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Mines and Quarries in the Roman Empire.

Organizational Aspects 27BC – AD 235.

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Scholars have recently argued for a centralized administration of mines and quarries under imperial control. This DPhil thesis questions this hypothesis and aims to provide a detailed study of the administrative or organizational structures of imperial mines and quarries.

The examination of the archaeological evidence, particularly the topographical layout of quarrying and mining sites, and of the organizational implications of geological constraints on mining or quarrying enterprises revealed stark differences in the way work procedures could be organized. Such constraints furthermore influenced the decision of procurators running an extractive operation on whether or not mining pits or quarrying sections were to be farmed out or what work procedures were to be employed.

The epigraphic evidence corroborates this picture of strong organizational differences amongst imperial mines and quarries. It furthermore documents the relative independence of equestrian and freedmen procurators from Rome in making organizational decisions within their clearly defined mining or quarrying districts (which are public property). The close cooperation of mining and quarrying procurators with provincial governors, presidial and financial procurators in the supply of workers and logistical support furthermore suggests that imperial extractive operations were mainly the concern of the individual provinces. Apart from tapping the personnel and material resources of the provinces, the mining or quarrying administrations leaned heavily on the military units. The Roman army played a considerable

role not only in providing protection and security for extractive operations, but in supplying technical and administrative assistance to imperial mines and quarries.

These and further observations do not support the idea of a centralized and combined administration for both imperial mines and quarries. Moreover, the delegation of most managerial powers to the mining and quarrying procurators which were equipped with a sizeable administrative staff and based in the provinces or even in the immediate vicinity of mines and quarries, makes a centralized administration directed from Rome unlikely. Within the framework of the imperial administration, the organization of imperial mines and quarries therefore has to be described as decentralized. A publication of this DPhil thesis is forthcoming.