echoing language from the opening of the *Acta* of his Saecular Games, which record that they were to be celebrated *pro temporum laetitia et felicitate sanctissimum piisimorumque principum nn.*

![Image](92x722)

The formula *felicissimo saeculo dominorum nostrorum* (“in the happiest age of our lords”) appears in a temple dedication from Philae in Egypt in 206 or 211 CE, and also in an honorific inscription from Rome from 209–211 CE.

![Image](92x722)

Perhaps the most curious influence of the Severan Ludi Saeculares may be observed in an inscription from Emesa in Syria, Julia Domna’s city. As was described above, several of Severus’s early coins bearing *saeculum* rhetoric were minted there between 193 and 195 CE. No trace of *saeculum* rhetoric is connected with Emesa for many years, until it is found in a fourth-century CE inscription from Berytus: *Fortunae / Genii(i) Coloniae / Marcus Julius Avidius Minervinus / domo Emesis co/ronatu honoratus / dec(urionum) saeculo(um) / (colonia) die suo fecit.*

Caracalla had granted Emesa the status of *colonia* in 211/212 CE, so this inscription appears to be celebrating the *saeculum* of the city with a dedication to its Genius.

### 6.9 Conclusion

This chapter has traced the connection between the *saeculum* and the Ludi Saeculares after the reign of Domitian to the reign of Septimius Severus. I have shown that legends on Hadrian’s coinage provide the first instance of *saeculum* rhetoric not explicitly linked with the Saecular Games. Hadrian’s desire to celebrate...
the arrival of a new age in his reign by reinventing the Parilia avoided criticism by distancing these festivities from elements of the ritual sequence associated with the Ludi Saeculares themselves, only adopting the term saeculum for a single coin type. Antoninus Pius may have celebrated Rome’s nine hundredth birthday in 148 CE following the pattern set by Claudius, but his use of saeculum rhetoric on coinage was similarly distanced from language that would explicitly identity the festivities as “Saecular Games”. Septimius Severus’s use of saeculum rhetoric at the beginning of his reign participates in the trend set by Marcus Aurelius, Commodus, and later aspirers to the throne, who used saeculum references in an increasingly formulaic style, but Severus was carefully planning to hold Ludi Saeculares in his own reign CE. I have shown that the ritual sequence of Severus’s Games followed closely the model of Augustus, and presumably of Domitian, but included innovations and expansions upon the earlier model as a form of competition, revealing Severus’s desire to surpass earlier emperors who held the Games.

Severus, like Augustus, was able to assert his authority in the Ludi Saeculares not only through his role as chief officiant of civic religious performances, but also through his ability to command and mobilize so many different participants in grand ritual sequences that surpassed those of previous emperors. Far from detracting from the emperor’s visibility, the inclusion of elite Romans in the Ludi Saeculares served to reinforce imperial power over all aspects of civic life. The process of situating power within the imperial family, begun in the time of Augustus, was already completed before the Severan period. Consuls, senators, quindecimviri, Vestal Virgins, and all other holders of office at Rome did so only by virtue of imperial favour. Yet through the religious performances presided over by Severus, Julia Domna, and their sons, Romans could situate themselves within a community headed by the imperial family who performed the Saecular Games on behalf of all Romans for the arrival of the new saeculum.

This analysis of the Severan Ludi Saeculares is not exhaustive; much research remains to be conducted on the reception of the Games at Rome and in the provinces. For example, an analysis of Greek inscriptions could prove fruitful: Gorrie makes a passing reference to a marble altar erected at Rome to a man from Tripolis, Q. Iulius Miletus; the inscription could indicate that he died while he was attending Severus’s Ludi Saeculares. She links this with Herodian’s description of heralds announcing the Games even beyond the city of Rome;106 perhaps news of the festivities had spread to Greece and attracted travellers. Christol’s study of inscriptions on altars to Diana, Apollo, Hercules, and Liber from Petra, erected by Q. Aiacius Modestus, a quindecimvir in 204 CE and imperial legate in Arabia, suggests further avenues for the study of the reception of the Saecular Games in the provinces.107

Severus’s new age had been widely advertised and associated with the establishment of his dynasty, and his Ludi Saeculares had created a new dimension to imperial authority. The connection between imperial dynasty and the arrival of a new age was firmly cemented in Roman consciousness. Censorinus’s investigation into the history of the Ludi Saeculares (included in his De die natali, published in 238 CE) was likely inspired by the most recent Games of Severus. As with the successors of Antoninus Pius, saeculum

107 Christol (1971); see also Lichtenberger (2011), 69–70, for a discussion of Hercules and Dis Pater in these dedications and their significance for Severus’s Ludi Saeculares.
rhetoric was readily appropriated by members of Severus’s family in their coinages. In the coinage of Caracalla, Elagabulus, Severus Alexander, and Gordian III, *saeculum* rhetoric occurs only with the legend *saecvli felicitas*, with one exception. A coin of Elagabulus carries the phrase *secvritas saecvli* for the first time; previously the phrase had only been used in inscriptions. The only inscriptions bearing *saeculum* rhetoric from this period that have survived are all from the reign of Gordian III: two dedications from Mauretania Caesariensis with the phrase *Indulg(entia) noui s(a)e[culi]*) and a votive inscription from Germania Inferior with the formula *Felicissimo saeculo d(omini) n(ostri).* Epigraphic evidence for the *saeculum* does not become common again until the reign of Diocletian, as is discussed in Chapter 7.

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108 *RIC* 4.1.590, 603; 4.2.239, 270–273, 299, 325, 348, 421; 4.3.216.
109 *RIC* 4.2.145.
110 CIL 8.20602; *AE* 1903, 94.
111 *AE* 1978, 568.
Chapter 7

The Ludi Saeculares of Philip I, *Saeculum* Rhetoric in the Third and Fourth Centuries CE, and the Reception of the Ludi Saeculares Tradition

This chapter provides an investigation into the last of the Ludi Saeculares, which were held under Philip I in 248 CE, and examines the vast number of coins bearing *saeculum* rhetoric that continued to be issued in the latter half of the third century CE. The use of certain legends in this coinage has led some scholars to assume that the Ludi Saeculares were held by later emperors, such as Gallienus, but these arguments are shown to be mistaken. Constantine I’s failure to hold Ludi Saeculares in 314 CE is discussed and compared with his use of *saeculum* rhetoric in his coinage and inscriptions. The decline of numismatic *saeculum* rhetoric in later centuries is contrasted with its continued use in epigraphic formulas into the fifth century CE. Finally, the attribution of a performance of the Saecular Games to the reign of Honorius is shown to be erroneous, due to a Renaissance misunderstanding of classical literary references.

7.1 Philip I’s Ludi Saeculares of 248 CE

The last of the festivities described as “Saecular Games” were held by Philip I in 248 CE, following the Claudian sequence of *saecula*. Philip chose to celebrate Rome’s millennium with a series of games and sacrifices that were described as “Ludi Saeculares” on his coins and by ancient authors, departing from Antoninus Pius’s model of quietly commemorating the new *saeculum* in coinage. The name may be misleading, because
it is difficult to determine how closely Philip modelled his Games on Claudius’s performance, which, as described in Chapter 4, likely adhered closely to the Augustan ritual sequence, including sacrifices at the Tarentum. Literary and numismatic evidence for Philip’s Games suggests that while they may have been held at the traditional location, it is uncertain whether or not they incorporated the customary sacrifices at the Tarentum, and his celebration was most memorable for the diverse animals used in the spectacles and displayed prominently on his coinage. The extravagance of the beast hunts may have its origins in the hunts displayed as part of Severus’s *ludi honorarii* in 204 CE.\(^1\)

The fullest descriptions of Philip’s Ludi Saeculares have been composed by Gagé and Körner, and they are also discussed in Pighi, but they can only summarize briefly the relationship between the Games of 248 CE and the prior history of the Ludi Saeculares.\(^2\) Körner observes that ancient sources for Philip’s celebration (the *Historia Augusta*, Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, and the *Epitome de Caesaribus*, discussed in further detail below) record celebrations of the Games of Claudius and Antoninus Pius, without referencing the series of Ludi Saeculares under Augustus, Domitian, and Septimius Severus, which he suggests is an indication of their unimportance in the third century CE.\(^3\) If this is the case, it would demonstrate that the Claudian series had shed its negative associations with time, and was considered a “legitimate” opportunity for an emperor to welcome the arrival of a new age with lavish festivities. Further, the lack of any reference to Ludi Saeculares celebrated according to the Augustan sequence confirms the trend discussed above with respect to the Games of Antoninus in 148 CE: while Claudius’s decision to hold the festival in 47 CE was likely an attempt to merge historical sequences of *saecula* of one hundred and one hundred and ten years, this connection with the Augustan calculation was not emphasized in Claudius’s own day or in succeeding centuries, and is never mentioned in connection with the Games of Antoninus or Philip.

It was fortunate for Philip’s publicity that he was able to celebrate Rome’s millennium during his brief rule; in the later fourth century CE, Eutropius lists his Ludi Saeculares as one of the most memorable events of his reign:

> *Philippi duo, filius ac pater, Gordiano occiso imperium inuaserunt atque exercitu incolumi reducto ad Italiam ex Syria profecti sunt. His imperantibus millesimus annus Romae urbis ingenti ludorum apparatu spectaculorumque celebratus est. Ambo deinde ab exercitu interfecti sunt, senior Philippus Veronae, Romae iunior. Annis quinque imperauerunt; inter Diuos tamen relati sunt.*\(^4\)

Eutropius calls the millennial festivities “games” and “spectacles” (*ludi, spectacula*), but does not describe any accompanying sacrifices or other such religious performances. The nature of these spectacles is recounted

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2. Gagé (1938) and (1974); Pighi (1965); Körner (2002), 248–259.
4. “When Gordian was killed, the two Philips, father and son, seized power and, after leading the army back safe, set out for Italy from Syria. During their reign the thousandth year of the city of Rome was celebrated with an immense preparation of games and spectacles. Then both were killed by the army; the elder Philip at Verona, the younger at Rome. They ruled for five years, yet they were accounted among the gods.” (Eutropius 9.3.)
in somewhat more detail in the problematic *Historia Augusta*, composed at some point between the late third to late fourth centuries CE, which focuses on Philip’s use of animals for presentation or slaughter in his Games:

> fuerunt sub Gordiano Rom(a)e elefanti triginta et duo, quorum ipse duodecim miserat, Alexander decem, alces decem, tigres decem, leones mansueti sexaginta, leopardi mansueti triginta, belbi, id est yaenae, decem, gladiatorum fiscalium paria mille, hippopotami sex, r(i)nocer(os) unus, arcoleontes decem, cam(e)lopardali decem, onagri uiginti, equi feri quadraginta et cetera huius modi animalia innumera et diuersa, quae omnia Philippus ludis saecularibus uel dedit uel occidit; has autem omnes feras mansuetas et praeterea efferatas parabat ad triumphum Persicum. quoduotum publicum nihil uluit. nam omnia haec Philippus exhibuit s(a)ecularibus ludis et munere atque circensibus, cum millesimum annum a condita urbe in consulat(u) suo et filii sui celebravit.5

This account identifies Philip’s celebration by the name “Ludi Saeculares”, and states that they were accompanied by animals displays and hunts (*animalia … quae dedit uel occidit*), gladiatorial games (*munera*) and chariot races (*circenses*), but it is not at all clear how we are meant to interpret the ritual sequence of the festival. Does *saecularibus ludis* form a category by itself that refers to the traditional rites of the Saecular Games established by Augustus, which included such performances as the distribution of *suffimenta*, sacrifices at the Tarentum, *ludi scaenici*, and a processional hymn? If so, the appearance of chariot races would follow precedent, but the parading of animals and gladiatorial games would be an innovation. Or were the *munera*, races, and beast hunts accompanied by theatrical events alone, and all three forms of spectacle constituted the entirety Philip’s Ludi Saeculares? Gagé and Körner think the latter to be the case, and note that the Games seem to have been held on April 21 (a connection with the Parilia and the founding-day of Rome), rather than May 31–June 3.6 Körner also identifies two Greek inscriptions that seem to indicate that singing contests were part of Philip’s millennial festivities.7

Jerome’s translation of Eusebius’s *Chronicon* from the late fourth century CE explicitly locates Philip’s Saecular Games in the Campus Martius, although the date is mistakenly listed as 246 CE:

> Regnantibus Philippis millesimus annus Romanae urbis expletus est; ob quam sollemnitatem innumerabiles bestiae in Circo Magno interfectae, ludique in Campo Martio theatrales tribus diebus ac noctibus popula peruirigilante celebrati.8

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5 “There were thirty-two elephants at Rome during Gordian’s reign, of which he himself had sent twelve, Alexander ten; ten elk, ten tigers, sixty tame lions, thirty tame leopards, ten belbi, that is, hyenas, a thousand pars of gladiators funded by the imperial treasury, six hippopotami, one rhinoceros, ten wild lions, ten giraffes, twenty wild donkeys, forty wil horses, and other innumerable, diverse animals of this sort, all of which Philip either presented or killed at his Saecular Games. [Gordian], however, was preparing all of these animals, wild, tame, and also savage, for a Persian triumph. That public vow was of no avail. For Philip exhibited all of them at his Saecular Games and gladiatorial games and circus races, when he celebrated the thousandth year from the foundation of the city in the consulate of himself and his son.” (*Historia Augusta: Gordiani Tres Iuli Capitolini* 33.1–3.)

6 Gagé (1938); Körner (2002), 251–252.

7 Körner (2002), 253.

8 “When the Philips were reigning, the thousandth year of the city of Rome was completed, on account of which festivity innumerable
An Armenian translation of Eusebius describes the Games in similar detail:

In principio regni Philippi cum filio millesimus annus Romae completus est, et bestiae in Circo Magno interfecit, ludique theatrales in Campo Aris per noctem tribus diebus celebrati sunt, peragebant autem tres dies per noctem ... stadia encaeniis Romae urbis incedebant.  

Thus, if Eusebius’s account is trustworthy, it seems likely that Philip held ludi scaenici in the Campus Martius over three nights, but there is no mention of nocturnal sacrifices held there. In the sixth century CE, Cassidorus follows Jerome closely in describing Philip’s Games. Further evidence for Aurelius Victor describes how Philip oversaw the construction of a lake beyond the Tiber due to the river’s lack of water:

igitur Marcus Iulius Philippus Arbas Thraconites, sumpto in consortium Philippo filio, rebus ad Orientem compositis conditoque apud Arabiam Philippopolis oppido Romam uenere; exstruxit quoque trans Tiberim lacu, quod eam partem aquae penuria fatigabat, annum urbis millesimum ludis omnium generum celebrant.

Again, it is difficult to discern if this passage is describing adherence to tradition or innovation. Philip’s lake may have been a renovation of the naumachia built by Augustus in 2 BCE, and may have been intended simply to provide water for the city’s inhabitants in that area, in addition to serving as the site for naval battles in his millennial games. Thus the decision to hold festivities there would have highlighted the emperor’s provision for his citizen’s welfare. On the other hand, it could be that the lake was created in that area as a convenient backdrop for the performance of ludi or sacrifices near the Tarentum, which had been located near a bend of the Tiber that was prone to flooding.

The coinage issued by Philip to commemorate his millennial festival corresponds closely with the literary evidence in its emphases, and its legends provide clues as to how his Games were interpreted in his own day. Within Philip’s coinage, images traditionally associated with the saeculum and the Ludi Saeculares are notably absent, apart from that of the cippus. His reverses do not show images of Felicitas, figures holding cornucopiae or a caduceus, and do not depict any member of the imperial family in the act of offering sacrifice. As the largest issue of coinage coinciding with the celebration of a saeculum, the series is best studied when divided into several categories. The majority of his coinage falls into the first category beasts were killed in the Circus Maximus, and theatrical games in the Campus Martius were celebrated for three days and nights, with the people keeping all-night vigil.” (Jerome, *Chron. a Abr.* 2265–2266.)

“At the beginning of the reign of Philip with his son, the thousandth year of Rome was completed, and beasts were killed in the Circus Maximus, and theatrical games were celebrated in the Field of Ares through the night for three days; they carried on, however, for three days through the night ... the contests of the city of Rome were advancing with dedication festivals.” (Latin translation of the Armenian for year 2262, from Pighi (1965), 91.)


"Therefore Marcus Julius Philippus Arbas Thraconites, with his son Philip taken into his company, after he had pacified the East and founded in Arabia the city of Philippopolis, came to Rome; and after a lake was constructed across the Tiber, because that part of the water was declining with scarcity, they celebrate the thousandth year of the city with games of every kind.” (Aurelius Victor, *Caes.* 28.1)

Previous studies of Philip’s coinage include Gagé (1938), Hands (1900), Twente (1978), Whetstone (1987), and Körner (2002), 253–258.
and bears the legend "SAECVLARES AVGV," with images of animals used in the beast hunts and circus games appearing on the reverses. This new legend utilizes the term "saeculares," which had always been reserved for the Ludi Saeculares, and suggests that Philip intended for the Games to be called by that name. He thus departs from the older legend "LVD SAE" (and its variations) of Augustus, Domitian, and Severus, or even the phrase "SACRA SAECVLARIA" introduced by Severus.

Several coins bear the legend "SAECVLM NOVVM" with a hexastyle temple and a statue identified as the goddess Roma. Coins depicting a "cippus" or column inscribed with "COS III" have as legends either "MILLARIVM SAECVLM" or "SAECVLARES AVGG" (fig. 7.1); these suggest that some sort of commemorative inscription may have been erected, but since no trace of one survives, it is futile to speculate as to where it may have been set up or what sort of information it could have recorded. Like Septimius Severus, Philip issued coins for his son, Philip II, and his wife, Otacilia, bearing similar legends and images on the reverses. A medallion depicts the imperial family on the obverse with the legend "CONCORDIA AVGVSTORVM," while the reverse bears an image of chariot races and the legend "SAECVLARES AVGG." Once again, the celebration of the Ludi Saeculares is closely associated with the designation of the emperor's heir and the establishment of a new imperial dynasty.

A final indication that Philip followed at least part of the Augustan/Severan tradition in planning his Ludi Saeculares may be seen in the appearance of L. Valerius Poplicola Balbinus Maximus, who was a member of the college of "QUINDECIMUIRI" from 246 CE until his death c. 270 CE. There is evidence for the presence of a L. Valerius Helvidius Priscus Publicola in the college at some point in the second quarter of the third century CE, but beyond this Valerius, the last member of the "GENS" in the college was Ofilius Valerius Macedo, who died c. 230 CE. It could be argued that Valerius Helvidius replaced Valerius Macedo, and his seat was later taken by Valerius Poplicola under Philip, following the ancient practice of reserving seats for members of particular "GENES." If so, this would be the first time that we have any evidence that this practice was observed for the Valerii among the "QUINDECIMUIRI SACRIS FACIUNDIS" since the Augustan period, so it is equally likely that Valerius Poplicola was added to the college in preparation for the Games of 248 CE.

Even if the Valerii were involved in the college of "QUINDECIMUIRI" at this date, however, there is no indication that Philip was a member of this college (or any other) at the time: Rüpke has observed that evidence for the presence of emperors in imperial colleges ceases after 238 CE, and for attendance at meetings of such colleges the last evidence is from the "ACTA" of the Ludi Saeculares of 204 CE. This does not mean that we

13 RIC 4.3.12–23, 158–161.
14 RIC 4.3.24a–b, 86a–b, 108, 163a–c.
15 RIC 4.3.157a–c.
18 Philip II: animals: RIC 4.3.224–225, 264a–b, 272; hexastyle temple with Roma: RIC 4.3.244; cippus: RIC 4.3.265a–c.
19 Otacilia: animals: RIC 4.3.111, 116a–b, 200a–b, 201; hexastyle temple with Roma: RIC 4.3.118; cippus with MILLARIVM SAECVLM: RIC 4.3.199a–c; cippus with SAECVLARES AVGG: RIC 4.3.202a–d.
22 Rüpke (2014), 236; at 238 he suggests that this was part of a greater trend of separating and distinguishing emperors from Roman elites through the restriction and regulation of their personal interactions. Ferri (2015, 124) agrees with this observation. While this
should assume that Philip was not involved in the preparations or celebrations of the Games; it is likely that Philip and his son did indeed preside over the ceremonies, following the example of all previous emperors, and given their close association with the Games in the surviving literary and numismatic sources, but they may have done so without needing to be co-opted into this college. It is difficult to determine if other religious authorities were present: an inscription from Rome from 254–257 CE (discussed below) suggests that a Vestal Virgin may have been present at Philip’s Games, which could suggest an attempt to follow the Severan model: the only concrete evidence that we have for the participation of Vestals in the Ludi Saeculares appears in the Acta of 204 CE, as discussed above.

When the evidence is taken together, we may conclude that spectacles took the central role in Philip’s Ludi Saeculares. In particular, the animals used in beast hunts were most prominently displayed on the coinage of 248 CE and captured the imagination of later authors. The races, gladiatorial games, and theatrical events would have drawn crowds of citizens and led to a strong association at Rome between the emperor and his millennial celebration, but there is no indication that Philip tried to engage the population’s attention with religious performances such as sacrifices, processional hymns, a supplicatio, or even with the distribution of suffimenta. This does not mean that such rites were not included in Philip’s Saecular Games, but the decision not to prioritize them in the commemoration of the Games significantly departed from previous celebrations of the festival.

possible, the lack of epigraphic evidence for imperial involvement in the colleges may not derive entirely from strategic isolation of the emperor: I thank Andreas Bendlin for the observation that many emperors in the third century CE would have been absent from Rome for long periods, thus making college participation difficult, and a failure to attend meetings an accident brought about by the necessities of military campaigns.
Philip's Ludi Saeculares formed an important part of his legacy in Christian authors. In Orosius's *Historiarum adversum Paganos Libri vii*, composed in the early fifth century CE, a legend is recounted of Philip's secret conversion to Christianity. Orosius has no difficulty reconciling Philip's new religion with his performance of the Games:

Primus imperatorum omnium Christianus fuit ac post tertium imperii eius annum millesimus a conditione Romae annus impletus est: ita magnificis ludis augustissimus omnium praeteritorum hic natalis annus a Christiano imperatore celebratus est.\(^{23}\)

For Orosius, Philip's celebration of Rome's millennium is viewed in a positive light, connecting his conversion with his ability to hold festivities that surpassed all their predecessors. The story is even further elaborated in the *Acta Sanctorum*, in which Philip is converted by a Christian named Pontius just as he is about to offer sacrifice to Jupiter during the millennial celebrations.\(^{24}\) This is our only source that describes Philip making a sacrifice at his Ludi Saeculares, but the source is not particularly reliable, since the conversion of the emperor in the midst of preparations for sacrifice considerably heightens the drama of the tale.

### 7.2 *Saeculum* rhetoric of the late third century CE

Philip's coinage would set a new standard for common legends to appear on imperial coins. Most of the emperors who followed in the third century would use variations on *saeculum* rhetoric on their coins in order to establish the authority and stability of their new dynasties, and at the same time emphasize their continuity with previous rulers. In sum, one hundred and twenty-one coin types utilizing *saeculum* rhetoric have been identified from the period between 249 and 312 CE, over one-third of all surviving coins that mention the *saeculum* or the Ludi Saeculares. They are cited and described in detail in Appendix 3; due to constraints of space, only a few noteworthy examples are discussed here. After Philip, several emperors would issue coins bearing the legend *saecvlares avgvstorvm* or *avgvsti* in imitation of their predecessor, and this had led to some confusion over the sequences of the games. Some studies still state that Gallienus, Maximianus, and Carausius held Ludi Saeculares out of the Augustan and Claudian sequences based on obscure calculations for new *saecula*, or the decision to ignore his calculations altogether, but this is entirely based on slender numismatic evidence and is highly unlikely.

In the turmoil following Philip I's defeat and death, imperial mints seem to have reused old patterns from Philip's reign in creating coins for their new rulers. Decius's coins from Antioch minted between 249 and 251 CE include the legends *saecvlares avgg* and *saecvllum novvm*,\(^{25}\) while a coin from Emesa

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\(^{23}\) “He he was first Christian of all the emperors and after the third year of his reign the thousandth year of Rome was completed: thus, this most august anniversary year, most august of all past years, was celebrated with magnificent games by a Christian emperor.” (Orosius, *Hist.* 7.20.2)

\(^{24}\) *Acta S. Pontii martyris*, 14 May, 7–9.

\(^{25}\) *RIC* 4.3.162 and 4.3.672–c, 90–91, 199a–c, 205a–b.
(c. 253–254 CE) with a bust of Uranius Antoninus has saecvlares avg. None of these emperors are believed to have held the Ludi Saeculares: these legends continued to be used for various other reasons: out of convenience, in order to emphasize continuity with the previous reign, or as another form of saeculum rhetoric. This was not the first time such a mistake was made: a coin bearing the portrait of Gordian III issued at Antioch bears the legend saecvlares avg I (RIC 4.3.238) and the image of a deer, a reverse of Philip I; while this may be due to a confusion of old and new dies at the mint, there could well have been a conscious effort to associate a ruler with the famous celebration connected to the saeculum change. Decius included other traditional phrases such as felicitas saecvli on his coins (fig. 7.2).

The first “false” Saecular Games are attributed to Gallienus, who succeeded Philip. Some have argued that Gallienus held the Ludi Saeculares during his reign, while others, such as De Blois, think that he may have made plans for their celebration without being able to bring them to fruition, and note that the only piece of evidence appears in two coins minted at Rome and Antioch: RIC 5.1.273 and 5.1.656 (and a variant). These coins depict a deer or antelope on the reverse in a style similar to the reverses of Philip’s Ludi Saeculares coins, and include the legend saecvlarhs (sic; or saecvlares) avg, which suggests that the mints reused a legend and the distinctive animal imagery found on the coins from 248 CE. De Blois does not connect the saeculum with the Ludi Saeculares, and thus does not take into account Gallienus’s

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26 RIC 4.3.7.
28 Stevenson (1889), 525; Herzog-Hauser (1924), col. 848; Cerfaux/Tondriau (1957), 376.
29 De Blois (1976), 128.
debt to Philip (compare figs. 7.3, 7.4).  

Gallienus used other forms of saeculum rhetoric elsewhere on his coins, enough that De Blois argues that he presented an image of a nouum saeculum aureum as part of a “propaganda campaign” on the model of Augustus and Hadrian. In his analysis, De Blois does not consider the sheer volume of saeculum rhetoric that immediately preceded Gallienus during the reign of Philip and in the few years after his death. Thus, the appearance of these saecvlares avg coins does not mean that Gallienus performed the games: he (or the mint) were most likely recycling the pattern from the previous regime, making the necessary emendation of avg to replace the avgg of the two Philips. Körner thinks that the imitation of the style only intended to “call to mind” Philip’s Games. A reference to sacrifices offered during Gallienus’s reign after consultation of the Sibylline Books may have helped spread the idea that he observed the Ludi Saeculares.

Evidence for Ludi Saeculares held by Carausius and Maximian is similarly slender. Carausius also produced coins with the legend saecvlares avg at Camulodunum between 286 and 293 CE. Two of these

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32 Körner (2002), 256. He does not situate this coin within the wider context of numismatic saeculum rhetoric, however.

33 Gallieno et Faus[1]iano cons. inter tot bellicas clades etiam terrae motus grauisissimus fuit et tenebrae per multos ⟨dies⟩, auditum praeterea tonitruum terra mugiente, non Ioue tonante, quo motu ipsae multae fabricae devoratae sunt cum habitatoribus, multi terrore emortui; quod quidem malum tristius in Asiae urbibus fuit. mota est et Roma, mota Libyia. hiatus terrae plurimis in locis fuerunt, cum aqua salsa in fossis appareret, maria etiam multas urbes occuparent. pax igitur deum quaesita inspectis Sibyll⟨a⟩e libris fact(um)<que Ioue Salutari, ut praeceptum fuerat, sacrificium. nam et pestilentia tanta exterror vel Romanæ vel in Achaicis urbibus, ut uno die quinque milia hominum pari morbo perirent. (Historia Augusta: Trebelli Pollionis Gallieni Duo 5.1.)
types depict a lion (\textit{RIC} 5.2.391–392), and one has a \textit{cippus} inscribed \textit{cos iii} (\textit{RIC} 5.2.393), both in imitation of Philip’s designs. For Maximian, evidence for Ludi Saeculares amounts to a coin from Lugdunum bearing the inscription \textit{saecvlares avgg} issued in 297 CE; Eckhel argues that this is evidence that the celebration was performed during his reign.\footnote{See \textit{RIC} 5.2.415. Stevenson (1890), 525; Nilsson (1920), following Eckhel, \textit{Syllog. i. Num.} Vt. plate 10.11.} If Maximian did plan Games for 304 CE, this would have been a confusion of Augustus’s and Claudius’s sequences of festivals: the last celebration of the Augustan sequence was in 204 CE, and the next should have been in 314 CE; the last of the Claudian sequence was Philip’s celebration in 248 CE, not due to be repeated until 348 CE.

Innovations in numismatic \textit{saeculum} rhetoric flourished during this period and give the impression of competition among emperors. The phrase \textit{pietas saecvli} appears in a posthumous coins of Valerian II from 260–269 CE (\textit{RIC} 5.1.32). Aurelian issued \textit{restit saecvli} between 270 and 275 CE (\textit{RIC} 5.1.52). Florian has \textit{secvritas saecvli} in 276 CE (\textit{RIC} 5.1.95), while Probus creates \textit{felicitas saec sec secv} in coins from 276–282 CE (\textit{RIC} 5.2.358). Postumus’s coins are particularly intriguing: his legends include \textit{saecvli felicitas} (\textit{RIC} 5.2.84), \textit{saecvlo frvgifero} (\textit{RIC} 5.2.84), \textit{[saec]vlvm avgg} (\textit{RIC} 5.2.160), and \textit{i o m sponsori saecvli avg} (\textit{RIC} 5.2.248), a legend last used in the reign of Commodus. Many of these coins portray typical images associated with the \textit{saeculum}: the personifications of Felicitas and Securitas, the caduceus, the emperor holding a globe and sceptre.

A similar creativity can be seen in epigraphic \textit{saeculum} rhetoric, of which only three examples survive from the period before Diocletian. An inscription commending a young Vestal Virgin to the care of the Vestalis Maxima, Flavia Publicia, from Rome during the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus (254–257 CE)
makes the request *ut saeculari actate ministerio / adsit* (“that she may be present for service in a saecular age”).\(^{35}\) Flavia Publicia served as chief Vestal from 240 CE,\(^ {36}\) so with *saeculari actate* the girl’s parents may be referring to her role in Philip’s Ludi Saeculares of 248 CE. An altar dedication from Africa Proconsularis under Probus from 276–282 CE has *quot saeculo / eius uniuersus or/bis floreat* (“in every age of his may the whole world flourish”).\(^ {37}\) Another dedication from Numidia, from the reigns of Carinus and Numerianus, dated to 283–284 CE, uses a more traditional formula: [*Felicissimo ac florentissimo saeculo dd (omnorum) nn (ostrorum)*] (“in the happiest and most flourishing age of our lords”).\(^ {38}\)

The increasing frequency of *saeculum* rhetoric in epigraphic and numismatic contexts suggests that the use of term had become formulaic. This should not be understood to indicate that the *saeculum* was stripped of meaning, but that its appearance in later centuries became a conventional way to describe imperial authority and identity in time as well as in space.

### 7.3 Saeculum rhetoric in the reign of Constantine and later

Both the Augustan and the Claudian series of the Ludi Saeculares seem to have ended after the ascendancy of Christianity at Rome. There is no record of Ludi Saeculares being held in 314 CE or 348 CE, during the reigns of Constantine I and Constantius II, because of the adoption of new Christian religious practice and the gradual abandonment of Roman religious traditions. Yet *saeculum* rhetoric thrived under Constantine, appearing in coins, inscriptions, and literature, and outliving recollections of its original connection with the Saecular Games. Epigraphic evidence from succeeding centuries demonstrates that *saeculum* rhetoric continued to be used in formulas introducing emperors in dedications and other honorific inscriptions, although the term ceased to be used in coin legends after the reign of Gratian at the end of the fourth century CE.

We can be confident that Constantine and his successors never held the Ludi Saeculares. Aurelius Victor laments the fact that the Claudian *saeculum* was not celebrated under Constantius during his own lifetime in 348 CE: … *mea quoque actate post mille centesimus consule Philippo excessit nullis, ut solet, sollemnibus frequentatus: adeo in dies cura minima Romanae urbis.*\(^ {39}\) Aurelius Victor contrasts the name of the consul in that year, Flavius Philippus, with the emperor Philip, who dutifully performed the ceremony in the previous century. The historian Zosimus, writing in the fifth or sixth century CE, singled out Constantine as the emperor who broke with ancient tradition prescribed by the oracle of 17 BCE in refusing to hold the games, thereby reducing Rome’s power:

> Ἐπὶ τοῖνυν, ὡς τὸ θεοπρόπιον φησὶ καὶ τὸ ἀληθὲς ἐχει, τούτων ἀπάντων κατὰ θεσμὸν ἐπιτελομένων

\(^{35}\) CIL 6.2135.

\(^{36}\) Cf. Rüpke (2005), 1315. Terentia Rufilla went on to become Vestalis Maxima herself in 300 CE.

\(^{37}\) CIL 8.26560.

\(^{38}\) CIL 8.27650.

\(^{39}\) “And in my age also, with a Philip as consul, eleven hundred years passed and were commemorated with no solemnities: in the same way each day passes with very little concern for the city of Rome.” (Aurelius Victor, *Caes.* 28.2)
CHAPTER 7. THE LUDI SAECULARES OF PHILIP I; RECEPTION

For both Zosimus and Aurelius Victor, the emperors’ failures to commemorate the arrivals of new saecula had a disastrous effect on the wellbeing of the Roman state: in their respective passages, Aurelius Victor goes on to describe Rome’s moral decline, while Zosimus focuses on the loss of Roman territory, authority, and cultural influence. These interpretations of the significance of the Ludi Saeculares demonstrate the effectiveness of the messages communicated in their previous celebrations: as a religious performance ensuring Rome’s good relationship with the gods, the Games had been strongly associated with the preservation of the state and the promotion of traditional morality. Yet both historians fail to identify or choose to ignore any connection between the Games and imperial dynasty, which had been an important element in previous centuries. From these two authors we may conclude that, in later imperial periods, the Ludi Saeculares were interpreted as deeply conservative expressions of old Roman values and supremacy.

Despite such criticisms, however, we must be careful before we assert that Constantine consciously rejected the Ludi Saeculares purely out of pious devotion to the new faith. The Augustan saeculum was due to be commemorated in 314 CE, when Constantine was fighting Licinius and in no position to plan for or officiate lavish celebrations at Rome. It would be several years before the empire was stable enough to permit such festivities to be held, and by then Constantine had turned his attention eastward to the development of Constantinople. As with many Roman religious practices, the Ludi Saeculares were closely associated with a particular place, and it is likely that no quindecimuir or other religious specialist would have suggested a way to transplant sacrifices rooted at the Tarentum in Rome to another city. As discussed above, there is no evidence that any emperor had been a member of the college of quindecimuiri since Maximinus I in 238 CE, so Constantine probably had little (if any) interaction with its members. Constantine would also have had little motivation to return to Rome to signal his authority over a new saeculum, when he would leave his mark by assigning his name to his new capital. While the extent to which Constantine identified with Christian practices and attitudes at this time is certainly an important factor in addressing the emperor’s motives for avoiding the Ludi Saeculares at the beginning of his reign, it is beyond the scope of this present study to attempt a conclusive answer to vexed question, and Constantine’s support of Christianity was only one of many factors that would have made the performance of sacrifices at the Tarentum seem undesirable.

40 “Further, as the oracle said and the truth maintains, when all of these things were performed in accordance with the rite, the empire of the Romans was preserved, and they continued to hold under their sway our whole world, so to speak; but when the festival was neglected when Diocletian abdicated the throne, Rome ebbed away little by little and escaped notice as it became for the most part barbarized …. But when Constantine and Licinius were consuls for the third time the period of one hundred and ten years was completed: the festival ought to have been held according to custom. Since this was not preserved, matters have come necessarily to the misfortune now oppressing us.” (Zosimus 2.7, ed. Paschoud, 1971.)

41 Aurelius Victor, Caes. 28.3–11.
and unnecessary.

Yet Constantine did not fail to make use of saeculum rhetoric and adapt it to his own needs soon after he had consolidated his power. Coins from Trier, Arles, and Thessalonica minted between 314 and 317 CE bear the legend felicitas perpetua saecvli, accompanied by an image of the emperor receiving a Victory on a globe from Sol (RIC 7.10, 114, 185; fig. 7.5). From 318–319 CE the mint at Rome issued coins with saecvli felicitas alone, depicting a shield with AVG on a cippus (RIC 7.158–164), with obverses bearing busts of Constantine, Licinius, or his son Crispus. Between 321–322 CE at Trier, coins with the new legend vertas saecvli either show Crispus on the obverse with a reverse of Ubertas holding a balance and cornucopiae, or Constantine II on the obverse with a reverse of three Monetae and cornucopiae (RIC 7.335 and 7.336, respectively). In 326 CE, coins from Rome with busts of Crispus and Constantine II return to the use of felicitas saecvli and depict Felicitas with an olive branch and sceptre (RIC 7.277, 278). Soon after, Constantine had Crispus put to death. A coin from the same year with a bust of Constantine bears the phrase gloria saecvli virtus caess, showing the emperor beside a couch holding a sceptre and offering a globe with a phoenix to the Caesar (RIC 7.279). A coin from Siscia minted between 326 and 327 CE has gloria secvli and shows the emperor in military dress (RIC 7.207). Finally, a recently discovered solidus from Ticinum issued between 313 and 324 CE bears the legend saecvritas saecvli, with a seated figure of Securitas on the reverse. Thus, Constantine’s coinage used some of the traditional symbols and phrases associated with the saeculum (Felicitas, cornucopiae, the phoenix), but like previous emperors, his legends competed with his predecessors with the use of new or superior phrases (felicitas perpetua saeculi, gloria saeculi).

Saeculum rhetoric in Constantine’s reign extended to inscriptions across the empire. As can be observed more fully in Appendix 4: Numismatic References to the Saeculum, terms modifying saeculum follow the models of the rhetoric of the previous centuries: pro beatitudine saeculi, beatissimo/fortunatissimo/florentissimo saeculo, etc. At Thignica in Africa proconsularis, the classic formulas “in the most blessed age of our lords” appears in an inscription from 307–340 CE: be]atissimo saeculo ddd(ominatorum) dnn(ostorum). A dedication from Zarai in Numidia from 310–313 CE reads florentissimo / saeculo d(ominatorum) nn(ostorum) (“in the most flourishing age of our lords”). Later in the dynasty, more flowery rhetoric merging several formulas appears in a dedication from Emerita Augusta, dated to between 337 and 340 CE: Floren[tissimo ac b]eatissimo s[ae]culo favente / feli[cite]tate [et clementia] dominorum (“in the most flourishing and blessed age with the favouring felicity and clemency of our lord”).

As has been discussed above, the extent to which this rhetoric was inspired or encouraged by imperial authority in the provinces is difficult to discern. If there was a case to be made for saeculum rhetoric becoming formulaic at the end of the third century CE, that argument is strengthened by the appearance

44 See Dahmen and Ilisch (2006).
45 CIL 8.4555.
46 AE (1975), 472.
of the same language in texts of the fourth century. When compared with the *saeculum* rhetoric of his coinage, Constantine's epigraphic rhetoric makes little attempt to depart from or compete with earlier models in phrasing. It is not unreasonable to assume that imperial mints were more likely to have been under influenced by an official ideology than dedications set up by individuals in the provinces, and the lack of innovation and competition in Constantine's epigraphic *saeculum* rhetoric likely bears witness to this difference between the two media.

Finally, *saeculum* rhetoric appears in the *Carmina* of Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius, who was urban prefect in 329 and 333 CE. He was banished under Constantine and was rehabilitated, perhaps in 325 CE; for this reason his collected poems appear under the title *Panegyricus Constantini* and were dedicated to Constantine. His poetry frequently makes reference to a "golden age", and the concept is prominent throughout his "pattern poems" (technopaegnia). Edwards has given an overview of the poet’s methodology and descriptions of the patterns that he achieved in his verse, but he does not comment on the use of *saeculum*.47 In C. 2, the abstract *intextus* formed by the poem yields *Sancte, tui uatis, Caesar, miserere serenus, / aurea sic mundo disponas saecula toto* (“Holy Caesar, have mercy on your bard, and, serene, order thus the golden ages of the entire world”). Similarly, C. 3.12–13 has *aurea iam toto, uictor, tua saecula pollent, / Constantine, polo* (“your golden age, victor, prevails in the entire world, Constantine”) while the

intextus contains grandia quaerentur, si uatis laeta Camena / orsa iuuet, uersu consignans aurea saecla ("grand beginnings are sought, if the joyful Muse delights in bards, sealing in verse the golden age"), picking up uersu consignans aurea saecla from l. 15. Saeculum rhetoric is most direct in the main text of C. 7 at ll. 29–30: Caesaribusque tuis toto uictoria in orbe / semper iure comes felix in saecula pollet ("with your Caesars and with victory in the entire world a happy comrade justly prevails into the ages") but is alluded to in the intextus: aetherium munus nobis per saecula missum, / rectorisque dei per te praesentia pollet ("a heavenly gift sent to us through the ages, and the presence of god the ruler prevails through you"). In the intextus of C. 12, we find Certa salus rerum, proles inuicta Tonantis, / orbi tu renouas felicis tempora saecli, / aurea iustitiae terris insignia donas ("Sure salvation of the universe, offspring of the unconquered Thunderer, you review the times of the happy ages of the world, you give golden insignia to justice in the lands"). The intextus of C. 14 forms a chi-rho, and begins:

Sancte, decus mundi ac rerum summa salutis,
lux pia terrarum, te solo princepe saecli
inmensum gaudere bonis datur. aurea uenit
summo missa deo fusis, pater alme, tyrannis
iustitia in terras ...

Later, the same poem makes the petition: ut uincas amore / aurea perpetuo restaurans saecula mundo ("that you may conquer with love, restoring perpetually the golden age of the world", ll. 12–13). In C. 5, Porfyrius marked the celebration of Constantine’s Vicennalia, the twentieth anniversary of the beginning of his reign, with a complex intextus that forms the shapes of the letters AVG XX CAES X, while the message within the letters looks forward to the celebration of Constantine's thirtieth year of rule. in the main body of the poem, the saeculum is mentioned yet again: sed et omnia laeta, Constantine, bono nunc ludent otia saeclo ("but even all joys, Constantine, now spend their leisure in a good age", ll. 27–28). In C. 19, his most elaborate poem, Porfyrius creates the image of a trireme with a chi-rho as mast. The poem can also be linked with the Vicennalia due to the XX pattern worked into the body of the trireme (fig. 7.6). The poem opens with Constantine, decus mundi, lux aurea saecli, / quis tua mixta canat mira pietate tropaca / exultans, dux summe, nousis mea pagina votis? ("Constantine, ornament of the world, golden light of the age, who may sing of your wonderful trophies mixed with piety, exulting, supreme commander, in my page for new prayers?" ll. 2–4), and ends with sic nobis lecto quo crescunt aurea saecla ("thus chosen for us where the golden ages grow").

But Constantine may have made plans, or may have been pressured to plan for Games to be held in 348 CE. As discussed above and in previous chapters, in the membership lists for the quindecimuiiri sacris faciundis from 17 BCE onward, at least one member of the Valerian gens appears in the college whenever

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48 "Holy one, adornment of the world and height of salvation of the universe, pious light of the lands, with you alone as ruler is it granted to rejoice exceedingly in good ages. Golden justice, kindly father, comes sent from the highest god to scattered tyrants in the lands ...” (Porfyrius, C. 14.1–5)

Chapter 7. The Ludi Saeculares of Philip I; Reception

Figure 7.6: Porfyrius, C. 19.
the Saecular Games are held during the imperial period, but Valerii do not maintain a constant position in the college at all times. We have no evidence that any Valerius was made a quindecimuir after the death of L. Valerius Poplicola Balbinus Maximus, who entered the college shortly before the Games of 248 CE and died c.270 CE, until a L. Aradius Valerius Proculus was co-opted c.331 CE. Thus, no Valerii were present in the college for the arrival of the Augustan saeculum in 314 CE, but Proculus served in the college until his death c.355 CE. It is unclear whether he was placed in the college at Constantine’s request, or whether he or his colleagues showed the initial interest in his presence. In either case, Proculus’s presence seems to indicate that some vague connection between the Valerian clan and their old sacrifices at the Tarentum was maintained.

Additionally, Proculus appears to have been an conservative individual with a deep interest in religious offices: Rüpke records a number of priesthoods that he held, such as that of augur and pontifex Flavialis, in addition to his consulship in 340 CE. Both he and his son Aradius Rufinus were among the last members of the college of quindecimuiri before it was dissolved. Symmachus the Elder commended the characters of both the father and the son, especially Proculus’s devotion to traditional religious practices:

Valerius Proculus

Cum primis, quos non oneruit gloria patrum,
ponemus Proculum, uitae morumque decore
haud umquam indignum magnorum Publicolarum.
Olli semper amor ueri et constantia, simplex
caelicolum cultus. Non illum sernenre posses,
et quamquam reuerendus erat, non inde timeres.  

Valerius is singled out as being “never unworthy of the great Publicolas”. This compliment would have been particularly meaningful to a quindecimuir whose most famous ancestor, Valerius Publicola, was supposed to have instituted the central sacrifices of the Ludi Saeculares. It is almost impossible to determine the precise lineage of these Valerii with any certainty, give the many generations of adoptions and emancipations that made the name “Valerius” ubiquitous over the centuries. But Symmachus’s poem suggests that some sense of gentilician identity, however vague, existed for these two elite men by virtue of bearing the name of the gens Valeria, even in the fourth century CE. Their appearance in the college of quindecimuiri in the period before and after 348 CE may be due to Constantine’s efforts, or their own zeal for traditional religious practices.

Constantine’s failure (or refusal) to hold the Ludi Saeculares in 314 CE should be balanced against the use of saeculum rhetoric in his reign. The appearance of the term in his coinage and in Porfyrius’s flattering

50 Rüpke (2005).
51 Rüpke (2005).
52 “Among the first men, whom the glory of his fathers did not overburden, we will place Proculus: in the dignity of his life and character he was never unworthy of the great Publicolas. That man always had a love of truth, constancy, and sincere worship of the heavenly gods. You could not scorn him, and although he was to worthy of reverence, you would not for that reason fear him.” (Symmachus the Elder, Ep. 1.2.4, ed. Salzman, 2011.)
poetry suggests that its use did not conflict with the emperor’s religious preferences. The presence of Valerii in the college of quindecimuiri during his reign may lead us to wonder as to whether or not Constantine hoped to hold some kind of celebration to commemorate Rome’s eleven-hundredth anniversary, following the examples of Claudius, Antoninus Pius, and Philip, but this must remain speculation.

7.4 Saeculum rhetoric after Constantine

The appearance of saeculum rhetoric in inscriptions endured at least a century longer than in coinage. No coins bearing the term saeculum are found after 324 CE, part from three issued under Gratian. These carry the legend gloria novi saecvli and depict the emperor holding Victory on a globe.\(^53\) As Appendix 4 indicates, however, saeculum rhetoric continued to appear in epigraphic formulas until the fifth century CE. This pattern was observed by Saastamoinen in building dedications from North Africa,\(^54\) but appeared throughout the Roman world. The trend of using increasingly lavish and varied language observed during Constantine’s period continued. An honorific inscription from Ephesus (367–392 CE) bears the unusual phrase sub s(a)euli nostri felicitate (“beneath the felicity of our age”),\(^55\) while a dedication from Cirta in Numidia (364–378 CE) uses the rare aureo saeculo ddd(ominorum) nn[ostrorum] (“in the golden age of our lords”).\(^56\) As late as the reigns of Leo and Anthimus in 467–472 CE, inscriptions from an amphitheatre restoration at Rome used could use the formula pro beatitudine saeculi (“for the sake of the blessedness of the age”).\(^57\) In addition, saeculum references in literature after Constantine became closely entwined with Christian interpretations of the term. Saeculum rhetoric was utilized by adherents to traditional Roman religious practices, such as Symmachus, or adapted by Christian poets, such as Commodian, who set their hopes for a new saeculum in a world to come against the earthly saecula of Roman emperors. Further study is needed on the relationship between the Christian and imperial uses of the term in the late Imperial period.

7.5 The invention of the Ludi Saeculares of Honorius

We have no evidence that the Ludi Saeculares were held at Rome after Philip I celebrated the city’s millennium in 248 CE. But some surveys of Roman history, particularly nineteenth-century and modern encyclopaedias produced for the educated public, and even a numismatic study, assert that the Christian emperor Honorius permitted his “pagan” subjects to celebrate the Ludi Saeculares at some point during his reign.\(^58\) There is no ancient evidence to support such a claim: any attempts to identify material as referring to Honorius’s Ludi Saeculares are mistaken. It is unlikely that any sort of state-approved non-Christian

\(^{53}\) RIC 8.103–b, 15, 16.
\(^{54}\) Saastamoinen (2010), 93–94.
\(^{55}\) AE (1906), 30b.
\(^{56}\) CIL 8.7015.
\(^{57}\) CIL 6.1796d.96, 100.
\(^{58}\) Dictionaries: Court de Gébelin (1776); Stevenson (1889), Bunson (1995); numismatic studies: Hands (1900).
festival could have been held at Rome in Honorius’s day, particularly the Ludi Saeculares. The origin of the story of Honorius’s games can be traced to one of the earliest studies of the Ludi Saeculares composed during the Renaissance.

References to Honorius holding Saecular Games in 397 CE, to celebrate a military victory, or 404 CE are particularly confusing and merit further examination. What ancient sources could have contributed to this idea? Pighi provides us with a reference to a passage in Claudian’s *Panegyricus de Sexto Consulato Honorii Augusti*, which celebrated Honorius’s consulship of 404 CE. At this point in the poem, the personification of Roma is speaking, begging Honorius to come to Rome: *iam flavescentia centum / messibus aestuare detondent Gargara falces, / spectatosque iterum nulli celebrantia ludos / circumflexa rapit centenus saecula consul …* Honorius is this hundredth consul, and Roma goes on to say that he will be the first emperor to pass through her gates after a victory over enemies, rather than after a civil war.

This passage does not necessarily suggest that the Ludi Saeculares were held or planned to be held in Honorius’s reign. In line 390, the games are described as *spectatosque iterum nulli*, games that “no one has seen twice”, likely an allusion to a traditional description of the Games perhaps spoken by the herald in announcing the Games, as preserved in Suetonius. The mention of *circumflexa … saecula*, “returning ages”, in line 391 makes it clear that Claudian has the Ludi Saeculares in mind. But the mere mention of the Games should not be taken as evidence for their performance, as was urged as early as 1840 by Walckenaer. In his commentary on this panegyric, Dewar suggests that Claudian here reminds Honorius that 404 CE, the year of his sixth consulship, fell one hundred years after Maximian prepared the Ludi Saeculares in 304 CE. This interpretation is somewhat problematic, because as discussed above, the evidence for Maximian’s preparations for the Games is slender, amounting to a few coins bearing the inscription *saeculares avgg* issued in 297 CE; other emperors of the third century had minted coins with similar inscriptions and did not hold celebrations connected with the *saeculum*.

As argued above, it is unlikely that Maximian made preparations for Saecular Games in 304 CE, but if he did not, then why does the poet Claudian mention the Games at all in 404 CE? It may be that Claudian himself has merged the sequences of Augustus and Claudius, and counts 404 CE as two hundred-year *saecula* from 204 CE, Severus’s celebration, or perhaps Claudian is looking ahead to 424 CE, two *saecula* of one hundred and ten years from 204 CE. Whatever the case may be, it is difficult to determine whether Claudian’s mention of the Ludi Saeculares was by that time an obscure or learned reference, or if the memory of these grand imperial festivals was still able to fire the imagination of common citizens. Claudian’s reference to an old Roman festival in a poem celebrating a Christian emperor could hint at the poet’s commitment to traditional Roman religious practices, yet it could also be an indication of his classical education. But the

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59 Pighi (1965).
60 “Now for the hundredth time the summer sickles shear Gargara growing golden with crops, and the hundredth consul hastens the returning ages that celebrate the games no one has seen twice …” (Claudian, *Panegyricus de Sexto Consulato Honorii Augusti*, 388–392, ed. Dewar 1996.) Gargara was a Greek city in Anatolia famous for its wealth in agriculture, also mentioned in Vergil’s *Georgics*.
61 Claudius 21.2.
62 Walckenaer (1840), 281–282.
63 Dewar (1996), 481.
Although there is nothing in Claudian’s lines that would allow a confident assertion that Honorius did in fact hold the Ludi Saeculares, Dewar, Nilsson, and others maintain a reticence as to whether or not the Games were performed. Pighi offers an intermediate position, suggesting that these lines are a fanciful reference to a performance of an obscure ritual called the *Troiae lusus* that Honorius saw at Rome, which formed the last vestiges of the traditional Games.\(^{64}\) Even if this were the case (which is highly unlikely), the political and religious context of Rome in the fifth-century ce was certainly not hospitable to the preservation of traditional Roman religious practices. Constantine I’s failure to perform the Ludi Saeculares was only one element in his severe curtailment of non-Christian religious performances. Theodosius I had reiterated Constantine’s legislation, and his son Honorius banned the performance of *ludi* in 404 ce, in clear continuity with his father’s policies. In fact, it was during Honorius’s reign in 407 ce that, according to Rutilius, Stilicho burned the Sibylline books, which had been in the keeping of the college of *quindecimuiri sacris faciundis*.\(^{65}\) Rüpke estimates that one of the last members of the college, Aradius Rufinus (son of the conservative Aradius Valerius Rufinus described above), had died by about 385 ce.\(^{66}\) The college itself appears to have diminished by the late fourth century: evidence for its membership lists grows increasingly sparse, until it fades away in 395 ce.\(^{67}\) The end of this college must have signalled a definitive end for the Saecular Games: once it was dissolved and its books were destroyed, there would have been no religious specialists to manage the celebration of the Ludi Saeculares, even if it were permitted by special legislation.

Given the paucity of evidence for Ludi Saeculares in 404 ce, how, then, did the Games come to be attached to Honorius? The first extensive study of the Ludi Saeculares, by Onofrio Panvinio in 1558, states briefly that, according to Claudian, Honorius held the last of the Games.\(^{68}\) This claim seems to have been picked up and elaborated upon by Pierre Taffin, who composed a much longer study of the Games in 1641. Taffin does not state precisely where Claudian mentions Honorius’s Ludi Saeculares, but almost certainly he has in mind the lines from the panegyric discussed above.

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64 Pighi (1965). The myth of the *troiae lusus* is recorded in Vergil, and may be of Italian origin.

65 *De reditu suo* 2.52, composed in the early 5th cent. ce.


68 Panvinio (1558).

69 “Honorius did not perform these Ludi Saeculares with all the sacrifices and rites of gentile idolatry; for which reason with Baronio I think that he is able to be excused in part; but in part I think he is to be severely condemned, because he permitted some ceremonies full of idolatry of such a kind. From whence he provoked the wrath of God on the city of Rome, who exacted vengeance on her, during the time not much later in which he handed her over to the Goths. That the Emperor Honorius permitted in his Saecular Games sacrifices to Dis and certain chthonic deities will be clear in the verses of Prudentius.” Taffin (1641, part 2), 80–81.
Interestingly, Taffin and the scholar Baronio make an argument similar to that of Pighi: that Honorius’s festival only included part of the traditional rituals of the Ludi Saeculares, not the full sequence of sacrifices, games, sellisternia, etc. that had characterized earlier celebrations.

Curiously, however, Taffin goes on to cite passages from Prudentius’s *Contra Symmachum* in order to further his point: “that the Emperor Honorius permitted in his Saecular Games sacrifices to Dis and certain chthonic deities will be clear in the verses of Prudentius.” Taffin’s version of Prudentius is virtually identical here to modern editions, which I use here:

> Respice terrifici scelerata sacraria Ditis,  
> cui cadit infausta fusus gladiator arena,  
> heu male lustratae Phlegetontia uictima Romae!  
> Nam quid uesani sibi uult ars impia ludi?  
> Quid mortes iuuenum, quid sanguine pasta uoluptas? …  
> Nonne pudet regem populum sceptrisque potentem  
> tali pro patriae censere litanda salute,  
> religionis opem subternis poscere ab antris? 

Taffin assumes that the references to Dis and “infernal caves” must indicate the sacrifices to Dis Pater and Proserpina at the Tarentum, the oldest ritual of the Ludi Saeculares. But this passage is certainly referring to gladiatorial games, which were not a characteristic ritual of the Saecular Games. Cameron notes that Honorius had passed a law closing gladiatorial schools in Rome in 399 CE, but a few years later Prudentius was still trying to convince the emperor to have the contests abolished altogether. Thus, the last piece of ancient evidence for Honorius’s Games also proves to be a misinterpretation.

This Renaissance misreading of Claudian and Prudentius would have been especially attractive to Taffin for three reasons. First, by arguing that the last Ludi Saeculares were held at Rome in 404 CE, Taffin was able to refute the Byzantine historian Zosimus, who stated bitterly that Rome fell to the Goths in 410 CE because the emperors had ceased to perform the Saecular Games. For Taffin, Honorius’s permissive attitude toward “pagan” religious practice, far from preserving the power of Rome, instead incurred divine wrath and retribution. Second, the Jesuit Taffin’s study of the Ludi Saeculares published in 1641 was motivated directly by another centennial celebration: the *Annus Saecularis* of the Society of Jesus observed in Rome in 1640. Taffin discusses this celebration at length, comparing it directly to the ancient “pagan” Saecular Games. The festivities included the singing of a new *Carmen Saeculare* to Christ and to Mary, which was clearly meant to allude to and supersede Horace’s old *Carmen Saeculare* to Apollo and Diana. The new hymn preserved Horace’s Sapphic metre and even some of the original alliteration:

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70 “Behold the wicked shrines of frightful Dis, for whom the gladiator falls, after shedding blood in the unlucky arena. Alas, a victim of Phlegethon for ill-purified Rome! For what does the impious art of an insane game mean? The deaths of youths, the pleasure fed on blood? … Is it not shameful that the king and people and power of the sceptre think it necessary to make such offerings on behalf of the welfare of the country, and to seek the help of religion from infernal caves?” Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum* 1.379–383, 390–393 (ed. Lavarenne 1963).

71 Cameron (1970).
Christe supremo sate de Parente,
Mater et tantae sobolis Maria,
Queis Pater rerum, iubet hunc per orbem
Cuncta subsesse.

Huic Choro puram sine labe uitam
Cui facit morum celebranda uirtus,
Lausque doctrinae, date seculare,
Condere Carmen.72

Lastly, Taffin also compared the Ludi Saeculares with the medieval practice of holding papal Jubilees, seeing them as the successors of ancient Roman tradition. Thus, for Taffin, Honorius served as an example of an improper leniency toward classical religion, in contrast with the Jesuit reception and transformation of an ancient pagan festival. Taffin's story would be repeated by later encyclopaedists across Europe, as discussed above.

7.6 Conclusion

The popularity of saeculum rhetoric in the centuries following the Severan Ludi Saeculares led to a paradox. I have shown that the original use of the term had allowed emperors to distinguish their identities and dynasties from their predecessors, situating their authority within the contexts of new ages of peace and prosperity. While the use of saeculum rhetoric in the first half of the third century CE was closely associated with the Games of Severus and Philip I, coins issued in the second half of this century reveal that saeculum rhetoric had become almost entirely formulaic. This pattern would be mirrored in inscriptions associated with imperial authority into the fourth and fifth centuries CE.

The dissociation between the Saecular Games and saeculum rhetoric permitted emperors sympathetic to Christianity, particularly Constantine I, to define their reigns as new golden ages of peace and prosperity. Constantine's failure to hold the Games following the chronology established by Augustus was a major break with tradition that caught the attention and criticism of later historians sympathetic to traditional Roman religious practices. The association between the Ludi Saeculares and the Valerii seems to have continued: as I have demonstrated, Valerii were present in the college of quidecimuiri for the Games of Philip in 248 CE, and their appearance in the college after long absence in 348 CE suggests that some preparations were made, possibly during Constantine's lifetime, for Games following the Claudian sequence to be celebrated. The final celebration of the Ludi Saeculares under Philip in 248 CE seems to have differed in some respects

72 "Supreme Christ, sprung from his Parent, and Mary, mother of such mighty offspring, to whom the Father of the universe commands all things through this globe to be subject, grant to this chorus, for whom celebrated virtue and praise of doctrine produce a pure life without ruin of character, to compose a centennial hymn." (Taffin, 1641, ll. 1–8.)
from previous performances: while sacrifices of some sort appear to have been held in the Campus Martius, beast hunts and sacrifices in a temple to the goddess Roma likely formed the main focus of the festivities. I have argued that attempts to identify later celebrations of the Saecular Games in the reigns of emperors such as Gallienus or Honorius are misguided.

_Saeculum_ rhetoric was most potent and memorable when used in the reigns of emperors who, by good fortune, were able to hold the Ludi Saeculares, from which the term had derived its initial significance. But emperors showed a remarkable respect for the preservation of the span of the _saeculum_: after Claudius, no further attempts were made to redefine its duration and hold the Saecular Games at closer intervals. They understood that the unique power of the Games lay in their infrequency, which was lost if they were held too often. Yet this was not the case with _saeculum_ rhetoric, and its use by the emperors divorced it from the context of the Games, rendering it less effective as a tool for demonstrating the individuality of single ruler. Instead, the _saeculum_ rhetoric of the late Empire became a formula for indicating generic imperial authority in time.
In this dissertation, I have provided a comprehensive analysis of the history and development of the Ludi Saeuclares and their connection with the Roman saeculum from the early Republic to the fifth century CE. In the first chapter, I demonstrated the process by which the Valerian clan’s traditional sacrifices came to be supervised by the state in 249 BCE. Next, I showed that under Augustus in 17 BCE, these rites were adapted into the Ludi Saeculares and were first connected with the concept of celebration once per saeculum. Augustus appropriated the central rites of the Valerian cult, transforming and expanding them in constructing his Games in order to assert his role as the restorer of the Republic. In the third chapter, I argued that the use of the term saeculum, from which the name of the festival was derived in Augustus’s reign, came to function in form of rhetoric that allowed for the creation of imperial authority and identity, first in the context of the Saecular Games, and then in epigraphic and numismatic formulas. My investigations of the use of saeculum rhetoric extended to numerous literary, epigraphic, and numismatic sources from the first century BCE to fifth century CE. In the third to seventh chapters, I provided in-depth analyses of planning, ritual sequences, and commemorations of the Ludi Saeculares held under Claudius, Domitian, Septimius Severus, and Philip I. In my discussion of the Games of 204 CE, I argued that Septimius Severus both asserted his role as the successor of Augustus through close imitation of the outline of his predecessor’s ritual program, and also tried to surpass him with more spectacular performances. In the final chapter, I demonstrated that while later emperors continued to perform the Saecular Games at regular intervals until the Games of Philip in 248 CE, they ceased to be held under Constantine I in the fourth century CE due to the influence of Christianity. My investigation of the development of the Valerian gentilician cult at Tarentum has shed light on possibilities for the religious change and innovation in Roman society, but has also pointed to major gaps in our understanding of Roman clans. The appearance of Valerii in the college of quindecimviri over centuries as part of an association with an ancestral cult raises questions about the continuity of gentilician identity at Rome. To what extent did the Tarentum sacrifices play a role in the construction of the Valerian gens’
identity? Was the clan unique in its conservatism and in the desire of members in late antiquity identifying with Republican ancestors? Little attention has been paid to the nature of gentilician cults themselves, and the appropriation of these cults into the civic sphere seems rare; further study is required to investigate the relationship between sacra publica and sacra priuata, state supervision of religious practices, and the religious authority of emperors.

The careful attention to the preservation of details of the ritual sequence of the Ludi Saeculares throughout the imperial period reveals how little we know about the precise methods by which the Romans recorded, preserved, and adapted their religious ceremonies. The use of the Tarentum as a commemorative space has parallels with the Arval Brethren’s use of the Grove of Dea Dia, which merits further investigation, along with the examination of record-keeping practices of other religious colleges.

Additionally, the adaption of the Saecular Games corresponds with the development of other religious performance at Rome. The change from a propitiatory rite offered in times of distress during the Republic to a celebration of imperial authority shares many similarities with the evolution of supplicationes. The increasing complexity of the ritual sequence of the Games, which corresponds closely with the sacrifices of the Arvals, should be compared with many other religious practices. In particular, the Ludi Saeculares should be studied alongside other festivals that were celebrated at more regular intervals, such as the lustrum, and contrasted with annual religious performances. The extent to which more frequently performed rites changed over the centuries would make for a worthwhile study. On the one hand, the Saecular Games presented an easy opportunity for innovation at Rome, since they were celebrated so rarely, and details from their past celebrations were unlikely to remain in common memory, while changes to rites performed annually would be much more visible. Without further comparative work, it is difficult to determine whether the innovations and adaptations to the Ludi Saeculares occurred on a smaller scale than they might have been if they had they been held more frequently, or whether they were typical in this respect.

A major contribution of this dissertation is the introduction of the concept of saeculum rhetoric, the means by which emperors associated their reigns, and often dynasties, with the arrival of a new age, thereby asserting their authority over time. My initial research has demonstrated that, during the Republican period, there was little to no use of the saeculum rhetoric; later, this rhetoric was initially confined to the reigns of emperors who celebrated the Ludi Saeculares, and even to the very years in which the Games were held: under Augustus in 17 BCE, Claudius in 47 CE, and Domitian in 88 CE. A close connection between the Games and the saeculum was maintained until the reign of Septimius Severus, who held the Games in 204 CE. After Severus, saeculum rhetoric was adopted into common imperial usage, even in years and reigns when the Ludi Saeculares were not celebrated. When used in conjunction with celebrations of the Games, this rhetoric allowed imperial authority to be expressed through the continuity of dynasty, the centrality of Rome as the location of the Games (particularly useful in provincial contexts), and the establishment of good relations with the gods through religious performances. When separated from the context of the Ludi Saeculares, saeculum rhetoric became formulaic, dropping out of use in coin legends by the fourth century CE, while surviving in inscriptions into the fifth century CE. Rather than emphasizing fixed centuries from
the foundation of the city of Rome or the lifespan of an individual within a generation, the *saeculum* of the Ludi Saeculares bolstered the achievements of an individual emperor and looked forward to a smooth transition of his influence as his authority was passed down to his heirs. Thus, the slow process by which *saeculum* came to be applied to the Ludi Tarentini eventually changed the significance of the term itself as it became closely associated with the authority of imperial dynasties. The use of *saeculum* in imperial coinage and inscriptions called to mind the Saecular Games themselves in earlier centuries, and later emperors intentionally used the term to associate their reign with the celebration of a new age in imitation of their predecessors, whom they also strove to surpass.

The next logical step in the study of imperial rhetoric pertaining to time is to broaden the data set to include sources that use Latin words with a similar meaning to *saeculum*, such as *tempus*, *aevum*, and *aetas*, and, if possible, to include Greek sources using the term *aiōn*. These related terms appear frequently in numismatic and epigraphic formulas, and the patterns of their use across the imperial period should be compared with the present findings pertaining to *saeculum*. As a further avenue of research, our understanding of this “rhetoric of time” would be greatly increased with the investigation of numerous Greek and Roman funerary inscriptions from private individuals, sources that often use *saeculum* in a different fashion, as referring to “the world of the living” or “this life”, opposed to the realm of the dead (or “heaven”, in Christian contexts). When these texts are compared with Christian literary sources, such as Commodian or Augustine, it appears that a new kind of *saeculum* rhetoric developed in the late Empire that pitted the present *saeculum* against a Christian conception of an afterlife. This rhetoric seems to have extended to the appropriation of the term *saeculum* to describe the particular age in which Christianity became the dominant religion across the empire. Further research on the development of other Greek and Latin terms relating to an “age”, and other contexts for the *saeculum*, will shed light on ancient conceptions of the relationship between time, religion, and imperial authority in the Roman empire.
## Appendix 1: Literary References to the Ludi Saeculares and the *Saeculum*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calpurnius Piso (in Censorinus 17.19)</td>
<td>Roma condita anno d(ci) saeculum occipit his consulibus</td>
<td>180–120 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Gromatici Veteres</em> 1.350</td>
<td>[reference to a saeculum change]</td>
<td>100–1 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucretius, <em>De rerum natura</em> 2.502–503</td>
<td>aurea pauonum ridenti imbuta lepore / saecla nouo rerum superata colore iacerent</td>
<td>98–55 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucretius, <em>De rerum natura</em> 2.1153–1154</td>
<td>haud, ut opinor, enim mortalia saecla superne / aurea de caelo demisit</td>
<td>98–55 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyginus, <em>De astronomia</em> 2.25</td>
<td>quae eodem tempore fuerit cum aurea saecula</td>
<td>25–1 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Horace, Carmen Saeculare</em></td>
<td>[reference to Ludi Saeculares]</td>
<td>17 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germanicus, trans. of Aratus, <em>Phaenomena</em> 103</td>
<td>aurea pacati regeres cum saecula mundi</td>
<td>15 BCE–19 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>Quotation</td>
<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festus, Epitome of</td>
<td>(saeculares ludi) Tarquini Superbi regis i— Marti consecravit ... ut — (saeculares appella— saeculi habetur</td>
<td>10 BCE–14 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verrius Flaccus p. 440 L</td>
<td>eodem anno ludos saeculares Caesar ingenti apparatu fecit</td>
<td>17 BCE–17 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livy (in Censorinus 17.9)</td>
<td>ludos saeculares ... quos centesimo quoque anno – his enim terminari saecula – fieri mos erat</td>
<td>17 BCE–17 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livy (in Censorinus 17.9)</td>
<td>aurea sunt uere nunc saecula</td>
<td>1 BCE–1 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovid, Ars Amatoria 2.277</td>
<td>quae dicere longum est / aurea quin etiam cum saecula</td>
<td>1–100 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livy (in Censorinus 17.9)</td>
<td>hoc duce si dixi felicia saecula, proque / Caesare tura pius</td>
<td>8–12 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovid, Tristia 1.2.103–104</td>
<td>Caesaribusque dedi</td>
<td>8–12 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horace, Ode 4.6.42</td>
<td>saeculo festas referente luces</td>
<td>13–27 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valerius Maximus 8.13</td>
<td>quibus insistens alacriorem se respectu uetustae felicitatis facere possit, tranquillitatemque saeculi nostri, qua nulla umquam beatior fuit</td>
<td>31 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valerius Maximus 2.4.5</td>
<td>Et quia ceteri ludi ipsis appellationibus unde trahantur apparet, non absurdum uidetur saecularibus initium suum</td>
<td>31 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seneca, Controversiae 2.7.7</td>
<td>o nos nimium felici et aureo, quod aiunt, saeculo natos!</td>
<td>37–41 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pliny, NH 7.159</td>
<td>utrisque saecularibus ludis saltuisse, Diui Augusti et quos</td>
<td>48–79 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pliny, NH 8.160</td>
<td>Claudi Caesaris saecarium ludorum circensibus, excusso in carceribus auriga albatis Corace, occupauere primatum</td>
<td>48–79 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seneca, Apocolocyntosis 1.1</td>
<td>quid actum sit in caelo ante diem III idus Octobris anno nouo, inicio saeculi felicissimi, uolo memoriae tradere.</td>
<td>54 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seneca, Apocolocyntosis 4.1.9, 23–24</td>
<td>aurea formoso descendunt saecula filo ... felicia lassis / saecula praestabit legumque silentia rumpet.</td>
<td>54 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calpurnius Siculus, Eclogae 1.44–45</td>
<td>alma Themis posito iuuenemque beata sequuntur / saecula</td>
<td>54–55 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calpurnius Siculus, Eclogae 4.6–7</td>
<td>sed haec, quibus aurea possint / saecula cantari, quibus et deus ipse canatur</td>
<td>55 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>Quotation</td>
<td>Date</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seneca, <em>De clementia</em> 2.1.4</td>
<td>et ulla diuturno abusa regno dare tandem felici ac puro saeculo locum</td>
<td>55–56 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seneca, <em>Ep. Mor.</em> 90.5</td>
<td>mihi crede, felix illud saeculum ante architectos fuit, ante tectores.</td>
<td>62–64 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statius, <em>Siluae</em> 1.6.39–40</td>
<td>nunc saecula compara, Vetustas, / antiqui Iouis aureumque tempus</td>
<td>81–95 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statius, <em>Siluae</em> 1.4.17–18</td>
<td>nec tantum induerint fatis noua saecula crimen / aut instaurati peccauerit ara Tarenti</td>
<td>81–95 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martial, <em>Epigrammata</em> 4.1.7</td>
<td>hic colat ingenti redeuntia saecula lustro</td>
<td>86–102 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martial, <em>Epigrammata</em> 4.1.8</td>
<td>et quae Romuleus sacra Tarentos habet</td>
<td>86–102 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martial, <em>Epigrammata</em> 5.7.2</td>
<td>una decem quotiens saecula uixit aus</td>
<td>86–102 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martial, <em>Epigrammata</em> 10.63</td>
<td>bis mea Romano spectata est vita Tarento</td>
<td>86–102 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quintilian, <em>Inst. Or.</em> 8.6.24</td>
<td>sicut ex eo, quod continetur, usus recipit ‘bene moratas urbes’ et ‘polum epotum’ et ‘saeculum felix’</td>
<td>90–92 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Quintilian], <em>Declamationes minores</em> 349.7</td>
<td>si incidisses in illos felicioribus saeculis natos, [cum] quibus uirtus magis commune bonum erat</td>
<td>90–100 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenal, <em>Saturae</em> 3.312–313</td>
<td>felices proauorum atauos, felicia dicas / saecula</td>
<td>96–140 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacitus, <em>De uita Iulii Agricolae</em> 3.1</td>
<td>sed quamquam primo statim beatissimi saeculi ortu Nerua Caesar res olim dissociabiles miscuerit ... augeatque cottidie felicitatem temporum Nerua Traianus</td>
<td>98 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacitus, <em>De uita Iulii Agricolae</em> 44.5</td>
<td>nam sicut (e)i (non licuit) durare in hanc beatissimi saeculi lucem ac principem Traianum uidere</td>
<td>98 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacitus, <em>Epistularium</em></td>
<td>lam illud a poetis saeculum aureum memoratum, si cum animo reutes, intellegas neglegentiae saeculum fuisse</td>
<td>100–200 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacitus, <em>Dia. de oratoribus</em> 12.3</td>
<td>ceterum felix illud et, ut more nostro loquar, aureum saeculum</td>
<td>102–107 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>Quotation</td>
<td>Date</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacitus, <em>Annales</em> 11.11</td>
<td><em>Isdem consulisibus ludi saeculares octingentesimo post Romam conditam, quarto et sexagesimo ... nam is quoque edidit ludos saeculares</em></td>
<td>110–120 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pliny, <em>Ep.</em> 10.2.2</td>
<td><em>cum inter initia felicissimi principatus ... etiam illo tristissimo saeculo uolui</em></td>
<td>114 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suetonius, <em>Tiberius</em> 59.1</td>
<td><em>aurea mutasti Saturni saecula</em></td>
<td>120 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suetonius, <em>Diuus Augustus</em> 31.4</td>
<td><em>nonnulla etiam ex antiquis caerimonis paulatim abolita restitut ... ludos Saeculares et Compitalicios ... item Saecularibus ludis iuuenes utriusque sexus prohibuit ullam nocturnum spectaculum frequentare</em></td>
<td>120 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suetonius, <em>Diuus Augustus</em> 100.3</td>
<td><em>tempus a primo die natali ad exitum eius saeculum Augustum appellaretur</em></td>
<td>120 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suetonius, <em>Claudius</em> 21.2</td>
<td><em>fecit et saeculares, quasi anticipatos ab Augusto nec legitimo tempori reseruatos</em></td>
<td>120 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suetonius, <em>Vitellius</em> 2.5</td>
<td><em>saepe facias, cum saeculares ludos edentui Claudio gratularetur</em></td>
<td>120 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suetonius, <em>Domitian</em> 4.3.4ff</td>
<td><em>Fecit et ludos saeculares, computata ratione temporum ad annum non quo Claudius proxime</em></td>
<td>120 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pomponius, <em>Commentum in Horatium Epistulae</em> 2.1.157</td>
<td><em>Saturnio metro usi sunt Latini ueteres aurei s(aeculi) sub Saturno, unde nomen est uersus</em></td>
<td>200–225 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pomponius, <em>Commentum in Horatium: Carmina</em> 4.6.42</td>
<td><em>Saeculo festas referente luces: Id est: die[m] saeculare festum referente.</em></td>
<td>200–225 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>Quotation</td>
<td>Date</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pomponius Porphyrio, <em>Commentum in Horatium: Carmen saeculare</em></td>
<td><em>Cum enim saeculares ludos Augustus celebraret, secundum ritum prisciæ religionis</em></td>
<td>200–225 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassius Dio 60.29</td>
<td>ὀκτακοσιοστοῦ τῇ Ῥώμῃ ἔτους ὑπάτων, ὑπάτων</td>
<td>200–229 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Censorinus, <em>De die natali</em> 16.7</td>
<td>Itaque ut saecula possim percurrere et hoc nostrum praesens designare, omissis aureis argenteisque et hoc genus poeticis, a conditu urbis Romae ... et quoniam saecula aut naturalia sunt aut civilia, prius de naturalibus dicam</td>
<td>238 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Censorinus 17.7, 9–10, 13</td>
<td><em>ludos saeculares etc.</em></td>
<td>238 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Censorinus 17.7, 9–10, 13</td>
<td>saeculum, etc.</td>
<td>238 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Herodian</em> 3.8.10</td>
<td>καλοῦντες ἥκειν καὶ θεάσασθαι πάντας ἃ μήτε εἶδον μήτε ὄψονται</td>
<td>240 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commodianus, <em>Carmen apologeticum</em> 309</td>
<td>ut resurrecturos nos credamus in nouo saeclo</td>
<td>250–410 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commodianus, <em>Carmen apologeticum</em> 671</td>
<td>et quibus absconsa reuelantur aurea saecla</td>
<td>250–410 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commodianus, <em>Carmen apologeticum</em> 695</td>
<td>ut possis abolitus resurgere saeclo nouato</td>
<td>250–410 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commodianus, <em>Instructionum libri ii</em>: 1.29.8</td>
<td>reddere decreuit nos ipsos in aureo saeclo</td>
<td>250–410 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commodianus, <em>Instructionum libri ii</em>: 1.34.1</td>
<td>aurea post fata ueniet tibi saecla</td>
<td>250–410 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>Quotation</td>
<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Eusebius, *Chron.***  
Year 2262  
(*Armenian translation; Pighi 1965, 91)* | ludique theatrales in Campo Aris per noctem tribus diebus celebrati sunt | 280–313 CE (original) |
| *Panegyrici Latini,*  
oratio 9.18.1 (by Eumenius) | cum uideat omnia quae priorum labes considerant ha[n]c felicitate saeculi resurgentia | 298 CE |
| *Panegyrici Latini,*  
oratio 9.18.4 (by Eumenius) | adeo, ut res est, aurea illa saecula, quae non diu quondam Saturno rege uiguerunt | 298 CE |
| Pseudo-Valerius Probus,  
*Commentarius in Vergilii Bucolica* 4.4 | uel a Sibylla, quod Cumana et post quattuor saecula nouam generationem futuram cecinit | 300–400 CE |
| *Concilia Africæ*  
345–525, *Breuiarium Hipponense* 149.84 | ut filii episcoporum et clericorum spectacula saecularia non exhibeant nec exspectent. | 300–400 CE |
| *Historia Augusta:*  
*Gordiani Tres Iuli Capitolini* 33.1–3 | animalia innumera et diuersa, quae omnia Philippus luid saecularibus uel dedit uel occidit | 300–400 CE |
| Aelius Donatus,  
Praefatio commentarii in *Vergilii eclogas* deperdit, p. 13 | et ideo uelut aurei saeculi speciem in huiusmodi personarum simplicitate cognosci | 310–380 CE |
| Porfyrius, *Carmina* 2,  
versus intexti | aurea sic mundo disponas saecula toto | 314–334 CE |
<p>| Porfyrius, <em>Carmina</em> 3.12–13 | aurea iam toto, uictor, tua saecula pollent, / Constantine, polo | 314–334 CE |
| Porfyrius, <em>Carmina</em> 3.15 and versus intexti | uersu consignans aurea saecla | 314–334 CE |
| Porfyrius, <em>Carmina</em> 5.27–28 | otia Caesaribus pacis dedit, aurea saecla / indulgens natis patriae pietatis honore | 314–334 CE |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Porfyrius, <em>Carmina</em> 7.29–30</td>
<td>semper iure comes felix in saecula pollet.</td>
<td>314–334 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porfyrius, <em>Carmina</em> 7.24</td>
<td>reddens mox aurea saecula rebus</td>
<td>314–334 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porfyrius, <em>Carmina</em> 12, versus intexti</td>
<td>orbi tu renouas felicis tempora saecli, aurea iustitiae terris insignia donas</td>
<td>314–334 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porfyrius, <em>Carmina</em> 14.2–3</td>
<td>te solo principe saeclis / inmensum gaudere bonis datur</td>
<td>314–334 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porfyrius, <em>Carmina</em> 19.2</td>
<td>Constantine, decus mundi, lux aurea saecli</td>
<td>314–334 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porfyrius, <em>Carmina</em> 19.29</td>
<td>sic nobis lecto quo crescunt aurea saecla</td>
<td>314–334 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porfyrius, <em>Carmina</em> 20a.5–8</td>
<td>et principis tropaea / felicibus triumphis / Augusta rite saeclis / exsultat omnis aetas</td>
<td>314–334 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholia in Optatiani Porfyrii carmina 3, p. 15</td>
<td>ad directum versus 'orsa iuuet, uersu consignans aurea saecla'</td>
<td>334–400 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholia in Optatiani Porfyrii carmina 12, p. 50</td>
<td>eiusdem uersus designat 'orbi tu renouas felicis tempora saecli'</td>
<td>334–400 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholia in Optatiani Porfyrii carmina 10, p. 49</td>
<td><em>Comment on</em> 'aurei saeculi restaurator'</td>
<td>334–400 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholia in Optatiani Porfyrii carmina 2, p. 42</td>
<td>ad directum minio scriptae faciunt uersum 'aurea sic mundo disponas saecula toto'.</td>
<td>334–400 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De rebus bellicos, praefatio 9</td>
<td>pro saeculi uestri felicitate gaudentibus</td>
<td>337–400 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurelius Victor, <em>Caes.</em> 15.4</td>
<td>annis quibus publica egit uiginti idem mansit, celebrato mirifice Vrbs nongentesimo</td>
<td>360 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurelius Victor, <em>Caes.</em> 4.12</td>
<td>huius anno sexto, cum quattuordecim regnarat, octingentesimus Vrbs mire celebratus</td>
<td>360 CE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Appendix 1. Literary References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aurelius Victor,</strong> <em>Caes.</em> 28.1</td>
<td>[Philip’s games]</td>
<td>360 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rufius Festus</td>
<td>aurea quondam / iudice me uestri uixerunt saecla parentes</td>
<td>360–386 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avienus, <em>Arati</em> “Phaenomena” 327–328</td>
<td>uita hominum nullis aget sub legibus aeuum aureaque innocuo(s) seruarent saecula mores</td>
<td>360–386 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eutropius 9.3</td>
<td>His imperantibus millesimus annus Romae urbis ingenti ludorum apparatu spectaculorumque celebratus est.</td>
<td>364–387 CE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symmachus, <em>Or.</em> 2</td>
<td>felicis saeculi ista commoditas est</td>
<td>368–388 CE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symmachus, <em>Or.</em> 3</td>
<td>salve noui saeculi spes sperata et in gremio rei publicae nutricis adolesce</td>
<td>368–388 CE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symmachus, <em>Or.</em> 3</td>
<td>iamdudum aureum saeculum currunt fusa Parcarum</td>
<td>368–388 CE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symmachus, <em>Or.</em> 3</td>
<td>totum de nouo saeculo Maronis excursum uati similis in tuum nomen excriberem</td>
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<td>Ausonius, <em>Epist.</em> 10.28–30</td>
<td>satorque prolis aureae conuincit Ascraeum senem, non esse saeculum ferreum</td>
<td>368–394 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerome, <em>Chron. a Abr.</em> 2262–2263</td>
<td>ludique in Campo Martio theatrales tribus diebus ac noctibus</td>
<td>c.378 CE</td>
</tr>
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<td>Symmachus, <em>Relationes</em> 15</td>
<td>sed ut nostra deuotio felicis saeculi testetur opulentiam</td>
<td>384–385 CE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tiberius Claudius Donatus, <em>Interpretationes Virgilianae</em> 2.8</td>
<td>recedente igitur imperio Saturni felicitas saeculorum eius insueto statu manere non potuit</td>
<td>400 CE</td>
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Citation | Quotation | Date  
---|---|---
Tiberius Claudius Donatus, *Interpretationes Virgilianae* 2.8 | nam supra dixit aurea saecula extitisse, nunc dicit deterior aetas successit | 400 CE
Tiberius Claudius Donatus, *Interpretationes Virgilianae* 2.8 | aurea quae perhibent illo sub rege fuere saecula: saecula, inquit, quae aureo nomine appellari consueuerunt | 400 CE
Tiberius Claudius Donatus, *Interpretationes Virgilianae* 1.6 | ordinatur sensus sic: hic est Augustus Caesar, diui genus, qui rursus condit aurea saecula Saturno regnata | 400 CE
Tiberius Claudius Donatus, *Interpretationes Virgilianae* 1.6 | denique sequitur + qui aurea condit saecula uir diui genus uir qui rursus Latio regnata per arua Saturno quondam | 400 CE
Serv. auct. *ad Ecl.* 9.46 = Cornell (2013), Augustus F2; Baebius Macer? | haruspex in contione dixit cometen esse, qui significaret exitum noni saeculi et ingressum decimi | 400 CE
**Pseudo-Acro on CS** | Verrius Flaccus refert carmen saeculare et sacrificium inter annos centum et decem Diti et Proserpinae constitutum bello Punico | 400–500 CE
**Claudian, Panegyricus de Sexto Consulato Honorii Augusti, 391–392** | spectatosque iterum nulli celebrantia ludos / circumflexa rapit centenus saecula consul | 403 CE
Orosius, *Hist.* 7.20.2 | ita magnificis ludis augustissimorum praeteritorum hic natalis annus a Christiano imperatore celebrates est | 416–418 CE
Zosimus, *Historia Nova* 2.1–3 | various references to the *Ludi Saeculares* | 498–518 CE
Zosimus, *Historia nova* 2.1–3 | various references to saeculum calculations | 498–518 CE
### Appendix 1. Literary References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><em>Acta S. Pontii</em></td>
<td><em>[ref. to Ludi Saeculares of Philip]</em></td>
<td>500 CE</td>
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<td><em>martyris, 14 May, 7–9</em></td>
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<td><em>Cassidorus, Chron.</em></td>
<td><em>ludosque in Campo Martio theatrales tribus diebus ac noctibus</em></td>
<td>519 CE</td>
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<td>2, p. 147</td>
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<td></td>
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Appendix 2: Epigraphic References to the Ludi Saeculares and the *Saeculum*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inscription</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Authority mentioned</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
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<td><em>InscrIt</em> 13.1</td>
<td>Ludi saeculares</td>
<td>1 cent. BCE?</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Augustus</td>
<td>Fasti Capitolini</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>CIL</em> 12.4333</td>
<td>saeculi felicitas</td>
<td>12/13 CE</td>
<td>Gallia Narbonensis, Narbo</td>
<td>Augustus</td>
<td>votive inscription</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>CIL</em> 3.774</td>
<td>ex nostro [saeculi]o; lu[dos] saec(u)lares C(aio) Furnio C(aio) Silano co(n)s(ulibus)</td>
<td>14 CE</td>
<td>Galatia, Ancyra</td>
<td>Augustus</td>
<td>Res Gestae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>CIL</em> 10.1401</td>
<td>felicitati saeculi instantis</td>
<td>47 CE</td>
<td>Latium / Campania, Herculanum</td>
<td>Cn(aeo) Geta L(ucio) Vagellio co(n)s(ulibus)</td>
<td>town financial stuff?</td>
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<td>Phrase</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<td>Purpose</td>
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<td>Pighi (1965), 42 n.2</td>
<td>[i]m[p Ca]e[s]a[re Domitian diui] ... [P. C)o[rn]e;lio T]ac[ito promag.] XV(u). s. f.</td>
<td>88 CE</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Domitian</td>
<td>Fasti Capitolini</td>
</tr>
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<td>statuam aereum Securi/tatis Saeculi</td>
<td>138–161 CE</td>
<td>Numidia, Cirta</td>
<td>Antoninus</td>
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<tr>
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<td>AE 1993, 1787</td>
<td>qui augustiss(i=U)mo saeculo sub sanc/tiss(i=U)ma Uttedi</td>
<td>144 CE</td>
<td>Mauretania Tingitana, Sala</td>
<td></td>
<td>dedication with statues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIL 2.5232</td>
<td>omnium saecu/lorum principi</td>
<td>167 CE</td>
<td>Lusitania, Collippo</td>
<td>Lucius Verus</td>
<td>dedication to Antoninus Pius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MiliariHis-panico 6</td>
<td>Saeculo Felicis/simo Impp(eratorum)</td>
<td>177–180 CE</td>
<td>Hispania citerior, Bracara Augusta</td>
<td>Marcus Aurelius, Commodus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AE 1893, +109</td>
<td>saeculi felicitat[i]</td>
<td>197–201 CE</td>
<td>Numidia, Lamiggi()</td>
<td>Septimius Severus</td>
<td>letter, legate of emperor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AE 1907, 158</td>
<td>pro s(a)ecli felicitate</td>
<td>198–209 CE</td>
<td>Mauretanica Caesariensis, El Eulma</td>
<td>Septimius Severus</td>
<td>dedication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIL 5.7881</td>
<td>saeculi / felicitate</td>
<td>200–300 CE</td>
<td>Alpes Maritimae, Cemenelum</td>
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<td>college dedication to man for generosity</td>
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<td>Phrase</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Authority mentioned</td>
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</tr>
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<td><em>CIL</em> 2.14.3.1226</td>
<td><em>s(a)eculum bonum</em></td>
<td>200–300 CE</td>
<td>Hispania citerior, Tarraco</td>
<td>Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus, or Septimius Severus</td>
<td>bell with prayer</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>AE</em> 2006, +54</td>
<td><em>post / [m]ultim maximisque saecu/lis felicissimis temporibus / suis</em></td>
<td>202–209 CE</td>
<td>Mauretania Caesariensis, Tipasa</td>
<td>Septimius Severus</td>
<td>boundary inscription</td>
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<td><em>CIL</em> 08.2557</td>
<td><em>Pro felicitate et inco/lumitate[m] saeculi do/minorum nn[[n(ostrorum)]]</em></td>
<td>203 CE</td>
<td>Numidia, Lambaesis</td>
<td>Septimius Severus</td>
<td>legion payment?</td>
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<td><em>CIL</em> 8.51</td>
<td><em>felicis saecu/li</em></td>
<td>203/204 CE</td>
<td>Africa pro-consularis, Thysdrus</td>
<td></td>
<td>dedication to Mercury on behalf of colony</td>
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<td><em>CIL</em> 6.32326–32325</td>
<td><em>ludorum saecu]lar[iu]m [se]ptim[orum]; ludos saeculares; saecularis sacri / ludorumqu[e, etc.]</em></td>
<td>204 CE</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Septimius Severus</td>
<td><em>Acta of 204 CE</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>CIL</em> 3.75</td>
<td><em>felicissimo saeculo d(ominorum) / n(ostrorum)</em></td>
<td>206 or 211 CE</td>
<td>Egypt, Philae</td>
<td>Septimius Severus</td>
<td>temple dedication to Jupiter and Juno?</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>CIL</em> 6.40623</td>
<td><em>Felicissimo saeculo do[minorum nostrorum]</em></td>
<td>209–211 CE</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Septimius Severus</td>
<td>honorific inscription</td>
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<td><em>AE</em> 2006, +73</td>
<td><em>[Pr]o felicitat(e) et incolumitat[e] / [sa]eculi domin(orum) nn[[n(ostrorum)]]</em></td>
<td>209–211 CE</td>
<td>Numidia, Lambaesis</td>
<td>Septimius Severus</td>
<td>private legal inscription</td>
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<td>Phrase</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Authority mentioned</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
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<td>CIL 8.20487</td>
<td>Indulgentia novi saeculi</td>
<td>238–244 CE</td>
<td>Mauretania Caesariensis, Castellum Thib( )</td>
<td>Gordian III</td>
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<td>CIL 8.20602</td>
<td>Indulg(entia) novi s(a)e[culi]</td>
<td>238–244 CE</td>
<td>Mauretania Caesariensis, Lemellef</td>
<td>Gordian III</td>
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<tr>
<td>AE 1903, 94</td>
<td>Indulgentia novi s(a)eculi</td>
<td>238–244 CE</td>
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<td>Gordian III</td>
<td>dedication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AE 1978, 568</td>
<td>Felicissimo saeculo d(omini) n(ostri)</td>
<td>241–244 CE</td>
<td>Germania inferior, Rigomagus Rome</td>
<td>Gordian III</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIL 6.2135</td>
<td>saeculari aetate</td>
<td>254, 255, or 257 CE</td>
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<td>Valerian and Gallienus?</td>
<td>dedication for VV</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIL 8.26560</td>
<td>quot saeculo / eius universus or/bis floreat</td>
<td>276–282 CE</td>
<td>Africa pro-consularis, Thugga</td>
<td>Probus</td>
<td>dedication on altar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIL 8.2760</td>
<td>[Felicissimo ac] florentissimo saec[u]lo dd(ominorum) nn(ostrorum)</td>
<td>283–284 CE</td>
<td>Numidia, Lambaesis</td>
<td>Carinus, Numerianus</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILAlg 1.2048</td>
<td>Beatissimo saeculo dd(ominorum) nn(ostrorum)</td>
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<td>Africa pro-consularis, Madauros</td>
<td>Diocletian, Maximian</td>
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<td>CIL 8.5333a-e</td>
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<td>dedication</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Location</td>
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<td>Purpose</td>
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<td><strong>CIL 8.4324</strong></td>
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<td>293–305 CE</td>
<td>Africa pro-consularis, Ammaedara</td>
<td>Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius, Galerius</td>
<td>dedication</td>
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<td><strong>CIL 8.608</strong></td>
<td>Felicissimo saeculo dominorum nostrorum</td>
<td>293–305 CE</td>
<td>Africa pro-consularis, Mididi</td>
<td>Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius, Galerius</td>
<td>on arch</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CIL 8.624</strong></td>
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<td>293–305 CE</td>
<td>Africa pro-consularis, Mactaris</td>
<td>Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius, Galerius</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CIL 08, 11195</strong></td>
<td>Saeculo beatissimo d(omini) n(ostri)</td>
<td>293–364 CE</td>
<td>Africa pro-consularis, Thaca</td>
<td></td>
<td>dedication after repairs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CIL 8.783</strong></td>
<td>Pro clementia saeculi [3]</td>
<td>300–400 CE</td>
<td>Africa pro-consularis, Apisa Maius</td>
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<td>di]uturna p(a)ene s(a)eculi vetustate</td>
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<td>Africa pro-consularis, Acholla/Botria</td>
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<td><strong>CIL 8.2241</strong></td>
<td>Pro beatitudine [saeculi sui dd(omini) nn(ostri)]</td>
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<td>Numidia, Mascula</td>
<td>Constantine, Licinius</td>
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<td>Africa pro-consularis, Thignica</td>
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<td>indulgence from emperor?</td>
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<td>Phrase</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Authority mentioned</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
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<td>307–340 CE?</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>CIL 15.1542.2</em></td>
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<td>Constantine</td>
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<td><em>CIL 8.4515</em></td>
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<td>310–313 CE</td>
<td>Numidia, Zarai</td>
<td>Maximian, Maximus</td>
<td>dedicatory to Colony Genius on anniversary of foundation?</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>AE 1950, 233</em></td>
<td>saeculo dec(reto) dec(urionum)</td>
<td>311–317?</td>
<td>Syria, Berytus</td>
<td>Constantine</td>
<td>dedication</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>CIL 8.22853</em></td>
<td>pro beatitudine saeculi [ddd(ominorum)] nnn(ostrorum)</td>
<td>324–333 CE</td>
<td>Africa pro-consularis, Thysdrus</td>
<td>Con-stantinus, Constantinus, Constantius</td>
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## Appendix 2. Epigraphic References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AE 1978, 864</strong></td>
<td>Beatissimo saeculo Invictorum principum</td>
<td>326–333 CE</td>
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<td>Constantinus, Constantinus, Constantius</td>
<td>dedication</td>
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<td>B(ea=AE)tissimo [saeculo ddd(omniorum) nnn(ostrorum)]</td>
<td>326–333 CE</td>
<td>Africa pro-consularis, Cincaris</td>
<td>Constantinus, Constantinus, Constantius</td>
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<td><strong>CIL 8.14436</strong></td>
<td>B[a]eatissimo saeculo Invictorum principum [ddd(omniorum) nnn(ostrorum)]</td>
<td>337 CE?</td>
<td>Africa pro-consularis, Belalis Maior</td>
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<td><strong>AE 1975, 472</strong></td>
<td>Floren[tissimo ac b]eatissimo saeculo culo favente / felicitate dominorum</td>
<td>337–340 CE</td>
<td>Lusitania, Emerita Augusta</td>
<td>Constantine, Constantius, Constans</td>
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<td><strong>CIL 8.4878</strong></td>
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<td>Africa pro-consularis, Thubursico Numidarum</td>
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<td><strong>CIL 8.5178</strong></td>
<td>[Pro felicitate(?)] beatissimi saeculi dd(omniorum) nn(ostrorum)</td>
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<td>Africa pro-consularis, Zattara etc.</td>
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<td>Sicily, Catina</td>
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<td>Saeculo felic[iissimo] / d[[d(ominiorum)]] n[[n(ostrorum)]]</td>
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<td><strong>AE 1955, 51</strong></td>
<td>Saeculi felicitate dd(ominiorum) nn(ostrorum)</td>
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<td>felicitas saeculi nostri</td>
<td>344–351 CE</td>
<td>Asia, Ephesus</td>
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<td>Beatissimis temporibus 3 saeculo d(omini) n(osti)</td>
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<td>Aureo saeculo ddd(omini) nnn(ostorum)</td>
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<td>Pro splendore felicium saeculorum ddd(omini) nnn(ostorum)</td>
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<td>[Beatissimis temporibus et florentissimo saeculo ddd(omini) nnn(ostorum)]</td>
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<td>Numidia, Goussa</td>
<td>Valens, Gratian, Valentinian</td>
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<td>sub s(a)eculi nostri felicitate</td>
<td>367–392 CE</td>
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<td>Valens, Gratian, Valentinian</td>
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<td><em>CIL</em> 3.6009.9</td>
<td>Aurea s(a)ecu/la videmus</td>
<td>395–423 CE?</td>
<td>Pannonia superior, Savaria</td>
<td>Honorius?</td>
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<td><em>CIL</em> 8.23098</td>
<td>Aurea s(a)ecu/la videmus</td>
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<td>Honorius?</td>
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<td><em>CIL</em> 3.735</td>
<td>aurea saec(u)la</td>
<td>425 CE</td>
<td>Thracia, Constantinopolis</td>
<td>Theodosius</td>
<td>Porta Aurea; honorific arch</td>
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<td>467–472 CE</td>
<td>Hispania citerior, Tarraco</td>
<td>Leo and Anthemus</td>
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<td>[3 pro beatitudo] s(aeculi 3)</td>
<td>467–472 CE</td>
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<td>Leo and Anthemius</td>
<td>amphitheatre restoration</td>
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Appendix 3: Numismatic References to the Ludi Saeculares

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coin number</th>
<th>Reverse Legend</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Emperor or Authority</th>
</tr>
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<td>RIC 1² 138</td>
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<td>RIC 1² 139</td>
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<td>RIC 1² 339</td>
<td>AVGST DI-VI F LVDOS SAE [obverse]</td>
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<td>RIC 1² 341</td>
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<td>RIC 1² 342</td>
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</tbody>
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### Appendix 3. Numismatic References to the Ludi Saeculares

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coin number</th>
<th>Reverse Legend</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Origin</th>
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<td><em>RIC 1² 354</em></td>
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</table>
### Appendix 3. Numismatic References to the Ludi Saeculares

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coin number</th>
<th>Reverse Legend</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Emperor or Authority</th>
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| RIC 2.1² 609
| COS XIXIII LVD SAEC A POP S C | 88 CE | Rome | Domitian |
| RIC 2.1² 610
| COS XIXIII LVD SAEC FEC // S C. | 88 CE | Rome | Domitian |
| RIC 2.1² 611
| COS XIXIII LVD SAEC | 88 CE | Rome | Domitian |
| RIC 2.1² 612
| COS XIXIII - LVD SAEC - FECIT // S C | 88 CE | Rome | Domitian |
| RIC 2.1² 613
| COS XIXIII LVD SAEC FEC // S C. | 88 CE | Rome | Domitian |
| RIC 2.1² 614
| COS XIXIII - LVD SAEC FEC // S C | 88 CE | Rome | Domitian |
| RIC 2.1² 615
| COS XIXIII - LVD SAEC FEC // S C | 88 CE | Rome | Domitian |
| RIC 2.1² 616
| COS - XIXIII -/ LVD / SAEC / FEC // S C. | 88 CE | Rome | Domitian |
| RIC 2.1² 617
| COS XIXIII LVD SAEC FEC // S C | 88 CE | Rome | Domitian |
| RIC 2.1² 618
| COS XIXIII LVD SAEC FEC S C | 88 CE | Rome | Domitian |
| RIC 2.1² 619
| COS XIXIII LVD SAEC FEC S C | 88 CE | Rome | Domitian |
| RIC 2.1² 620
| COS XIXIII LVD SAEC FEC S C | 88 CE | Rome | Domitian |
| RIC 2.1² 621
| (COS XIXIII) LVDOS SAECVL FECIT | 88 CE | Rome | Domitian |
| RIC 2.1² 622
| COS XIXIII - LVD SAEC FEC // S C. | 88 CE | Rome | Domitian |
| RIC 2.1² 623
| COS XIXIII - LVD SAEC FEC // S C. | 88 CE | Rome | Domitian |
| RIC 2.1² 624
| COS XIXIII - LVD SAEC FEC // S C | 88 CE | Rome | Domitian |
| RIC 2.1² 625
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<th>Coin number</th>
<th>Reverse Legend</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Emperor or Authority</th>
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<td>Rome</td>
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## Appendix 3. Numismatic References to the Ludi Saeculares

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### Appendix 3. Numismatic References to the Ludi Saeculares

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### Appendix 3. Numismatic References to the Ludi Saeculares

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Appendix 4: Numismatic References to the *Saeculum*

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### Appendix 4. Numismatic References to the *Saeculum*

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