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Cover illustration: Finds from the Hellenistic grave at Chalkis, Aetolia.
Photograph by Henrik Frost.

Use and Abuse of Athena in Roman Imperial Portraiture: The Case of Julia Domna¹

Birte
Lundgreen

Athena/Minerva is one of the more overlooked goddesses in Roman sculptural representations commissioned by private individuals and the Imperial court.² This has its natural explanation in that she does not appear in portraiture as often as Ceres and Venus. Yet, she is an interesting example of a goddess who, though neither peaceful nor fertile, had a place in the imagery of Roman women. As a goddess assimilated with women of the ruling class, Athena can be traced back to the Ptolemaic queens in the Hellenistic period. She was assimilated with Livia and other members of the Julio-Claudian family, but does not appear again on a large scale until the Severan period. Her connection with

the Severan family is, however, of special interest, since she was apparently used by both male and female members of the family.

Julia Domna's use of Athena is apparent in a fragmentary replica of the so-called 'Athena Medici' statue type in Thessaloniki (Figs. 1-2).³ These fragments are well known in studies of the Medici statue type and have additional interest for technical reasons, since they stem from an acrolithic statue.⁴ The photographs clearly show how the head has the cheeks prepared for the fastening of additional hair. Further, the face has the characteristic features, like the distinctive mouth, of Julia Domna. This identification was put

¹ I would like to thank Drs. J. Fejfer, J. Huskinson, M. Moltesen, D. Montserrat, Professor R.R.R. Smith and not least the editors for their valuable comments on this paper.

² I am currently researching the physical and ideological contexts in which Athena/Minerva statues appear in the first and second centuries A.D. The Danish Research Council for the Humanities has generously supported me with a three-year grant.

³ Thessaloniki Archaeological Museum inv. no. 877; H of head 0.59 m; H of right leg 1.76 m; L of right arm 0.26 m. Most recently on the 'Athena Medici' see Lundgreen (1997), 7-36, pls. 1-16 and G. Despini, Th. Stephanidou-Tiveriou, Em. Voutiras, *Catalogue of Sculpture in the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki I* (1997), no. 72.

⁴ The term *acrolithic* denotes a statue worked in stone and wood, generally with the naked parts in marble and the wooden ones covered by drapery in bronze sheets and/or gold leaf. However, the statue in Thessaloniki differs in this respect by having her right, dressed leg made in marble, a feature seen in all of three examples of the Athena Medici statue type; for further discussion and references see Lundgreen (1997) pp. 11-13. See most recently on the technique E. Häger-Weigel, *Griechische Akrolith-Statuen des 5. und 4. Jhr. v.Chr.* (Berlin 1997), *passim*.



Figs. 1-2. Thessaloniki Museum, inv.no. 877 (DAI Athens 71/585; Despinis (1975) pl. 3).

forward by earlier scholars and it is generally agreed that the statue should be assessed as a portrait assimilation of Julia Domna with Athena/Minerva.⁵ The head is listed among portraits of Julia Domna,⁶ but does not feature very prominently.⁷

I believe a new assessment is due of the statue fragments in Thessaloniki:

their date should be discussed, and the question whether the head has been reworked or not; other information from Thessaloniki, in particular the possible location for the erection, should also be included. Other evidence, e.g. epigraphical and numismatical, should be incorporated into the general assessment of Julia Domna and the use of Athena / Minerva in her imagery.⁸

⁵ The statue fragments were first published at length by S. Pelekidi, 'Ο τύπος της Αθηνάς των Μεδίκων', *AD* 9, 1924-5 (1927), 121-44, and the connection to Julia Domna suggested by E. Langlotz, 'Die Repliken der Athena Medici in Sevilla', *Madriider Mitteilungen* 1 (1960), 167; later elaborated on by Despinis (1975) and (1977), 95-102.

⁶ Fittschen (1978), 28-43, esp. 43 n. 55c = head in Thessaloniki.

⁷ The statue in Thessaloniki is included in T. Mikocki's recent monograph on assimilations of Imperial women with goddesses: Mikocki (1995), no. 439, but Julia Domna's affiliations with Athena/Minerva are only briefly discussed with emphasis on the war-like associations. See B. Lundgreen, 'Imperial Women as Goddesses', *Classical Review* 48 (1998), 438-40.

⁸ There exist decree inscriptions from the Athenian Acropolis (*JG* II-III 1,2, 1076 and Oliver (1941), 84-5), cf. Ghedini (1984), 128-32; Ghedini has also interpreted coins from Gabala as presenting an assimilation of Julia Domna as Athena, *BMC Galatia, Cappadocia, Syria* 245, no. 10, cf. Ghedini (1984), 132. This evidence will be discussed below. For epigraphical evidence of erections of portraits of Julia Domna in general see Fejfer (1988), 295-301.

Finally, the conclusions should be placed in a wider context, that is in relation to evidence of a general kind of assimilations of Athena/Minerva for both public and private women in the Imperial period and, more specifically, in the Severan period. In conclusion, I will attempt to address three aspects of the use and perhaps abuse of Athena/Minerva in the Imperial period that the material here presented seems to call for. It concerns first of all whether the individuals who were subject of assimilation with Athena / Minerva have anything in common; secondly, if there is a pattern in the geographical dispersion of the material; and thirdly, if and how the Severan examples might differ from the rest.

The term assimilation is used when an analogy has been made between a mortal and a god. In iconography this is indicated by a visual connection between a person and the image of the deity. The assimilation is also verbally expressed when a person takes on the name of the god: Livia Fortuna, or as an epithet: Livia Pronaia, or as a completely new incarnation: Neos Dionysos, Nea Hera.⁹ Making a distinction between assimilation and association is difficult, since the transition

from the more diffuse connection of the association to the assimilation is not clear-cut and was hardly thought of as being so in Antiquity.¹⁰ The association is in general used when the identification between the god and the person is indirect, e.g. a coin with the portrait of the Empress on the obverse and on the reverse a depiction of a goddess,¹¹ whereas the assimilation is more direct: the person dressed as a deity and carrying divine attributes has in some way *become* the god or goddess.¹²

The origin of assimilations can, as noted above, be traced back to Hellenistic times. The phenomenon stems from ancient Greek ideas about heroic and divine rank as something attained by merit.¹³ Although Athena is a goddess rarely used for assimilations, she was represented in the Hellenistic period, notably by the Ptolemies, who developed the Hellenistic ruler cult in which assimilation plays an important part.¹⁴ Arsinoë II (316-269 B.C.), the sister and joint ruler of Ptolemy II Philadelphos, was described in Alexandria as Athena *Chalkioikos* (“who has a dwelling of bronze”). The same epithet was used for Athena at Sparta, or more specifically for the bronze shrine in which her image was

⁹ Mikocki (1995), 7-8.

¹⁰ See also A. Filges, *Standbilder jugendlicher Göttinnen* (Cologne 1997), 174, esp. n. 697, with critique of Mikocki (1995) and the absence in modern research of a discussion of the ‘essential’ meaning of Imperial portrait statues.

¹¹ B.S. Spaeth, *The Roman Goddess Ceres* (1996), 119 fig. 42a-b: Faustina the elder associated with Ceres.

¹² Eadem; Matheson (1996), 182.

¹³ Nock (1930), 250.

¹⁴ Following a Pharaonic tradition *cf.* Hahn (1994), 21-22.

placed.¹⁵ The literary sources provide a further example of a Ptolemaic female ruler assimilated with Athena. In a poem by Kallimachos about Berenice II (273-221 B.C.), *The Lock of Berenice*, concerning divine kingship, Athena is used as a suitable example for the behaviour of Berenice before she married, as opposed to after her marriage to Euergetes, when she was compared to Aphrodite. Thus, Berenice behaved like a goddess and had a claim on deification both before and after her marriage.¹⁶ In this connection Athena's chastity is emphasised, i.e. Athena as the virgin goddess rather than the warrior goddess.

The history of assimilations continues unbroken into the Imperial period.¹⁷ Concerted efforts were made in the use of propaganda during the reigns of Augustus and the subsequent Julio-Claudian emperors, and the use of assimilations with women of the Imperial family increased. Livia is the best represented woman in this field by far with, according to Mikocki, 132 examples of assimilation, followed by Sabina, Hadrian's wife, with 45 and Julia Domna with 42 examples of assimila-

tion.¹⁸ However, it is especially under Tiberius and Claudius that the increase in assimilations becomes more marked and that is clearly associated with Livia: the majority of her representations can be dated in that period.¹⁹

Athena is represented mainly in the Julio-Claudian period, and again under the Severans, with two cases under the Flavians and Antonines.²⁰ The larger than life-size statue representing Julia Domna as Athena, which was set up in Thessaloniki, is, however, the only known survivor of a supposed public sculptural programme of the Empress in the image of the goddess. Other examples are mentioned in the epigraphical evidence, but they all belong in the religious sphere, with images of the Empress placed in temples to Athena and honoured as the goddess.²¹

The technical preparation of the marble fragments in Thessaloniki indicates that the statue was conceived as an acrolithic statue. The naked parts were worked separately in stone and attached to what was probably a wooden core. However, the chiton-dressed right leg, which is also carved in stone, is

¹⁵ Pausanias, *Description of Greece* iii 17.6.

¹⁶ Cf. L. Koenen, 'The Ptolemaic King as Religious Figure', in A. Bulloch, E. Gruen, A.A. Long, A. Stewart (eds.), *Images and Ideologies. The Self-definition in the Hellenistic World* (1993), 108.

¹⁷ Example of Augustus' daughter Julia assimilated with Diana on a coin, a denarius minted by C. Marius in 13 BC. For early material – see also D.E. Kleiner, 'Politics and Gender in the Pictorial Propaganda of Antony and Octavian', *Échos du monde classique. Classical Views* 36 n.s. 11 (1992), 357-67.

¹⁸ Mikocki (1995), 125.

¹⁹ *Idem*, cat. nos. 1-134.

²⁰ Domitia Longina and Sabina respectively, cf. Hahn (1994), nos. 249 and 297, see further below.

²¹ See further below – and with an interesting example of a private couple, Simon Magus and his wife, who commissioned statues of themselves assimilated with Zeus and Minerva, cf. Wrede (1981), 42.

problematic, but, as I have suggested elsewhere, it was intended to emphasise the change in fabric from the heavy woollen peplos to the thin, transparent chiton.²² The latter is only visible on the right leg and the upper arms of the Athena Medici statue type to which these fragments belong. Other researchers have, however, suggested that an acrolithic statue with a wooden core is most often fitted with a bust, worked out below with a flat lower surface, rather than a deep or deeper cone as seen in the Thessaloniki head.²³ These features might instead indicate that the rest of the statue was also worked out in stone, i.e. of a so-called composite character.²⁴ However, according to Despinis, who has carried out the most detailed research on the fragments in Thessaloniki, the specially worked holes on the back of the right leg indicate that they were attached to a wooden core.²⁵ Since there are indications both of stone attached to wood and stone attached to stone, there is no general agreement on the question

whether the Thessaloniki fragments belong to an acrolithic or a composite statue. I will, nevertheless, continue to use the term acrolith, since I believe that the makers, or the person who commissioned the statue, wished to emphasise the colourful aspect and different textures so characteristic of an acrolith.

The above-mentioned working of the surface on the forehead and cheeks has been very convincingly reconstructed and identified as the characteristic hairstyle of Julia Domna.²⁶ Although the ears are visible – a feature not otherwise seen on portraits of Julia Domna²⁷ – the other features are characteristic of Julia Domna: cheeks, chin, side hair. The presence of the ears must be understood as a reminiscence of the original Greek Athena statue, and perhaps reflects a wish to maintain some of the statue's authentic impression. Many replicas had metal attachments in the hair and, in particular, earrings; some even had their eyes inserted separately.²⁸ The head has been dated in the second cen-

²² Lundgreen (1997), 11-13.

²³ H.-G. Martin, *Römische Tempelkultbilder* (Rome 1985), cat. nos. 12-13, and p. 192.

²⁴ E.g. Aphrodite Getty (Malibu 88.AA.76); cf. J. Boardman, *Greek Sculpture. The Late Classical Period* (1995), fig. 192.1,2.

²⁵ Despinis (1975), *passim*.

²⁶ Despinis (1977), 95-102, and accepted by for instance K. Fittschen (1978), 28-43, esp. 43 n. 55 c = head in Thessaloniki.

²⁷ The uncovered ears, which are otherwise not associated with Julia Domna, are nevertheless not a strong enough argument for a rejection of the identification – an identification also supported by Professor K. Fittschen in personal communication.

²⁸ The following sculptures have their ear lobes pieced: Thessaloniki 877, Vatican Museum no. 1434, Vienna, Antikenmuseum no. 168, British Museum no. GR 1805.7-3.55, Selçuk no. 109/38/81, Oberlin, Allen Memorial Art Museum no. 39.139, Vatican Museum Magazine no. 4389 and a head in Lepcis Magna. Furthermore the inclusion of different materials is also emphasised by the inserted eyes seen on: Seville no. 839, Vatican Museum no. 1434, Vienna no. 168, British Museum no. GR 1805.7-3.55, Rome, National Museum no. 55.051, Oberlin, Allen Memorial Art Museum 39.139, head in private collection USA, head in Italian private collection, head in Lepcis Magna and a head formerly in the a private collection in Istanbul. See Lundgreen (1997) for further references to these sculptures.

tury A.D., and is believed to have been reworked later in that century, or in the early third, into a portrait of Julia Domna. Despite the uncovered ears, the identification seems certain, since no other female Imperial portrait from the second and third centuries presents this particular combination of facial features and massive side hair.²⁹ The interpretation of the head as being a reworked image of the goddess Athena into a portrait of an empress should, however, be re-assessed.

The Julia Domna portrait in Thessaloniki belongs to the so-called Leptis type, which is named after the Arch of Septimius Severus in Leptis Magna, dated c. 205/6-208/9 A.D.³⁰ According to Klaus Fittschen, two portrait types of Julia Domna can be defined with certainty: the Gabii and the Leptis types (figs. 3-4). The latter is distinguished from the former by the hel-

met-like enlargement of the wig, by additional decorative braids on the cheeks, and by the replacement of the bun at the back with a braided nest of hair. It is uncertain precisely when the Leptis type appeared – perhaps it was created along with the fourth and last portrait type of Septimius Severus, possibly on the occasion of the secular games in A.D. 204.³¹ It is generally agreed that the hairstyle was created by a wig. The transition from the hair to the face is shown by a deep groove and, moreover, a small curl is often visible on the cheeks, indicating Julia Domna's own hair.³²

I believe, however, that there are several technical problems with the Thessaloniki head being originally an image of Athena, later reworked into a portrait-assimilation of Julia Domna as that goddess. My reservations concern also the date and origin of the statue.³³

²⁹ However, R.R.R. Smith has in a recent article presented a larger than life-size portrait statue of a lady from Aphrodisias, a certain Claudia Antonia Tatiana, who indeed has Julia Domna's characteristic hair style and further might be associated with Aphrodite because of the feet of a child or Eros remaining on her right, 'Cultural Choice and Political Identity in Honorific Portrait Statues in the Greek East in the Second century A.D.', *Journal of Roman Studies* 88 (1998), 56-93, esp. 68, fig. 2, pl.VI,2.

³⁰ Strocka (1972), 169-70.

³¹ Although it has recently been asserted that there are no signs of commemoration of this event in the coinage of Julia Domna, cf. Lusnia (1995) 131.

³² Fittschen (1978), *passim*, further describes the hairstyle as being created by curling irons to make the sharp waves, or crests and valleys. The two portraits discussed by Fittschen are the so-called Bloomington busts which present other interesting features; first of all, they do not go back to two prototypes created simultaneously, but rather to those current at the time of the respective production of the individual busts: Septimius Severus' third type and Julia Domna's first. Secondly, pairs of ruler portraits are most often found in villas, and what must be described as imperial villas, e.g. Gabii busts in the Louvre. Thirdly, in relation to workmanship, it is interesting to note that although the Bloomington busts are undoubtedly made at the same time, only the male bust displays an extensive use of drill work. This can be explained by the fact that the male hairstyle from Hadrian onwards needed the drill for its execution, whereas the women's coiffure could be done by chisel.

³³ Despinis (1975 & 1977) originally suggested it to have been made in Athens because of its high quality, and he is furthermore the advocate of the reworking of the head cf. Langlotz, *Madridrer Mitteilungen* 1 (1960), 147.

Fig. 3. (left) Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. 1103 (Musées Nationaux).

Fig. 4. (right) Ostia, Museo, inv.no.21. Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione F5708.



The head clearly displays individual features with the cheeks, the mouth, and the chin diverging from the ordinary heads of Athena of the Medici type (figs. 5-6).³⁴ The face is rounded, and the rather heavy cheeks have softly modelled indentations running downwards from the wings of the nose and at each corner of the mouth. The lips are narrow.³⁵ The nose is broken, but has a distinct profile consisting of a large, hooked line, separated from the steep forehead by a pronounced angle. The chin is round and slants obliquely towards the neck, as opposed to the normal Medici-head type, which has a chin almost at a right angle from the neck (fig. 6). The neck

has two, clearly visible, Venus-rings which are moulded rather than incised, as in the usual representations. The only marked difference to ordinary portraits of Julia Domna is the uncovered ears. I believe that, by keeping this feature of the Athena Medici-head type, the sculptor wished to emphasise the divine character of the image of Julia Domna as Athena. The result is a statue which is not simply the body of Athena, fitted with a

³⁴ Head found on the Pnyx in Athens, National Museum no. 3718.

³⁵ According to K. Fittschen and P. Zanker, *Katalog der römischen Porträts in den Capitolinischen Museen und den anderen kommunalen Sammlungen der Stadt Rom* III (1983) on the Gabii type head, characteristically broad mouth.



Figs. 5-6. Athens, National Museum, inv.no. 3718 (DAI Athens NM 5135, 5137).

Julia Domna head, but a heterogeneous synthesis of the Empress and the goddess.

The assumed reworking has, according to Despinis, been carried out by removing approximately 5 mm of marble from the surface of the face and neck in order to change the head of Athena into a portrait of Julia Domna. However, the head in Thessaloniki does not differ much from other heads of the type when one compares individual measurements (distance from head to chin: *c.* 25 cm, distance between the outer corners of the eyes: *c.* 15 cm). The slanting chin seems particularly difficult to model from the sharply angled one of the prototype by removing only

5 mm of marble. Amelung and Theophanidis, already, published comparative measurements of a selection of heads of the Athena Medici type, including the one in Thessaloniki.³⁶ Their measurements still give a general idea of the concordance of the six chosen heads (Athens, Thessaloniki, Vienna, Vatican, London, and Rome). The heads in Vienna, London and Rome have restored nose tips, and it is altogether missing from the head in Thessaloniki. The most divergent measurement is the distance between the top of the forehead and the chin, where the Thessaloniki head is 1.5 cm shorter than the other heads. Otherwise the measurements of the Thessaloniki head match those of the other heads

³⁶ W. Amelung, 'Athena des Phidias', *Jahreshefte der Österreichischen Archäologischen Institut* 11 (1908), 169-211 and V.D. Theophanidis, 'Η Αθηνά της Πινυκός', *AD* 13 (1930-31), 171-76.

Fig.7. Thessaloniki Museum
 inv. 877 – solid line
 Rome, National Museum
 55.051 – dotted line.



Fig.9. Thessaloniki Museum
 inv. 877 – solid line
 Athens, National Museum
 3718 – dotted line.

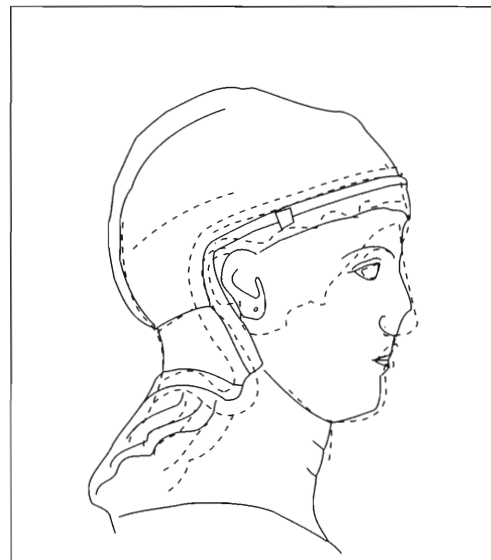
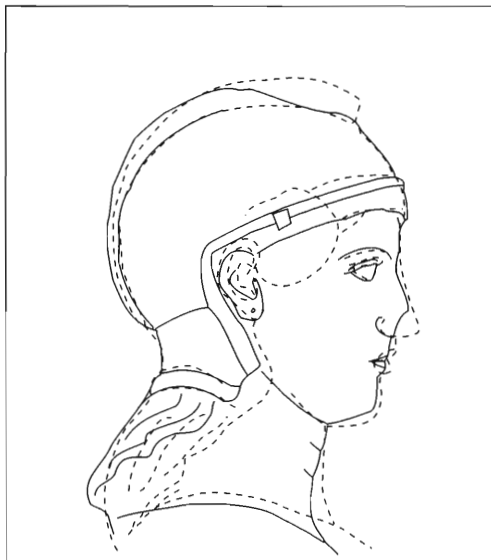


Fig.10. Thessaloniki Museum
 inv. 877 – solid line
 Vienna, Antikenmuseum
 168 – dotted line.

Fig.11. Thessaloniki Museum
 inv. 877 – solid line
 London, British
 Museum GR 1805.7-3.55 –
 dotted line



rather well. The mouth looks smaller but is, in fact, as wide as on the other heads: the optical illusion can be explained by the more fully moulded cheeks framing the mouth. By scanning the outlines of the selected heads of the Athena Medici type it has been possible to make a direct comparison of the heads to assess any divergences (Figs. 7-11).³⁷ In doing so, it becomes clear that the slanting chin on the Thessaloniki head is unique to that head. The argument against the reworking must be that a mere 5 mm, cut away from the Thessaloniki head, cannot have created a portrait out of an ideal head of a goddess.³⁸ It seems, though, as if it would have been much easier to insert another head of Julia Domna, rather than carrying out a meticulous and extremely high-quality re-cutting of the head. The coherence presented in the drawings (Figs. 7-11) might instead suggest that the head in Thessaloniki was created with the same proportions as the Athena Medici heads in general, and where differences occur, they are the result of the characteristic facial features of Julia Domna. Her distinctive hairstyle was added in stucco, cre-

ating this unique representation of the Severan Empress as Athena. The proportions of the Thessaloniki head are in line with the other heads of the Athena Medici type, but have been adjusted to become a characteristic portrait of Julia Domna. The slight differences are therefore hardly due to a re-cutting of the head, but can be explained as the result of the statue's original conception as Julia Domna in the guise of Athena.

The fragments of the Athena statue had been reused as building material in a Byzantine wall dated in the fourth or fifth century A.D.³⁹ Among the spolia was also a portrait of Septimius Severus of the early type, placed on a cuirassed bust.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, the bust is very poorly published and, although the proportions match those of the Julia Domna statue, the fact that the Septimius Severus portrait was created as a cuirassed bust makes it unlikely that they were set up together in an original layout.

Returning to the date of the Julia Domna head, the division of her portraits into two major groups, as per-

³⁷ Heads in Vatican, Athens (Pnyx), Vienna, London, Rome, and Thessaloniki – the latter only included in Theophanidis' article. The method was also used by e.g. E. R. Varner, 'Domitia Longina and the Politics of Portraiture', *AJA* 99 (1995), 187-206, esp. figs. 3, 8, 10, and 15; identifying a portrait in the Capitoline as one of Domitia Longina. I must thank John Pind, The Danish National Museum, Copenhagen, for producing these scans for me.

³⁸ In a recent review article it is emphasised how the original proportions cannot survive a re-cutting, see A. Claridge, 'Late-antique reworking of the Ara Pacis?', *JRA* 10 (1997), 447-53, esp. 448.

³⁹ 'Chronique des fouilles et découvertes archéologiques' *BCH* 48 (1924), 497-98: mentioning a honorary decree, which might be associated with the erection of the statues; S. Pelekidi, 'Ο τύπος της Αθηνάς των Μεδίκων', *AD* 9 (1927), 121 n. 2. An enquiry to the museum in Thessaloniki has not yielded any further references than the ones in the indeed recent museum catalogue, see above n. 3.

⁴⁰ Type I dated to A.D. 196/7; Thessaloniki Archaeological Museum inv. no. 898; D. Soechting, *Die Porträts des Septimius Severus* (1972), 145 no. 22: H: 0.55 m. Hh: 0.35 m.

suasively suggested by Fittschen, places the Thessaloniki portrait after A.D. 204/205 but most likely before the death of Julia Domna in A.D. 217.⁴¹

The next question concerns the reason for the erection, which could be related to members of the Imperial family visiting or just travelling through Thessaloniki. We have no evidence of Julia Domna ever having visited Thessaloniki,⁴² but we do know that Caracalla was in the neighbourhood. A dedication could be associated with Caracalla's journey to his campaign in Anatolia (A.D. 214-17). He might have come through Thessaloniki on his way to Antiochia, as suggested by Despinis,⁴³ and since Julia Domna was in Antiochia with her son in 216 she might have travelled with him.⁴⁴ This would suit the late date suggested above, based on the style of the Julia Domna head. However, a visit by the Emperor or his family is not necessary for a statue dedication: it could simply have been made by the local civil administration.⁴⁵ Julia Domna became

augusta already in 193, and although her powers vary from time to time, she held more power and had more influence than any female member of the Imperial family since Livia.⁴⁶ As such she would have been an obvious choice for a statue dedication in any location of the Roman Empire.

To sum up, I believe that the statue of Julia Domna was an original creation of the Severan period of the Empress assimilated with Athena. This must rule out an otherwise extremely meticulous and technically almost impossible recutting. Further it should be dated among the later portraits of Julia Domna, that is in the period A.D. 204/5-217.

In an interpretation of the erection of the statue of Julia Domna as Athena the circumstances of the discovery of the fragments should be investigated, before further assumptions are put forward. Unfortunately there is very little exact information to be gathered from the original publication.⁴⁷ However, in more recent publications the general

⁴¹ The date suggested by Ghedini (1984), 128, for the Julia Domna portrait as the deified Empress has indirectly been rejected by Fejfer (1988), 298, who claims that there is in general very little evidence for posthumous dedications of the Severan Empress. See also J. Fejfer, *Ikonografisk-historisk undersøgelse over portræt-opstillinger af det severiske dynastis kvinder* (unpublished prize-paper, University of Aarhus 1981), 54-55.

⁴² M. Bonello Lai, *I Viaggi di Giulia Domna sulla base della Documentazione Epigrafica* (Università di Cagliari, Facoltà di lettere e filosofia. Annali della facoltà di lettere 1978-79), *passim*.

⁴³ Despinis (1977), 100.

⁴⁴ Bonello Lai (1978-79) 43 *cf.* *AE* (1903) 265 = *IGL Syriae* VI 2713.

⁴⁵ Fejfer (1988), 300-01.

⁴⁶ Kampen (1991), 224; Lusnia (1995), 119.

⁴⁷ 'Chronique des fouilles et découvertes archéologiques' *BCH* 48 (1924), 497; Ghedini (1984), 128 saw the statue of Julia Domna as Athena in Thessaloniki as unequivocal testimony of the existence of a cult for Julia Domna as Athena where the statue was erected. This was supposedly supported by the epigraphical evidence from Athens, to which I will return below, in other words she/Ghedini did not review the actual archaeological remains from Thessaloniki.

area has been convincingly identified as the second-century ancient Agora,⁴⁸ and the building placed closest to the find spot has persuasively been interpreted as a library, because of the rectangular recesses in the remains of the wall.⁴⁹ A statue of Julia Domna as Athena could plausibly have been set up in such a context. Statues of Athena were dedicated in several libraries, an early example from the Hellenistic period being the Athena Parthenos replica in Pergamon.⁵⁰ Athena was certainly not only the goddess of war and patron of Athens, but also the female deity for promoting the pursuit of wisdom.⁵¹

The find of the sculptural fragments of statues of both Julia Domna and Septimius Severus in Thessaloniki seems to tie in neatly with an Antonine/Severan redevelopment of the city in general, and of the Agora in particular.⁵²

An assessment of Julia Domna's choice of goddesses for assimilation reveals a very wide range of subjects,⁵³ and the representation in Thessaloniki is not the only instance of an assimilation of Julia Domna with Athena. In the beginning of the twentieth century Premerstein published fragments of an Athenian decree in-

⁴⁸ Vickers (1970), 239-51; G. Velenis, 'Αρχαία αγορά Θεσσαλονίκης', *AAA XXIII-XXVIII 1990-1995* (1998), 129-42.

⁴⁹ X. Bakirtsis, 'Περί του συγκροτήματος της αγοράς της Θεσσαλονίκης', *Αρχαία Μακεδονία II* (Thessaloniki 1977), 262-63, pl. 1, fig. 5, *cf.* Professor Boura. The distinctive features of the library building being the rectangular recesses, into which the wooden scroll-cases could be placed *cf.* W.L. MacDonald, *The Architecture of the Roman Empire II. An Urban Appraisal* (1986), 118; E. Makowiecka, *The Origin and Evolution of Architectural Form of Roman Library* (1978), 78-84.

⁵⁰ N. Leipen, *Athena Parthenos. A reconstruction* (1971), no. 21; R.R.R. Smith, *Hellenistic Sculpture* (London 1991), fig. 185. See now V.M. Strocka, 'Noch einmal zur Bibliothek von Pergamon', *AA* (2000), 155-56 for a different interpretation of the building.

⁵¹ In the Roman period she maintains her Greek 'devotions', although the centre of gravity was slightly different in Rome in the early period, *cf.* W. Schürmann, *Untersuchungen zu Typologie und Bedeutung der Stadtrömischen Minerva-Kultbilder* (1985), 5: on the Aventine Hill, especially in the Republican period, she was honoured as patron for craftsmen, whereas in the Imperial period she is often seen as the city protectress. However, the evidence, both literary and archaeological, from the early Imperial period does provide further examples of Athena/Minerva as patron for craftsmen. I will treat this subject in more detail in a forthcoming study on Athena/Minerva in the Roman period.

⁵² Vickers (1970), 249-51: the date is supported by pottery finds from the stoas of the Agora examined by Dr. J.W. Hayes; G. Velenis, 'Αρχαία αγορά Θεσσαλονίκης', *AAA XXIII-XXVIII 1990-1995* (1998), 142, also describes various Roman phases: second and third centuries, and the second half of the fourth century A.D. Vickers believes the Agora became more of a Roman Forum rather than a Greek Agora under the Severans, and he therefore expects a temple – a *Capitolium* – dominating one end in the Roman manner (or perhaps both ends as at Philippi, in which connection it should be noted that the shape and layout of the actual agora matches in detail the one at Philippi, which is just much smaller, *cf.* Velenis. If this is so, another possibility might be that the Athena/Julia Domna statue was located in this temple, as Ghedini (1984), 128 already has suggested.

⁵³ Mikocki (1995), 69-77, 125: as many as 20 different goddesses and personifications are used by Julia Domna. This is the highest number for an empress, with Livia in second place with 17 different deities.

scription on a stele from A.D. 195-8. The inscription described the way in which an image of Julia Domna was set up and worshipped in the temple of Athena Polias on the Athenian Acropolis.⁵⁴ It describes both throne- and temple-sharing and, more interestingly, the sharing of sacrifice.⁵⁵

Furthermore, the decree mentions that a golden statue of Julia Domna was commissioned for the Parthenon. Although there are disagreements over the interpretation of some details in the inscription, the general reading is unquestionable and the mention of sharing of sacrifice is unusual. The only comparable examples date from the Julio-Claudian period, with an inscrip-

tion from Athens mentioning Livia, and another from Pergamon relating to Julia Livilla.⁵⁶

An investigation of Julia Domna's use of Athena for assimilations must, of course, also include coins, and in a recent article it has been suggested that the reverse of Julia Domna's coins provide the most useful information regarding her public image as projected by the Imperial court.⁵⁷ Previously, scholars have suggested that Julia Domna also used Athena's image in this medium for her self-representation. According to F. Ghedini, the similarity between two coins, deriving from respectively Laodicea ad Mare and Gabala, makes it possible to

⁵⁴ A. v. Premerstein. 'Athenische Kultehren für Kaiserin Iulia Domna', *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts* 16 (1913), 249-70; *IG* ii-iii.1 (IA I,2) 1076; a further inscription of the same decree discovered in 1939, see Oliver (1941), 84-85.

⁵⁵ The Athenian inscription mentioning Julia Domna preserves a decree of the Athenian people providing that, in view of Julia Domna's help to an Athenian envoy with a petition,

1. all the magistrates shall sacrifice to Agathe Tyche on her birthday and on entering office to Julia Augusta, Saviour of Athens, and to Athena Polias:
2. the General in charge of the hoplites shall cause to be made an image of Julia and the Archon shall set it under the same roof as Polias, ἵνα σύνθρο[νος]:
3. the day on which the Embassy was sent to the Emperor is to be kept holy:
4. the Archon is to make a sacrifice to Julia at the end of June, the care for this sacrifice resting on the priestess of Athena Polias and the dues falling to her share:
5. [the priestess] is to dedicate a golden image (ἄ]γαλμα χρουσοῦν) of Julia in the Parthenon:
6. the General is to offer a preliminary sacrifice to Agathe Tyche and the magistrates and all the priests and the heralds are to pour a libation. The priestesses and the Basilissa of the new year are to make their inaugural sacrifice to Athena Polias; the free maidens are to be present and there is to be an illumination dance and festival in order that the piety felt towards Julia Augusta, Saviour of Athens, may be made manifest:
7. the decree is to be inscribed on a stele to be set by the altar of the Augusti.

Cf. Nock (1930), 229. Kettenhofen (1979), 111-12, argues that Julia Domna is not personified as Athena Polias, though see most recently M. Beard, J. North and S. Price, *Religions of Rome* vol. I: A History (Cambridge 1998), 355-56; vol. II: A Source book (Cambridge 1998), no. 10.5c, who follow J.H. Oliver, 'Julia Domna as Athena Polias', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* suppl. 1 (1940), 521-30, in that the honours mentioned in the decree specifically identified Julia Domna with Athena Polias.

⁵⁶ See further below.

⁵⁷ Though this is put forward in relation to issues minted in Rome, see Lusnia (1995), 119-39, esp. 121.

interpret the image of Athena on the reverse of the Gabala coin as an assimilation or association of Julia Domna (figs. 12-13).⁵⁸ The Laodicea coin has the head of Septimius Severus with a laurel wreath on the obverse; on the reverse a small distyle temple or shrine frames the portrait of Julia Domna, who, according to the adjacent inscription, should be understood as Tyche.

The coin from Gabala has a portrait of Julia Domna on the obverse and on the reverse a similar distyle temple, but this time with a bust of Athena placed on a rectangular base.⁵⁹ I believe the association can find support by the observations made by Hahn in relation to coins from Alexandria. Two coins relating to Domitia Longina and Sabina both use the term *σεβαστή/sebaste* together with the name of Athena, thus making an assimilation or association possible between the Flavian and Antonine empresses and the goddess.⁶⁰

I should like to present some brief comments on Athena/Minerva's role in the Imperial period in general before returning to the specific case of

the Severans. Since there are no secure sculptural representations of Imperial women assimilated with Athena, we must look at the epigraphical and numismatic evidence. Gems and cameos represent another fairly large group of material from the period.

There are at least seven inscriptions, which associate Athena with a female member of the Imperial household. They are dated in the Augustan or Julio-Claudian period and refer to just two women: Livia and Julia Livilla. Four of the inscriptions refer to the association between Livia and Athena, and derive from four different locations: Athens, Kyzicus, Eresos and Aizanoi. Athena is called either Pronaia or Nikephoros.⁶¹

Julia Livilla, the daughter of Germanicus and sister of Caligula,⁶² is mentioned in connection with Athena in three inscriptions, all from Pergamon, as Nikephoros in all three instances. In one of these examples she is also called *synthronos* ("throne-sharing").⁶³

The numismatic evidence has already been mentioned, with the two examples

⁵⁸ *BMC Galatia, Cappadocia, Syria*, 245 no. 10; cf. Ghedini (1984), 132.

⁵⁹ *BMC Galatia etc.*, 258 no. 81, pl. XXX.9 for the Laodicea coin, and *ibid.* 245 no. 10, pl. XXVIII.12 for the Gabala coin; cf. Ghedini (1984), 132, figs. 24 and 20, respectively. On the Laodicea coin see also M.J. Price and B.L. Trell, *Coins and their Cities* (1977), fig. 469, who interpret this particular image as showing a portable shrine in which the image of the empress/goddess was displayed.

⁶⁰ Hahn (1994), 242, 285-86, nos. 249 and 297.

⁶¹ Athens: *IG* iii 1.461= *IG* ii-iii 3238, from after A.D. 29: uses the epithet Pronaia; Kyzicus: *IGR* IV 144, uncertain date: Nikephoros; Eresos: *IG* XII suppl. (1939) 37-8 no. 124, Augustan: Pronaia; Aizanoi: *IGR* IV no. 584, Claudian: Pronaia.

⁶² On Julia Livilla see also S. Wood, 'Diva Drusilla Panthea and the sisters of Caligula', *AJA* 99 (1995), 457-82.

⁶³ *IGR* IV 328, 464 (*synthronos*), and 476, they all date from A.D. 37-39, cf. Hahn (1994), 171.

Fig. 12. (Left)
London British Museum,
Department of Coins and
Medals, *BMC*
Galatia etc. 258
no. 81: Laodicea
ad Mare – reverse.



Fig. 13. (Right)
London, British Museum,
Department of Coins and
Medals, *BMC*
Galatia etc. 245
no. 10:
Gabala – reverse.



presented by Hahn concerning Domitia Longina and Sabina, dated to respectively A.D. 90/91 and 121/122.⁶⁴

The third group of material concerns gems and cameos. The evidence is well-known for its ambiguity and must be treated very cautiously. The Julio-Claudian and Severan periods are the best represented in this chronologically disparate group of material. Six gems or cameos associate Athena with women from the Julio-Claudian Imperial household.⁶⁵

Finally, private women who chose to use Athena for their imagery should be presented. Three examples are rele-

vant here, of which two are private grave reliefs from Macedonia. They are dated in the late second and early third centuries A.D., respectively.⁶⁶ One is a grave relief from Trojaci and displays a small Athena standing between a large man and woman.⁶⁷ She has generally been interpreted as the deceased daughter of the framing couple, in the shape of the goddess. The other relief shows an Athena in size equal to two of the other figures next to a slightly smaller Herakles.⁶⁸ These two instances seem to show how maidens, who most likely died unmarried and childless, were chosen by their parents to be associated with Athena/Minerva on the funerary monument.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Hahn (1994), 242, 285-86, nos. 249 and 297.

⁶⁵ The Julio-Claudian material concerns: gem in British Museum no. 3584: Julia or Agrippina the elder; gem in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles no. 226: Agrippina the elder; gem in Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum inv. no. IXa 63; gem in Paris, as above no. 277: Octavia; gem, *ibid.* no. 21: Octavia; Rhineland, Müller Collection: Poppaea. I will discuss this material in more detail in my forthcoming general work on Athena/Minerva in the Roman period.

⁶⁶ Wrede (1981), nos. 157/236 and 235.

⁶⁷ S. Düll, 'Götter auf Makedonischen Grabstelen', in *Essays in memory of B. Laourdas* (1975) Abb. T7; Wrede (1981) no. 235.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Abb. T6; Wrede (1981) no. 157/236.

⁶⁹ Wrede (1981) *passim*: this is already indicated in the Hellenistic period and with an early example of an assimilation with Athena *cf.* the already mentioned poem of Kallimachos to Berenike II, where she is compared with Athena before she married, see L. Koenen, 'The

The third example concerns a portrait bust of a mature woman dated in the Flavian period. She is depicted in the Flavian realistic manner, with wrinkles and loose skin. She wears the helmet of Athena, indicating the power and dominance of the goddess and tallying in nicely with the portrait features of this Roman matron.⁷⁰

As mentioned in the introduction, there seems to be evidence not only of Julia Domna's use of Athena in the Severan period, but perhaps also of a predilection for this goddess among the men in the Severan family. There are three possible examples in the arts of Caracalla in the guise of the goddess.

Athena's masculinity is naturally associated with her warrior-like character and with two of her attributes, the aegis and the head of Medusa, which are often seen in connection with male rulers. The aegis gives the bearer di-

vine powers, and the head of Medusa adds apotropaic qualities. The aegis originally belonged to Zeus but is more often carried by Athena.⁷¹ The association with a mortal, and specifically with a ruler, is a feature that first appears under Alexander the Great and continues into the Hellenistic and Roman periods.⁷²

Chronologically, the attributes are most common with emperors and Imperial women of the Julio-Claudian period and the Minerva iconography gains currency especially in the Claudian period, with the two Agrippinas and at least eight examples of Claudius carrying her attributes.⁷³

However, the use of the attributes is taken further in a few cases, where it might be argued that the person has been associated or even assimilated with Athena. There are three examples from the Severan period which, I believe, are associations of Caracalla

Ptolemaic King as Religious Figure', in A. Bulloch, E. Gruen, A.A. Long and A. Stewart (eds.), *Images and Ideologies. The Self-definition in the Hellenistic World* (1993), 108. Though Matheson (1996), 190 only refers to Diana and Persephone in this connection.

⁷⁰ Unfortunately the present whereabouts of this head are not known, see Wrede (1981), no. 234; Matheson (1996), 189.

⁷¹ *LIMC* VIII. 1 (1997) s.v. 'Aigeai', 513-14 (S. Vierck).

⁷² W.-R. Megow (1987), no. A 110, has suggested that a gem in Paris, Cabinet des Médailles no. 128, is a representation of Domitian assimilated with Athena/Minerva. The masculine facial features have earlier been associated with Constantine the Great or Gallienus. The head carries both helmet and aegis for the identification with the goddess. However, Boschung questioned it along with other attributions made by Megow, whereas Henig thinks it an interesting suggestion: *Gnomon* 63 (1991), 255-59 and *JRA* 1 (1988), 143-44, respectively. The gem can be traced back a long way, ruling out the work as modern.

⁷³ For the men, see Megow (1987), A 18, A 29-30 (Augustus); A 62 (Caligula); A 70-71, A 73-74, A 76, A 80-81, A 84 (Claudius); A 85 (Tiberius); A 88-90 (Jupiter); A 93, A 98-99, A 103 (Nero); A 106 (Galba?); A 115 (Augustus); A 129 (Hadrian); A 141 (Commodus?); A 143 (Caracalla); A 156 (Caracalla?); C. 20, C 24, C 26, C 28 (Germanicus) For the women *ibid.*, nos. B26-27 with discussion on p. 149. These are also questioned by Boschung, *Gnomon* 63 (1991), 258. However, there is a problem with the historical analysis of the material evidence, since scholars often fail to refer to any physical representations of the association of the Imperial person in question with a deity, as seen recently in A. E. Barrett, *Agrippina. Mother*

Fig. 14. Leptis Magna,
Septimius Severus Ach
(DAI Rome).



with Athena: two are sculptural representations and one is a gem.⁷⁴

The first example concerns part of the decoration of the triumphal arch of Septimius Severus at Leptis Magna, dated *c.* A.D. 205/6-208/9.⁷⁵ Four figures can be seen on the relief slab on the inner face of the pier, from left to right: Tyche, Juno, Jupiter and Minerva. I should like to focus on the

three latter figures (fig. 14). Juno is identified by the peacock by her side and the veiled head, and the wig-like coiffure gives her away as Julia Domna. Next to her sits Jupiter on his throne holding a staff. His chin is covered in a long beard, depicted in almost separate strands of corkscrew curls, characteristic of Septimius Severus. Finally, Athena/Minerva can be identified by the shield she carries on her left arm, the aegis on her chest, and the owl standing by her right foot. The two centrally placed gods, Juno and Jupiter, are assimilated without question with the Emperor and Empress because of hairstyle and beard. I will suggest that in this Capitoline Trio the Minerva figure may be interpreted as Caracalla who had been co-ruler since 199, when he became *augustus*. Unfortunately, the head of Minerva is missing, which might otherwise have given a final clue for or against my interpretation.

The second example comes from a completely different area of the Empire: Moesia inferior, nowadays Bulgaria, where a votive relief presents the Capitoline trio standing under

of Nero (London 1996), who has no references to any assimilations of Agrippina with Athena/Minerva. The Vienna gem is mentioned (*Gemma Claudia* – for this see also Künzl, ‘*Gemma Claudia*’, *Römisch-Germ. Zentralmuseum: Arch. Korrespondenzblatt* 24 (1994), 289-97), but the gems in Paris and London (Megow B 26-27), and their association of Agrippina the younger with Minerva, are not. Likewise, a new book on Domitian has no mention or discussion of Megow’s attribution of the Paris-Domitian gem. Cf. P. Southern, *Domitian. Tragic Tyrant* (London/New York 1997).

⁷⁴ Furthermore, looking at the literary evidence, there is at least one example of Caracalla being worshipped in Athena’s temple, notably from Pergamon: cf. Nock (1930), 221; M. Fränkel, *Die Inschriften von Pergamon* II (1890-95), no. 299, 225ff.

⁷⁵ Select bibliography: R. Bartoccini, ‘L’Arco quadrifronte dei Severi a Lepcis (Leptis Magna)’, *Africa Italiana* 4 (1931), 32-152, esp. 83-84, fig. 48; Strocka (1972), 169-70; Ghedini (1984) 80-81, fig. 11; Mikocki (1995), cat. no. 423, pl. XIX.

an arcade supported by two columns (fig. 15).⁷⁶ An inscription below the sculptural representation informs us that the relief was set up in honour of the Great Jupiter, Queen Juno, Minerva and the consul, after the dedicator, Caius Straboratus, a veteran soldier, had been granted freedom from public service. It dates from the early third century A.D. The Capitoline Trio has Jupiter in the centre with features and beard of Septimius Severus; on his right, Juno is depicted with the characteristic hairstyle of Julia Domna. On Jupiter-Septimius Severus' left stands Minerva with a shield by her right leg and a spear in the left hand. I would again suggest an assimilation of Athena/Minerva with Caracalla. In favour hereof is the dedicatory inscription, where the gods are addressed on equal level. As noted above, Caracalla became co-regent in 199 and so the most likely interpretation of the Capitoline Trio on the votive relief, is that it depicts the ruling family: Septimius Severus and Julia Domna as Jupiter and Juno, and Caracalla as Athena.

Finally, a gem in Paris shows four busts (fig. 16),⁷⁷ two by two in profile facing each other. It depicts the Severan family, probably prior to the



Fig. 15. Bulgaria, Novae (Polish Archaeological Expedition, cf. Mikocki (1995) pl. XIX no. 424).

death of Geta in A.D. 211/212. The four figures have been interpreted as Septimius Severus and Julia Domna on the left assimilated with Jupiter-Sol and Juno, and Caracalla and Geta on the right, where only the former can be assimilated with a deity, in this case, because of the aegis he is wearing, Minerva.

The material briefly presented above makes an association between Caracalla and Minerva possible.⁷⁸ If the interpretation is correct, we have three examples from various parts of the Empire, where the goddess is be-

⁷⁶ Relief stele; Novae (Moesia Inferior); Veliko Tyrnovo, Okrazen Narodni Muzei. H: 0.94; W: 0.83 m. Local limestone. Findspot unknown. Early third century A.D. Select bibliography: Kolendo and Sultov, *Eos. Commentarii Societatis philologiae polonorum* lxxv (1987), 369-79, fig. 1; I. Novae no. 12; Mikocki (1995), cat. no. 424, pl. XIX.

⁷⁷ Cameo, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles inv. no. B 13047 (no. 300) 0.75 x 0.112 m; sardonyx, perhaps early third century; Select bibliography: Babelon, *Camées Bibliothèque Nationale*, 156, no. 300, pl. XXXIV; A. Furtwängler, *Die Antiken Gemmen III* (1900), 365-66, fig. 199; Ghedini (1984), 108 n. 298, 126, 153; Megow (1987), no. A 143; Mikocki (1995), no. 427.

⁷⁸ Mikocki (1995), 73: "elle pourrait constituer une allusion au troisième membre important de la famille impériale - Caracalla".

Fig. 16. Paris, Cabinet des Médailles B 13047 (Museum photo).



ing used for an association with a man from the Severan Imperial family. Cross-gender assimilations seem strange to us, perhaps, but I believe there are two factors in favour of that interpretation. The first concerns the apparent changed attitudes towards the question of gender over the centuries, where precisely the period of the Severans marks a shift.⁷⁹ Myths change and so do conceptions of gender: they are dependent on changing contexts and attitudes, making it possible for the meanings to digress. That leads us to the second factor, concerning the nature of Athena/Minerva. She is generally known as the goddess of war and protectress of the city but, as

noted in connection with Julia Domna, her intellectual qualities were also well-known. Additionally, we see her status as virgin used in a funerary context, on grave markers of young girls. The warrior character is obviously a masculine characteristic, and in favour of Caracalla as Athena the warrior, the example from Thessaloniki of Julia Domna as Athena speaks indirectly. Here it is not the militant goddess but rather the goddess of wisdom, which is displayed in the statue in the library of the Roman agora. When Julia Domna is associated with a military aspect it is the *mater castrorum* title which is chosen instead.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ N. Kampen, 'Omphale and the Instability of Gender', in N. Kampen (ed.), *Sexuality in Ancient Art* (1996), 233-46; the East seems to offer a more "relaxed" attitude to the subject, which fits nicely with the background of Septimius and his Eastern wife, cf. *ibid.*, 240. Mikocki (1996), 73, believes the phenomenon of men being assimilated with female goddesses was well known in Antiquity, and further that there is a tradition of rulers favouring the androgynous, with nn. 270-71.

⁸⁰ Appears first under Faustina the younger, cf. *Capitol. Marc. Aur.* 26, and granted to Julia Domna in A.D. 195: Kettenhofen (1979), 79-80; Fejfer (1985), 131; W. Kukoff, 'Zur Titulation der römischen Kaiserinnen während der Prinzipatszeit', *Klio* 75 (1993), 244-56; Lusnia (1995), 123.

The evidence presented above produces further questions. Firstly, who were the individuals assimilated with Athena / Minerva? Do these women and, for that matter, men, have anything in common that may be connected with the goddess of both war and culture? Secondly, does the geographical dispersion of the material describe a pattern? And, thirdly, in which respects do Severan examples differ from earlier ones?

Concerning the first question, it has already been claimed that there is an accumulation of examples in the Julio-Claudian period and, again, under the Severans, with singular examples under Domitian and Hadrian. I have concentrated on the two former dynasties. Across the centuries it appears that both young and mature women could be assimilated with Athena. Livia (58 B.C.-A.D. 29), Agrippina the Elder (c. 14/13 B.C.-A.D. 33) and Agrippina the Younger (A.D. 15-59) and Julia Domna (A.D. ?-217) are the mature examples. Younger women are represented by Julia Livilla (A.D. 18-42), Poppaea (A.D. c. 31-65) and Octavia (A.D. c. 40/42-62). A common denominator for all examples is found in the men who were associated with the women: Tiberius, Claudius, and Caligula were all sons, brothers or grandsons of the women, and apparently dedicators of the monuments.

The evidence relating to Livia, whether it concerns inscriptions, coins, sculpture, gems or literary sources assimilating her with any goddess or personification, belongs largely in the Julio-Claudian period, especially in the reigns of Tiberius and Claudius.⁸¹ Julia Livilla was honoured especially by her brother Caligula, in whose reign the dedications at Pergamon are also dated.⁸² Agrippina the younger is another of his sisters: she lived the longest and was honoured together with their mother, Agrippina the elder. However, she is only represented on cameos, which are very difficult to date, though I believe a date in Caligula's reign would be quite likely. There is a well-known literary reference to the importance Athena / Minerva played to the Emperor: in the year 39 he chose to place his new-born daughter Julia Drusilla (named after the third and apparently most beloved of his sisters), in the lap of Athena in the Capitoline temple.⁸³ Some have even wanted to see this little girl, who died only four months later, assimilated with Athena on a cameo in Paris.⁸⁴

As for Octavia and Poppaea, their assimilations can be connected with Claudius and Nero, father and husband of the respective women. In the case of Julia Domna the matter is not so clear-cut. The majority of the assimilations of

⁸¹ This becomes evident when examining the 132 catalogue numbers relating to Livia in Mikocki (1995), cat. nos. 1-132; see also Matheson (1996), 183.

⁸² S. Wood, 'Diva Drusilla Panthea and the sisters of Caligula', *AJA* 99 (1995), 457-82.

⁸³ Suet. Cal. 25,4; Cassius Dio LIX 28, 7 writes in the lap of Jupiter but still to receive Athena's protection. See M. Fuchs, 'Frauen um Caligula und Claudius: Milonia Caesonia, Drusilla und Messalina', *AA* (1990), 107-22.

⁸⁴ *Eadem* fig. 1: Bibliothèque Nationale no. 277. It is a possibility but, since there seems to be doubts about the authenticity of the little head, it is better to be cautious.

Julia Domna with various goddesses and personifications are to be dated before Septimius Severus' death in 211, but as Caracalla became co-ruler in 199, some assimilations may rather be on his initiative, although he was only 10-12 years old when he was declared *augustus*.⁸⁵ The statue in Thessaloniki might possibly, however, be connected with Caracalla's travels through the area, whereas the inscriptions from Athens are dated under Septimius Severus, which is also the case for the coin from Gabala.

In most instances, female or male, Athena/Minerva's warrior like character is used, and might in the earlier, i.e. Julio-Claudian, examples be seen as a fore-runner of the *mater castrorum* title, which was not officially introduced until Faustina the younger.⁸⁶ However, some of the inscriptions should be understood as following existing cult practice, where the city goddess, Athena Polias, is associated with the 'first lady' of the Empire.⁸⁷ However, in the Severan period the usage of the powers of the goddess became more wide-spread. The material from Thessaloniki must, for instance,

be associated with Julia Domna's intellectual leanings.

As regards private women associated with Athena/Minerva, the examples mentioned illustrate young unmarried women, honoured by their parents – surely attempts at playing on Athena's virginity.⁸⁸ Caligula uses the goddess for assimilations of his sisters for the same reason, and the same thing happens in the case of Octavia.

The second question concerns the geographical dispersion of the material. All the examples come from outside Italy, with the possible exception of the gems, which should probably be associated with the Imperial court of the capital. Athena/Minerva-assimilations are known from Athens, Thessaloniki, Skopje and Moesia Inferior in Bulgaria, from Eresos on Lesbos, Gabala in Galatia, Aizanoi, Kyzicus and Pergamon in Asia Minor, from Alexandria and Leptis Magna in North Africa. Especially in Macedonia, both private individuals and rulers in the late second early and third century A.D. were keen on using Athena in their personal imagery.

⁸⁵ Mikocki (1995), *passim* – 43 catalogue numbers; Fejfer (1985), 131.

⁸⁶ The appellation was due to the fact that Faustina the younger accompanied her husband, Marcus Aurelius, on several expeditions, the first leading to his victory over the Quadi in A.D. 174. She died in A.D. 175 on another campaign to the East. The appellation was used in later inscriptions as a title of the Roman empresses: Lusnia (1995), 123.

⁸⁷ As in the cases of Livia and Julia Domna in Athens and Julia Livilla in Pergamon. At Kyzicus and Eresos on Lesbos there is also evidence of local cults for Athena, which might explain the honours paid to Livia, *cf.* Hahn (1994), 378-80. However, there seems to be no such evidence available in relation to the inscription from Aizanoi (Livia) or the coin emissions from Alexandria (Domitia Longina and Sabina) and Gabala (Julia Domna), respectively.

⁸⁸ Though it is otherwise the goddess Diana who is understood as used to indicate virginity for women/girls "below the elite stratum" *cf.* N.B. Kampen, 'Material Girl: Feminist Confrontations with Roman Art' in *Arethusa* 27 (1994), 111-35, esp. 126-28.

That leads us to the third question, whether the usage of the goddess is different in the Severan period than earlier. I believe that the evidence supports a Severan attraction to, and usage of, Athena/Minerva in court propaganda as reflected in sculpture and on coins. That usage spread to local dedications, and to gems, which are pictures from within the Imperial household.⁸⁹ The Severans did not limit their use of Athena's many powers and appearances to the warrior goddess only, but used the entire available spectrum. Julia Domna is mainly known for the way she was used to promote the Severan dynasty as a natural continuation of the Antonine predecessors, evoking the memory of both the elder and younger Faustina, and by emphasising her role as mother of the new dynasty.⁹⁰ Her military associations lay in the multiple usage of the *mater castrorum* title and image, as introduced by the Antonine empresses.⁹¹ The above-mentioned Gabala coin,

where the Empress is associated with Athena, should probably be interpreted as an example of that. The statue in the Agora of Thessaloniki marks a contrast to that image. Bearing in mind Julia Domna's intellectual qualities, as known from literary sources, and her friendship with Philostratos,⁹² it is not surprising to find her in an original creation of Athena-Julia Domna dedicated in the library in Thessaloniki. It is debatable whether or not Caracalla wished to be, and was seen as, the goddess in her warrior attire, but I believe it is a possibility that should be taken into consideration.

The assessment of the role of Athena / Minerva in Roman female portraiture, presented here, has hopefully shown that she played a significant part in assimilations of Imperial women with goddesses. Furthermore, Athena could take on many different aspects other than the – albeit important – military one.

⁸⁹ According to N. Hannestad in *Roman Art and Imperial Policy* (1987), 275, the image of Athena plays a strong part in the coinage of the period – he also suggests an association between Julia Domna and Minerva on the Concordia relief on the Severan Arch at Leptis Magna, where the goddess is placed above the head of the Empress, *idem*. fig. 168.

⁹⁰ Kampen (1991), 224; Lusnia (1995), 137.

⁹¹ Lusnia (1995), 123, and, as noted earlier, also here following a precedent set by the Antonine empresses, i.e. Faustina the Younger.

⁹² G.W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (1969), 101-09.

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