

THE TITLES “DACICUS MAXIMUS” AND “CARPICUS MAXIMUS”  
IN THE IMPERIAL PROPAGANDA OF THE THIRD  
AND THE FIRST HALF OF THE FOURTH CENTURY

by

ROBERT SUSKI

ABSTRACT: In the second half of the 230s, the Emperor Maximinus Thrax assumed the title “Dacicus Maximus” following his victory over the “free Dacians” who had most probably invaded the province of Pannonia. After nearly a hundred years, Constantine the Great added the same *cognomen* to his imperial titles in commemoration of his victory over the Goths in the former province of Dacia. This article intends to discuss the significance of the *cognomen* in the Roman imperial propaganda of the third and fourth centuries.

Trajan was the first Roman emperor to assume the *cognomen ex virtute* “Dacicus”. It occurred upon his victory in the first Dacian war in 102<sup>1</sup>. After the conquest of Dacia, the *cognomen* disappeared from official imperial propaganda for more than a century. Although it is indeed attested in two inscriptions dedicated to Antoninus Pius<sup>2</sup> and one from the reign of Marcus Aurelius<sup>3</sup>, its unofficial character is obvious. This is confirmed by its absence in the papyri documents dating from the reigns of these two emperors as well as the very low number of inscriptions mentioning this *cognomen*<sup>4</sup>. Its appearance in reference to these rulers was most likely connected with the campaigns waged in Dacia. Armed clashes with the Dacians during the reign of Antoninus Pius are mentioned in the

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<sup>1</sup> Cass. Dio LXVIII 10, 1 f.: Καὶ οἱ παρὰ τοῦ Δεκεβάλου πρέσβεις ἐς τὸ συνέδριον ἐσήχθησαν, τὰ τε ὄπλα καταθέντες συνῆψαν τὰς χεῖρας ἐν αἰχμαλώτων σχήματι καὶ εἶπόν τε τινα καὶ ἰκέτευσαν, καὶ οὕτω τὴν τε εἰρήνην ἐσπέισαντο καὶ τὰ ὄπλα ἀπέλαβον. Τραϊανὸς δὲ τὰ τε νικητήρια ἤγαγε καὶ Δακικὸς ἐπωνομάσθη, ἐν τε τῷ θεάτρῳ μονομάχους συνέβαλε (καὶ γὰρ ἔχαιρεν αὐτοῖς), καὶ τοὺς ὀρχηστὰς ἐς τὸ θέατρον ἐπανήγαγε (καὶ γὰρ ἐνὸς αὐτῶν τοῦ Πυλάδου ἦρα). See STEIN 1901: 1976; KNEISSL 1969: 70–74; GOSLAR 1975: 643; SIJPESTEIJN 1983: 359–366; JÖRDENS 1994: 214; KIENAST 1996: 123; BENNETT 1997: 98 f.; GOODMAN 1997: 68; BIRLEY 2000: 109–112.

<sup>2</sup> *CIL* VIII 12513 = *ILS* 343; *CIL* VIII 20424.

<sup>3</sup> *IGR* III 449.

<sup>4</sup> KNEISSL 1969: 96 f.; GOSLAR 1975: 643; KIENAST 1996: 135.