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INTRODUCTION

In Italy during the fourteenth century some men began to study ancient Roman coins. This should not be a surprise though, as it was the Renaissance, and there was a great interest in the classical past. The humanist Petrarch was the most famous of these early numismatists. Petrarch said in a letter that often people would approach him with a request to identify a newly discovered ancient coin. “Often there came to me in Rome a vinedigger, holding in his hands an ancient jewel or a golden Latin coin, sometimes scratched by the hard edge of a hoe, urging me either to buy it or to identify the heroic faces inscribed on them.”¹ At this time, people were mostly concerned with iconography— they mainly wanted to know which emperor was on the front of their coin. A quote from Petrarch illustrates the Renaissance interest in the portraits on the coins. In 1354, Petrarch gave some Roman coins to Emperor Charles IV. “I presented him with some gold and silver coins, which I held very dear. They bore the effigies of some of our rulers—one of them, a most life-like head of Caesar Augustus—and were inscribed with exceedingly minute characters.”² These early coin collectors would probably be better called antiquarians rather than numismatists. An antiquarian might collect just for the acquisition of old objects, but numismatists study coins in an attempt

¹ Francesco Petrarch, *Letters on Familiar Matters XVII- XXIV*. Translated by Aldo S. Bernardo (New York: Italica Press, 2005) , 57.

² Francesco Petrarch, *Petrarch, the First Modern Scholar and Man of Letters; A Selection from His Correspondence with Boccaccio and Other Friends, Designed to Illustrate the Beginnings of the Renaissance*. Translated by James Harvey Robinson (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1970) , 371-372.

to answer specific questions that are often historical in nature. In the ensuing centuries however, the field of Roman numismatics grew exponentially. Iconography is still important, but now the field is a multi-disciplinary endeavor that encompasses many areas such as history, archaeology, and science. Many people have long recognized the importance of numismatics to history, and some, like the poet W. H. Auden, have argued that coins are more reliable than ancient sources:

Serious historians study coins and weapons
 Not those reiterations of one self-importance
 By whom they date them,
 Knowing that clerks could soon propose a model
 As manly as any of whom schoolmasters tell
 Their yawning pupils.³

Of course, coins can be as problematic and prone to bias as written sources, but as long as the numismatist is careful and uses established research criteria, coins can help tell a much fuller story of history.

This paper will look at bronze coins of Constantine the Great, in conjunction with the primary and secondary sources, in an attempt to glean a fuller picture of the past and explore some of the debates that occur in the field of Roman numismatics. Constantine was one of the most (if not the most) influential of the Roman emperors, and his actions and deeds are still affecting people to this day. Constantine looms large in history, and even in his own time he was impressive, at least according to Eusebius, who said that Constantine was “so exceeding his contemporaries as even to put them in fear...he took pride in moral qualities rather than physical superiority.”⁴ An interesting question one

³ W. H. Auden, quoted in Michael Grant, *Roman History from Coins* (Barnes & Noble, 1995) , 16.

⁴ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*. Translated by Averil Cameron and Stuart Hall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) , 77.

might ask is, “Without Constantine, would Christianity have flourished?”⁵ The answer to that question is outside the scope of this paper, but it helps demonstrate the fundamental importance of his actions. Another important decision Constantine made was turning the city of Byzantium into his new capitol of Constantinople. So, even though the Western Empire eventually fell, it carried on in the east, as the Byzantine Empire centered at Constantinople.⁶ Constantine may have been more responsible for shaping medieval Europe than any other single person. Numismatically, Constantine also made a long-lasting contribution. In A.D. 309, he introduced a unit of currency called the *solidus*. This gold coin remained in use in the Byzantine Empire until the tenth century. To this day, people are still fascinated with Constantine and his story and myths, and this paper hopes to shed some light on the subject of the significance of this emperor.

As numismatics is a specialized field, this paper will use many numismatic terms that are the jargon of the field, so some of the more common definitions are in order. Ancient Roman coins minted during the fourth century were hand struck by slaves. Before minting coins though, someone had to make a die. Two dies had to be engraved, the obverse, or front, typically had the bust of the emperor surrounded by the obverse legend which generally consisted of the name of the ruler, and the reverse, or back, which

⁵ Ramsay Macmullen asked just this question and ultimately said that without state sponsorship it is doubtful that Christianity would have been successful, *Christianity & Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University, 1997).

⁶ There has been a lot of debate as to whether the Empire fell (Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is often cited) or if it was more of a transformation. The concept of transformation was really started by Peter Brown. Recently there have been some historians that convincingly argued that it was indeed a fall. For example-- Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (New York: Oxford University, 2006) and Bryan Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

could consist of various types with different messages.⁷ Before the minting process, employees prepared metal by melting it and generally they used circular moulds to make coin sized planchets. The engraver made the obverse die so that it would fit into an anvil, while the reverse die looked similar to a large punch. Now the tricky and potentially dangerous part began as one slave held the planchet with a tong between the anvil and punch, while another swung a very large, heavy hammer. The mint workers did this repeatedly, and they managed to turn out a remarkably uniform product. Of course, as these coins were struck by hand, no two would be exactly the same. Using different dies, since they wore out fairly frequently, also meant that there was quite a bit of variety. After the planchet has been struck, numismatists often refer to the body of the coin as the flan, even though sometimes the term is interchangeable. The specific name of these coins is unknown, but modern numismatists regularly refer to the standard unit of this period as a *follis* (plural *folles*).⁸ The coins that this paper will deal with have a mintmark in the exergue. This area is located on the reverse of a coin, at the bottom, and is often separated from the rest of the coin by a line. The mintmark not only tells which city minted the coin, but also which *officina* in the mint performed the operation. Mint officials divided the mints into different workshops or *officinae* for efficiency and also for accountability. In the West, Latin, such as P for *prima*, was used to designate the

⁷ “The main task of the obverse legend in our period is to facilitate the identification of the ruler.” Patrick Bruun, *Roman Imperial Coinage Volume VII: Constantine and Licinius* (London: Spink & Son, 1997), 27.

⁸ The actual name of the coins used at this time is unknown, and there are also other names used such as *nummus*. The word *follis* was actually a bag used to hold 12,500 *denarii*, but it is standard practice to call a single coin a *follis*. For more on this see the article by A. H. M. Jones, “The Origin and Early History of the Follis.” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 49 (1959) : 34-38.

officina, while the East used Greek, like A for *alpha* and so on. For example, a coin from Trier might have STR in the exergue, which means that the second workshop (*Secunda*) in Trier (TR) was responsible, while a coin from Alexandria might have an exergue of SMALB, which translates as sacred money (*sacra moneta*) from the second (*beta*) workshop of Alexandria. This was actually a very efficient and quite orderly system for identification and accountability, and modern U.S. practice continues to utilize mintmarks to distinguish which cities minted particular coins. There may also be various symbols in the exergue, like dots or stars, which help to further separate issues, like *dot PTR*, which means this coin was from the first *officina* of Trier. The reverse may also have field marks, which may consist of symbols or letters. These field marks are generally found in the left and right fields of the reverse, mainly to the sides of the main design.

Numismatists have many reference works for the period that this paper will encompass, but the most commonly cited work will be volume seven of *The Roman Imperial Coinage*,⁹ which numismatists commonly abbreviate RIC VII. This book is part of a ten volume set that covers the period of Imperial coinage, from 27 B.C. through A.D. 491. RIC VI, which covers the period from A.D. 294- A.D. 313, has some coins of Constantine's reign, but RIC VII, covering A.D. 313- 337, is the main book for his coinage. When Patrick Bruun was working on this book, he surveyed major museum collections and the relevant literature in an effort to catalogue the coinage of this period. He arranged it geographically by mint so that it starts in the West with London and ends

⁹ Patrick Bruun, *Roman Imperial Coinage Volume VII: Constantine and Licinius* (London, Spink & Son, 1997).

in the East with Alexandria. Within each city section, the coins are further arranged chronologically. This book is very technical and Bruun did not write it for the novice; but for the serious numismatist of this period, it is the requisite and authoritative book. Anne Robertson, a noted numismatist, said of this book, “It would be difficult to praise too highly Dr. Bruun’s volume, an exquisite piece of work, scarcely marred by a single misprint. It is fortunate that a numismatist of Dr. Bruun’s caliber should have been available to carry out so momentous a task.”¹⁰

Late Antiquity is currently something of a popular subject in historiography. There is even a new journal, the *Journal of Late Antiquity*, and the cover of the first volume shows a follis of Constantine, indicating the importance of both Constantine and his coinage. In fact, the first issue had a few articles with a Constantine theme, which also included a few other pictures of coins. However, this journal also shows that there might be a need for greater numismatic knowledge among historians. One of the pictures shows a common reverse type for the Constantinian period—two soldiers flanking a military standard.¹¹ The military standard is a little different from most representations of this time though, in that it is inscribed with a chi-rho. The author, or editor, said that this was a coin of Constantine’s, and attested to his support of Christianity. The problem is that the illustrated coin is from Siscia, and this city did not strike these coins with the Christogram until after the death of Constantine. The coin depicted was actually issued by Constantine II (the oldest son of Constantine) after Constantine's death. The Siscian

¹⁰ Anne S. Robertson, “Coins of Constantine and Licinius.” *The Classical Review* 17 (Dec 1967) : 377.

¹¹ Christopher Haas, “Mountain Constantines: The Christianization of Aksum and Iberia,” *The Journal of Late Antiquity* 1 (Spring 2008) : 102. The coin in the picture is credited as one time belonging to Ralph Mathisen, who is the editor of the journal.

issues confuse many people because after the death of Constantine I, his son Constantine II used the same legends on the obverse as his father had, CONSTANTINVS MAX AVG. The chronology of these coins has long been established, but an easy way to know that the coin is Constantine II is that there are no Siscian issues for Constantine II as Caesar, as he had already assumed the title of Augustus because his father was dead. This might seem like a small issue to some, but God (and Clio) is in the details and history and numismatics are so much better when they are right! History and numismatics are also better if they are entertaining, so let us hope that, besides getting it right, this paper will also entertain the reader.

CHAPTER 2

CHRISTIAN SYMBOLISM ON COINS OF CONSTANTINE

According to Eusebius, the fourth century bishop of Caesarea, the first Christian emperor was Philip, who ruled from A. D. 244- 249.¹ The anonymous author of the *Origo Constantini* also believed that Philip professed to be a Christian, albeit with ulterior motives. "This Constantine was the first Christian Emperor except for Philip (the Arab) who, or so it seems to me, became Christian simply in order that the thousandth year of Rome might be said to belong to Christ rather than to idols."² The accounts of the Christian beliefs of Philip were probably just rumors originally started in an attempt to make the emperor look bad, as Christianity was not a very popular religion yet. The first coin with Christian over-tones may have been issued in the name of Salonina, wife of Gallienus, who was the Roman emperor from A.D. 260- 268. There has been speculation that she was a Christian because a coin issued in her name has the reverse inscription AVE IN PACE.³ There is no historical doubt, however, that Constantine was the first emperor that embraced Christianity though, and this chapter investigates the numismatic evidence of Constantine's conversion.

¹ Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, trans. G.A. Williamson (New York: Penguin Classics, 1990), 206.

² Samuel N. C. Lieu and Dominic Monserrat, *From Constantine to Julian: Pagan and Byzantine Views A Source History* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 48.

³ Harold Mattingly, Edward Allen Sydenham, and Percy H. Webb, *The Roman Imperial Coinage. Vol. V, Part I* (London: Spink & Son, 1927). The Salonina coin is Mediolanum 58.

People who expect to find Christian imagery on bronze coins of Constantine will be disappointed. “Of approximately 1,363 coins of Constantine I in RIC VII, covering the period of 313-337, roughly one percent might be classified as having Christian symbols.”⁴ The first instance of Christian symbolism on a coin of Constantine is a chi-rho on a rare silver medallion issued from Ticinum in 315. This medallion was not meant



Figure 1. Silver medallion with a chi-rho on the crest of the helmet.

for general circulation, but was most likely a special presentation piece, and as such, not many people would have seen it or its design.⁵ This coin is important, because it shows a clear chi-rho and was issued shortly after A.D. 312, the year Constantine fought the

⁴ Mark Dunning, "First Christian Symbols on Roman Imperial Coins," *The Celator* 17 (December 2003) : 6.

⁵ Charles Odahl, "Christian Symbols in Military Motifs on Constantine's Coinage," *Society for Ancient Numismatics* 13 (1982-3) : 64-72.

Battle of the Milvian Bridge. Eusebius even stated that Constantine “was in the habit of wearing on his helmet [the chi-rho] at a later period.”⁶

This paper is about the bronze coinage, though, and there is only one bronze reverse that has a symbol associated with Christianity as part of the design.⁷ The reverse of this coin has a labarum, which is a military standard topped with a chi-rho, that is



Figure 2. Bronze coin with a chi-rho atop a standard piercing a serpent.

piercing a serpent. There are more coins with symbols used as field marks, though. There is a coin with the reverse legend of VICTORIAE LAETAE PRINC PERP from Siscia

⁶ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, trans. Averil Cameron and Stuart Hall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 81.

⁷ C. H. V. Sutherland, R. A. G. Carson, and Patrick Bruun, *The Roman Imperial Coinage. Vol. VII, Constantine and Licinius A.D. 313-337* (London: Spink, 1966), 572-3.



Figure 3. Coin with chi-rho (enhanced because it was worn) in the crossbar of the helmet.

that has a chi-rho in the crossbar of Constantine's helmet, but it only occurs a few times, and then only in officina B. There are also the "eyes to the heavens coins", which show Constantine with his head raised up and eyes focused upwards, as if he is looking towards heaven. This bust type is not a solely Christian image, as Greeks used this upward gaze on coins long before Constantine; and the Greek engravers likely meant the bust to show an affinity with the gods. Engravers in the fourth century may have even got the idea for the upraised bust after seeing some of these Greek coins. The "eyes to the heavens" bust type was officially issued in bronze in three reverse types. It was used for



Figure 4. Coin with an “eyes to the heavens” bust.

VOT XXX, and DAFNE types.⁸ Sometimes this bust type turns up on CONSTANTINOPOLIS and VRBS ROMA coins, but this was probably more artistic license on the part of the engraver, rather than an official design from the mint.⁹ This head uplifted seems to have only been officially engraved by mint personnel from eastern

⁸ VOT is short for votive. Emperors in the fourth century issued these public vows about every five years to celebrate the anniversary of their accession to the throne. So VOT XXX marked the thirty year anniversary of Constantine’s rule. Sometimes these coins were anticipatory and actually minted before the real date. This is overly simplified, but for more information on votive coinage see the articles by Harold Mattingly, “The Imperial Vota.” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 36 (1950) : 155-195; and “The Imperial Vota.” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 37 (1951) : 219-268. PROVIDENTIAE AVGG translates as foresight of the emperors. The reverse features a city gate (see figure 5). With this reverse, Constantine wanted to remind his subjects that they were safe and secure due to his actions. The DAFNE (*Dafne* is Greek for victory) coins will be talked about at length in chapter two of this paper.

⁹ CONSTANTINOPLIS (Constantinople) and VRBS ROMA (City of Rome) coins were issued starting in A.D. 330 and continued until A.D. 346. These were issued to mark the foundation of Constantinople and to also re-affirm Rome as the traditional center of the Empire. This paper will discuss these coins more in chapter two. The reason that the use of the uplifted head on some of these must have been unofficial, is that the normal bust occurs at the same time and from the same mint and same officina. These coins also come from Eastern mints, which had more Hellenistic influence, which goes back to the point that the Greeks originally used the uplifted gaze on coins before the Romans.

mints, maybe because Constantine was shifting his capitol to Constantinople. Why did mint officials use this bust type? It seems likely that engravers copied this bust from an earlier Greek design, but what, if anything, prompted the use of this type? Eastern mints began issuing this series circa A.D. 325. Constantine summoned the Council of Nicea in 325 and celebrated his vicennalia (20 year anniversary). Eusebius tells us this type was issued because of the religious conviction of Constantine.

How deeply his soul was impressed by the power of divine faith may be understood from the circumstance that he directed his likeness to be stamped on the golden coin of the empire with eyes uplifted as in the posture of prayer to God: and this money became current throughout the Roman world. (Eusebius 4:15)

It seems likely that Constantine borrowed this ‘eyes to the heavens’ pose from Greek coinage and adapted it to convey a Christian message. It could also be that Constantine was sending a message to the Roman world that he was indeed a man of great religious piety.

The field marks that have Christian significance consist of chi-rho’s and crosses. “Early Christian crosses came in several forms including the equilateral or Greek +, the letter tau T, the letter chi X sometimes called St. Andrew’s cross, the tau-rho monogram and the Latin cross, *crux immissa*.”¹⁰ Historians and numismatists debate whether these symbols actually had any Christian relation. The chi-rho appeared for the first time in the third century B.C. on a Greek bronze of Ptolemy, and certainly could not have referred to Christ. The various field marks on coins usually served an internal function meant to

¹⁰ Mark Dunning, "First Christian Symbols on Roman Imperial Coins," *The Celator* 17 (December 2003) : 8.



Figure 5. Coin of Ptolemy III with a chi-rho between the legs of the eagle.

show which workers were responsible for the coin, and the mint supervisor, or *procurator monetae*, probably picked these marks. Since Constantine had been portrayed with Christian symbols on the silver medallion issued in 315, "mint supervisors thereafter felt free to use Christian signs as control marks or decorative embellishments on imperial coinage...In doing so, they were reflecting the emperor's veneration of Christian signs and his practice of employing them on his war helmet and military standards."¹¹ It is not so important what imagery Constantine used; but rather, it is more important what imagery he did not use. A few scholars believe that the coinage of the time only reflected the dead weight of traditional Roman belief, but the coin motifs actually had changed quite a bit. By 324, Constantine was the sole ruler of the Roman Empire and: "he did all this without attributing his success in any way to correct religio toward the ancient gods. It was in this

¹¹ Charles Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2004) , 168- 9.

pointed absence of piety toward the gods, as the traditional guardians of the empire, that his subjects came to realize that their emperor was a Christian."¹²

Of course the old gods did not disappear from the coinage over night; it was a gradual transition that took years. For many of Constantine's early years as an emperor though, he shared rule of the Roman Empire with others and did not have complete authority over the types of coins that the mints issued. Shortly after the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, when Constantine consolidated his power in the West, the old pagan imagery started to disappear from Roman coinage. Constantine certainly realized that he could not change the people's religion immediately, it would take many years to win their hearts and minds...and eventually convert them. Constantine had to exercise some caution and not upset too many people, especially the army. "He was careful, and that was why his Christianization of the empire was only gradual...reflected in the slow and for a long time minimal infiltration of the coinage by Christianity."¹³ He continued to occasionally utilize Sol on his coinage until circa A.D. 320, when Sol was eventually supplanted by generic reverses such as soldiers holding military standards.¹⁴ By this time, Constantine had a pretty firm hold in the western half of the Roman Empire and there had been almost a decade for the Christianity of Constantine to trickle down through the ranks. It was extremely important for Constantine not to alienate the military.

¹² Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 2d ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 61.

¹³ Michael Grant, *Constantine the Great: The Man and His Times* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1993), 155.

¹⁴ Patrick Bruun, "The Disappearance of Sol from the Coins of Constantine," *Arctos* 2 (1958): 15- 37.



Figure 6. Typical portrayal of Sol

Since the army was responsible for putting him on the throne, it could have just as easily removed him. In reality, Constantine owed his position to the army, regardless of his trust in God, and he surely realized this. Constantine professed to being a Christian, but the army at this time was mostly pagan. There were even Germans in Constantine's army when he clashed with Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge.¹⁵ The word pagan comes from *paganus*, which means rustic or pertaining to the country, and most soldiers of the fourth century came from the provinces. Christianity took longer to spread to the countryside, so that is why the word pagan came to be associated with non-Christians.

Some historians believe that Constantine was being ambiguous in his personal religious beliefs and point out that the Roman Empire continued using Sol on coinage for

¹⁵ Andreas Alföldi, "Cornuti: a Teutonic Contingent in the Service of Constantine the Great and its Decisive Role in the Battle at the Milvian Bridge," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 13 (1959) : 169-183.

many years after Constantine's conversion in 312.¹⁶ The reverse of these coins typically have the legend SOLI INVICTO COMITI, which translates as "Sol, invincible companion." Another theory is that Constantine was being syncretic in his views; he was blending Sol with Christ.¹⁷ Romans always depicted Sol nimbate, and the portrayal of Christ was also often in the same fashion. Just because the Romans, or Constantine, employed solar halos to depict deity, it does not mean that they confused or conflated these deities. There was definitely some blending, as people are creatures of habit and cling to familiar ways. Many people, especially the uninformed and ignorant, could indeed have blended solar monotheism with Christianity. However, there is no real evidence that Constantine believed, in a neoplatonic fashion, that the two were one and the same. These syncretic views of some historians and numismatists also conveniently ignore evidence regarding Constantine's Christianity. There are many letters from Constantine where he is very clear in his beliefs. In one example from A.D. 314, Constantine wrote : "For I have been informed that you are a worshipper of the most high God." There is no doubt that Constantine is referring to the God of Christianity because, besides writing this letter to a bishop, he closes with "I am aware that all men worship the most holy God by the due rites of the catholic religion in harmonious and brotherly

¹⁶ For a recent work that depicts Constantine as somewhat ambiguous see H.A. Drake *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance*. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000). Averil Cameron uses the word ambiguous in one instance in *The Later Roman Empire* (Harvard University Press, 1993) , 65. "Constantine's actions may have been more ambiguous than Eusebius allows."

¹⁷ The current historiography on Constantine favors a sincere conversion to Christianity, but some earlier historians believed that Constantine was a syncretist, see André Piganiol and René Cagnat *L'empereur Constantin* (Paris: Rieder, 1932). Michael Grant in *The Emperor Constantine* (London: Butler and Tanner, 1993) , 135; wrote that "This connection with the sun made Constantine's eventual transition to Christianity easier, because he may well have believed that Christ and the unconquered sun-god were both aspects of the highest divinity, and that no mutual exclusiveness existed between them or separated them."

observance. Amen.”¹⁸ This letter is just one among many in which Constantine said that he was a Christian or affiliated himself with Christians. Shortly after Constantine defeated Maxentius, he also began building churches in honor of God. He demolished the camp belonging to the honor guard of Maxentius, the *Equites singulares*, and built a huge Christian basilica on the spot.¹⁹ However, there is no record of Constantine building any shrines or temples to Sol or any other god. Constantine also passed laws that showed his support of Christianity. Early in his career, Constantine was also careful with the laws he passed, in what must have been an effort to not upset his subjects, mainly those subjects in the army. The Edict of Milan is an example of this, it granted religious tolerance to all, but was actually meant to end all persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. By A.D. 321, Constantine was not quite as tolerant of non-Christians. He passed a law that on Sunday, Christian soldiers could have time off to go to church. On Sundays, he also ordered that pagan soldiers had to leave the city and march to an open space where they would offer a generic prayer to God with the use of words like “guardian” and “helper.”²⁰ An analogy could be used to demonstrate the point of confusing currency with religious policy. 1700 years in the future, someone discovers a cache of United States of America

¹⁸ This quote came from Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, translated by Mark Edwards (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998) : 183- 184. Letters from Constantine have been preserved in the works of authors such as Eusebius in *Church History* and *Life of Constantine* and also by Optatus in *Against the Donatists*. Critics used to say the sources for Constantine’s letters, especially Eusebius, were untrustworthy. That changed when archaeologists found a papyrus letter from A.D. 319, which was before Eusebius wrote his books, that corresponded word for word with the letter in *The Life of Constantine 2: 27- 28*. For more on this see A. H. M. Jones and T. C. Skeat, “Notes on the Genuineness of the Constantinian Documents in Eusebius's Life of Constantine,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 5 (1954) : 196-200.

¹⁹ Noel Lenski, “Evoking the Pagan Past: *Instinctu Divinitatis* and Constantine’s Capture of Rome,” *The Journal of Late Antiquity* 2 (Fall 2008) : 206.

²⁰ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, trans. Averil Cameron and Stuart Hall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) , 81.

money. On some of the money, the legend “In God We Trust” is found. However, on the back of a dollar bill is something that looks like an Egyptian pyramid with an all-seeing occult eye. So according to this evidence, George Washington was a syncretist. He blended Christianity and Paganism/ Occult practices! The all-seeing eye is a Masonic symbol, and Washington was a Mason, but for someone interpreting this imagery in the future, they might wonder if Washington was something of a pagan. This is very similar to what many people that only use coins minted 1700 years ago insist on doing with Constantine. For numismatists, it may be tempting to assign great importance to coins and believe that they reveal intimate details; but coins, like any other source, must be taken in context. Coins can be very useful, but one must look at all the sources!

So the SPES PVBLIC reverse "is the first coin type where the design explicitly proclaims Constantine's new faith."²¹ The reverse of this coin (see figure 2), shows a serpent being pierced by a standard topped with a chi-rho. Constantine and Eusebius compared serpents/dragons to evil on many occasions. In one instance, when he referred to Arius, Constantine talked about the serpent and the Devil as if they were one. "Take heed, everyone take heed, how sad he sounds, when pierced by the serpent's sting [that is the Devil's]."²² Constantine also used the dragon/serpent symbolism to specifically describe Licinius, his rival in the eastern half of the Roman Empire, "like some wild beast, or a twisting snake coiling up on itself."²³ There is another quote by Eusebius that

²¹ Elizabeth Hartley, ed. *Constantine the Great: York's Roman Emperor* (York, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2006) , 145. SPES PVBLIC translates as “public hope,” which, with the defeat of Licinius, Constantine declares he is the savior of the people.

²² Grant, *Constantine the Great: The Man and His Times*.,175.

²³ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* , 94.

reflects the SPES coinage and another type issued jointly, circa A.D. 327."But now, with liberty restored and that dragon driven out of the public administration through the providence of the supreme God and by our service."²⁴



Figure 7. LIBERTAS PVBLICA reverse

"The references to "liberty...restored" and the perishing dragon-serpents in the palace sermon and the episcopal letter must be the literary twins of the LIBERTAS PVBLICA and the pierced dragon coins issued about the same time."²⁵ LIBERTAS PVBLICA means "public liberty," in reference to freedom restored to the citizens, which could be a nice numismatic allusion to the LIBERTAS coin type. In Christianity, the use of

²⁴ Ibid. , 111.

²⁵ Charles Odahl, "The Use of Apocalyptic Imagery in Constantine's Christian Propaganda," *Centerpoint* 4, no. 3 (1981) , 17.

serpent/dragon symbolism to represent evil goes all the way back to the beginning, with the tale of Adam and Eve, with Eve tempted by the devil in the guise of a serpent.

Eusebius also described a painting that Constantine placed above the door to his palace.

This he displayed on a very high panel set before the entrance to the palace for the eyes of all to see, showing in the picture the Saviour's sign placed above his own head, and the hostile and inimical beast, which had laid siege to the Church of God through the tyranny of the godless, he made in the form of a dragon borne down to the deep. For the oracles proclaimed him a 'dragon' and a 'crooked serpent' in the books of the prophets of God (Isaiah 27:1); therefore the emperor also showed to all, through the medium of the encaustic painting, the dragon under his own feet and those of his sons, pierced through the body with a javelin, and thrust down into the depths of the sea. (Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 3:3)

The SPES coin shows three medallions on the standard. The medallions were portraits of Constantine I and two of his sons. The sons were probably Constantine II and Constantius II, as Eusebius said that Constantine personally showed him the standard. Since Eusebius did not meet Constantine until 325, and Crispus, the oldest son of Constantine, was dead by 326, the next two oldest sons (Constans, the youngest son of Constantine, was only an infant at this time) are the most likely candidates to have been represented on the standard. Eusebius continues:

The symbol of the Saviour's name, two letters indicating the name of Christ by means of its initial characters, the letter P being intersected by X in its centre: and these letters the emperor was in the habit of wearing on his helmet at a later period. From the cross-bar of the spear was suspended a cloth, a royal piece, covered with a profuse embroidery of most brilliant precious stones; and which, being also richly interlaced with gold, presented an indescribable degree of beauty to the beholder. This banner was of a square form, and the upright staff, whose lower section was of

great length, bore a golden half-length portrait of the pious emperor and his children on its upper part, beneath the trophy of the cross, and immediately above the embroidered banner. (Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 1:31)

There is one more coin of Constantine depicting religious symbolism, but it is a posthumous issue. After Constantine's death in A.D. 337, his sons issued a coin with



Figure 8. Posthumous coin of Constantine.

Constantine on the obverse wearing a death shroud, and the reverse showed Constantine in a quadriga pulled by four horses being lifted up by the hand of God into the heavens. Eusebius also wrote about this coin (*Life of Constantine* 4:73): "At the same time coins were struck portraying the Blessed One on the obverse in the form of one with head veiled, on the reverse like a charioteer on a quadriga, being taken up by a right hand stretched out to him from above."²⁶ What is interesting is the obverse part of the legend starts with the initials DV, which is short for DIVO. This proclaims that Constantine was

²⁶ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 94.

deified, becoming a god himself. For someone that was a committed monotheist most of his life, and urged others to be the same, deification is very ironic. Of course, Constantine had no choice in this matter! Constantine also has the distinction of being the last Roman emperor to be consecrated and deified on a coin.

Even as Constantine slowly replaced pagan images on coins around the empire, some areas, like Rome, did not completely spurn the old religions. Rome issued a coin in



Figure 9. Coin with a cryptogram in the exergue.

A.D. 320 to celebrate Constantine's fifteenth year of rule. The reverse of this coin proudly claimed ROMA E AETERNAE-- Eternal Rome. What is really interesting about this coin is that part of the mintmark is a cryptogram, and is Greek for eros, which in Latin is amor. Roma and amor are palindromes-- they read the same backward or forward. Amor was the secret name of Rome. This may have been an attempt by the pagan aristocracy of Rome confronting the pro-Christian policies of Constantine "with its

own religion of mystery and romance.’²⁷ The first letter in this mintmark is the Latin letter “R”, for Rome. The next symbol is a ligature, which consists of two Greek letters epsilon and rho, and then an upward sweep which transforms the ligature into the Greek letter omega. What looks like a “C” is actually the Greek letter sigma. The last letter is the Latin “Q”, which is the officina. The Greek cryptogram section reads epsilon rho omega sigma or Eros.²⁸ The temple of Venus, who was the goddess of love, and the



Figure 10. Diagram of the cryptogram.

temple of Roma were also located back to back. The close proximity of the temples would have made this cryptogram even more amusing to the citizens of Rome. The

²⁷ Andreas Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome*, trans. Harold Mattingly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 80.

²⁸ Numismatists and historians agree that this ligature does translate as *eros*. Alföldi gives some older references to this in Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome*, 80.

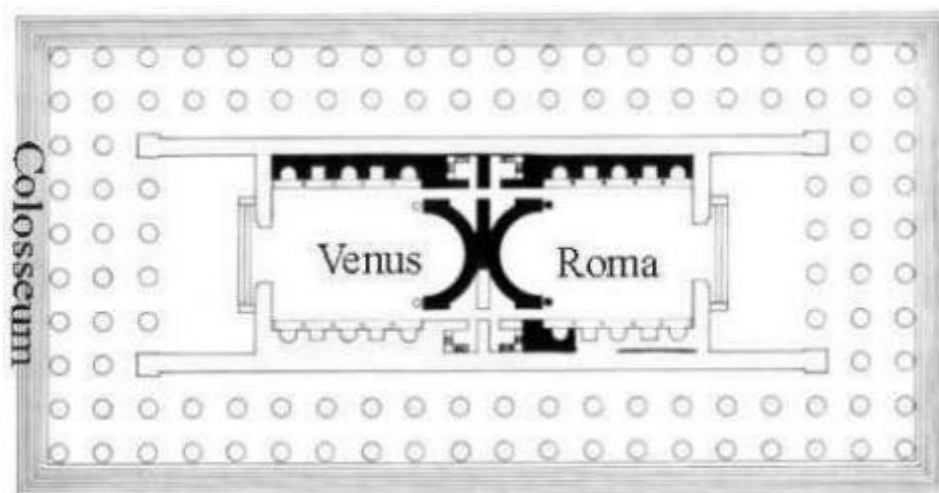


Figure 11. Temples of Venus and Roma.

Romans were very fond of palindromes, and there is a famous example in Virgil's *Aenid* (4:37), where Aeneas said to Dido that the oracle commanded him to go to the land of his "amor"-- which is Roma. Sidonius Apollinaris was a Gallo-Roman poet who lived from A.D. 430-480. He was the author of a classic palindrome-- *roma tibi subito motibus ibit amor*.²⁹

Rome also issued another series of coins that was clearly pagan. Roman emperors performed *vota pvblica*, or public vows, on the third of January. Somehow, an Egyptian ritual involving ships of Isis, *navigium Isidis*, became associated with the vows of the emperor. This became the Festival of Isis, and Romans celebrated it on the fifth of March. Rome issued coins with the bust of the current emperor and a reverse with

²⁹ This palindrome is from the story of St. Martin and the devil. There are two palindromes in this story, *signa te signa temere me tangis et angis. roma tibi subito motibus ibit amor*, which translates as "Cross, cross thyself, thou plaguest and vex'st me needlessly. For by my labors thou shalt soon reach Rome, the object of thy wishes." Sidonius Apollinaris, translated by O. M. Dalton, *The Letters of Sidonius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915) , 210.

Egyptian deities like Isis, Serapis, Anubis, or Harpocrates. Constantine must surely have disliked his image on a coin with pagan gods, but the citizens of Rome really enjoyed their festival, and Constantine knew he had to judiciously pick his battles. By A.D. 380, circumstances had changed, and the emperor Theodosius passed laws forbidding the use of the imperial bust on this pagan coinage. Mint personnel circumvented these laws by changing the bust of the emperor into a deity, for example an image of Theodosius would be changed only by putting on the headdress of the god Serapis.. People celebrated the Festival of Isis as the celebration of a new year, and they used a *carrus navalis*, or ship on wheels. Noted numismatist Andreas Alföldi even theorized that in the Middle Ages, the Church may have interpreted the phrase *carrus navalis* as *carne vale*, which may have been the beginning of the modern carnival.³⁰ However it is generally agreed that *carnevale* translates roughly as “going without meat.” On the 29th of March, the citizens of Denmark still hold a *carrus navalis* celebration.

So, the coinage of the first Christian emperor has very little in the way of overt religious imagery. This fact causes some to question the sincerity of Constantine’s beliefs. This questioning ignores the changes to the coinage—the pagan gods almost completely disappeared from Roman currency during the reign of Constantine. Some of the aristocracy in Rome continued to maintain their pagan traditions, as evidenced by the *eros* mintmark or Festival of Isis coinage, but the religion of the Roman Empire had irrevocably changed. The nephew of Constantine, Julian, or better known as Julian the Apostate became sole Emperor in A.D. 361. He tried to restore paganism, but

³⁰ Andreas Alföldi, “A Festival of Isis in Rome in the Fourth Century,” *Transactions of the International Numismatic Congress, Organized and Held in London by the Royal Numismatic Society, June 30-July 3, 1936, on the Occasion of its Centenary* (London: England, 1936) , 135-6.

Christianity was far too firmly rooted. Julian died in A.D. 363, and his ideas of pagans ruling the Roman Empire died with him. Some historians and numismatists even believe that Constantine was syncretic or ambiguous in his beliefs or actions. These opinions completely ignore the evidence, though. Harold Mattingly, in a footnote, said that these people “must not resent the question again and again presented to them: did Constantine really have the Lateran Basilica built ‘in secret’?”³¹ If some people are confused by Constantine’s coinage, the many Christian churches he built leave no room for ambiguity. Of course, a modern Christian would probably not have much in common with Constantine. He was a man of his times, and above all, a Roman general and emperor. “The Christianity of Constantine, then, was not wrapped in the glory of the true Christian spirit, but in the darkness of superstition. But to deny the sincerity and urgency of his religious convictions is to make a very grave mistake.”³²

³¹ Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome*, 52.

³² *Ibid.*, 23.

CHAPTER 3

COINS AND THE CITY OF CONSTANTINE—CONSTANTINOPLE

As a young man, Constantine lived in the court of the Roman Emperor Diocletian. Constantine may have even served as a hostage of some sorts, in order to ensure that his father, Constantius, who was a Caesar in the West, acted according to Diocletian's wishes. Constantine was not ill-treated, but rather had access to the best things in life, including Greek culture. In A.D. 306, Constantine went West to be with his father, and, after his father died, he assumed control of his father's territories. The western Roman Empire was very much a backwater compared to the magnificent cities in the East, and Constantine always seemed to have his eye on the East. He spent the next fifteen years slowly moving eastward. He did not necessarily abandon the West, but he certainly had grand designs for the East, which did not so much involve the Western half of the Roman Empire. After many battles, Constantine fought and won his ultimate battle and became the sole ruler of the Roman Empire. Constantine's new city, Constantinople, issued several new coin types that commemorated his great victory and celebrated the unique and special nature of his new capitol.

After the first civil war in A.D. 316, tension between Constantine and Licinius, the Emperor in the East, continued to grow.¹ In A.D. 322, while Constantine was chasing the Sarmatians, a nomadic tribe that originated from present day Iran and ranged in the

¹ The first civil war started over a possible assassination plot against Constantine. Constantine had appointed Bassianus, who was married to his half sister, but very close to Licinius, his Caesar. Senecio, the brother of Bassianus, was reputedly behind the plot and Licinius was implicated. This conspiracy may have just been a ploy by Constantine, who may have actually wanted his eldest son Crispus to be Caesar.

Danube area, he wound up in the territory of Licinius.² Constantine eventually celebrated a large victory over the Sarmatians; however, Licinius was not pleased at the incursion



Figure 12. Coin issued “on the occasion of Sarmatia being conquered.”

into his territory, and even refused to allow the SARMATIA DEVICTA coinage to circulate in his territory.³ Constantine must have surely viewed this refusal to circulate his coinage as the insult that it was clearly intended to be. The SARMATIA coinage has a reverse depicting Victory advancing right, holding a trophy in one hand and a palm branch in the other and spurning a bound captive seated on the ground. This coinage may also have been intended as a slight towards Licinius, since it portrayed Constantine as being the conqueror of a rebellious tribe that Licinius was unable to placate. Constantine

² “And a territorial adjustment was arranged at Serdica on 1 March 317, according to which, although Licinius remained master of the east, he ceded a large part of the Balkan peninsula to Constantine. He kept Thrace, but gave up half of Moesia and the whole of Pannonia: five provinces altogether, comprising a major recruiting area, and including the mints of Siscia and Thessalonica.” Michael Grant, *Constantine the Great: The Man and His Times* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1993), 43.

³ Noel Lenski, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 75.

also fought the Goths in Danubian territory that belonged to Licinius. These incursions seemed to give Licinius a legitimate reason to initiate hostilities with Constantine. Of course, Constantine may very well have hoped for this reaction from Licinius. The two rulers also quarreled over other things. Licinius began to take actions against Christians, like not allowing them to hold imperial jobs, which Constantine viewed as persecution. This allowed Constantine to promote himself as a protector of Christians and champion of the faith. Constantine, the first crusader, was about to embark on a holy war.

Regardless of motives, the second civil war between Constantine and Licinius was about to begin. In A.D. 324, Constantine and his army set out from Thessalonica. On the 3rd of July, Constantine's forces attacked the army of Licinius. Constantine even suffered a wound during the fighting, but his forces won the battle. After his terrible defeat, Licinius fled to Byzantium. Approachable only on a narrow peninsula, Byzantium was easy to defend from land attacks, but sea attacks were another story—and a sea battle would decide the outcome. The naval forces of Licinius were led by the commander Amandus. Crispus, the oldest son of Constantine, led Constantine's navy against the naval forces of Licinius. Crispus deployed around eighty ships against some three hundred belonging to the enemy.⁴ Zosimus, a Byzantine historian who lived in the late fifth century, said that Constantine's fleet had 200 ships and Licinius had 350 ships.⁵ Zosimus might have exaggerated, but all sources agreed that Constantine's fleet was greatly outnumbered. What accounted for the surprise victory of Constantine's forces?

⁴ The number of ships varies according to different sources, but all agree that Constantine's forces were outnumbered. These figures came from Noel Lenski, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 76.

⁵ Zosimus, *New History*, Translated by R. Ridley (Sydney: University of Sydney, 2004), 34.

Could it have been that Constantine had better trained sailors...maybe divine providence?

A papyrus letter from circa A.D. 323, gives an answer. The letter is from a procurator who said that the government of Egypt had an urgent requirement of box and acanthus wood for repair of the men-at-war vessels in the arsenals of Memphis and Babylon.

Egypt sent a total of 130 ships to serve in the navy of Licinius, but it seems that they were all old tubs!⁶ Of course, with fewer ships, maybe Constantine's fleet was able to maneuver better, and despite being outnumbered, Crispus won a stunning victory at Byzantium and Licinius fled again, this time to Chalcedon. Licinius mustered his remaining forces, and on the 18th of September met the army of Constantine at Chrysopolis. Constantine's forces easily won the battle and Licinius escaped to Nicomedia. On the run and under pressure, Licinius surrendered through negotiations using his wife Constantia, who was also Constantine's half-sister. Afterwards, Constantine ordered Licinius and his son Licinius Junior to be held at Thessalonica but Constantine eventually ordered them to be executed, so as to remove any further threats.

Circa A.D. 326, Constantine decided to turn Byzantium into his new capitol, and he renamed it Constantinople. "We may thus assign the spiritual birthday of the new capital to 328 as suggested by A. Alföldi, or possibly to 327, at any rate to some time after Constantine's return from his momentous vicennial celebrations at Rome in 326."⁷ In A.D. 327, the mint in Constantinople, which had opened in A.D. 326, began to strike

⁶ C. H. Roberts, "A Footnote to the Civil War of A.D. 324." *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 31 (1945) : 113.

⁷ Patrick Bruun, *Roman Imperial Coinage Volume VII: Constantine and Licinius* (London: Spink & Son, 1997) , 561.



GLORIA EXERCITVS



GLORIA ROMANORVM



LIBERTAS PVBLICA



SPES PVBLIC

Figure 13. Civil War II commemorative coinage.

some new coinage. There were two reasons that the mint struck special types that the Roman Empire did not issue from any other cities. Primarily, these coins commemorated the victory of Constantine over Licinius. “Four entirely new types were created for

Constantine, GLORIA EXERCITVS, GLORIA ROMANORVM, LIBERTAS PVBLICA, and SPES PVBLIC... Here the reverses record a summing up of the Civil War II, the glory of the army constituting the glory of the Empire, the death of the tyrant (SPES PVBLIC) granting liberty for all.”⁸ These types were fairly obvious in their meanings. The GLORIA EXERCITVS reverse, which translates as “glory of the army,” has a soldier holding a reversed spear in his right hand and his left hand resting on a shield. The reversed spear denoted tranquility.⁹ Constantine never forgot that he owed his position as emperor to his army, and he frequently issued coins praising their honor and valor. The GLORIA ROMANORVM type has Roma seated on a shield, holding a long scepter, and holding a victory on a globe in her right hand. This type proclaims “the glory of the Romans,” which might seem ironic since this coin commemorated a war fought between Romans. The LIBERTAS PVBLICA, which proclaims ‘public liberty,’ shows Victory, who is holding a wreath in each hand, standing in a galley. The Victory in the galley is an allusion to the naval victory of Crispus. Maybe the use of two wreaths was intended to further remind the public of the stunning naval victory that won Constantine the city of Byzantium, or perhaps it was just for symmetry in the design. This type was a new one that the officials came up with to commemorate the military victory of Constantine. The fourth and last type was also a new type. The SPES PVBLIC, or “public hope,” has a chi-rho atop a standard with three medallions impaling a snake. The imagery

⁸ Bruun, *Roman Imperial Coinage Volume VII*, 567.

⁹ Andreas Morell, Sigebert Havercamp, and Hubert Goltzius, *Thesaurus Morellianus: sive, Familiarum Romanorum numismata omnia, diligentissime undique conquisita, ad ipsorum nummorum fidem accuratissime delineata, & juxta ordinem Fulvii Ursini & Caroli Patini disposita.* (Amstelaedami: Apud J. Wetstenium & Gul. Smith, 1734), 458.

of this coin is very striking—the chi-rho, symbol of Constantine, atop a standard which is piercing an evil serpent—Licinius. This coin is fairly rare, and may have been a special presentation piece, or it may have been rare simply because it was the last in the series of the four coins that the workers produced, and as such, it had a short minting run.

So the first reason that Constantinople issued these coins was to celebrate the defeat of Licinius. The second reason was much more practical. There were many workers in the new city of Constantine, transforming it into a city worthy to represent the ruler of the Roman Empire. These workers had to be paid, and there were a lot of them, so new coins resulted. According to Jordanes, a Roman bureaucrat who lived during the sixth century, many Goths even helped build the new city. “In like manner it was the aid of the Goths that enabled him to build the famous city that is named after him, the rival of Rome, inasmuch as they entered into a truce with the Emperor and furnished him forty thousand men to aid him against various peoples.”¹⁰ So Constantine needed to pay the many workers in his city, but the propaganda of the reverses was also very important, as the many inhabitants of the city, including Goths, were not that familiar with their new emperor. The obverse of these coins also told the inhabitants a story, though. In A.D. 327, the image of Constantine on coins from Constantinople changed. Constantine made a choice to never again wear the pagan laurel headdress or radiate headdress associated with Sol and began wearing the kingly diadem. Philostorgius said that Constantine started wearing the diadem as a sign "of his sole rule and victory over opponents."¹¹ Constantine

¹⁰ Jordanes, *The Origin and Deeds of the Goths*, trans. Charles C. Mierow (London: Dodo Press, 2007), 37.

¹¹ Lenski, *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, 29.

may have also started wearing the diadem because it was more Greek in nature, and



Figure 14. Bust with a laurel headdress on the left and diadem on the right.¹²

Constantinople had a very Greek nature, despite being part of the Roman Empire. These busts were also political propaganda, a chance to show the people in the East who their new emperor was, or who he wanted to be seen as. Here was their new Roman emperor, not wearing the laurel headdress, but rather wearing a diadem like so many Greek kings before him—including Alexander the Great.

The officials of the Constantinople mint reflected the Greek nature of their city with the next coin type issued after the civil war coinage. This reverse type was the

¹² Both of these coins have the LIBERTAS PVBLICA reverse. The coin with the laurel headdress is RIC VII Constantinople 18, issued in A.D. 327. The second bust, with the diadem, is RIC VII Constantinople 25, which was issued in the later part of A.D. 327.

CONSTANTINIANA DAFNE issue, or Dafne coinage. This coinage not only commemorated the victory of Constantine, but also reflected the Greek nature of the city, as DAFNE in Greek translates as victory.¹³ Dafne coinage began in A. D. 327,



Figure 15. CONSTANTINIANA DAFNE -- RIC VII Constantinople 30.

and the mint struck the Dafne type without interruption until A.D. 330. Dafne coins were only struck for Constantine; the mint struck other types for his sons. The Constantinople mint began issuing the Dafne at seven officinae A (alpha), B (beta), Γ (gamma), Δ (delta), E (epsilon), S (digamma), and Z (zeta). The use of Greek letters for the *officinae* further demonstrates the blending of Roman and Greek culture. This coin type with the reverse legend of “Constantinian victory” is also the only example of mint officials using the name of Constantine as an adjective. Despite this coin clearly being a reference to a

¹³ John Melville Jones, *A Dictionary of Ancient Roman Coins* (Numismatic Fine Arts Intl 1990), 81.

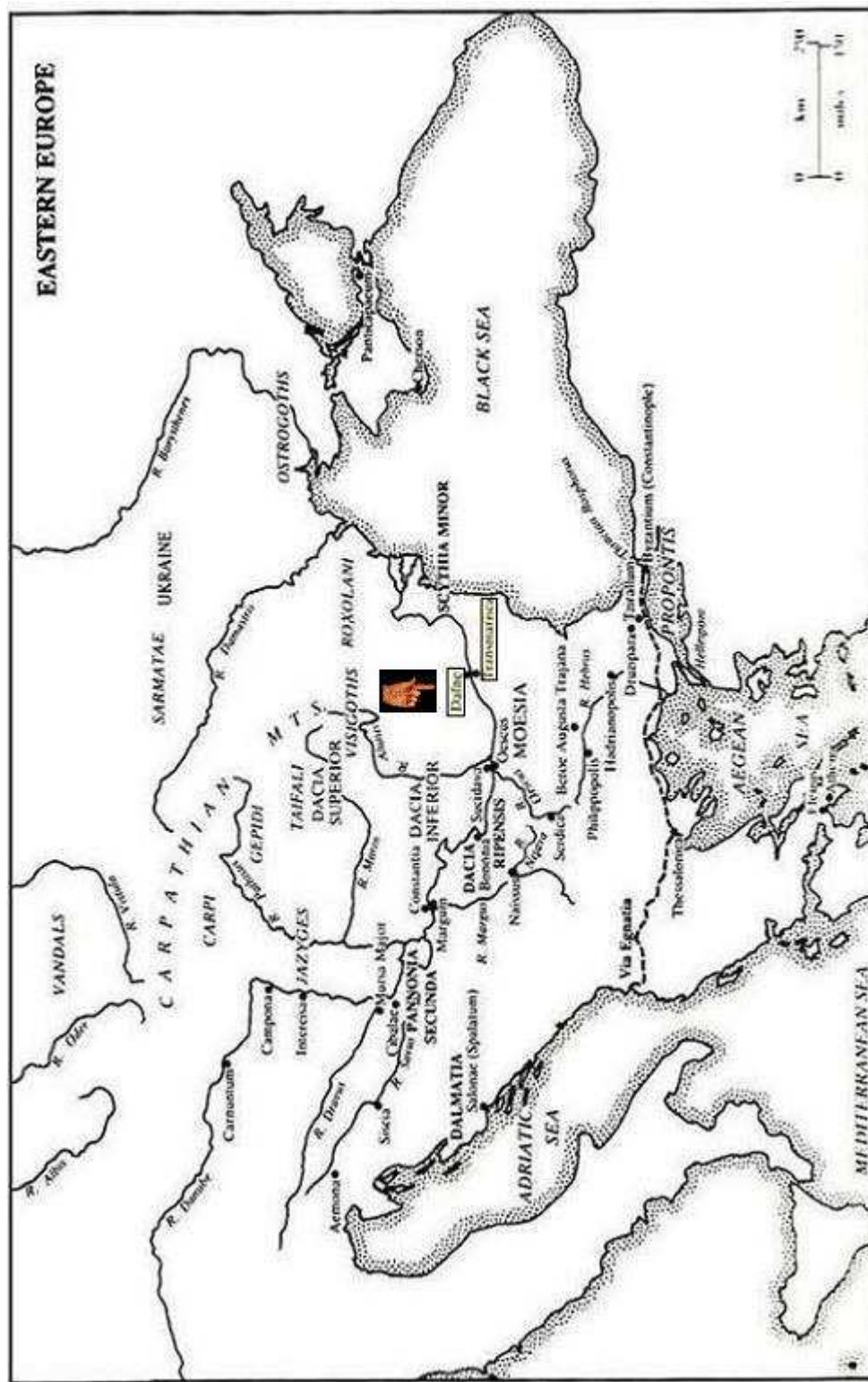
victory just by virtue of the definition of the reverse legend, many numismatists have labeled this coin as a commemorative of a fortress on the Danube. The man responsible for popularizing this belief was an Austrian numismatist named Joseph Hilarius Eckhel (1737- 1798). “Various have been the opinions expressed by the learned respecting it.- Eckhel (viii. 81), in citing them all, considers that interpretation to be decidedly and most probable, which Gretser and Spanheim drew from Procopius, viz. that by Constantiniana Dafne is to be understood the castle or camp (castrum) Dafne, constructed by Constantine on the bank of the Danube.”¹⁴ The Romans, however, built many forts, but they did not commemorate any of these other forts on coins.

A few ancient sources even mention the Dafne or Daphne fortress. Around A.D. 550, Procopius, who was a historian during the reign of the emperor Justinian (ruled A.D. 527- 565) wrote *Buildings*, which was an account of construction during Justinian's rule.

Just opposite this, on the other bank of the river, Constantine, Emperor of the Romans, once built with no small care a fort, Daphnê by name, thinking it not inexpedient that the river should be guarded on both sides at this point. As time went on, the barbarians destroyed this entirely; but the Emperor Justinian rebuilt it, beginning at the foundations. (Procopius *Buildings* 4: 5-13)

So some people choose to believe that the Dafne coinage was named after this fortress mentioned by Procopius, when the coins and the fort seem to actually have no connection, other than a shared name. Dafne in Greek, after all, means victory; so a fort that the Romans named victory seems more than appropriate. Thus, if the fort was named Dafne, it could actually have no connection with the Dafne coinage, other than the use of

¹⁴ This quote is from Seth W. Stevenson, *A Dictionary of Roman Coins*, originally published in 1889. He is referencing Eckhel, *Doctrina Numorum Veterum*, 8 vols., published 1792-1798.



This map is from Michael Grant's "Constantine the Great: The Man and His Times"

Figure 16. Map showing the forts Dafne and Transmarisca outlined. The hand is pointing to Dafne- Transmarisca is underneath and to the right.

the word Dafne-- or victory. John of Ephesus even wrote about another fort or camp called *Daphnudii Castra*, which was located near the sea.¹⁵ There was even a Daphne



Figure 17. Inset from the Peutinger table showing the temple to the left.¹⁶

suburb in the city of Antioch, and Eusebius wrote about the Daphnaean Apollo temple in Antioch:

Having been devoted by the folly of her parents to this service, a service productive of nothing good or noble, but only of indecent fury, such as we find recorded in the case of Daphne. On one occasion,

¹⁵ John of Ephesus lived circa A.D. 507- 588 and spent many years in Constantinople. Translated from the original Syriac by R. Payne Smith in *Ecclesiastical History of John, Bishop of Ephesus* (Oxford University Press, 1860) , Book 3: 8 talks about the fort.

¹⁶ For more on the Peutinger table and the temple of Apollo see J. M. C. Toynbee “Roma and Constantinopolis in Late-Antique Art from 312 to 365.” *Journal of Roman Studies* 37 (1947) : 143.

however, having rushed into the sanctuary of her vain superstition, she became really filled with inspiration from above, and declared in prophetic verses the future purposes of God. (Eusebius' Oration of *Constantine to the Assembly of the Saints* Chapter 18)

Figure 17 is an inset from the Peutinger Table, a circa fourth century Roman map, which shows the Daphnaean Apollo temple, surrounded by laurels, in Antioch. The passage from Eusebius relates how the oracle realized the error of her old pagan beliefs. Maybe the Dafne coins also alluded to this sort of change in spirituality. This coin may have had a double message from Constantine to the people of Constantinople that his new city would be a Christian city while also representing his victory over Licinius-- which was a victory of Christianity over paganism. RIC VII describes the reverse as a victory holding a palm branch in each hand; but this is an error. Anyone that looks closely at the coinage will see that it is obviously a laurel in the right hand and palm in the left hand of victory. Laurel symbolizes victory while the palm symbolizes peace. It is interesting that besides turning away from the captive, victory is also turning away from the laurel branch and trophy of arms. This could symbolize a rejection of the pagan (i.e. laurel crowns). Maybe it is just a rejection of old war-like ways. The trophy of arms reminded Romans that there was peace, but only through violence. *Si vis pacem, para bellum* – If you want peace, prepare for war. Maybe the new Constantine wanted to turn his back on his old war-like ways? Maybe some of these things are just coincidence or hard to understand after so many years. It is interesting though that Dafne in mythology was associated with laurel. She was turned into a laurel tree to protect her from Apollo, and that is why the Daphne temple was surrounded by laurel trees.

The fort was also on the north bank of the Danube (refer to fig. 16), so a bridge would have been needed. The Paschal Chronicle was written by an anonymous Byzantine writer. He identified himself as a contemporary of the Emperor Heraclius (ruled A.D. 610- 641). According to the Paschal Chronicle, in A.D. 328, a bridge was indeed built over the Danube. "Constantine the pious crossed the Danube very many times, and made a bridge for it in stone."¹⁷ Aurelius Victor was a historian who lived circa A.D. 320- 390, and he also mentioned the bridge in *De Caesaribus*. This bridge probably marked the start of a Gothic campaign. Victor said that the bridge was built and then, "camps and forts were strategically placed in many locations."¹⁸ There was also a bronze medallion issued to commemorate this bridge.¹⁹ As the Dafne coins were possibly issued as early as 327, it seems unlikely a coin was issued to commemorate a fort that was yet to be built. At best, the fortress was in the planning or initial construction stages when the first Dafne coins were issued. The Dafne fort is also mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus (A.D. 330-395) in his history of the later Roman Empire. The emperor Valens (ruled A.D. 364- 378) was preparing for a campaign against the Goths and he "established his base near a

¹⁷ *Chronicon Paschale 284- 628 A.D.* Translated by Michael and Mary Whitby (New York: Liverpool University Press, 2007) , 15.

¹⁸ Aurelius Victor *De Caesaribus* , Translated by H.W. Bird (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994) , 15.

¹⁹ RIC VII Rome 298. The reverse is SALVS REIP, a bridge with three arches, whereon emperor advancing right in military dress, holding transverse spear, shield, preceded by Victory, holding trophy, turning head towards him, in front, suppliant; beneath, to left, Danube resting; in exergue DANVBIS. This medallion was struck between A.D. 327-333. For an article on this medallion see Andreas Alföldi, "Die Donaubrücke Constantins des Grossen und verwandte historische Darstellungen auf spätrömischen Münzen" *Zeitschrift für Numismatik* 36 (1926) : 161- 167.



Figure 18. Medallion commemorating the bridge over the Danube.

fort called Daphne, and crossed the Danube on a bridge of boats."²⁰ Marcellinus was mistaken in calling this fort Daphne, though. Procopius said that the fort across from Dafne on the south bank of the Danube was called Trasmarscas (see fig. 16). Procopius also said that the Dafne fort was destroyed; and the bridge had already been destroyed, since, according to Marcellinus, Valens had to use boats to cross. So by the campaign of Valens, the Dafne fortress and bridge across the Danube had already been destroyed by the Goths.²¹ Constantine did have a victory over the Goths in the Danube area. In 332 A.D., Constantine was awarded the title *Gothicus Maximus*.²² Coins issued in 327-8

²⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire*. Translated by Walter Hamilton (New York: Penguin Classics, 1986) , 336.

²¹ For more on the chronology of the bridge's destruction, see the article by E.A. Thompson, "Constantine, Constantius II and the Lower Danube Frontier," *Hermes* 84 (1956) : 372- 381.

²² T. D. Barnes, "The Victories of Constantine." *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 20 (1976) : 153.

would not celebrate an anticipatory victory, but rather an accomplished victory. After looking at the evidence, there is no reason to believe that the Dafne coinage commemorated anything other than the A.D. 324 victory of Constantine over Licinius. The trophy of arms on the reverse was also a common motif that the Romans used to symbolize victories and demonstrate the pacification of enemies, but never used to commemorate the building of anything. Besides the trophy of arms, the reverse has some other interesting elements.

The reverse has a winged Victory, that is more akin to pagan ideals, but at some point, the pagan victory became the Christian angel. In this transition, the image of victory did not even change. She still had wings and is depicted with the victor's wreath and palm. "This is perhaps the only case in which the transition from pagan goddess to Christian angel is perfectly clear."²³ Did the victory on the Dafne coin represent an angel? It certainly could have to some people, but in keeping with the ambiguous religious themes used by Constantine, this imagery would have been acceptable to pagans and Christians alike. There are different portrayals of the barbarians on the Dafne coins. Since barbarians are represented, some people think that these coins must have referred to

²³ Harold Mattingly, *The Man in the Roman Street* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company 1976), 79.



Figure 19. Portrayals of barbarian captives on Dafne coinage.

the pacification of a local tribe. The barbarian is actually a symbol of imperial power-- the barbarian attribute. Small submissive barbarian figures appear on many Roman coins and generally have nothing to do with a specific victory, but rather the representation of barbarians had been given a symbolic meaning of Roman policies and authority.

Barbarians are general symbols of victory and power. However, what might be the most interesting element of the coinage is represented by the physical transformation that Constantine undergoes as the series progressed.

The Dafne issue never portrayed Constantine with a laurel headdress, but only with the kingly diadem. Constantine's physical appearance on this series also changed during the three years that Constantinople struck these coins. Maybe his appearance changed to reflect his spiritual transformation. The first bust type, RIC 30, is a diademed

**RIC 30****RIC 32****RIC 38**

Figure 20. Three busts types of the Dafne coinage.

head. This shows a bull-necked Constantine with sharp features and short hair. This coin was probably an accurate portrayal of what Constantine actually looked like. Constantine

appeared thick-necked on his statues and had a nickname of "bull-neck".²⁴ The RIC 30 bust also looks more like earlier issues from Rome, Arles, and Ostia.²⁵ This bust type is very reminiscent of the tetrarchic busts. The Tetrarchy, or rule of four, was established by the Emperor Diocletian circa A.D. 293 and lasted until about A.D. 313. The tetrarchic busts on coins are typified by the close cropped hair favored by the military and a short beard. The images on these coins tend to look so much alike, that at times they are interchangeable. Tetrarchic portraits symbolized the new remoteness of the emperors by using abstract portraits.²⁶ The similarities in the busts of the tetrarchic emperors might have also been meant to demonstrate some degree of interchangeability in order to ensure a smooth succession. RIC 32 however depicts Constantine with his eyes lifted up, as if he is looking to the heavens. "It is tempting to associate the short use of the eyes raised type with the vision of Constantine in November 327 in conjunction with the founding of the enlarged capitol, but it is only speculation to do so, though the chronology must be very

²⁴ Samuel N.C. Lieu and Dominic Monserrat, *From Constantine to Julian. Pagan and Byzantine: Views A source of History* (Routledge,1996) , 5. For more on the meaning of the phrase "bull-neck" see Christer Bruun, "The Thick Neck of the Emperor Constantine. Slimy Snails and 'Quellenforschung'" *Historia : Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte* 44.4 (1995): 459 – 480.

²⁵ A new emperor sent images to colleagues and other important people. This was called *transmission imagines*, which was the equivalent of a request for recognition of imperial status. For more see Patrick Bruun "Portrait of a Conspirator, Constantine's Break with the Tetrarchy." *Arctos* 10 (1976) : 5-23, and "Notes on the Transmission of Imperial Images in Late Antiquity." *Studia romana in honorem Petri Krarup septuagenarii* (1976) : 122- 131. Lactantius also talked about this—"A few days later the image of Constantine wreathed in laurel leaves was brought to the evil beast (Galerius), who deliberated for a long time whether he should accept it."Lactantius. *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, Translated by J. L. Creed (New York: Clarendon Press, 1984) , 39.

²⁶ John Casey, *Understanding Ancient Coins: An Introduction for Archaeologists and Historians* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1986) , 35.

close.”²⁷ He is a changed man, from the earlier bull-necked man with a close cropped hair cut. By RIC 38, the transformation is complete. Constantine has softened, even feminized. His features are softer, his neck is thinner and more graceful and his hair is now curling down his neck. Constantine has gone from a soldier-Emperor into a philosopher king in just three years.²⁸ While this depiction probably appealed to Constantine’s senses, it might have also been a reflection of the Greek flavor of Constantinople. RIC 38 (issued circa Jan. 328 to late 329) has a star in the exergue. Some scholars believe that the star commemorated the residence of Constantine in Constantinople because he adopted the star as his personal symbol. There is actually one



Figure 21. Anepigraphic Dafne issue.

²⁷ Speck R. S., and Stephen M. Huston, *Constantine's Dafne Coinage at Constantinople* (San Francisco: Stephen M. Huston, 1992).

²⁸ For more on Constantinian portraiture see Evelyn B. Harrison, “The Constantinian Portrait.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 21 (1967) : 79-96.

more Dafne type, but it is quite rare. This coin has an anepigraphic (meaning no legend) obverse with the “eyes to the heavens” bust. Because of the rarity of this coin, coupled with the fact that there is no obverse legend, this coin was probably intended as a special presentation piece, which further demonstrates the symbolic importance of the Dafne coinage.²⁹

In A.D. 330, officials celebrated the dedication of Constantinople with a commemorative series. All thirteen Roman mints produced these types: Trier, Lugdunum (Lyons), Arelate (Arles), Aquileia, Rome, Siscia, Thessalonica, Heraclea, Constantinople, Nicomedia, Cyzicus, Antioch and Alexandria. There were a few different types of commemoratives, but the most important and most prolific were the CONSTANTINOPOLIS, or victory on a prow type, and VRBS ROMA (City of Rome) or wolf and twins type. The pantheon of gods has disappeared from Roman coinage, but personifications still appeared. The difference is that the gods, according to Roman beliefs, had a real existence, while personifications were only symbols—but they were still divine personalities.³⁰ The female figure on the obverse is the personification of Constantinople or Rome. The wolf and twins type depict Romulus and Remus (the founders of Rome) being suckled by the she-wolf. This design was modeled on the famous Capitoline Wolf (Lupa Capitolina). The statue was made circa 500 B.C. and it

²⁹ This type was not known until 1989. According to Speck and Huston in *Constantine's Dafne Coinage at Constantinople*, note 8, there were three specimens of this coin in the Bankhaus H. Aufhaeuser Munich auctions 7. 1990, 777; 8, 1991, 704; and 9, 1992, 522. Two of these coins were officina A and one was officina S, so officina Epsilon is a new example of this rare type. An example from officina gamma is also known. Speck and Huston placed this type with the other 'raised eyes' type for chronology but speculated that these coins could have been for special presentation pieces. Since 1989, a few more examples have surfaced, bring the total known examples of this coin to about half a dozen.

³⁰ For more on personifications see J. M. C. Toynbee “Roma and Constantinopolis in Late-Antique Art from 312 to 365.” *Journal of Roman Studies* 37 (1947).

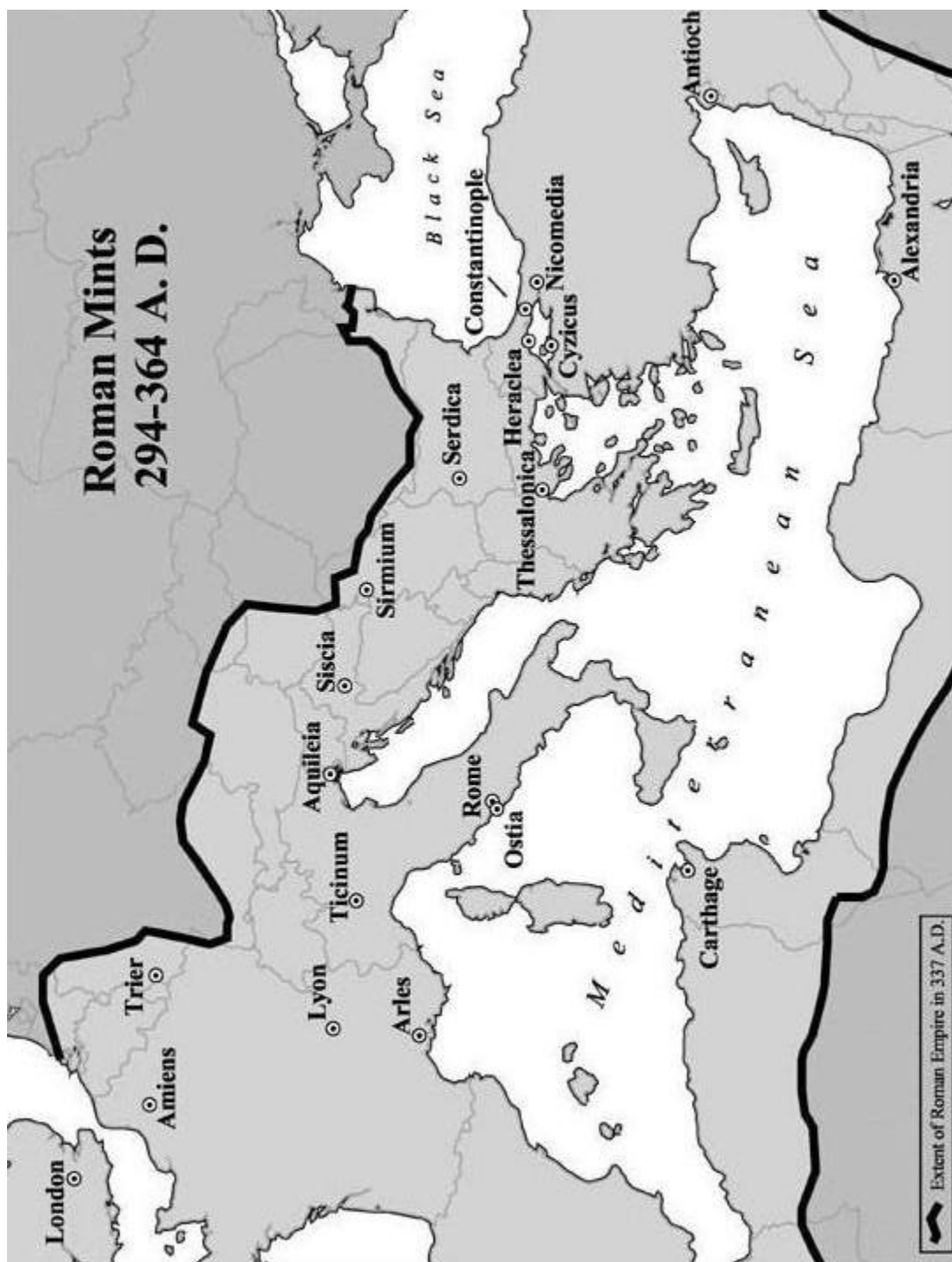


Figure 22. Map of the Roman mints. From Victor Failmezger, *Roman Bronze Coins-From Paganism to Christianity 294-364 A.D.* (Washington, D.C.: Ross & Perry, 2002).



Figure 23. Constantinopolis and wolf and twins commemoratives.

used to stand on the Capitoline Hill. The two stars on the reverse represent the dioscuroi.³¹ Officials issued the wolf and twins type to also re-affirm Rome as the traditional center of the Empire. Rome might have been the traditional center, but it was not the political or economic center anymore—that was Constantinople. Constantine’s new city was the jewel of the Empire, while Rome lost out and became the “lonely” *Roma Aeterna*.³² The fortunes of Constantinople were on the rise though, and the victory on a prow told a story. The story is in a large degree, economic. Constantinople was a busy port city, while Rome, even though near the port of Ostia, was landlocked. Goods flowed in and out of Constantinople with ease, while Rome became stagnant. The CONSTANTINOPOLIS coinage, with its theme of a nautical victory, was a great coin design to commemorate the rise of Constantine’s city.

The reverse of this coin has Victory standing in the prow of a galley. This reverse type alludes to the naval victory of Crispus and the subsequent capture of Byzantium. Once again, Constantine was reminding the Romans that he was the conqueror, and as such, the rightful ruler

There are also interesting variations on these coins. The mints of Heraclea, Constantinople, Nicomedia and Cyzicus, which surrounded the Propontis (the Sea of Marmara) dropped the S from the obverse legend. This was a regional variation and

³¹ The dioscuroi are the twins Castor and Pollux. According to mythology, both had the same mother, Leda, but different fathers. Pollux was immortal because his father was Zeus, while Castor had a mortal for a father. When Castor died, Pollux asked Zeus if he could give some of his immortality to his brother, so Zeus turned them into the Gemini constellation.

³² S. MacCormack, “Roma, Constantinopolis, the Emperor, and His Genius.” *Classical Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (May 1975) : 147.

"reflects the fall of the terminal -s in the spoken language."³³The obverse legend break for all the mints is always CONSTAN-TINOPOLIS except for Rome, which used the legend break CONSTANTI-NOPOLIS. Sometimes the engravers at Rome even misunderstood



Figure 24. Coin from Rome with the prow going the wrong way.

what the reverse was supposed to depict, and engraved the prow moving towards Victory, instead of Victory standing on the prow. The tendency in the western mints was to render the prow of the ship in a very simple fashion, perhaps due to their lack of nautical themes, but some of the eastern mints, more accustomed to nautical themes, occasionally engraved the prow with more style, and sometimes you can even see the oars of the galley.

³³ J. P. C. Kent, "Urbs Roma and Constantinopolis: Medallions at the Mint of Rome." *Scripta Nummaria Roman. Essays Presented to Humphrey Sutherland* (London: Spink & Son, 1978), 106.

The description in RIC describes Constantinopolis as holding reversed spear . This object might actually be a scepter, rather than a reversed spear. Compare the object with the scepter that the victory on the reverse is holding. The ends are alike--they both end in small globes. On some coins, Constantinopolis is holding what might be considered a cross- scepter with a globe (often topped with a smaller globe). This may or may not have had Christian significance, but Constantine first used this symbolism in A.D. 315 on a silver medallion, which also has a chi-rho on the crest, issued in Ticinum. The cross-scepter imagery was later an imperial attribute and sign of power on some gold coins of Valentinian III. This symbolism, and other imagery, may not have been



Figure 25. Coin of Valentinian III with cross scepter.

understood by many people at the time, though. In the sixth century, John of Ephesus wrote that the general public believed that the figure of Constantinopolis on gold coins of Justin II was actually Venus.³⁴ Justin II saved the day by telling the angry crowd of

³⁴ John of Ephesus lived circa A.D. 507- 588 and spent many years in Constantinople."For Justin had introduced in the coinage of his darics a female figure, which was generally compared to Venus."

Christians that it was actually an angel whispering in his ear. It seems that a lot of the message of ancient coins was lost on the audience, or that symbolism was lost or forgotten. Of course, this illustrates the need for caution whenever one tries to interpret symbolism—the real question of what did it mean to the people at the time might be very different from what a modern researchers might think.



Figure 26. Coin of Justin II holding victory.

Constantine spent much of his career as an emperor consolidating his power, and when he finally gained control of the Roman Empire, he shifted the center to Constantinople. The importance of this event was commemorated in the Dafne coinage and further demonstrated with the Constantinopolis coinage. Constantine also underwent a physical transformation on his coinage, which might reflect his wishes to be more like a Greek king—maybe he likened himself to Alexander. At the least, this transformation

Translated from the original Syriac by R. Payne Smith in *Ecclesiastical History of John, Bishop of Ephesus* (Oxford University Press, 1860), 192.

showed that Constantine began to accommodate Greek tastes. By shifting his capitol to Constantinople and making it the focus of the Empire in the East, Constantine ensured that Roman civilization would continue through the Byzantine period—during the “dark ages,” Constantinople was a shining beacon of light. The inhabitants of the city also never forgot that they were Roman, even though they spoke Greek—they called themselves *Romaion*.

CHAPTER 4

THE PRINCE, THE HELMET, THE GERMANS AND THE COINS

Circa A.D. 306, Constantine assumed the title *PRINCIPI IVVENT*, which translates as ‘Prince of Youth.’ This title was fairly common for an heir apparent, and Constantine had several coins which proclaimed him as this prince of youth. The irony of this title is that Constantine was far from a youth, he was most likely around thirty-five years old at the time.¹ Constantine eventually modified this title to be *PRINC PERP*, or ‘Eternal Prince.’ Around A.D. 313, Constantine issued a coin with a reverse that read *VICTORIAE LAETAE PRINC PERP*—‘Joyous Victory to the Eternal Prince.’ This type, which is abbreviated as *VLPP*, has many interesting aspects and even had some influence on Germanic culture for centuries.

¹ Ancient sources vary about the year of Constantine’s birthday, the day was 27 February of, most likely, A.D. 271, 272, or 273. Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.7-8 and 4.53, provides approximate dates only of A.D. 272 and 273. Eutropius, *Breviarium* 10.8.2, wrote that when Constantine died on the 22nd of May A.D. 337 he was 66 years old, so he would have been born in 271. There is a rare coin that may have commemorated Constantine’s birthday. The reverse of this coin is *PLVRA / NATAL / FEL* (May there be many happy births) in a wreath. The authors of LRBC [LRBC is a standard abbreviation for the book by R. A. G. Carson, P. V. Hill, and J. P. C. Kent, *Late Roman Bronze Coinage* (New York: Sanford Durst, 1989)] suggested that this coin could mark Constantine’s 50th birthday and assign it a date circa 326, so Constantine’s birthday would be 27 Feb 276. In RIC VII, the authors dated this coin (RIC VII Rome 321) to A.D. 329. This would make his birth date 27 Feb 279. The authors of RIC do not suggest it commemorates Constantine’s birthday, but they reference LRBC in a footnote on page 335. If this coin does celebrate Constantine’s birthday, it should be assigned an earlier date for the issue to be more in step with ancient sources, though. It would fit nicely in the Rome series from A.D. 321, and would mean that Constantine, if indeed born in A.D. 271, celebrated his fiftieth birthday on this occasion.



Constantine
VICTORIAE LAETAE PRINC PERP



Licinius
IOVI CONSERVATORI AVG



Maximinus
SOLI INVICTO COMITI

Figure 27. Billon coinage from Trier.

The occasion for the A.D. 313 VLPP issue was Constantine's defeat of Maxentius, who was actually a usurper in Italy, as the other Emperors did not officially recognize him. This coin was actually one of three coins issued in the name of each current ruler in the Roman Empire—Constantine, Licinius, and Maximinus. These coins are actually billon, which is roughly twenty-five percent silver. This was a special issue, and Trier was the only city in the Empire to mint these coins. Trier was the capitol of Constantine's Gallic Empire, so it would have been expected to issue special coinage after Constantine's stunning victory over Maxentius. These coins, or *Festmünzen*, may have been issued by Trier to celebrate the short-lived reconciliation of the three Augusti.² Constantine's coin has a reverse with two Victories standing, facing one another, together holding a shield inscribed VOT PR (Vows to the Roman People) on an altar. The Licinius coin has a reverse that reads IOVI CONSERVATORI AVG (To Jupiter, the savior of our Emperor) and depicts Jupiter with his head left, right arm holding a thunderbolt, and left holding a transverse scepter, seated on eagle standing right with wings spread. The Maximinus coin is a SOLI INVICTO COMITI (To my companion the invincible sun) reverse, with Sol, radiate, naked to waist, standing with his head left in a facing quadriga, which is a Roman chariot pulled by four horses, right hand raised, and left holding globe and whip. It is worth noting that two of the emperors were associated with pagan gods, but Constantine was not. This may be an early effort on Constantine's part to move away from the pagan religion. The twelfth Latin Panegyric tells about the gifts that the Senate awarded Constantine after his victory over Maxentius (Paneg. Lat.

² *Festmünzen* is a word coined by German numismatists, which literally means 'festival money'.

XII, 25.4).³ He was given a statue, a shield, and laurel crown. The VLPP coinage might allude to these gifts. The reverse has a shield. On many of the post A.D. 317 busts, Constantine's helmet is laureate. The exact type of statue that the senate gave to Constantine is unknown, but it seems likely to have been a victory type. Another interesting point, is that Constantine's portrayal on the obverse is very militaristic—he is helmeted, cuirassed, and holding a spear; while the other two emperors have neither weapons nor helmets. Constantine was always depicted wearing a helmet on the billon VLPP coins and subsequent bronze issue (except for a very rare issue from Arles).⁴ The helmet itself was an important symbol, and on some rare issues from



Figure 28. VLPP from Arles without a helmet.

³ C. E. V. Nixon and Barbara Saylor Rodgers, eds. *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini* (University of California Press, 1994), 331.

⁴ Given the extreme rarity of this type with Constantine depicted as laureate rather than the normal helmeted bust, it may be that the mint workers misunderstood their instructions and left out the helmet for this issue as subsequent issues from Arles all have the expected helmet.

Siscia, even has a chi-rho in the cross-bar. The helmet portrayed the one that Constantine wore at the battle of the Milvian Bridge and could be associated with his religious policies. There is also a reference in the seventh Latin Panegyric to a painting in the palace at Aquileia that showed Constantine's future wife Fausta handing him "a helmet gleaming with gold and jewels, and conspicuous with its plumes of a beautiful bird."⁵ For the warrior Constantine, the helmet imagery was very important. The helmet reflected the military prowess of Constantine, and he was actually quite an able general. The helmet also served to remind the Roman people that Constantine deserved to rule, if for no other reason, through military conquest. Constantine earned his authority on the battlefield and his helmeted bust on coins that circulated through the Roman Empire reminded his many subjects that he was emperor—and he had earned it!

In RIC VII there is confusion with the chronology of the VLPP coins. The problem is that Trier minted billon coinage in A.D. 313, while in A.D. 318 several cities in the Roman Empire issued the VLPP in bronze. A brief introduction into the metallurgy of Roman coins from this period is needed to clarify some points. The bronze coinage of the Constantinian period from A.D. 307-348 should actually be thought of as a true silver denomination since these coins had carefully measured amounts of silver and quite often, a surface enrichment of silver.⁶ At the very least, these coins should be called argentiferous bronze coins! The percentage of silver during this period fluctuated from 1-5% silver, and varied from mint to mint. Fractional coinage always had less silver, and

⁵ Nixon, and Rodgers, eds. *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini*, 199.

⁶ L. H. Cope and H. N. Billingham, "The Composition of 35 Roman Bronze Coins of the Period A.D. 284- 363," *Historical Metallurgy* 1 (1967) : 1.

the commemorative fractions issued by Constantine in A.D. 317 had almost no silver. These coins had only trace amounts of silver-- 0.3% or less. The argentiferous alloys were comprised of mainly copper (Cu), lead (Pb), tin (Sn) and silver (Ag). Other impurities might include iron (Fe), nickel (Ni), cobalt (Co), zinc (Zn), gold (Au), arsenic (As), antimony (Sb), and Indium (In).⁷ From A.D. 307-317, the amount of silver was circa 2-5%, with the exception of the billon coinage, and generally eastern mints had higher percentages of silver than the western mints, until Constantine became sole ruler of the Empire. Coinage often directly reflected the state of the Roman economy. As the Roman economy gradually worsened, the amount of silver in the coins lessened and conversely, when the economy was on the upswing, Romans minted coins with higher silver percentages⁸. From A.D. 318-320, there was circa 4% silver in the coinage. From A.D. 321-330, the silver content was circa 2%. After A.D. 330, the silver content was circa 1%, which was maintained until A.D. 341, when the silver dropped to less than 0.5%. Coins with only a trace amount of silver can no longer be thought of as argentiferous.⁹

⁷ C. E. King, "The Alloy Content of Folles and Imitations from the Woodeaton Hoard." *Journal of the European Study Group on Physical, Chemical, Biological and Mathematical Techniques Applied to Archaeology* 1 (1977) : 86-100. The metal Indium is occasionally found in alloys of fourth century coins. It is similar to aluminum and its most common isotope is very slightly radioactive.

⁸ "Rather than repeat the raising of the coin's face value while leaving the coin physically unaltered, however, the opposite tactic was adopted, and the weight and fineness of the coinage was reduced to enable a greater number of coins with the same face value to be produced from the same stock of metal, since this greater quantity was needed as a result of the sharp increase in price." Christopher Howgego, *Ancient History from Coins* (New York: Routledge) , 131.

⁹ L. H. Cope, C. E. King, J. P. Northover, and T. Clay. *Metal Analyses of Roman Coins Minted Under the Empire. British Museum Occasional Paper* 120 (1997) , 8.

Many argentiferous coins of this period exhibit silvering on their surface. This surface-silvering was probably an attempt to make the public have more confidence in the value of their money. Through experimentation, some possible methods of surface enrichment of silver have been theorized.¹⁰ For flans with more than 5% silver, cold hammering followed by annealing resulted in lead and silver being forced to the surface. A dilute acid bath would give the flan a silvery surface. For flans that contained less than 5% silver, a bath in molten silver chloride displaced silver and deposited it on the surface, which gave the flan a silvery wash. Hot working and blanching prior to striking also enriched the surface silver content. There are other ways a coin could have a silvery surface. Corrosion may also promote a silvery surface on a coin. Lead corrodes very easily, and as it is displaced, silver can be deposited on the surface. Various methods in the cleaning process can also give a coin a silvery appearance, such as heating a coin or even washing a coin. Lead can be removed by prolonged washing, leaving more silver on the surface.¹¹ A recent study of silvered coins showed that the silvering often contained mercury. Experiments were performed with a silver-mercury amalgam and various heating cycles. Copper sheets were coated with silver-mercury pastes and heated. The alloy that best withstood the 600 degree temperatures had 62% mercury and 38% silver.¹²

¹⁰ L. H. Cope, "Surface-Silvered Ancient Coins," *Methods of Chemical and Metallurgical Investigation of Ancient Coinage* (1972), 275.

¹¹ Teresa Clay, "Metallurgy and Metallography in Numismatics," *Numismatica e Antichità Classiche* 17 (1988) : 341- 352.

¹² C. Vlachou, J. G. McDonnell, and R. C. Janaway, "Experimental Investigation of Silvering in Late Roman Coinage," *Materials Research Society Symposia Proceedings* 712 (2002) : 461- 470.

tariffed the coins, giving them 3-5% silver. The VLPP was re-introduced as part of this new higher silver content base coinage. This makes a lot of sense, since many people already associated the VLPP with higher silver content because of the billon issue. So because of the P and S officinae marks, RIC VII listed the billon Constantine coin with the later base coins that looked pretty much the same as the billon issues (especially if the base coins were silvered). Licinius also had base coins of his type minted, while Maximinus never had a base coin issued, as he committed suicide after a failed coup attempt in 313. Since there are not any base issues for Maximinus it only makes sense that there were indeed two separate issues. RIC VII also lists a bronze medallion with a reverse legend of VICTORIAE LAETAE PRINCIPIS PERPETVI (RIC VII 208) with the 318-319 issue, but the footnotes said that Andreas Alföldi, a noted numismatist and historian, thought that this medallion should be dated immediately after the battle of the Milvian Bridge. It seems more likely that this medallion was indeed struck in A.D. 313 and was associated with the billon coinage. There have also been metallurgical tests performed on the billon coinage to verify that the coins from the three rulers have similar metallic compositions and must have been minted at the same time.¹³

In A.D. 318, mint officials began striking VLPP coinage at the mints of London, Lyons, Trier, Arles, Ticinum, and Siscia. The rest of this paper will look at the coins from Siscia, as they are especially interesting. Constantine had just won the territory of Siscia from Licinius in 317. Siscia was also the farthest east of the mints that issued the VLPP's,

¹³ This article explains the analysis of the billon coins and subsequent dating: J. Barrandon, J. P. Callu, C. Brenot, "The Analysis of Constantinian Coins (A.D. 313-40) By Non-Destructive Californium 252 Activation Analysis," *Archaeometry* 19 (1977) : 173-186.

so it was the closest mint of Constantine to the remaining territory of Licinius.

Constantine was also having troubles with "barbarians" from the North. On these coins,



Figure 30. VLPP depicting Constantine with spear.

Constantine often has full military regalia comprising a helmet, cuirass, spear and shield.

This military bust may have been propaganda on the part of Constantine aimed at Licinius and perhaps the fractious Northern tribes-- a little reminder that God was on his side! One must also remember that Constantine was first and foremost an accomplished soldier and general, and these military busts reminded people of his military prowess and right to rule through, if not by providence, conquest. After Constantine's victory at the Milvian Bridge, the helmet may have even had an association with Christianity, and some rare examples of VLPP from Siscia even have a chi-rho in the crossbar. It is interesting to note that the heroic bust with spear and shield was only issued for Constantine and was never issued for Licinius, who is always depicted as

laureate. The mint in Siscia also issued the first coin in the East that had the title MAX[imus] on the obverse. After Constantine defeated Maxentius in A.D. 312, the Roman senate awarded him the title of MAXIMUS. This title was only used on one issue for a brief time. Maybe Constantine wanted to put Licinius on alert with a gentle reminder of who was the ‘max.’ The coin in figure 31 is also interesting because of the



Figure 31. VLPP with MAX in legend-- RIC VII Siscia 52.

obverse legend break. The deliberately broken legend (versus breaks because there is just not enough room) on the obverse, which occurs above the head of Constantine, has been suggested by a historian to mirror an oriental concept that nothing should come between the king and heaven, or in this case, nothing should come between Constantine and heaven.¹⁴ On this coin, Constantine wears a laureate helmet, indicating that he is a victorious military leader.

¹⁴ RIC VII, footnote on page 28.

Crude imitations of the VLPP coinage began turning up, probably shortly after the first official ones came out of the mint and numismatists refer to them as ‘barbarous coinage’ because of their usually poor quality and style. There are numerous theories about the origins of these coins. In the 1950’s, Phillip Hill wrote an article that caused much debate.¹⁵ In this article, he claimed that Germanic tribes struck barbarous imitations of fourth century coins as late as the fifth century. A few years later, hoard evidence proved conclusively that imitations were actually contemporary with the official coinage.¹⁶ This does not mean however, that Germanic people could not have struck these imitations. This paper will only deal with VLPP imitative coinage in the Siscian style, which often has a fairly legible attempt at the Siscia mintmark in the exergue, though sometimes it is retrograde. Different imitative coins from different times cannot all be explained in the same way, because of different circumstances. The circumstances in the early fourth century were unique. Some people believe that these coins were made just to alleviate a coin shortage, but the diocese of Hispaniae did not have a mint, and these coins rarely turn up there.¹⁷ Others believe that these coins were issued as pay for the military on the frontiers, but how long would Constantine have been able to issue inferior coinage before the troops, who put him in office, decided to remove him from power? The Roman government also tended to establish mints in areas with high

¹⁵ P. V. Hill, “Barbarous Imitations of Fourth-Century Roman Coins,” *The Numismatic Chronicle* 10 (1950) : 233- 270.

¹⁶ J. P. C. Kent, “Barbarous Copies of Roman Coins: Their Significance for the British Historian and Archaeologist.” *Limes-Studien* 14 (1957) , 61- 68.

¹⁷ For more information about the mints, look at M. Hendy, “Mint and Fiscal Administration under Diocletian, His Colleagues and His Successors: A.D. 305- 324,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 62 (1972) : 75- 82.

concentrations of soldiers, like the Rhine and Danube frontiers in order to ensure that the military received their pay. Each of these theories may be right to some extent, but they do not look at the whole picture. Firmicus Maternus, who lived in the fourth century, even said that an alignment of the stars and planets influenced forgery. Maternus was probably wrong, though!

Mars allots 20 months to Mercury. When Mercury accepts these months he rouses certain dangers from things written, or he inflicts loss from forgeries. But often he will have enemies destroyed in various ways. If Mercury and Venus are in conjunction, in square aspect, or in opposition, they indicate the crimes of forgery and counterfeiting, especially if Mercury is found in the house or terms of Saturn. (Firmicus Maternus *Ancient Astrology: Theory and Practice* 35:6).

This period was a time of great change in the Roman Empire. Many Germanic people were living in Roman territory. The Roman Empire needed the influx of people to farm the land and protect the borders from other Germanic people. During the reign of Constantius I, “the whole nation of the Carpi was transferred” to Roman land.¹⁸ Constantine had Germans in his army, and these “barbarians” helped him greatly in A.D. 312 at the battle of the Milvian Bridge. The Roman senate even included carved images of barbarians serving in Constantine’s army on some of the panels of the Arch of Constantine located in Rome. Many of these barbarous tribes actually lived in the Roman Empire, or very near the borders. The Romans called them foederati. The foederati were allies of Rome, but not citizens. Rome often granted these tribes many privileges including trade rights, and these Germans became very used to Roman products.

Near to us...are our faithful allies the Hermunduri. Because they are so loyal, they are the only Germans who trade with us not merely on

¹⁸ Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus* 39: 28.

the river bank but far within our borders, and indeed in the splendid colony that is the capital of Raetia. They come over where they will, and without guard set over them. The other Germans are only allowed to see our armed camps; to the Hermunduri we exhibit our mansions and country- houses without their coveting them (Tacitus *Germania* Book 41).

However, it seems that the Germans did covet Romans' homes. In Slovakia, archaeologists discovered the remains of several buildings built in the manner of the Romans and utilizing Roman materials. These buildings were "apparently occupied by Germans."¹⁹ These remains showed that some Germans were very used to Roman life—one building even had hypocaust- heating and another had a bath-house. "Roman artifacts were in everyday use at all levels of society and some of these suggest the adoption of Roman ways."²⁰ Of course not all Germans had adopted Roman ways, and during Constantine's rule quite a few still needed to be 'civilized'.

Circa 332, Constantine was victorious over the Goths. According to Eusebius, he converted them "from a lawless animal existence to one of reason and law. In this way the Goths learnt at last to serve Rome."²¹ According to Jordanes, the Goths even helped build Constantinople. "In like manner it was the aid of the Goths that enabled him to build the famous city that is named after him, the rival of Rome, inasmuch as they entered into a truce with the Emperor and furnished him forty thousand men to aid him against various peoples."²² This event happened later than the VLPP coinage, but demonstrates how in certain areas, especially along the borders, the population was

¹⁹ Lynn F Pitts, "Relations Between Rome and the German 'Kings' on the Middle Danube in the First to Fourth Centuries A.D.," *Journal of Roman Studies* 79 (1989) : 56.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, : 58.

²¹ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* book IV: 5.

²² Jordanes, *The Origin and Deeds of the Goths* book XXI.

probably actually more ‘barbarian’ than Roman. Along the border, there would have been a lot of Germanic people, even the military in these towns had a very large percentage of Germans. The borders were very porous, and there was a lot of movement back and forth. As an example of the porous borders, archaeologists found a small hoard containing 37 VLPP imitations in the remains of Carnuntum, a border town north of Siscia and situated on the Danube.²³ Carnuntum actually did have a Roman mint at one time—Regalianus, Emperor in A.D. 260, minted coins, both in his own name and that of his wife Sulpicia Dryantilla, at a hastily established mint. These coins found on the *limes*, might give some evidence of the people that used them. Carnuntum is also important because it had long been the start of the way to the amber coast. Pliny mentioned a Roman knight who started his trek in Carnuntum and journeyed six hundred miles to the Baltic coast and set up several trading posts.²⁴ Archaeologists have found Roman goods scattered all along the amber trade route. This route is only one of the better known ones, there were many other trade routes that linked the Romans and Germans. North of the Danube, people find many Roman objects like bronze vessels, brooches and pottery, but the most commonly found Roman artifacts are coins. Figure 32 is a map showing coins dated from A.D. 250- 400. These coins demonstrate the extensive trade routes into the Germanic people’s territory and show the widespread diffusion of Roman currency. The widespread occurrence of

²³ Matthias Pfisterer and Heinz Winter, “Eine Sammlung barbarisierter spätrömischer Münzen aus Carnuntum,” *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Numismatische Gesellschaft* 41, no.2 (2001) :27-41 and volume 41, no. 3 (2001) : 47- 61. The authors wrote about 52 imitations found near Carnuntum, which included 37 VLPP imitations. Coin three and coin four in the addendum of this paper are very close in style to the obverse of coin number 36 in the article. It weighed 1.7 grams and had an exergue of dot SIS.

²⁴ Olwen Brogan, “Trade between the Roman Empire and the Free Germans,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 26, part 2 (1936) : 200.

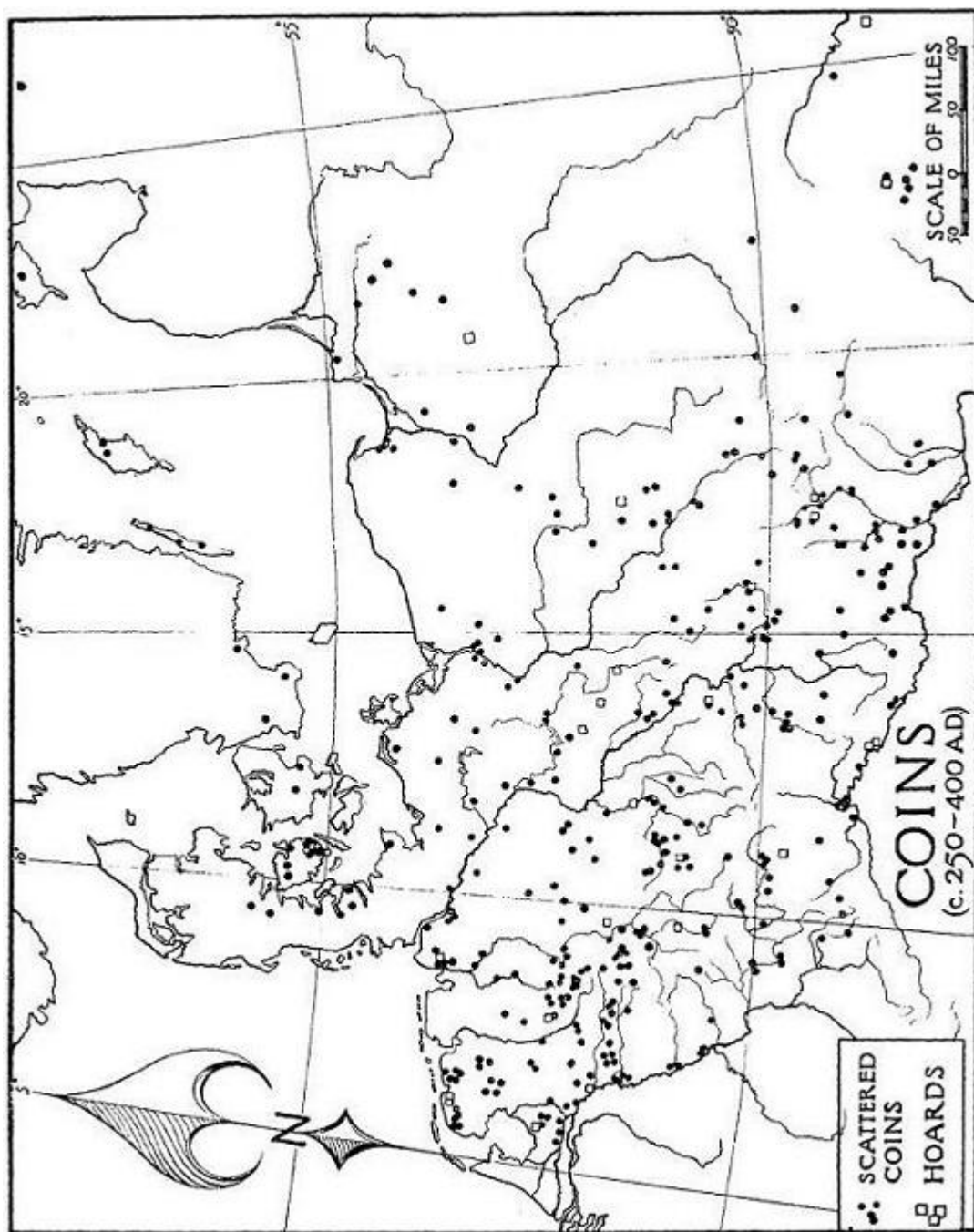


Figure 32. Map showing coin finds.²⁵

²⁵ This map is from the article by Olwen Brogan, "Trade between the Roman Empire and the Free Germans," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 26, part 2 (1936) : 205.

currency and other artifacts suggests that many Germans were becoming “Romanized,” or at the least, many Germans enjoyed quite a few aspects of Roman culture. As many Germans were used to using Roman money, in times of shortage it only seems natural



Figure 33. Imitation of a VLPP.

that they might produce their own copies. Of course, being barbarians, most Germans did not read or write Latin.

One thing VLPP imitations often have in common is the legends. These imitative coins almost never got the legends correct. This is no surprise though if the coins were made for, or made by Germans, since most of them, like the Goths, could not read or write Latin--they did not even have their own written language. You also have to wonder what Germanic people, who did not read or write, (and may not have even understood the concept) saw when they looked at the legends on a Roman coin. These people probably

saw nothing more than curious designs or decorations. As a result, the engraver could use nonsensical symbols instead of Latin and no one cared. Remember also that by the Roman definition that is why they were barbarians. Barbarians were any people that did not read or write Latin...and especially those that wore pants!²⁶ The Romans used the term barbarian in a negative sense, though. It would probably be better to refer to this type of coinage as imitative. The Germans were not actually barbarians and really only wanted a better life for themselves and their families...and they saw opportunity in Rome.²⁷ One must remember that the Germanic people had also been in contact with Roman culture for centuries, and the line was surely blurred between the distinction of who was Roman and who was a barbarian.²⁸ Of course, cultural transmission was, and is, a two way street. As the Germans picked up Roman culture, the Romans also picked up German culture. That is the reason that the law against pants was passed in Rome--too many Romans were 'going native'. The barbarians were not just at the gate, they were firmly entrenched in the city!

²⁶ "Within the City of Rome no person shall wear either trousers or boots. But if any man after the issuance of this regulation of Our Clemency should obstinately persist in such contumacy, he shall be punished according as his legal status permits and expelled from our sacred City." *Codex Theodosianus* 14.10.3 June 6, 399.

²⁷ For more on why it is wrong to call the Germanic people barbarians and why even calling them Germans is an anachronism, see Walter Goffart, "Rome, Constantinople, and the Barbarians," *American Historical Review* 86, no. 2 (April 1981) : 275-306.

²⁸ There has been a lot of research and many books and articles written on just how Romanized the Germans actually were. A book that touches on this subject is by Peter Wells, *The Battle that Stopped Rome* (Norton, 2003). An article on the subject is by Lynn F Pitts, "Relations Between Rome and the German 'Kings' on the Middle Danube in the First to Fourth Centuries A.D." *Journal of Roman Studies* 79 (1989) : 45- 58.



Tiberius Claudius Nero serrate denarius, c79 BC, SC Bust of Diana right, bow and quiver before. / Victory in biga right, A .LXXXVII below, TI CLAVD TI F AP N in exergue. Claudia 6; Cr383/1; Syd 770.

Figure 34. Denarius like the Germans preferred.

Tacitus (who wrote *Germania* in the first century A.D.) said that the Germanic tribes liked to use Roman denarii. The Germanic tribes preferred these coins because the edges were serrated which made it easier to check for forged coins.

The Germans however adjoining to our frontiers value gold and silver for the purposes of commerce, and are wont to distinguish and prefer certain of our coins. They who live more remote are more primitive and simple in their dealings, and exchange one commodity for another. The money which they like is the old and long known, that indented, or that impressed with a chariot and two horses. Silver too is what they seek more than gold, from no fondness or preference, but because small pieces are more ready in purchasing things cheap and common. (Tacitus *Germania* Book 5).

So the Germanic people, at least on the frontiers, were quite used to having Roman money by the fourth century. Since the imitations are struck, this would also mean that there were ‘mints’ that produced these ‘barbarous’ coins. Bastien, a respected French

numismatist, even said that these coins came from “well organized work-shops.”²⁹ This level of organization coupled with the designs seems to indicate 'barbarous' origins for these coins. The map in figure seven shows where archeologists discovered hoards containing imitations, which they later published. The data covers imitations from A.D. 330- 348, but the barbarous VLPP's could be expected to have a similar distribution. Many of the finds are in the region of the border. These finds are also limited to reported hoards, so unreported finds or finds that did not constitute hoards were not included. Also not included was data from what was then the Soviet Empire. In the spirit of the time, Russia did not share information, but since the collapse of the USSR, many imitations are sold that come from countries like Bulgaria. The steady influx of imitations from ‘behind the iron curtain’ would indicate that these coins circulated in great numbers and might even indicate a point of origin if more data could be acquired. If these coins were not minted by foederati in Roman territory or 'barbarians' across the borders, how long would an organized mint producing counterfeits in an area under strong Roman control have lasted? Remember, a mint would have been a very noisy place with the hammering of coins, so not exactly easy to hide, and a furnace would have been going continually. Counterfeiting was, after all, a crime that Rome did not look upon kindly.³⁰

The large amount of these copies is “indicative of the heavy overtariffing of the official coinage.”³¹ This meant that people could make copies of the official coinage for less than

²⁹ Pierre Bastien, "Imitations of Late Roman Bronze Coins, 318-363," *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes* 30 (1985) : 144.

³⁰ Philip Grierson, “The Roman Law of Counterfeiting.” *Essays in Roman Coinage Presented to Harold Mattingly* (Oxford University Press , 1956) , 240- 261.

the official money was worth. The official VLPP had as much as 3-5% silver, while the previous coinage that was de-monetized had around 2% silver. If someone made imitations by melting down the old coins, a nice profit could be made.³² For this paper, the lab at MTSU analyzed twenty-two imitations and the complete results along with a picture of each coin are in the addendum. The sizes are close to the official coinage (circa 19mm), but on average tend to be about a millimeter smaller.³³ The average weight of the imitations is about .2 grams lighter than the official coinage which weighs an average of three grams. Twenty of these coins had circa 2% silver, which indicates that the previous de-monetized issues were melted down. One of the coins, number eight, had no silver, and number fourteen had .39%. So by manufacturing imitations, people could actually make money hand over fist!³⁴ At the time, people were very aware that bronze coins had some silver in them. There is even a law from A.D. 349 aimed at mint employees removing silver from bronze coins.

³¹ George C. Boon, "Counterfeit Coins in Roman Britain," *Coins and the Archaeologist* (London: Seaby, 1980) : 137.

³² J. Barrandon and J. P. Callu and C. Brenot in their article, "The Analysis of Constantinian Coins (A.D. 313-40) By Non-Destructive Californium 252 Activation Analysis," *Archaeometry* 19 (1977): 173-186, found that examples of the VLPP imitative from Trier averaged less than 2% silver.

³³ The analysis was performed on a SEM Hitachi 3400N Edex Oxford Inca at 20 kilovolts, live time 100 seconds.

³⁴ one possible origin of the phrase "make money hand over fist" referred to the minting practice of holding the die in your fist and striking with a hammer held in your other hand.

We have learnt that many metalworkers (flaturarii) are purging the maiorina coin (maiorina pecunia) no less criminally than frequently by separating off the silver the bronze. Therefore, if anyone is caught in this operation from now on let him know that he is to suffer capital punishment, and indeed those who own the house or land that they are to be punished by the confiscation of property to the largitiones: Our Clemency is naturally to be informed of the names.³⁵

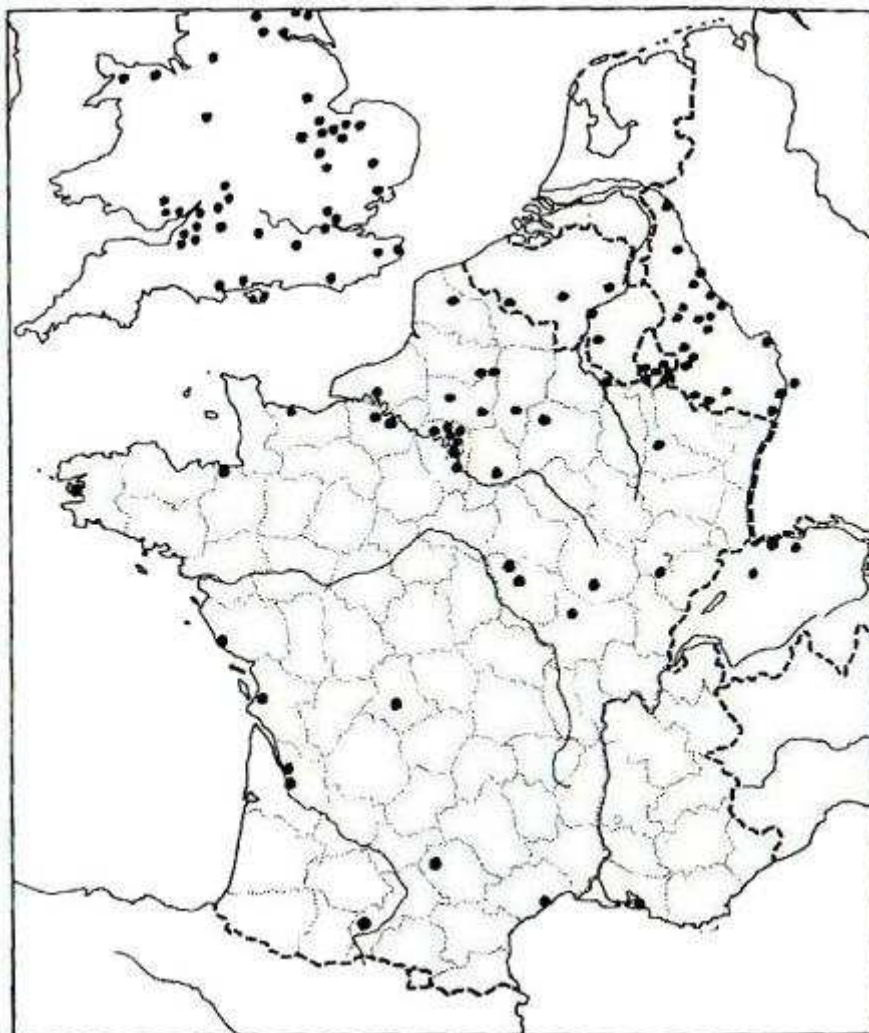


Figure 35. Map of imitation finds.³⁶

³⁵ Law of February 12, 349 A.D., CTh IX. 21. 6, from the Emperor Constantius II (337-361) to the Praetorian Prefect Limenius. Adapted from Pharr translation in the book by Michael F. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy, Circa 300-1450* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 470.

³⁶ The map is from the article written by J. P. Callu and J. P. Garnier, "Minimi constantiniens trouvés à Reims, Appendice II: Corpus des imitations," *Numismatica e Antichità Classiche* 6 (1977): 330-

Another fact could point to these coins being made by Germanic people. Figure 36 shows the obverse bust from four imitations which are in the addendum. Look at imitations 3 and 4 and 15 and 16 in the appendix. The first two, 3 and 4, are amazingly similar and 15 and 16 are also very close in appearance. This seems to show that the engravers were copying previous barbarous issues instead of official versions of the VLPP-- they did not seem to care what the official coinage looked like. Sometimes the style is very good on these coins, but other times the style is so abstract that it is hard to tell what the engraver wanted to depict. The poor style, and at times almost unrecognizable image of Constantine, seems to point to "barbaric" manufacture. Many of these coins bear images that would have surely been insulting to Constantine! The stylistic differences on these coins might make more sense in the terms of a different culture. Some of the VLPP's for example, bear little resemblance to the familiar (to a Roman at least) figure of two victories holding a shield over an altar. To a Germanic engraver, this imagery would not have been quite so familiar, and so it became so highly abstract that one may have difficulty recognizing the original model. Maybe the engraver knew that the people that would use these coins would not know better or even care. So even if these coins were not minted by 'barbarians', it seems that the coins were meant to be used by the Germanic people.

315. As stated, this map is the locations of imitations from A.D. 330- 348. The article lists the locations and types of imitations found, and the publication information of the finds, i.e. Numismatic Chronicle.



Imitation 3



Imitation 4



Imitation 15



Imitation 16

Figure 36. Imitations of the VLPP coinage.



Figure 37. Coin of Theodahad.

The VLPP helmet/crown of Constantine was also used by Germanic kings. The above picture (fig. 37) of a coin from Ostrogothic king Theodahad (A.D. 534-536) illustrates a very similar helmet as the VLPP type. There is no plume or cheek flap, but the type is still recognizable, especially the stars to the right and left of the cross-bar.³⁷ The VLPP type helmet became the most common type helmet in Europe in the sixth and seventh century—called a *spangenhelm*. These helmets utilized jointed construction and were made of metal strips that comprised a frame that connect three to six bronze or steel plates—that is why the VLPP helmets had so many rivets in the design. As late as the

³⁷ “For the first time an Ostrogothic king is portrayed on a coin destined for normal currency. His title *rex* and his elaborately decorated *spangenhelm*, a type of helmet well-known as a product of highly skilled ostrogothic craftsmanship, but ultimately also of Roman origin, clearly indicate that a king is indicated, not an emperor. The reverse of this coin again is within the limits of ancient Roman tradition, for it imitates a coin type common long ago under the Roman emperor Vespasianus, even copying the certainly meaningless S-C (*senatus consultas*) of the prototype.” Thomas S. Burns and Bernhard H. Overbeck, *Rome and the Germans as Seen in the Coinage* (Emory University, 1987) , 73.

seventh century, a helmet was used in place of a crown, in the coronation of Egbert, a King of Kent who ruled from 664 to 673.³⁸

The VLPP coinage was one of the most important (in terms of quantity produced alone) bronze types issued during Constantine's reign. The billon coin celebrated his victory over Maxentius and signaled his adoption of the spangenhelm as a personal symbol of his military strength and right to rule. The bronze issue once again confirmed Constantine's military prowess and served as a reminder and possible warning to Licinius and the Germans. Germanic tribes relied heavily on, and possibly produced, VLPP imitations. Future German kings even borrowed the imagery and symbolism of the VLPP and even adopted Constantine's helmet as a symbol of kingship. One small coin thus exerted quite a lot of influence for some four hundred years—the eternal prince would have been very pleased.

³⁸ Andreas Alföldi, "The Helmet of Constantine with the Christian Monogram." *The Journal of Roman Studies* 22 (1932) : 16.



Figure 38. Typical German spangenhelm.

CONCLUSION

Constantine the Great “is one of the few inescapable figures in Roman history and one of the most intractable.”¹ Constantine will always be famous for being the first Christian Emperor and for founding the city of Constantinople-- events which rank “amongst the most significant in history.”² As the first Christian Emperor, Constantine promoted Christianity which undoubtedly helped the success of the Church. By moving the capitol of the Roman Empire to Constantinople, Constantine was responsible for creating the successor to the Roman Empire-- the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine Empire lasted for over a thousand more years after Constantine’s death, and had a great impact on history. Constantine also bridged the gap between the late classical and early medieval period, “while the last of the great Roman Emperors, Constantine also was the first medieval emperor.”³ One of Constantine’s most lasting actions resulted from the laws he passed which bound people to the land. This meant that if your parents farmed, you would farm, and this led to the concept of serfdom. This is one of Constantine’s less appealing legacies, but it had a huge impact on the society of medieval Europe.

Even though Norman Baynes described the problem of fully comprehending Constantine as intractable, historians have many sources to help understand the man. Quite a few primary sources discuss Constantine the Great. Some of these literary sources

¹ Norman H. Baynes, *Constantine the Great and the Christian Church* (British Academy, 1972) : 3.

² Michael Grant, *The Emperor Constantine* (London: Phoenix Giant, 1998) : back cover.

³ This quote is from Louis Haas of MTSU, and originally appeared as a suggestion from him as an idea to incorporate into the paper.

are excessively lavish in praise, such as Eusebius of Caesarea's, while others like that of the Byzantine historian Zosimus, who was a high ranking official in the Imperial treasury, portray Constantine in a less positive fashion. Imperial rescripts, such as those collected in the Theodosian Code, are also a source for laws that Constantine passed. A wealth of material remains is available, including statues, monuments, and buildings. Inscriptions etched into these stone monuments, such as on the Arch of Constantine, offer historians another field of study, epigraphy, which is the study and deciphering of inscriptions. Another of these sources is the field of numismatics, the study of coins.

This is one type of source, though, which some historians might not utilize to its fullest potential, especially because of the specialized knowledge needed to understand this field. The study of this source is much like epigraphy; but instead of words and images carved in stone, these engravers worked with little metal discs of gold, silver, or bronze. Numismatics has come a long way since its inception in the fourteenth century during the Renaissance. Humanists like Petrarch probably collected coins more out of a sense of nostalgia or antiquarianism. The coins of emperors like Augustus demonstrated a past when Italy had the greatest Empire in the world, and, for the humanist, the classical world was the epitome of culture. Modern numismatics, however, has changed greatly from the days when people were mostly concerned with who was on the coin. The area of numismatics involves many disciplines. History itself is integral to understanding numismatics. Many numismatists have trained as historians, but far fewer historians have trained as numismatists. Archaeology plays a part, specifically in the recovery and publication of coin hoards. Science, especially in the area of metallurgy, which deals with alloy composition, has a big role in numismatics. The study of languages is also

important. The incorporation of so many fields means that numismatics is truly an interdisciplinary effort. Yet of all the combined disciplines, history is the most integral with numismatics. The use of coins by historians is another tool for interpreting the past.

Historians can use coins, in conjunction with primary sources, to give a much more complete picture of the fourth century. Coins can help historians to fill in gaps about life during the era of Constantine. A good example of numismatics helping history is the revised date of the first civil war between co-emperors Constantine and Licinius. Patrick Bruun accurately used numismatics to date the civil war to A.D. 316, instead of the previously accepted date of A.D. 314.⁴ Bruun was able to do this by looking at Constantinian coinage. Bruun noticed that in A.D. 315, Constantine stopped issuing coins in the name of Licinius. This would only have occurred if there was trouble between the two of them. Constantine and Licinius also appointed their sons as Caesars in A.D. 317. Bruun reasoned that this was part of a peaceful agreement in conclusion of the war. Christopher Ehrhardt demonstrated that the Arch of Constantine, which the Roman senate dedicated in A.D. 315, corroborates the later date, since the monument depicts Constantine and Licinius as allies.⁵ Bruun conclusively proved that the first civil war occurred in A.D. 316. This political issue may no longer be an area of debate, but one major aspect of Constantine and his reign still incites much discussion among historians and numismatists.

Numismatists and historians often use coins when debating whether Constantine was a Christian, what kind of Christian he was, or how sincere he was in his beliefs.

⁴ Patrick Bruun, *The Constantinian Coinage of Arelate* (Helsinki, 1953).

⁵ Christopher Ehrhardt, "Monumental Evidence for the Date of Constantine's First War against Licinius," *Ancient World* 23 (1992) : 87-94.

The question of his Christianity really demonstrates the importance of Constantine to history. “Without Constantine, would Christianity have flourished?” The real question though is without state sponsorship would Christianity, or any religion, prosper? Or what if the persecution of Christians by pagan Romans had continued? Christianity might never have flourished at all and in the early fourth century it did not look like Christianity would last. In A.D. 303, the Emperor Diocletian, who was the senior ruler, started the last, and worst, persecution of Christians. Historians call this the Great Persecution, and it lasted until A.D. 313, when Constantine and Licinius signed the Edict of Milan. This edict granted religious tolerance in the Roman Empire and ended the persecution of Christians. The actions of Constantine allowed the Catholic Church to flourish. In some respects, one can even view the history of Medieval Europe as a history of the establishment and growth of the Church. There were three orders in the Middle Ages—those who worked, those who fought, and those who prayed. Those who prayed, the clergy, were arguably (according to the medieval intellectual world) the most important as they were responsible for the salvation of souls. The Church was an institution that was closely valued in the lives of millions in Europe from cradle to grave. The Western Catholic Church never ordained Constantine as a saint (the Greek Orthodox Church did), but it is hard to imagine the Church’s survival without his actions. The Church shaped and guided the growth and development of Europe and Constantine was at least indirectly, if not directly, responsible for the initial success of the Church. So for Constantine, the big question for many people seems to revolve around his religiosity. The coinage shows that Constantine slowly removed pagan gods from the reverse. Constantine replaced the obviously pagan types, like Sol, with coins that were more

ambiguous, like the camp gate reverse that proclaimed *PROVIDENTIAE AVGG*-- In honor of the foresight of the Emperors. Some people say that Constantine lacked sincerity or that he displayed syncretism with Christ and Sol in his beliefs. The coin evidence in conjunction with written primary sources, however, clearly demonstrates that Constantine was a Christian. Coins can tell us much more than just the religious nature of Constantine.

Coins can also show us what Constantine, or other Emperors, looked like. This is useful to historians because the portrayal on the coin not only demonstrates the ruler's appearance, but more importantly, what he wanted his subjects to think he looked like. Constantine underwent a transformation in his appearance which is only readily apparent by comparing different issues of his coinage. The symbolism of the reverse is also very important as this provided another message to the subjects. A message like "Joyous victory to the eternal Prince," announced Constantine's military might and right to rule. Sometimes the reverses are easy enough to understand, as in the case of *SARMATIA DEVICTA*, which translates into "Sarmatia conquered." The *CONSTANTINOPOLIS* type, with the galley and victory, is easy to link with the naval victory over Licinius. A reverse like the *Dafne* type illustrates the point that the message is not always so clear. It also demonstrates that solid history is essential in numismatics. Many people erroneously believe that this coin commemorated a fort. With some research in the available histories, this belief is easy to prove wrong. There is a saying in ancient numismatics, "buy the book before the coin." This saying infers that one should buy a numismatic book, but a history book would be an equally wise, or even wiser, purchase. The *Dafne* type is easier to understand in context of its minting, which occurred shortly after Constantine defeated

Licinius and gained sole rule over the Roman Empire. The date of minting, in conjunction with the translation of the reverse, clearly demonstrates that the Dafne coin was a war commemorative. Historical documents are often very important in numismatics. Sometimes it is the smallest details on a coin that link to a document.

Two bronze coins of Constantine have small denominational marks of XII and XVI respectively on their reverses.⁶ The bronze coin, or *follis*, had a value of 25 to a denarius, but the marks of value on these fractional coins suggest a value not in increments of five adding up to 25, but rather 4, which suggests a value of 24 *folles* to a denarius. If the value was 25 folles to a denarius, the fractionals would not have had 12 on the reverse but rather 12 1/2, and 16 2/3 instead of 16. It was easier and more convenient to count small change this way, and then convert to 25 units for larger amounts. Diocletian's Edict of Prices also lends support to the theory that Romans used two systems for their monetary system. For small amounts up to 25 DC, the *denarii communes* is most frequently named as an even number-- 2, 4, 6, 8 etc. Beginning at 25 DC, increments of 5, and more commonly 10, are used.⁷ The parallel use of 24 and 25 is a duodecimal and decimal system like the old English currency. Many people might not be interested in Diocletian's Edict of Prices, but modern events demonstrate the popularity of Constantine and his coinage.

⁶ The two coins are RIC VI Rome 355-358, PACI PERPET (XII) Pax standing left, holding standard; and RIC VI Rome 359-360, VIRT EXERCIT GALL (XVI) Virtus leaning on a spear. For an article on these coins see David G. Wigg, "An Issue of Follis Fractions with Denominational Marks by Constantine I at Rome," *Die Münze. Bild- Botschaft- Bedeutung. Festschrift für Maria R. Alfoldi* (Frankfort, Germany: Peter Lang, 1991) : 405-423.

⁷ L. H. Cope, "Diocletian's Price Edict and its Associated Coinage Denominations," *Schweizer Münzblätter* 27 (1977) : 7-11.

Constantine and his coinage continue to be relevant to this day. Recently some countries in Europe celebrated the 1700 year anniversary of Constantine. In England the celebration took place in A.D. 2006. This year commemorated the anniversary of Constantine's ascension to power in York, England on the 25th of July A.D. 306. Some noted scholars from different disciplines contributed articles to a book dedicated to this event.⁸ Out of the ten articles in the book, two of them deal directly with numismatics. Constantine made Trier his capitol in A.D. 307, so Trier, Germany celebrated the anniversary in A.D. 2007. Trier issued a coin bearing the bust of Constantine on the obverse and the old city gates of Trier on the reverse. This coin was legal tender in Trier until the festivities ended. So historians still engage each other in debates about Constantine and many people in general are fascinated with this man. He will most certainly continue to be a topic of discussion and debate for many generations. We can even include Constantine in the conversation—his coins speak to us...all we have to do is listen!

⁸ Elizabeth Hartley, ed. *Constantine the Great: York's Roman Emperor* (York, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2006).

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APPENDIX 1

ANALYSIS OF IMITATIVE VLPP COINS

analysis performed with an SEM Hitachi 3400N
Edex Oxford Inca.
Analysis at 20 kilovolts, live time 100 seconds

Value is expressed as weight percent.

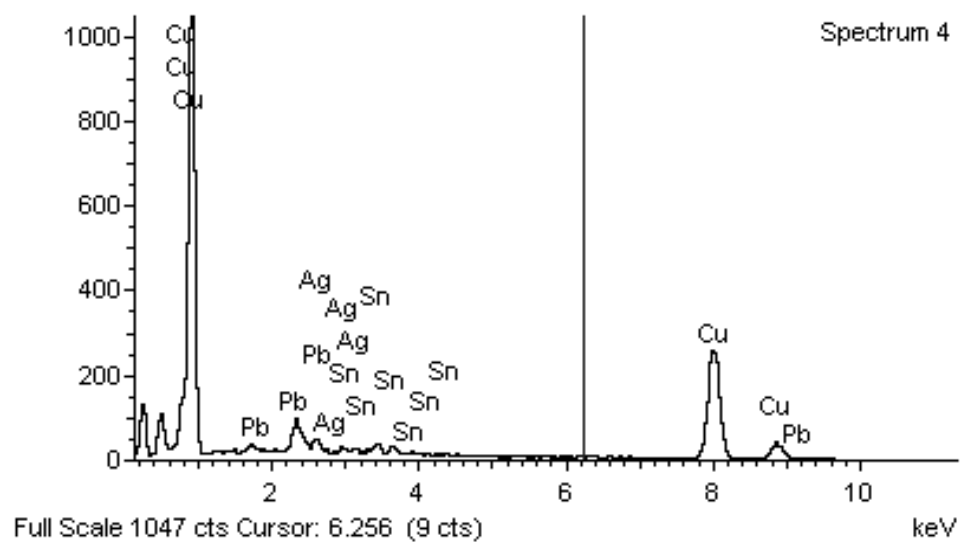
The size of the coins is given in millimeters and weight is in grams.

Coin 1



19 mm 3.1 gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	80.62
Ag L	2.60
Sn L	4.46
Pb M	12.31
Totals	100.00

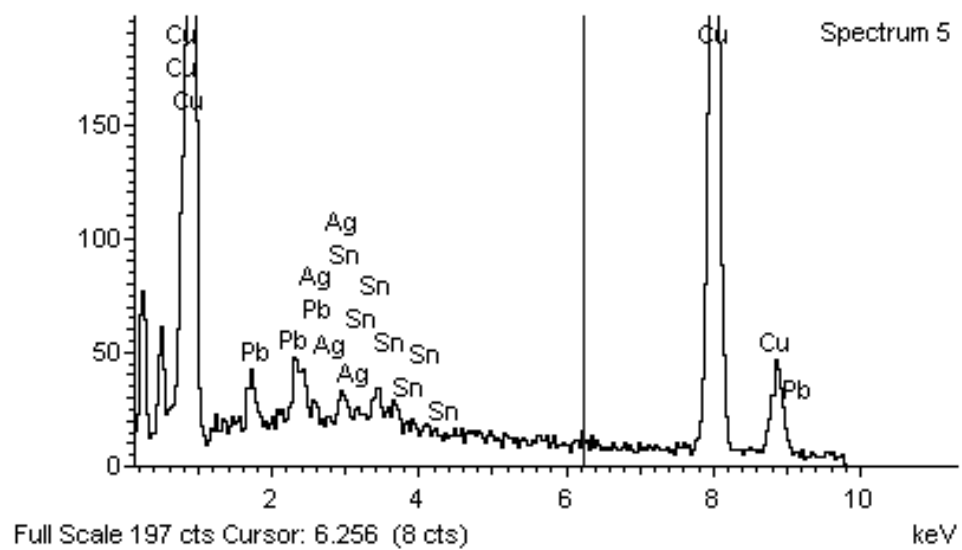


Coin 2



17mm 2.6 gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	89.60
Ag L	2.42
Sn L	2.93
Pb M	5.04
Totals	100.00

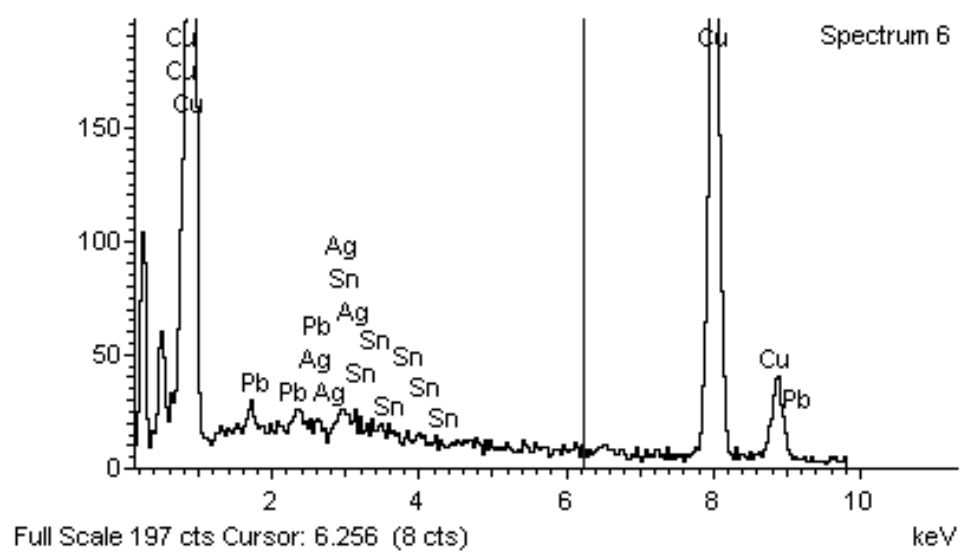


Coin 3



18 mm 2.5gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	95.27
Ag L	1.70
Sn L	0.82
Pb M	2.21
Totals	100.00

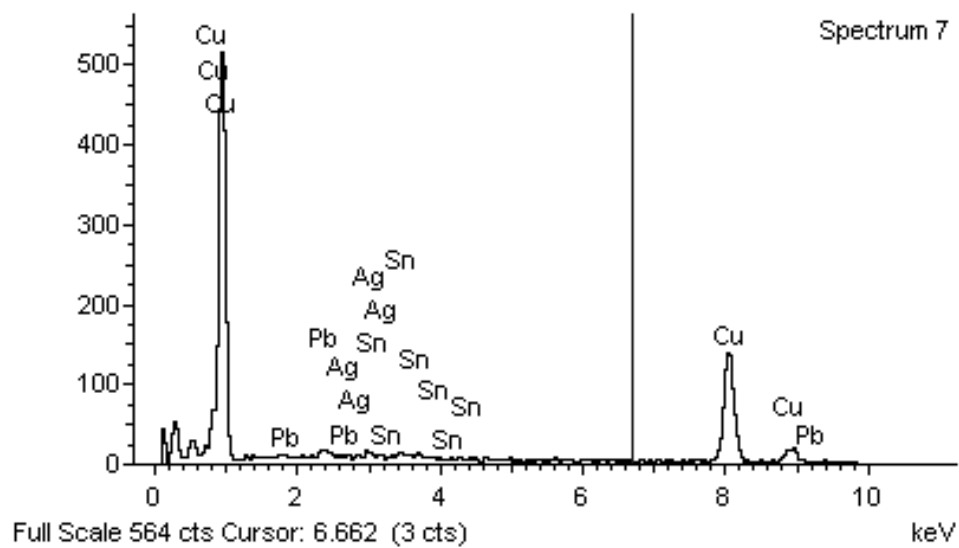


Coin 4



16mm 2.3gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	91.83
Ag L	2.86
Sn L	1.48
Pb M	3.83
Totals	100.00

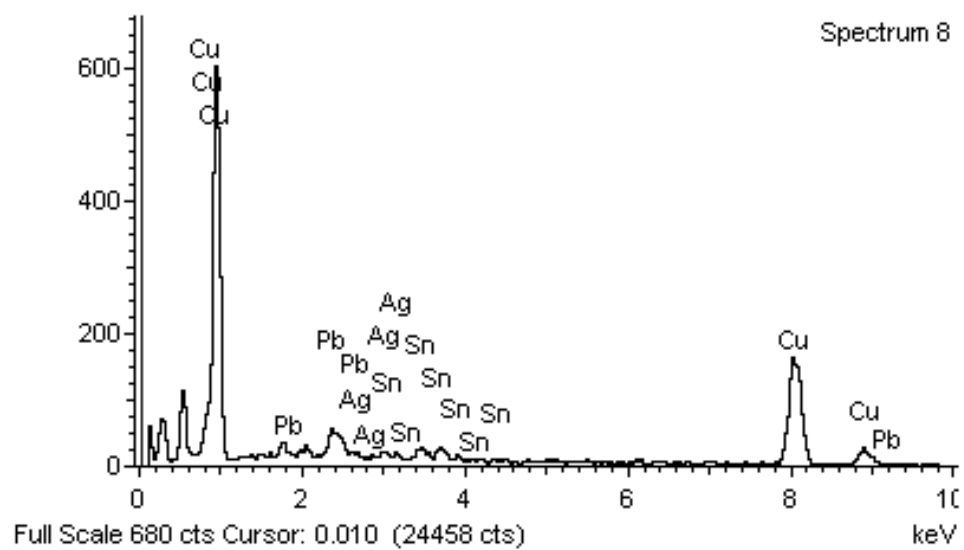


Coin 5



18mm 3.1gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	79.39
Ag L	2.87
Sn L	6.32
Pb M	11.43
Totals	100.00

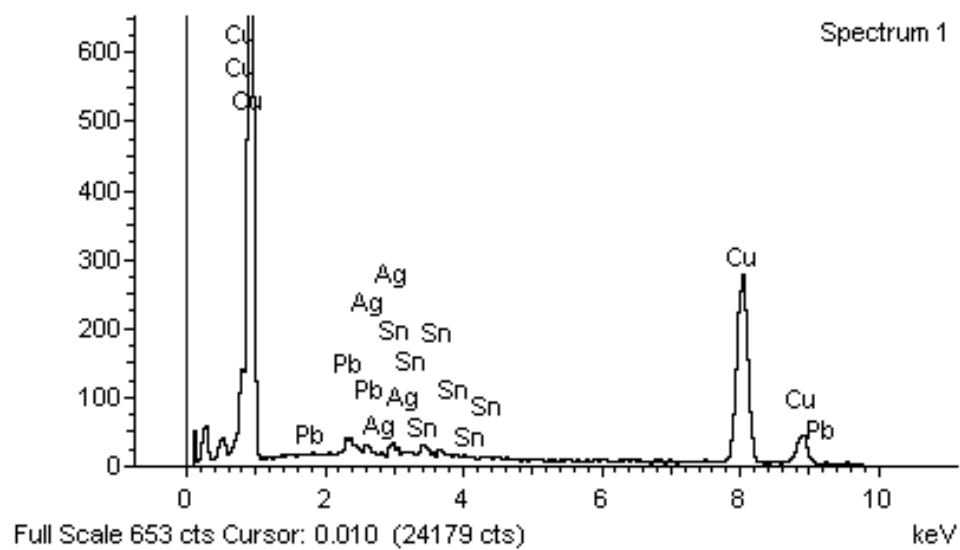


Coin 6



17mm 2.2gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	90.34
Ag L	2.79
Sn L	2.90
Pb M	3.97
Totals	100.00

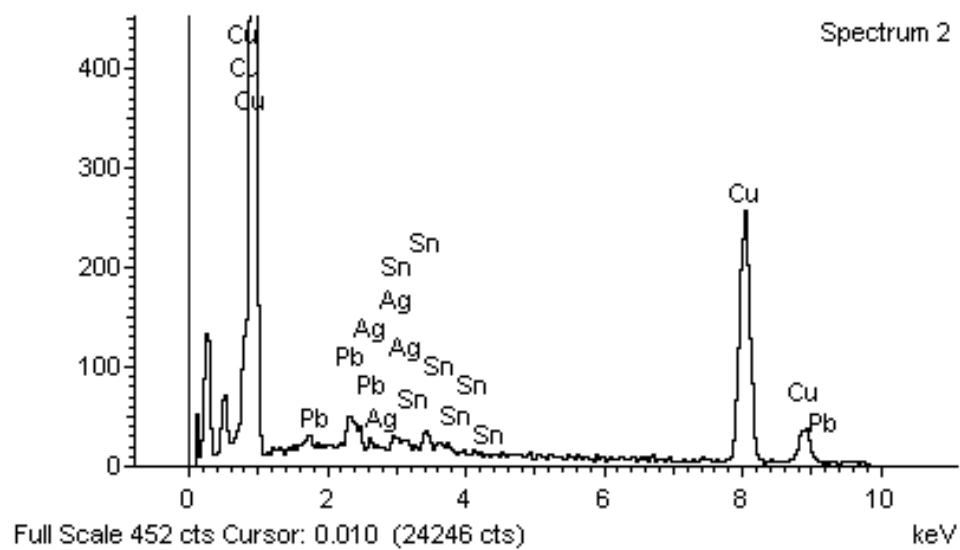


Coin 7



18mm 3.7gm

Element	Weight %
Cu K	86.83
Ag L	2.60
Sn L	3.82
Pb M	6.75
Totals	100.00

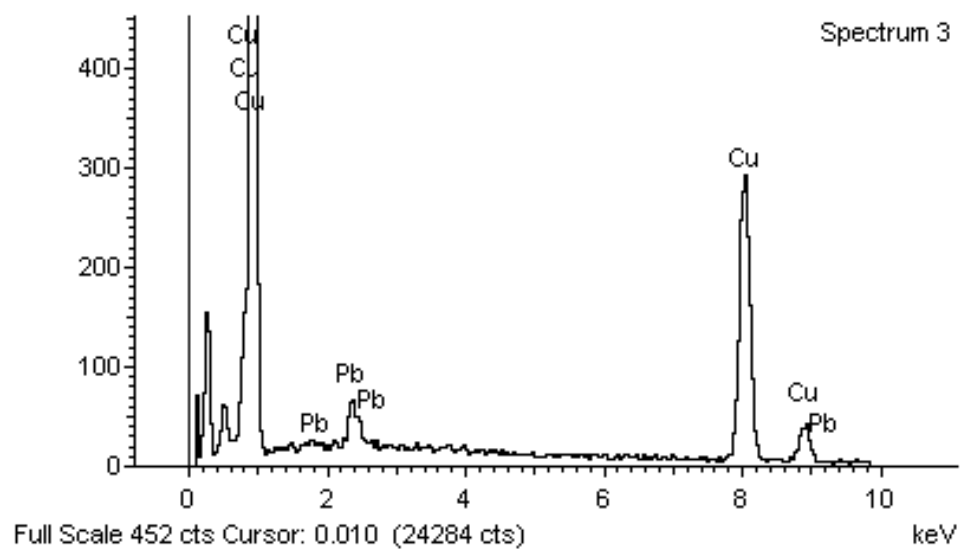


Coin 8



19mm 2.6gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	91.60
Ag L	---
Sn L	---
Pb M	8.40
Totals	100.00

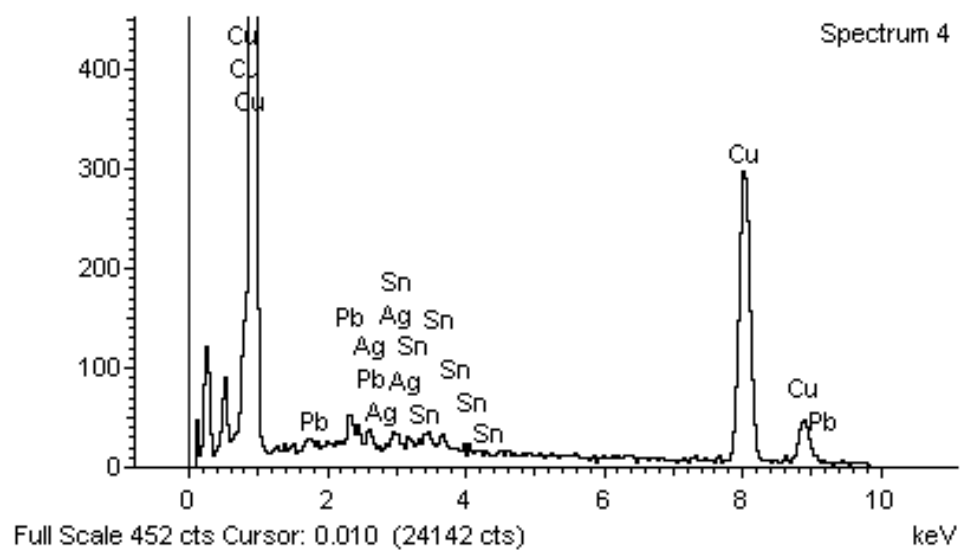


Coin 9



17mm 2gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	95.22
Ag L	1.68
Sn L	1.65
Pb M	1.45
Totals	100.00

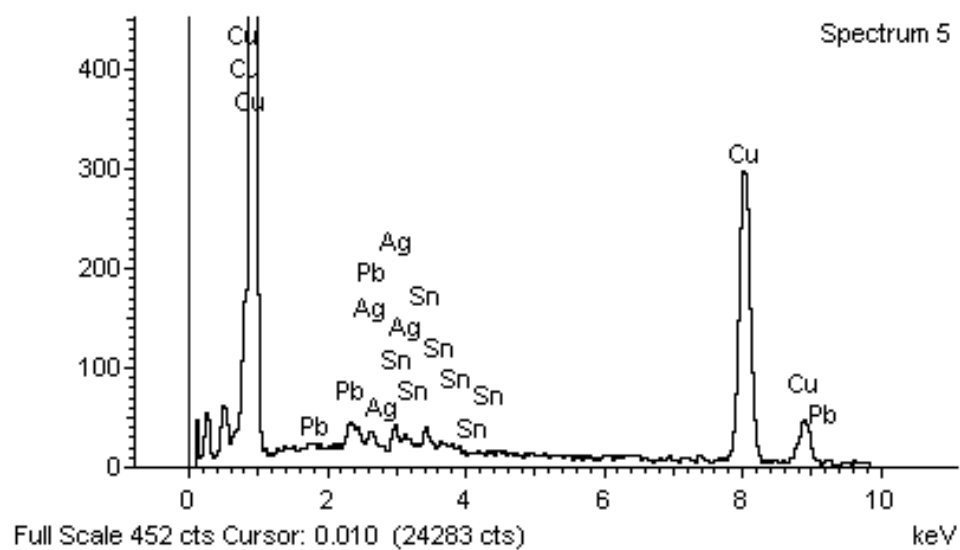


Coin 10



17mm 2.4gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	94.57
Ag L	2.25
Sn L	1.81
Pb M	1.37
Totals	100.00

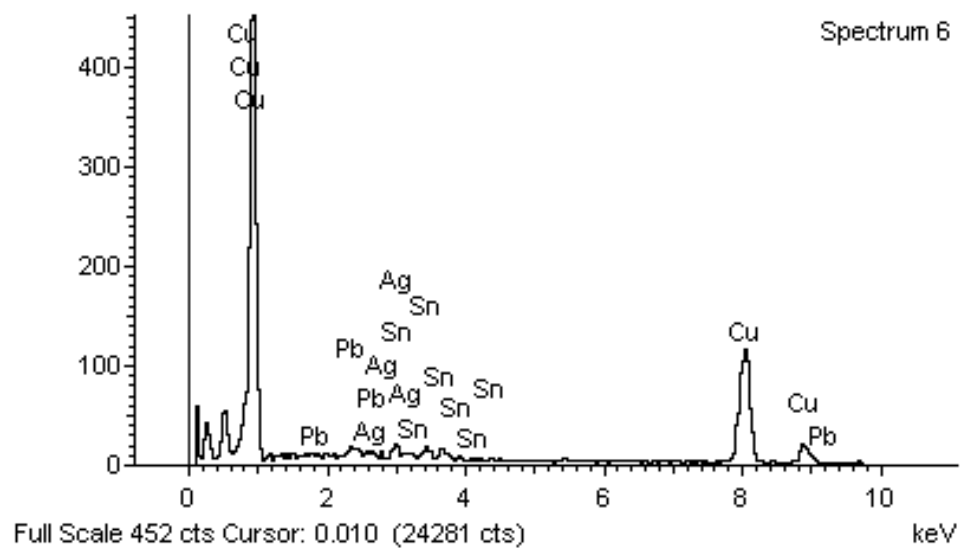


Coin 11



18mm 2.9gm

Element	Weight %
Cu K	93.35
Ag L	2.28
Sn L	2.84
Pb M	1.52
Totals	100.00

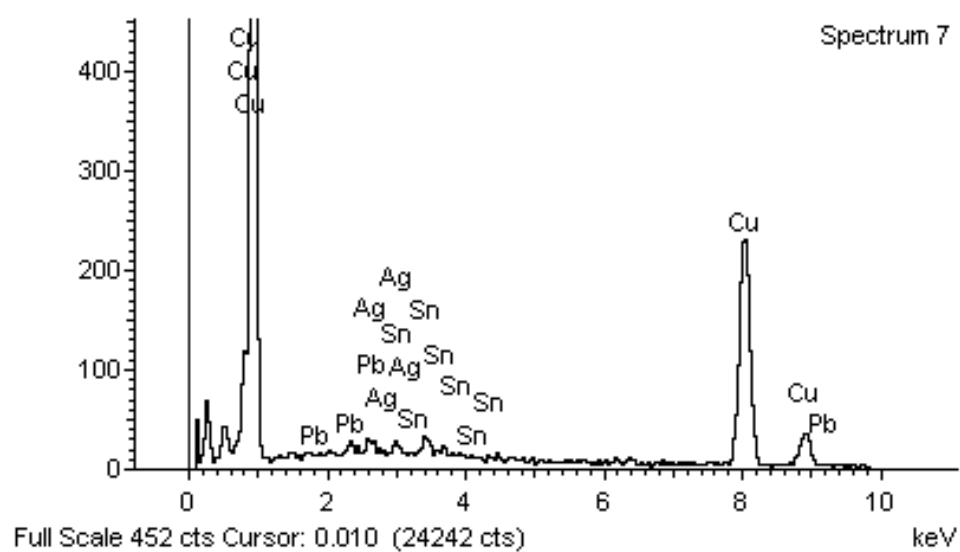


Coin 12



20mm 2.7gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	90.99
Ag L	2.48
Sn L	4.11
Pb M	2.41
Totals	100.00

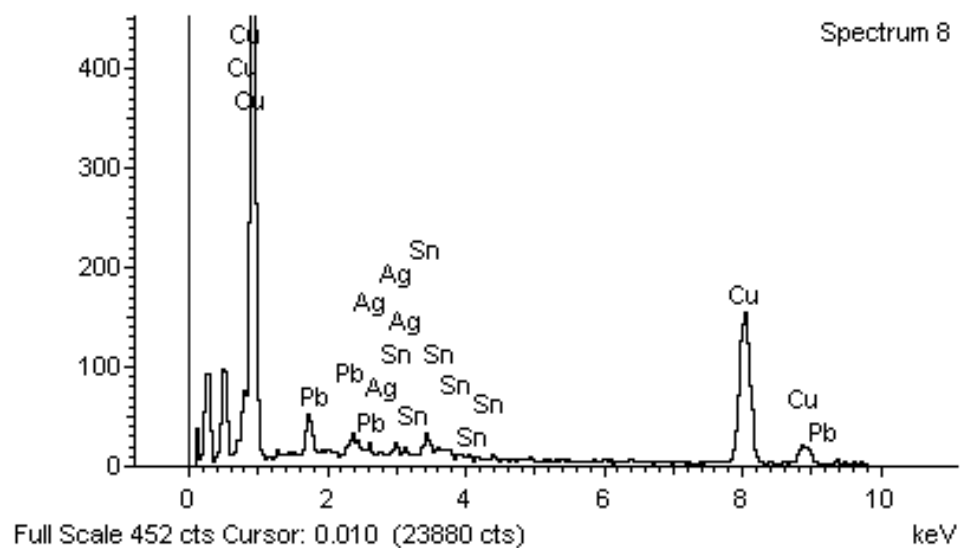


Coin 13



15mm 2.4gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	86.72
Ag L	3.02
Sn L	5.84
Pb M	4.41
Totals	100.00

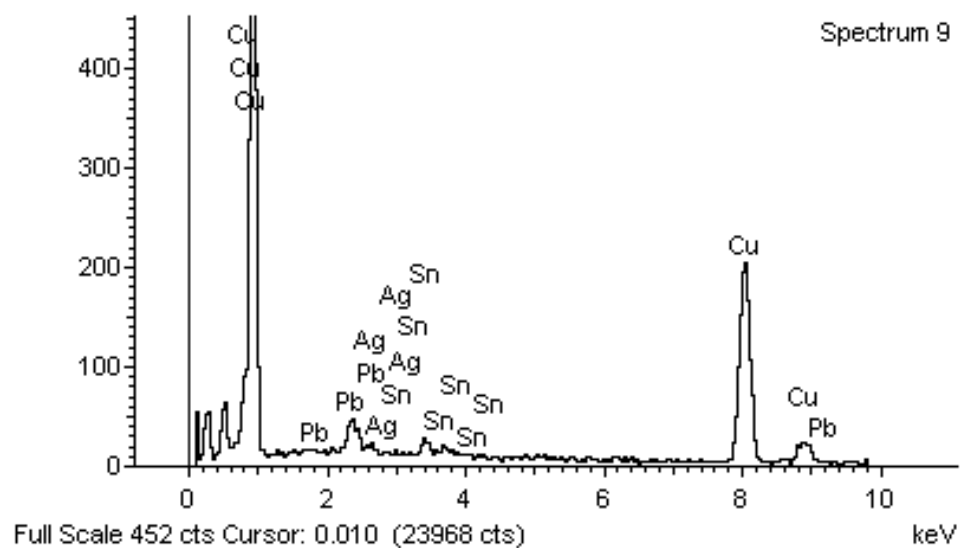


Coin 14



16mm 3.0gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	86.60
Ag L	0.39
Sn L	4.23
Pb M	8.78
Totals	100.00

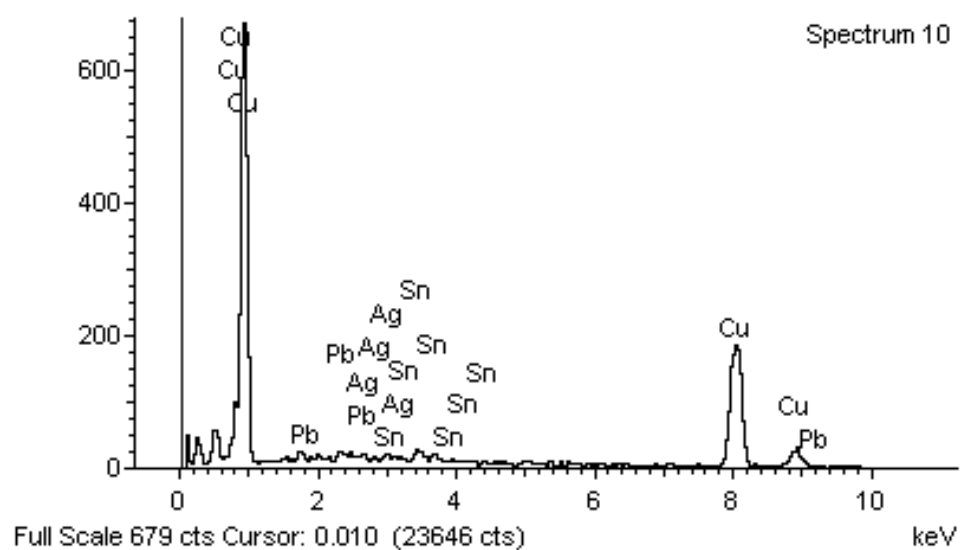


Coin 15



18mm 2.5gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	94.86
Ag L	1.22
Sn L	3.06
Pb M	0.86
Totals	100.00

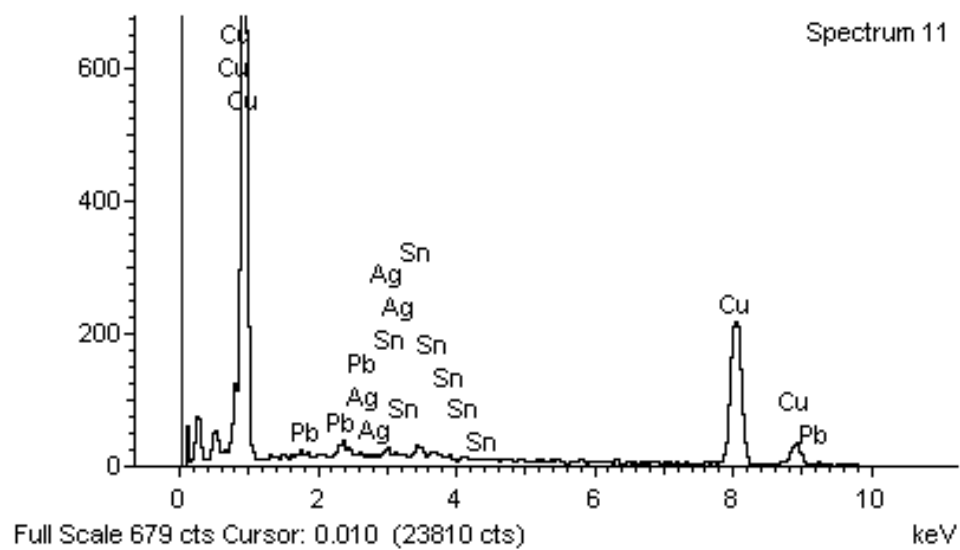


Coin 16



18mm 2.6gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	89.50
Ag L	1.18
Sn L	4.80
Pb M	4.52
Totals	100.00

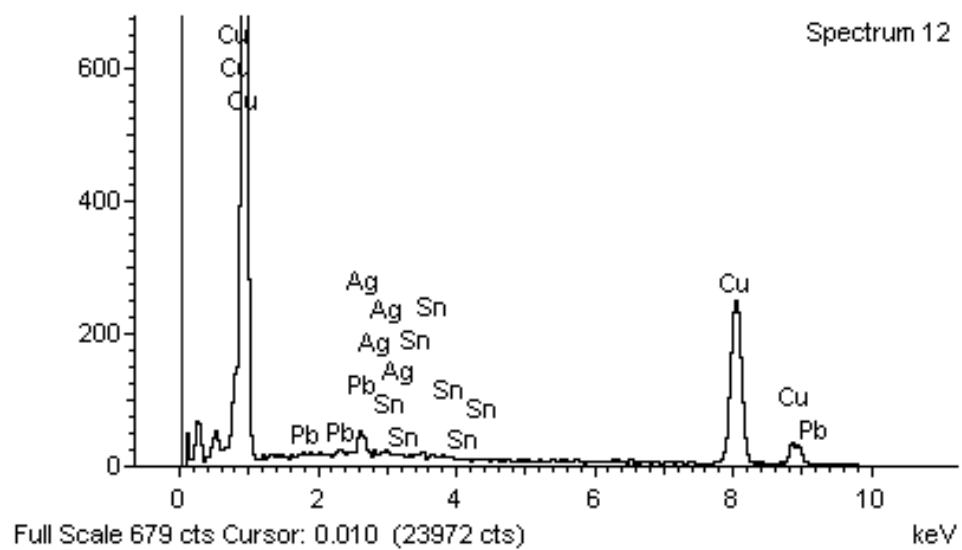


Coin 17



18mm 2.6gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	94.24
Ag L	2.02
Sn L	1.50
Pb M	2.24
Totals	100.00

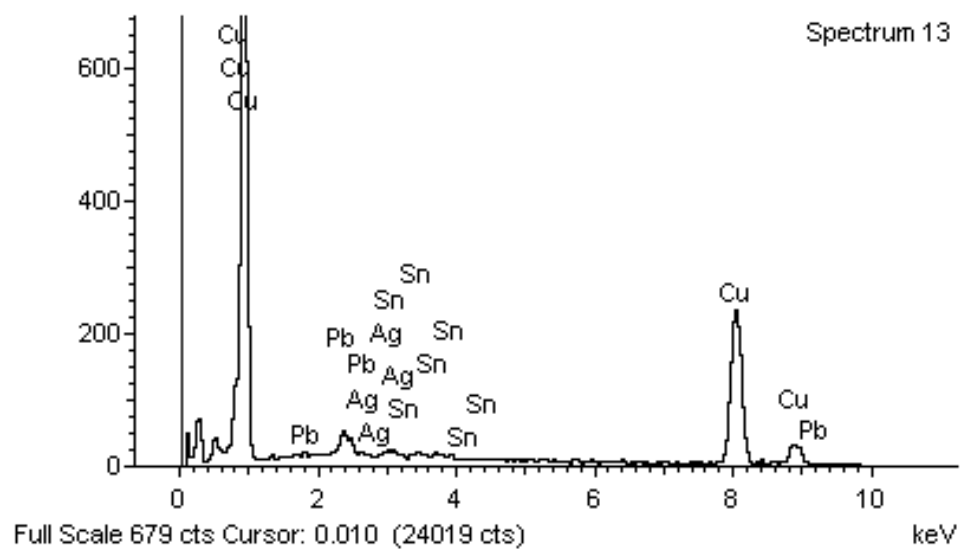


Coin 18



19mm 3.0gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	89.83
Ag L	1.74
Sn L	1.62
Pb M	6.81
Totals	100.00

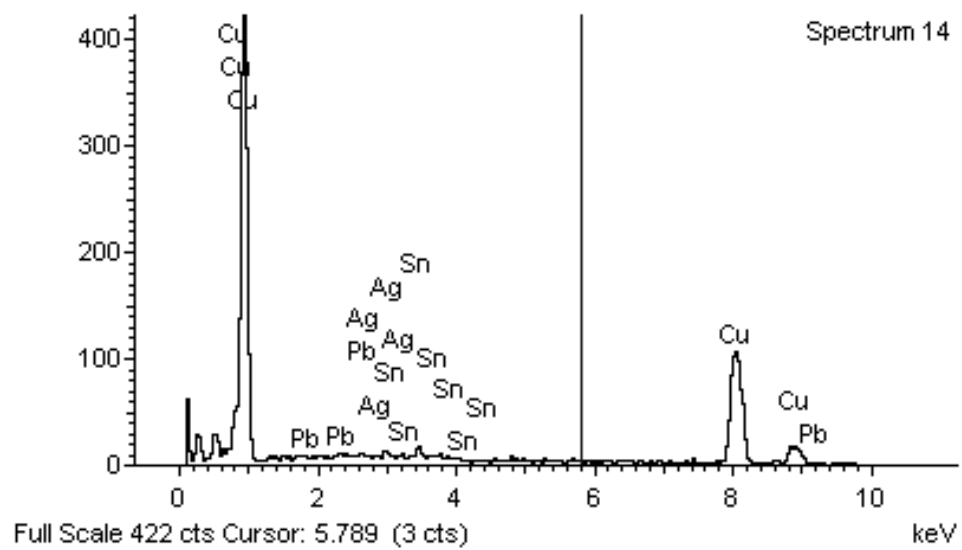


Coin 19



16mm 2.8gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	93.54
Ag L	2.22
Sn L	3.02
Pb M	1.22
Totals	100.00

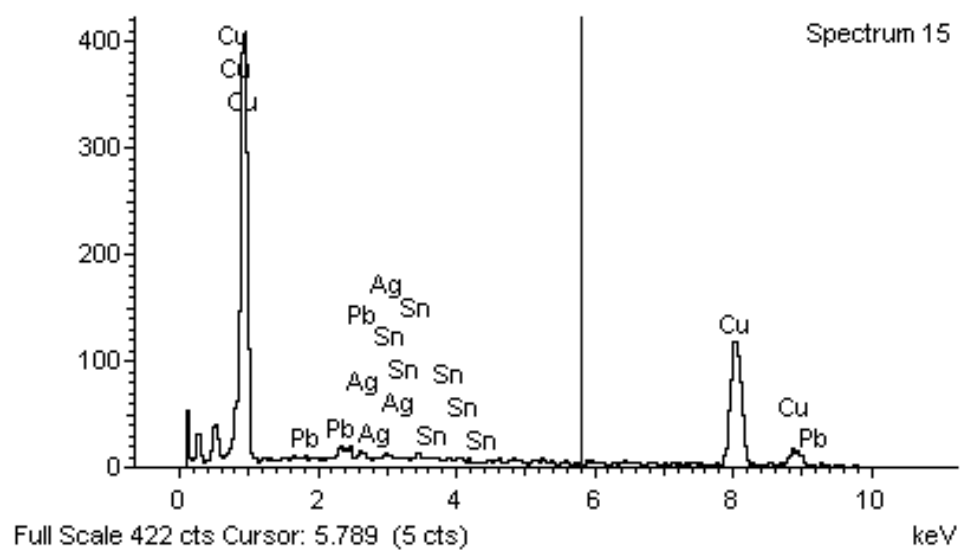


Coin 20



17mm 2.4gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	88.61
Ag L	2.12
Sn L	3.02
Pb M	6.24
Totals	100.00

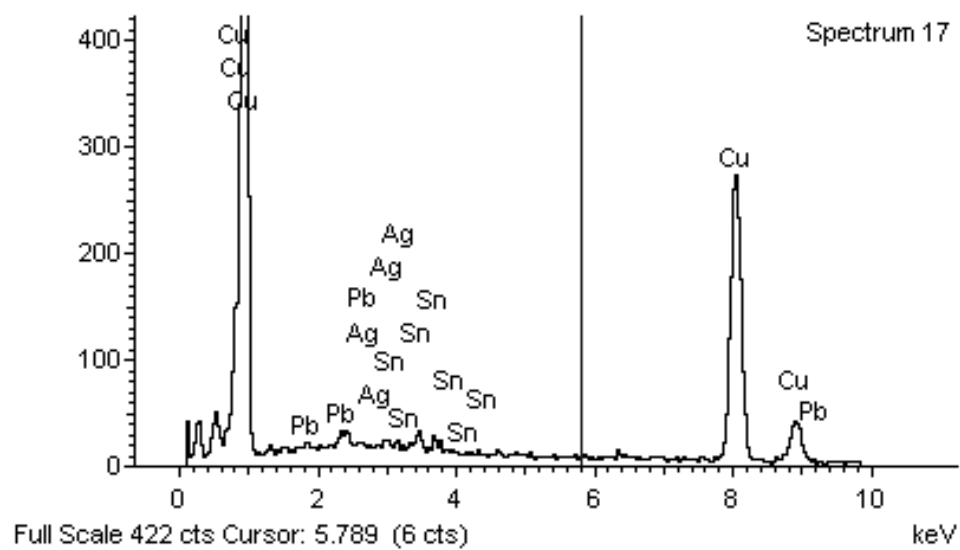


Coin 21



17mm 2.2gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	92.89
Ag L	1.51
Sn L	3.20
Pb M	2.39
Totals	100.00

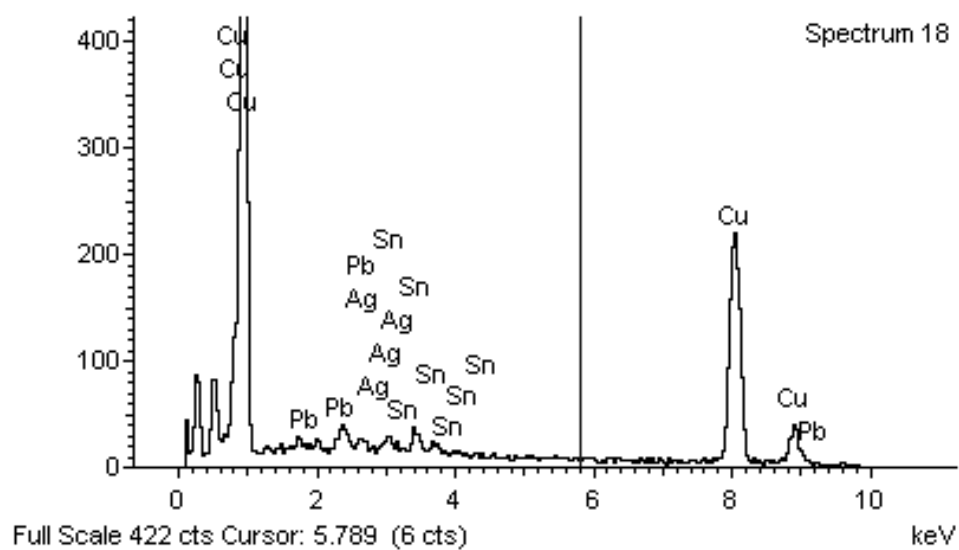


Coin 22



16mm 2.6gm

Element	Weight%
Cu K	88.88
Ag L	2.19
Sn L	3.73
Pb M	5.20
Totals	100.00



APPENDIX 2

Reverse Coin Types for Constantine

These are just the bronze coins issued by or for Constantine, which include folles, reduced folles and fractionals. Some of the descriptions will differ quite a bit among the variations of coin types. The translations of the legends, which are italicized, are included except when they are repetitive.⁹

ADVENTVS AVG [*Arrival of our Emperor*] Prince riding left, right raised, left holding up spear, on horse pawing seated captive to left.

BEATA TRANQVILLITAS [*Blessed peace (calm)*] globe set on altar inscribed VO/TIS/XX; above, three stars.

BONO GENIO PII IMPERATORIS [*To the good guardian spirit of the pious Emperor*] Genius standing.

CLARITAS REIPVBLICAE [*Renown of the state*] Sol standing left, chlamys across left shoulder, raising right hand, globe in left.

COMITI AVGG NN [*To the companion of our Emperor(s)*] Sol standing left, chlamys falling from left shoulder, holding globe & whip.

CONCORD MILIT [*The harmony of the soldiers*] Concordia standing left, holding standard in each hand.

CONCORDIA FELIX DD NN [*The fortunate harmony of the soldiers of our Lords*] Two emperors.

CONCORD(IA) IMPERII [*Harmony of the empire*] Concordia standing left, modius on head, right hand leaning on sceptre, left holding horizontal fold of drapery.

⁹ Most of these translations are from *Roman Bronze Coins: From Paganism to Christianity 294-364 A.D.* by Victor "Tory" Failmezger. The translations from this book were originally checked by Michael Braunlin who is assistant head of the Classics Library at University of Cincinnati.

CONCORDIA MILITVM [*The harmony of the soldiers*] Jupiter presenting Victory on globe to Constantine.

CONCORDIA PERPET DD NN [*The everlasting harmony of our lords*] Two Emperors.

CONSERVATOR AFRICA SVAE [*Our Emperor(s) (in honor of), savior of his (their) Africa*] Africa standing facing, head left, in long drapery with elephant-skin head-dress, right holding standard, left tusk; at feet to left, lion with captured bull.

CONSERVATORES KART SVAE [*Our Emperor (in honor of) savior of his Carthage*] Carthage standing facing, head left, holding fruits in both hands, within hexastyle temple.

CONSERVATORES VRB SVAE [*In honor of the savior of his city*] Roma seated facing, head left, in hexastyle temple, globe in right hand, scepter in left.

CONSTAN/TINVS/AVG in three lines, wreath above.

CONSTANTINI AVG legend around VOTIS XX.

CONSTANTINO P AVG BRP NAT [*To Constantine, prince, Emperor, born for the welfare of the State*] Constantine standing facing, head left, in military dress, right holding globe, left leaning on scepter.

CONSTANTINIANA DAFNE [*Constantinian Victory*] Victory seated l. on cippus, palm branch in left hand and laurel branch in right hand, looking r.; trophy at front, at the foot is a kneeling captive with head turned being spurned by Victory.

DN CONSTANTINI MAX AVG laurel wreath enclosing VOT XX or VOT XXX or camp gate with two turrets and star above.

FELICITAS AVGG NN [*The happiness of our Emperors*] Felicitas seated left, holding branch and globe.

FELICITAS PERPETVA SAECVLI [*Eternal happy times*] Emperor in military dress, standing left, chlamys across left shoulder, receiving Victory on globe from Sol standing right, cloak displayed; between them kneeling captive.

FIDES MILITVM [*The loyalty of soldiers*] campgate with three beacons.

FVNDAT PACIS [*To the founder of peace*] Mars helmeted, nude, advancing right, looking left, trophy across left, shoulder, flying chlamys, dragging captive by hair.

GENIO AVGG ET CAESARVM [*To the spirit of our Emperors and Caesars*] Genius standing left.

GENIO AVGVSTI [*To the spirit of the Augustus*] Genius standing left.

GENIO CAESAR [*To the spirit of the Caesar*] Genius standing left.

GENIO EXERCITVS [*To the spirit of the Army*] Genius standing left.

GENIO FIL AVG [*To the spirit of the son of the Emperor*] Genius standing left.

GENIO IMPERATORIS [*To the spirit of the Emperor*] Genius standing left.

GENIO POP(VLI) ROM(ANI) [*To the spirit of the Roman People*] Genius standing left.

GLORIA EXERCITVS [*The glory of the army*] Soldier holding reversed spear in right, left hand on shield or Two soldiers helmeted, standing facing one another, reversed spear in outer hands, inner hands on shields resting on the ground; between them two (or one) standards.

GLORIA PERPET [*Everlasting glory*] Two Victories advancing right, both holding wreath and branch; between them standard.

GLORIA ROMANORVM [*The glory of the Romans*] Roma seated on a shield, holding a long sceptre, Victory on a globe in right hand.

HAEC VOTA MVLT NN [*These vows (undertaken) for many years*] Vows.

HERCVLI CONSERVAT(ORI) CAES [*To Hercules savior of the Caesar*] Hercules with lion.

HERCVLI VICTORI [*To Hercules, the victor*] Hercules standing right, leaning on club. Club draped with lion's skin.

IMP LICINIVS AVG bare head of Licinius, right.

IOVI CONSERVATORI AVGG (NN) [*To Jupiter, the savior of our Emperors*] Jupiter standing left, chlamys across left shoulder, leaning on sceptre with eagle, Victory on globe in right hand; eagle holding wreath to left; to right, captive on ground. (many varieties of this type)

LIBERATOR ORBIS [*To the liberator of the world*] Constantine on horseback right, right hand raised, holding large round shield on left arm, riding down lion below horse.

LIBERATORI VRBIS SVAE [*To the liberator of his city*] Roma seated facing, head left, in hexastyle temple, globe in right hand, scepter in left or Roma presenting globe to Constantine.

LIBERTAS PVBLICA [*Public liberty*] Victory standing left on galley, wreath in both hands.

MARTI PACIF(ERO) (AVG N) [*To Mars, the peacemaker of our Emperor*] Mars in military dress, lunging left; right holding branch, left holding spear and shield.

MARS VICTOR [*Mars, the victor*] Mars with spear and trophy.

MARTI (PATRI) CONSERV(ATORI) [*To Mars, the saving father*] Mars in military dress, standing right, reversed spear in right hand, left on shield set on the ground, cloak across right shoulder.

MARTI PATR SEMP VICTORI [*To our father Mars, always victorious*] Mars with spear and trophy.

MARTI (PATRI) PROPVG(NATORI) [*To Mars, the defending father*] Mars, naked but for chlamys, advancing right with spear and shield in left hand.

MVLT NATAL FEL [*Many happy births*] Vows.

PACIS GLORIA [*Glorious peace*] Constantine standing left and wearing a robe; holding globe in left hand and branch in right hand.

PACI PERPET (XII) [*In honor of eternal peace*] Pax standing left, holding standard.

PAX PERPETVA [*Eternal peace*] Pax seated, looking left, legs crossed, olive branch in right hand holding transverse sceptre, leaning on column to right.

PERPETVA VIRTVS [*Eternal strength*] Mars standing with spear and shield.

PERPETVITAS AVGG [*The perpetuity of the Emperors*] Roma seated left, holding victory and spear.

PLVRA/NATAL/FEL [*May there be many happy births*] In laurel wreath.

P M TR P COS II P P female figure seated on a double cornucopia, holding a wand in her right hand.

PRINCIPI IVVENT BRP NAT [*To the Prince of Youth, born for the good of the state*] Prince with spear and globe.

PRINCIPI IVVENTVTIS [*Prince of Youth*] Prince standing right, holding a globe and spear, or with captive on either side or holding legionary standards.

PROVIDENTIAE AVGG [*Foresight of the Emperors*] Female standing on prow, holding cornucopia, received by turreted Arles holding sceptre or camp gate, two turrets, no doors, star above.

RECVPERATORI VRB SVAE [*To the recovery of his city*] soldier presenting victory to Constantine, seated left.

RESTITVTOR ROMAE [*To Rome, having been restored*] Roma giving a globe to the emperor.

RESTITVTOR VRBIS SVAE [*Restorer of his city*] Cult image of Roma in a temple.

ROMAE AETER (AVGG) [*To the everlasting Rome of the Emperors*] Roma seated in temple or Roma seated.

ROMAE AETERNAE [*To everlasting Rome, fifteen yearly vows*] Roma seated right, shield in lap inscribed X/V.

ROMAE RESTITVTAE [*To Rome, having been restored*] Rome sitting.

SAC MON VRB AVGG ET CAESS [*The sacred money of the city of our Augusti and Caesars*] Moneta standing left, holding scales in right hand, cornucopia in left.

SAECVLI FELICITAS [*Happy times*] Shield with AVG on cippus, decorated with garland.

SALVIS AVGG ET CAESS FEL KART [*With the Emperor and Caesars being safe, happy Carthage is strengthened*] Carthage standing left holding fruits.

SAPIENT(A) PRINCIP(IS) [*Wisdom of the Prince*] owl on top of an altar.

SARMATIA DEVICTA [*Sarmatia conquered*] Victory advancing r., holding trophy, palm branch, spurning captive std. on ground to r.

SECVRIT PERPET DD NN [*Eternal security of our Emperors*] Securitas standing by a column.

SECVRITAS AVGG [*Security of the Emperors*] Securitas standing left, leaning on column.

SOLI INVICTO COMITI [*To my companion the invincible sun (god)*] Sol radiate, raising right hand, globe in left; standing left, chlamys across left shoulder. (many varieties)

S P Q R OPTIMO PRINCIPI [*The senate and people of Rome to the best of Princes*]
Legionary eagle between two vexella.

SPES PVBLIC [*Public hope*] Reverse legend across field; labarum, with three medallions on drapery and crowned by chi-rho, pierces serpent.

SPES REIPVBL(ICA) Constantine on horse, trampling a captive.

TEMPORVM FELICITAS [*Happy times*] Felicitas standing.

TRB P CONS III-P P PROCONSVL [*Tribune, Consul for the fourth time, Father of the Country, Proconsul*] Emperor seated left on curule chair, holding globe and short sceptre.

VBERTAS SAECVLI [*The fruitfulness (abundance) of the age*] three Moneta standing or Ubertas standing left, draped, holding balance with two scales in right hand, cornucopia in left.

VTILITAS PVBLICA [*Public utility (common good)*] Soldier holding Victory on globe receiving Utilitas standing on prow, holding cornucopia and scales.

VICTORIA AET AVGGG NNN [*Eternal victory of our Emperors*] Victory presenting globe to Constantine or Victory advancing inscribing VOT X on shield attached to palm tree.

VICTORIA AVGG Victory holding wreath and palm branch.

VICTORIA CAESS Victory standing l., wreath in raised hand.

VICTORIAE AETERNA AVGG N Victory inscribing shield with VOT IS XX

VICTORIAE LAETAE PRINC PERP [*Joyous (well-earned) victory to the eternal Prince*] two Victories stg., facing one another, together holding shield inscribed VOT PR, on altar.

VICTORIAE LIBERAE [*In honor of victory, now free (liberated)*] Victory advancing left, holding wreath, branch, pushing captive seated on ground.

VIRT PERP CONSTANTINI AVG [*The unfailing valor of Constantine, the Emperor*] Emperor helmeted, in military dress, standing left, holding reversed spear in left hand and victory on globe in right, to left, captive seated on ground; to right, shield.

VIRT EXERC [*Valor of the army*] Sol standing in the middle of what may be a raised platform with steps, raising right hand, holding globe in left, chlamys across left shoulder.

VIRT EXERCIT GALL (XVI) [*Valor of the army of Gaul*] Virtus leaning on a spear

VIRT PERP CONSTANTINI AVG [*The unfailing (perpetual) valor of Constantine, the Emperor*] Mars with a captive.

VIRTVS AVGG [*The valor (in honor of) of our Emperors*] gateway with wide open doors, four turrets, star above.

VIRTVS AVGG ET CAESS NN [*The valor (in honor of) of our Caesars*] Virtus/Mars walking right, carrying spear, shield and trophy or horseman rides down two or three captives.

VIRTVS AVGVSTI Emperor standing right, holding spear, hand on shield set on ground.

VIRTVS CONSTANTINI CAES [*The valor of Caesar Constantine*] Prince with shield on left arm, galloping right and spearing kneeling foeman, second foeman prostrate on ground.

VIRTVS EXERCIT [*In honor of the valor of the army*] banner inscribed with VOT XX (or trophy) standing on ground, captive seated on either side

VIRTVS PERPETVA AVG [*Everlasting valor of the Emperor*] Hercules wrestling lion or Mars standing.

VIRTVTI EXERCITVS [*Valor of the army*] Virtus advancing right in military dress, right holding transverse spear, left shield and trophy over shoulder, or Virtus nude except for helmet advancing right, holding spear in right and trophy over left shoulder.

VOT IS X [*Vows for ten years*] in laurel wreath.

VOT X CAES (NN)

VOT X AVG N

VOT X/ET XV F.

VOT X MVL XX

VOT/XV/FEL/XX

VOT XX MVL T XXX

VOT XXX AVG(N)

VOTA PVBLICA [*Public vows*] Galley right, Isis in prow holding sistrum and situla.