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CIVIL WAR AND PUBLIC DISSENT: THE STATE MONUMENTS OF THE DECENTRALISED ROMAN EMPIRE

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Source: [Late Antique Archaeology](#), Volume 3, Issue 1, pages 139 –

155 **Publication Year :** 2006

DOI: [10.1163/22134522-90000042](#)

ISSN: 1570-6893 **E-ISSN:** 2213-4522

Document Type: Research Article

Subjects: [Classical Studies](#)



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From the tetrarchy onwards, the arches and columns erected in praise of emperors show a distinct change in the way in which civil war was commemorated or justified. The attitudes towards civil war demonstrated on these monuments also changed over time, reflecting the attitudes and social mores of those who erected them. From the time of Augustus onwards, in both panegyric and public art, victory in civil war had been presented in terms of the defeat of non-Roman combatants. However, by the 4th c., when the conservative aristocracy was still powerful, it was possible to commemorate defeat of fellow Romans. This paper suggests that this change in imperial image and in the sociopolitical context of these monuments, whereby the need to establish the emperor's authority overrode the traditional concerns of conservative sections of the public.



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