THE OMNIPRESENT VICTORY

Tracing continuity and change in the iconography of an emblematic figure in Roman imperial coinage (27 BCE – 491 CE) *

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Samenvatting – *De overwinningsgodin Victoria is een veelvoorkomend figuur op de munten van Romeinse keizers. Dit geldt voor zowel de eerste drie eeuwen van de keizertijd als voor de twee eeuwen van verchristelijking van het keizerschap en haar ideologie die daarop volgden. In dit artikel staat de vraag centraal hoe Victoria's iconografie zich in deze vijf eeuwen ontwikkelde. Op basis van de recentelijk gedigitaliseerde muntencatalogusserie Roman Imperial Coinage (RIC) onderwerpt dit artikel Victoria voor het eerst aan een systematische iconografische analyse. Dit onderzoek laat daarmee zien dat deze figuur in haar verbeelding een sterke mate van continuïteit kende, maar desalniettemin op subtiele wijze werd aangepast aan de veranderende politieke en religieuze omstandigheden in het Romeinse Keizerrijk.*

Summary – *Victory is a common figure on the coins of Roman emperors. This is true both for the first three centuries of the imperial period and for the two centuries of Christianization of emperorship and its ideology that followed. This article focusses on how Victory's iconography developed during these five centuries. Based on the recently digitized coin catalogue Roman Imperial Coinage (RIC), this article for the first time subjects Victoria to a systematic iconographic analysis. This study thereby shows that there was a strong sense of continuity in the depiction of this figure, which was nevertheless subtly adapted to the changing political and religious landscape of the Roman Empire.*

Fig. 1 – Solidus *of Zeno, 476-491* (*RIC X Zeno* (*East*) *910*)

Fig. 2 – Aureus *of Divus Vespasian, struck under his son Titus in 79* (*RIC II*^{2} *Titus 363*)

* All the coins in this article are illustrated at scale 150%.

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Introduction

Victory was a dominant theme on the coins of the emperors that ruled the Roman Empire during the first five centuries of the common era. It lurked in every detail of a Roman coin, whether it be in the depiction of fallen enemies, trophies in the background, or an emphasis on the martial prowess of the emperor. A strong attestation of this importance of imperial victory was that its personification was the second most common figure on imperial coins, the emperors themselves obviously being the first. Known to the Romans as *Victoria* and to us as (capitalized) Victory, the recognizability of this female figure was fostered by her ever-present wings as well as her standard attributes, which were the wreath, the palm-branch, and the trophy – an iconography strongly inspired by her Greek equivalent Nike.[1] For the most part visualized as such, Victory was already a frequently recurring figure on the coins of the emperors of the first three centuries, and became even more common in the standardized repertoires of the fourth and fifth centuries (Graph 1).[2]

The prominence of Victory on the coins of Rome's emperors cannot be detached from her significance to imperial ideology. Both her emblematic wings and her attributes helped her to fulfil her main task, which was to bestow her favour upon someone in any contest – thereby rendering this person victorious.[3] In Roman imperial ideology, such a contest was especially of a martial kind. In a society as pervaded by war as that of the Romans, military success was of the utmost importance for any man to distinguish himself and to prove himself a worthy Roman.[4] As prime man of the state – during the Principate reflected in the term *princeps* – the emperor was consequently expected to be victorious. In imperial ideology this found reflection in the emperor's victory and its personification being intrinsically linked to the empire's well-being in what modern scholarship has labelled a 'theology of victory'.[5] Other concepts that were gener-

[1] For the occasional wingless Victories that appeared outside the realm of Roman coinage, see Hassall, 1977.

[2] The graph has not distinguished between the various metals, yet it suffices to say here that Victory appeared frequently on gold, silver and bronze alike. It should be noted, too, that until the reign of Hadrian, half denominations of the precious metals – the *quinarius aureus* and the silver *quinarius* – were *victoriati*, meaning that with few exceptions these denominations bore an image of Victory. On this see Betjes, 2022: 180-185.

[3] The wings also allowed Victory to oscillate between the transcendental and the mundane, as a consequence of which she could replace the eagle or peacock in carrying Faustina skywards on *consecratio* images on Antonine bronzes: *RIC* III Antoninus Pius 1132A-B, 1699.

[4] This is underlined by Latin *virtus* denoting both manly excellence and courage on the battlefield, on which see Weinstock, 1971: 227-233; Eisenhut, 1973; Roller, 2001: 22-26, 99-108; McDonnell, 2006.

[5] As "théologie de la Victoire impériale", it was introduced by Gagé, 1933. His terminology was frequently picked up in later studies. For a detailed description of the scholarship on the 'theology of Victory', see Fears, 1981b: 737-739 n. 2; with Noreña, 2011: 147 n. 157, for an overview of more recent contributions.

ally personified, such as *concordia* ('harmony'), *spes* ('hope'), and *abundantia* ('abundance'), were all understood as depending on the favour Victory bestowed upon the emperor. The emperor's devotion to the gods – his *pietas* – played an important part in obtaining this favour.[6] In the early empire, Jupiter was understood as being the ultimate source of this favour, yet a similar rationale underlay the victory of Christian emperors of the fourth and fifth centuries.[7] In Eusebius, for example, it was Constantine's devotion to the Christian God that rendered him victorious – even invincible.[8]

Introduced under Augustus, consolidated under Vespasian, and continuing under the Christian emperors, this general significance of victory to Roman imperial ideology and the subsequent prominence of its personification have been commonly addressed in modern scholarship.[9] Far less attention has been paid to how, over the long term, the lasting prominence of Victory was reflected in imperial representation. The invaluable 1967 study of Tonio Hölscher is still rather unique in its longitudinal approach to the main Victory motifs across various forms of Roman art.[10] A more systematic approach is nevertheless still wanting, which is why this article singles out imperial coins to examine the development of Victory's iconography over five centuries.[11] That such an endeavour is indeed worthwhile, is probably best shown by the two coins figuring at the beginning of this article (Figs. 1–2). Even though four centuries separate the *aureus* of Titus and the *solidus* of Zeno, Victory is still the recognizable winged female figure. One may even surmise that the Zenonian composition ultimately depends on the same model as its Flavian counterpart. The one major difference, of course, is the Christian cross that has replaced the trophy. This symbol is by itself an indication that the fifth-century Victory belonged to a different ideological climate than the early Flavian winged goddess. The similarities nevertheless suggest that Christian imperial iconography also shared many characteristics with that of the early empire.

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[6] For the significance of *pietas* with regard to obtaining Victory's favour, see Liv. 40.52.5-6, with Gagé, 1930: 7-8; 2; Erkell, 1952: 54-59; Fears, 1981b: 778-779; Ando, 2000: 283-284; Koortbojian, 2006: 202-203.

[7] For the association between Jupiter and Victory, see Fears, 1981a: 34-43; Fears, 1981b: 744-745, 775-776, 781-782; Beard, 2007: esp. 225-233.

[8] See most notably Euseb. *Laud. Const.* 7.12; with Fears, 1981b: 749-752, 822-823; MacCormack, 1981: 182. See Wienand, 2012, for an elaborate take on the significance of victory in Constantinian ideology, with esp. p. 355-482 for its Christian elements.

[9] Among the more detailed contributions are Fears, 1981b; Ando, 2000: 248-281; Koortbojian, 2006; Noreña, 2011: 146-165. For the continued importance of the notion of victory in post-Constantinian Roman, Byzantine and early medieval ruler ideologies, see McCormick, 1987.

[10] Hölscher, 1967.

[11] As such, it builds upon Hölscher, 1967 as much as providing a systematic counterpart to the numismatic study of Bellinger & Berlincourt, 1962.

This tension between continuity and change as exemplified by the coins of Titus and Zeno are brought to the fore in this article. By applying a longitudinal approach to the iconography of Victory on imperial coinage, this study means to properly connect the Christianized yet still very recognizable Victory of Zeno to five centuries of iconographic precedent. As a consequence, this article traces changes in Victory's iconography, which are subsequently regarded in the light of previous coin typology. It thereby argues for a strong sense of continuity underlying Roman numismatic iconography, even after the reigns of Diocletian and especially Constantine made drastic alterations to imperial ideology and coinage alike.[12] As such, this study aims not just to map such long-term iconographic developments, but also to understand how and why iconographic changes occurred on imperial coins.

Systematically applying such an approach to coin iconography over the long term may seem a rather ambitious undertaking. The millions of extant Roman coins featuring Victory have since long been subdivided in coin types, but this still leaves us with thousands of types to study. The latter has probably been a key factor in the overall lack of quantified approaches to the *longue durée* of Roman numismatic iconography. An important development in this respect is the recent digitization of all the volumes of the *Roman Imperial Coinage*, which has resulted in *Online Coins of the Roman Empire* (*OCRE*).[13] As a consequence of this, students of Roman history now have at their disposal all the coin types produced in the mints of Rome's emperors from Augustus to Zeno, thus spanning the period of 31 BCE-491 CE. When used cautiously – which means using the quantification of types to trace continuity or a lack thereof (and not taking it as an accurate reflection of the numbers by which Roman mints actually distributed coins) – the data provided by *OCRE* allow for long-term analyses such as the one in the present article. A secondary aim of this article is to showcase the potential of such an approach, most notably through the graphs visualizing main developments in Victory's iconography.[14]

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[12] For Tetrarchic ideology, see *e.g.* Kolb, 1987; Hekster *et al.*, 2019. For Constantinian ideology, see *e.g.* Grünewald, 1990; Wienand, 2012. For characterisations of the coinage of the fourth and fifth century, see *e.g.* Harl, 1996: 158-180; Hendy, 1985: 448-475; Burnett, 1987: 126-155.

[13] See https://numismatics.org/ocre/ [last consulted 4 June 2023].

[14] This article is an abridged and slightly reworked version of the fourth chapter of my PhD dissertation: see Betjes, 2022. It follows this dissertation's periodization and methodology. A critical assessment of the use of *OCRE* as a research tool can be found in the introduction of the dissertation. This includes a plea for the benefit of quantifying coin types when studying long-term iconographic developments, rather than using hoard material and dies, both of which have generally been deemed as more reliable for quantification purposes (see *e.g.* Kemmers, 2019: 26-27).

For this analysis, the main focus is on coin reverses that featured Victory as the figure dominating the composition (such as on Figs. 1-2). This was only one of four different ways in which she appeared. Second are the images in which Victory appeared as a supporting figure, standing alongside – or flying towards – the protagonist of the image to imbue them with a notion of victory, often through the act of crowning (*e.g.* Fig. 3). Third is Victory's attribute form, the Victoriola, which was the Victory statuette often set on a globe and holding a wreath, rendering its holder or receiver victorious (*e.g.* Figs. 4 (reverse) & 5).[15] Lastly, Victory's presence could serve an ornamental function, appearing as *acroteria* on a temple or adorning a chariot or a shield (Fig. 4 (in shield on obverse)). Of these four categories, the first was by far the most common for the greater part of the five centuries under scrutiny, even if the Victoriola was rather common, too (see Graph 2).[16] A full study of the Victories serving as an attribute or in a secondary or ornamental role falls outside the scope of this article. They are nevertheless occasionally brought in for comparison, as they developed along the same lines as the images featuring Victory as the main figure.

Fig. 3 – Sestertius *of Domitian, 86*
(*RIC II.1*^{2} *Domitian 474*)

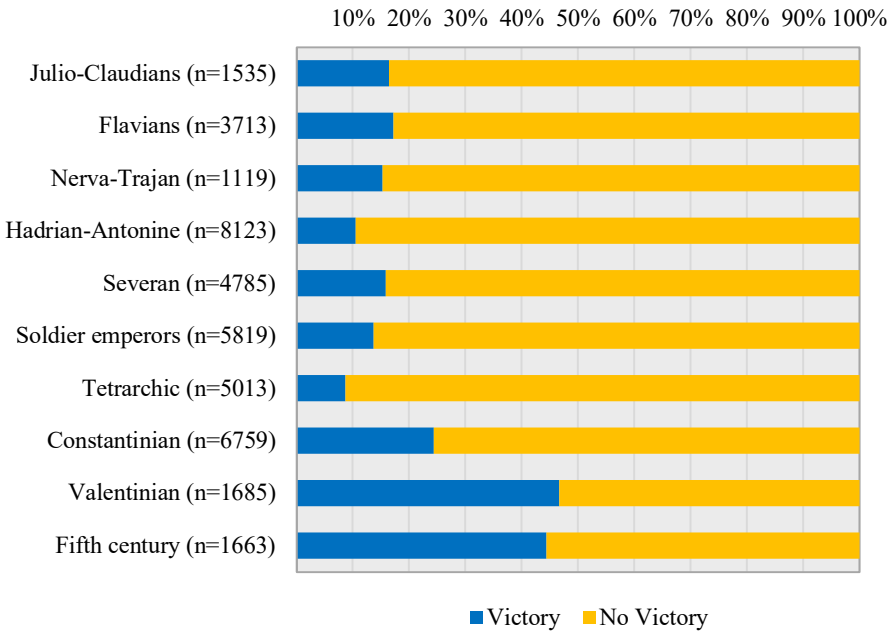
[15] For discussions of the Victoriola, see R.-Alföldi, 1961; Hölscher, 1967: 26-34; Weinstock, 1971: 100-103.

[16] Note that the four categories hardly ever overlapped. Of the almost 7,500 coin types, this occurs on only 38 types. Half of these show Victory as attribute or in ornamental form on the obverse, and in a different form on the reverse: *RIC* V Probus 287; VII *Lugdunum* 28, 67; *Aquileia* 38; *Sirmium* 20; *Heraclea* 99; *Constantinople* 43; VIII *Siscia* 107; *Antioch* 67-68; IX *Rome* 25; X Theodosius 348-355. The other examples are those types that brought two forms on Victory together on the reverse. Most common are the images showing the emperor holding the Victoriolae while being crowned by another Victory: *RIC* IV Caracalla 70A-B; Severus Alexander 510, 666; *RIC* VIII *Rome* 427. For the rare tautology of Victories holding a Victoriola, see below, n. 113.

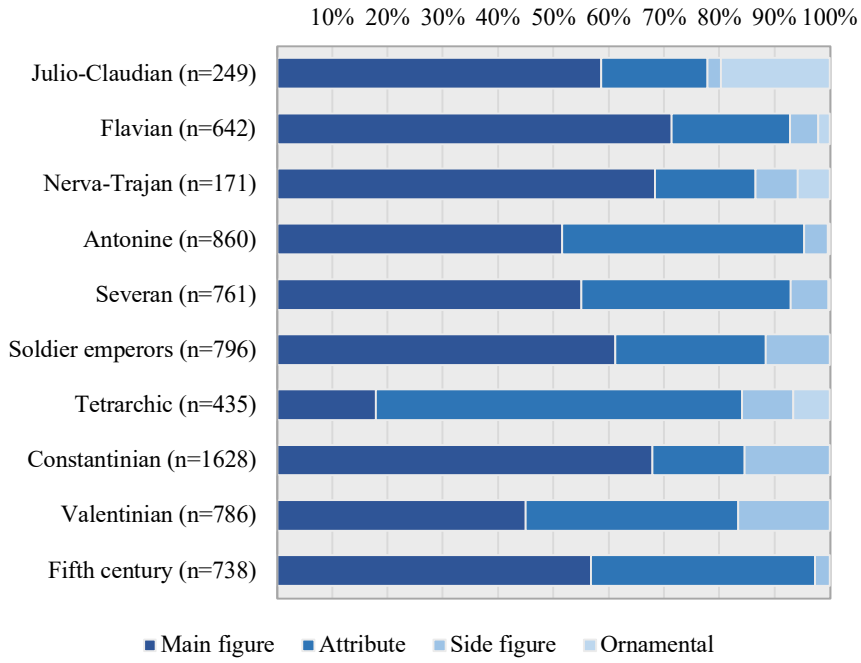
Fig. 4 – Solidus *of Theodosius II, 408-420* (*RIC X Theodosius II* (*East*) *355*)

Fig. 5 – Antoninianus *of Carinus, struck under his father Carus in 283-284* (*RIC V Carus 463*)

With its focus on Victory as a main figure through a type-based quantification of five centuries of Roman imperial coinage, this article examines the development of Victory's iconography in two sections. The first briefly addresses the development in the legends that surrounded images of Victory. This part lays bare the dominant themes through which the development of Victory's iconography can subsequently be explored in the second section, in which continuity and change are examined in the images that featured Victory.



Graph 1 – The appearance of Victory on the reverse of Roman imperial coins



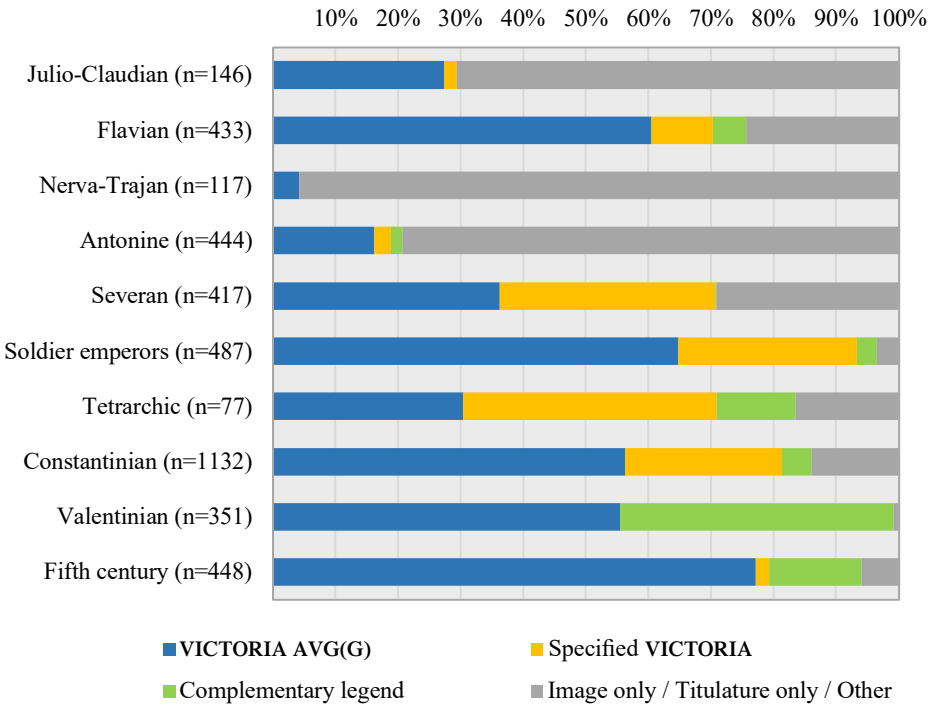
Graph 2 – Victory's forms of appearance

Continuity and change in the legends surrounding Victory

On the greater majority of imperial coins, images of Victory were surrounded by legends that identified, specified or supplemented to what was depicted. These texts are by themselves informative about the (perception of the) figure of Victory, and are therefore worth delving into before turning to the images themselves. As a matter of fact, these texts reveal a certain shift in the way Victory was related to the emperor and imperial ideology in general. The themes deriving from this brief examination will also be those that guide us through the gradual transformation of Victory in imagery.

In Graph 3, we see which kind of legends surrounded the images of Victory. Legendless images and legends that do not relate to the reverse image are grouped together in the grey category, as they add little to our understanding of the significance of Victory. They are instead indicative of periods that saw little need for an identifying legend around the reverse image. We see instead that this legend was often used for other purposes, which especially entailed continuing the imperial formula of the obverse. Particularly for the Julio-Claudian period and the second century, the result was that Victory was regularly surrounded by a legend that contained references to the emperor's tribunician power,

his consulship and the honorific title *pater patriae*. Although such legends add little to the reverse image itself, they create a strong coherence between obverse and reverse, thereby bringing the emperor and Victory in close association.[17]



Graph 3 – Legends around images of Victory as main figure

For most of the other periods, by far the most common legends surrounding Victory were those that identified her as *Victoria Augusti* ('Victory of the emperor').[18] Mostly abbreviated as **VICTORIA AVG**, the latter part strongly associated Victory with the obverse emperor, who was similarly surrounded by an **AVG** legend as an abbreviation of the name Augustus, which every successor of the 'original' Augustus save Tiberius adopted to signify emperorship. When shared emperorship became more common from the late second century onwards, the **VICTORIA AVGG** variant (short for *Victoria Augustorum*, 'Victory

[17] This effect and developments in numismatic variants of the imperial formula are discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of Betjes, 2022.

[18] We see the variant **VICTORIA AVGVSTA** on only two types in imperial coinage: *RIC* II.1² Vespasian 566; II.3² Hadrian 3182. The significance of the difference between *Victoria Augusti* and *Victoria Augusta* has been debated, for which see the overview provided by Fears, 1981b: 743 n. 15. The ambiguity created by the abbreviated forms of the legend may in some instances have been on purpose, on which see Ando, 2000: 291, 294

of the emperors') would gradually replace its singular counterpart.[19] The association that both the singular and the plural forms of this legend suggested was that Victory was to be related to emperorship, yet in a rather vague and generic sense. The fact that these legends continuously appeared during the five centuries under scrutiny, is suggestive evidence of a strong sense of continuity in Victory's numismatic appearance.

From the later second century until the early fourth century, it became more common for legends around Victory to make her appearance more specific to the circumstances of an emperor's reign. So we see that during this period personalized legends – which before had only appeared for a brief spell during the Year of the Four Emperors[20] – became a more systematic part of imperial coinage, resulting in such legends as **VICT**[*oria*] **GALL**[*ieni*] **AVG**[*usti*] ('Victory of emperor Gallienus') and **VICTORIA CONSTANTINI AVG**[*usti*] ('Victory of emperor Constantine'). Roughly contemporary was the increasing tendency to specify the military achievements that was celebrated through Victory's appearance, exemplified by such legends as **VICTORIA GERMANICA** and **VICTORIA SARMATICA**. Although they did so in different ways, both of these categories of specifying legends associated Victory more narrowly with the rule and achievements of the issuing emperor. As such, they attest to a more personalized use of Victory.[21] This also had repercussions for how Victory's relation with the emperor was perceived. Originally, Victory had been a more neutral figure, bestowing her favour upon an honouree upon successful outcome, yet with such personalized legends she increasingly appeared to be a personal patron of the emperor.[22] We see this most explicitly on coins from the breakaway Gallic and British empires in the later third century, on which she appeared as **COMES AVG**[*usti*], the emperor's companion.[23]

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[19] Especially from the fourth century onwards the number of Gs would often be increased to signify the number of ruling emperors. For this practice, see Grierson & Mays, 1992: 85-86, who also point to the fact that this became less systematic in the course of the fifth century.

[20] On which see Ando, 2000: 293-294; Noreña, 2011: 161; Stoyas, 2011.

[21] The growing personalization and appropriation of Victory are also visible in the legends that spoke of *victoria aeterna.* This came to denote a more generic sense of eternity in the later third century, yet the legend had originated under the early Severans as part of an ideological emphasis on the eternal prosperity for the empire that was promised by the establishment of the Severan dynasty, for which see Betjes, 2022: 168-173; with Baharal, 1996: 20-33; Lichtenberger, 2011: 219-279.

[22] This development coincided with an overall tendency of emperors appropriating divine figures in the third century, which was similarly reflected on coins: see Manders, 2012: 95-154. This tendency eventually culminated in Diocletian and Maximian being represented as earthly manifestations of Jupiter and Hercules, on which see Kolb, 1987: 22-67; Steinbock, 2014: 54-60.

[23] *RIC* V Postumus 228; Victorinus 94, 106-107; Tetricus I 10, 56-59, 169, 224-225; Carausius 14-19, 198-203, 747-751; Allectus 3.

A final category of legends surrounding Victory were those that did not identify her, but instead expressed a message that was complementary to the image. Such texts are, for example, attested on coins of Vespasian, on which the winged goddess is surrounded by the legend **PACI AVGVSTAE** ('to the peace of the emperor') so as to signify the importance of Vespasian's victory in securing the peace he brought.[24] These early Flavian coins are nevertheless relatively unusual, as complementary legends would only become a regular part of imperial coinage in the fourth and fifth centuries. This was a direct consequence of the profound transformation of the reverse image at the turn of the fourth century. Inspired by the Christian sympathies of the emperors of the age, divine beings completely disappeared from coins, as did many of the personifications that had until this point been a frequent part of imperial coinage. Victory was among the few traditional figures to remain on coins. In this new standardized imperial repertoire, it became common for Victory to be cast as the guarantor of a prosperous empire at the expense of the personifications who had traditionally done so. So we find her regularly surrounded by legends speaking of *felicitas* ('good-fortune'), *salus* ('health'), and *securitas* ('safety'). Such legends not seldom served as slogans of the issuing emperors, with language drawn from contemporary panegyrics.[25] The breakthrough of the complementary legend, in brief, was the indirect attestation of the transformation of coin typology that cannot be detached from the Christianization of the empire.[26]

Of course, some of the aspects discussed above particularly pertained to the legend, such as the use of slogans or specifying military campaigns. A number of themes can nevertheless be distilled from the analysis of the legend that also concerns the images that featured Victory, which in short come down to three key words: continuity, personalization and Christianization. As we turn to imagery itself in the remainder of this article, these themes will be accommodated in three parts. The first deals with the remarkable degree of continuity in Victory imagery, whereas the more elaborate second and third examine personalization and Christianization consecutively to highlight the gradual transformation of Victory. In these latter parts, subtle changes to Victory's iconography from the second century onwards are shown as a fundamental basis for the subsequent numismatic developments under the Christian emperors.

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[24] *RIC* II.1² Vespasian 1390, 1396, 1406, 1412, 1421, 1425, 1431-1432, 1441-1442, 1447, 1457, 1461, 1465-1467, 1470, 1535. For the intimate link between *pax* and *victoria* in Roman thought, see Fears, 1981b: 806-808, 812-813; Noreña, 2011: 164.

[25] See *e.g.* the **FEL TEMP REPARATIO** of the sons of Constantine (Vaneerdewegh, 2017: 158) and the **GLORIA NOVI SAECVLI** coins of Gratian (Jussen, 2019: 258).

[26] The disappearance of the gods also had serious repercussions for Victory's second most common form, the Victoriola. Before this attribute was most commonly found in divine hands or those of personifications. The Constantinian transformation and standardization of figures on the reverse, however, meant that from the fourth century onwards the emperor himself, Roma and Constantinopolis would be the only figures still carrying the Victoriola.

Continuity and change in the images of Victory

The persistent Victory: the suggestion of crowning and iconographic tradition

Graph 4 brings together all the images in which Victory appeared as the main figure in the image or as a side figure, to shed light on the various actions she performed on the reverse of coins.[27] This graph shows that she frequently interacted with other figures and objects, the latter being mostly a shield or a trophy. Especially with a trophy or other figures, such interaction for the most part came down to crowning. Crowning was the typical manner to represent Victory's single most important ability of signalling a divine favourite.[28] The principal recipient of this favour was the emperor, who was the most common figure to appear alongside Victory on the reverse of coins.[29] Such images made very explicit that the emperor was Victory's favourite, visualizing the transaction implied by the laurel wreath that appeared on most early imperial obverses.[30]

Images of Victory crowning the emperor are generally quite conservative. The most common type for the crowning Victory showed her simply crowning the standing (or sometimes seated) emperor in front of her.[31] With none of these images from the first and second centuries adding an identifying legend, it would seem that imperial victory was expressed in a rather general way. The addition of a thunderbolt in the hands of Domitian, Trajan, and Marcus Aurelius, however, point to the Jovian origin of this favour.[32] Third-century scenes of crowning Victories tended to leave out references to the divine, perhaps smoothening

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[27] More expansive in his categorization is Vermeule, 1957: 361 n. 3, who distinguishes seventeen different motifs of Victories, most of which, however, hardly differ semantically. As most of these motifs will be part of the discussion anyway, Graph 4 provides a schematic overview of the actions Victory is seen to perform instead.

[28] For the crowning Victory as the numismatic expression of divine favour, also see Noreña, 2011: 156.

[29] Of the 633 coin types that showed Victory as a side figure, on as many as 566 types the main figure was the emperor or his heir(s). More than half of these 566 types showed a crowning scene.

[30] A small Victory crowning the emperor's head on the obverse of Augustan *dupondii* makes this connection explicit, yet this iconography was not picked up afterwards: *RIC* I² Augustus 426, 426A, 429-430, 433-434.

[31] Occasionally we find the crowning Victory standing behind the emperor in a chariot: *RIC* I² Augustus 140-145, 426-426A, 429-430, 433-434; Galba 134; II.1² Vespasian 1127; III Commodus 558, 568, 615; IV Caracalla 499A-B, 506; Macrinus 36, 47A-48; Elagabalus 26A, 296-298B; Maximinus Thrax 27-29, 114; Gordian III 135, 139, 320-322; Philip I 11; Trebonianus Gallus 98; V Valerian 54; Gallienus (joint reign) 313; Gallienus 454; VI *Rome* 215, 217; VII *Treveri* 469. The types of Augustus and Galba showed the chariot standing on top of an arch.

[32] *RIC* II.1² Domitian 283, 362, 404, 474, 532, 639-640, 703-704, 752, 795; II Trajan 549-550; III Marcus Aurelius 264-266.

the continuation of such scenes under the Christian emperors of the fourth century. For the fifth century, a rare crowning scene is found on coins of Libius Severus (r. 461-465), whose engravers imitated a scene from Constantine's gold coinage, including the legend **PIETAS AVGVSTI NOSTRI** ('devotion of our emperor').[33] Despite stylistic differences and minor changes in the composition, the depiction of the act of crowning in the later Roman Empire was still very similar to the way it had been rendered at the beginning of the Principate (cf. Figs. 3 & 6).[34]

The long line of compositions that show Victory in the act of crowning the emperor are by themselves a token of the continuity in the iconography of imperial coins. However, Graph 4 shows that as a motif for Victory her crowning manifestation was not at all the most common.[35] What appears from the graph instead is that Victory mostly was not interacting with any figures or objects at all on the reverse of a coin. This observation is slightly misleading, however. By far the most common images of Victory on imperial coins for the entire period under examination were those showing her on her own standing or walking left or right holding a palm and wreath (Graph 5).[36] The extended hand in which Victory holds the wreath suggests that she is presenting it to someone (*e.g.* Figs. 7-8). In the absence of a side figure, the image invites its viewer to see the only other figure on the coin as the intended honouree: the emperor whose portrait fills the field on the obverse. Obverse and reverse thus work together to suggest the act of coronation.[37] We may see in this visual strategy a strong awareness of how to capitalize upon the characteristic two-sidedness of a coin, a numismatic idiom that was created from the first moments Victory appeared on Roman coins.[38] This early numismatic code for the reverse image would prove to be

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[33] *RIC* X Libius Severus 2701. Constantinian prototypes: *RIC* VII *Treveri* 569; *Nicomedia* 162-163, 165-168.

[34] The crowning scene of the **PIETAS AVGVSTI NOSTRI** coins likely drew upon coin types of Probus (compare *RIC* V Probus 7), whose coins were frequently used as models by the engravers working under Constantine.

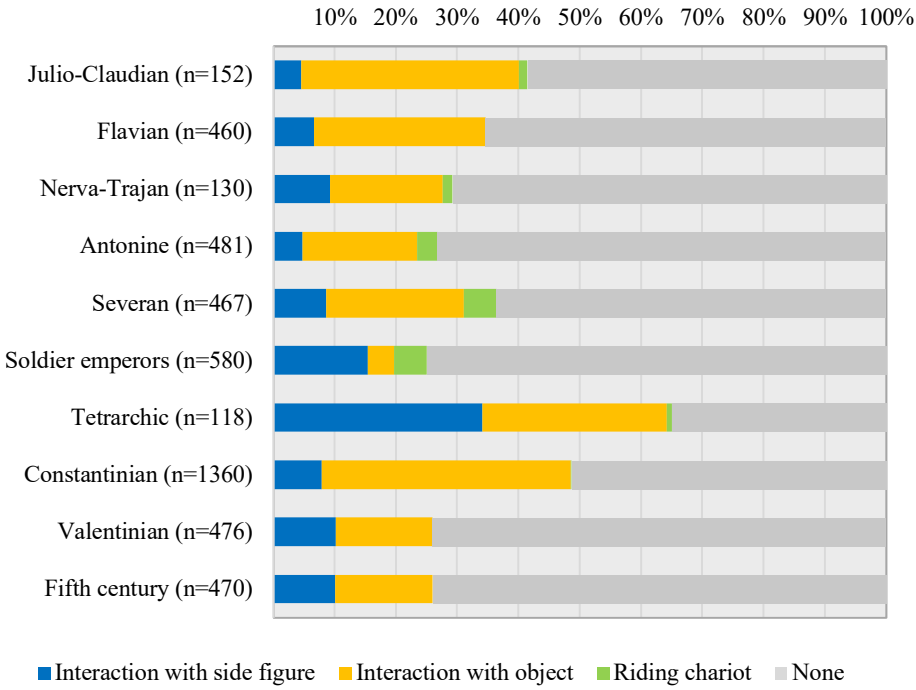
[35] Only for the Tetrarchy do we find a notable increase, yet this is due to a general lack of Victories for this period more than to a certain preference in Victory types.

[36] In Graph 5, Victories standing atop a globe or prow are also included, since they created the same effect. As shown by Vermeule, 1957: 359-361, Victory moving right was mainly restricted to the first three centuries of imperial rule, although the fifth century saw a brief revival. The relative lack of Constantinian types in this graph is especially due to twin Victories becoming the standard bronze type for this period, on which see p. 20.

[37] The use of both sides of a coin to associate Victory with the emperor has a notable predecessor in coin types struck for Octavian after the battle of Actium: *RIC* I² Augustus 263-264. On the obverse, Victory standing on a prow extended her wreath as if she was crowning someone. The message was understood when upon turning the coin the viewer found Octavian in a triumphal *quadriga*.

[38] The *stater* produced on Greek soil for Titus Quinctius Flaminius is an early example of the same effect was created on coins predating the imperial period: *RRC* 548/1a. The idea

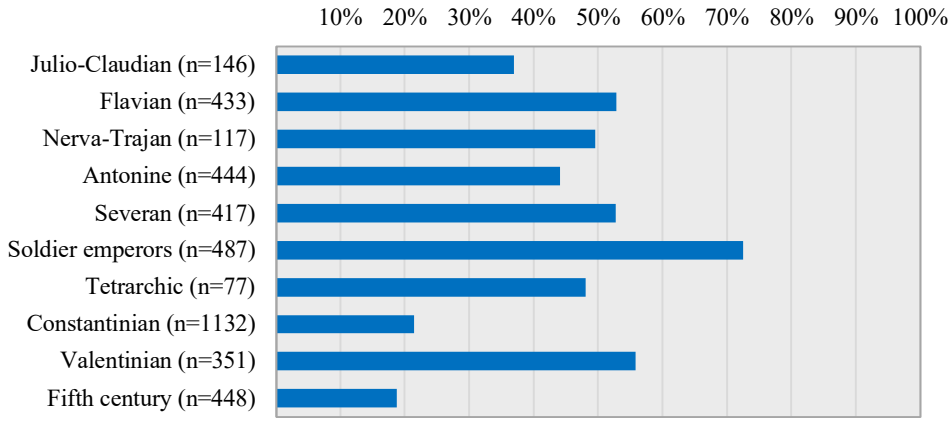
quite durable. In fact, the potent message involving the wreath- and palm-holding Victory would dominate imperial coinage, until eventually the cross-bearing Victory took her place in the late fifth century (a development visualized in Graph 6). Until that point, Victory had also appeared as if she was crowning the emperor when the wreath was combined with other attributes, mostly the trophy. Fifth-century Victories holding a cross-topped globe in one hand and lifting a wreath in their other hand continued to give the impression that they crowned the obverse emperor (Fig. 9).[39]



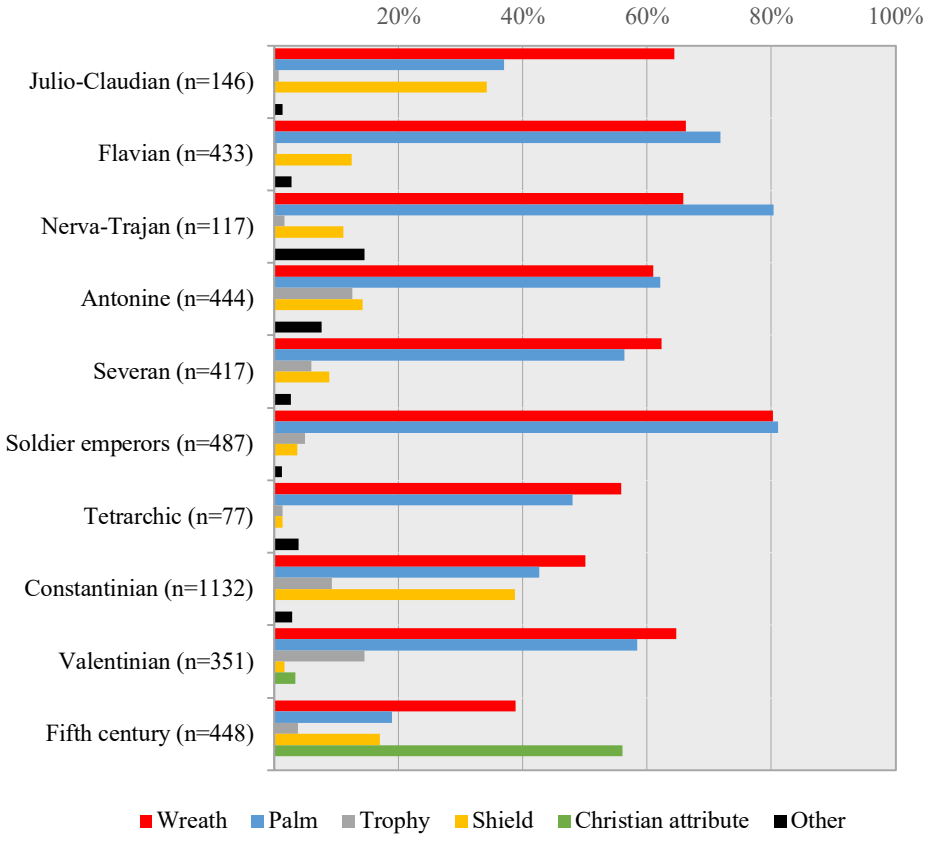
Graph 4 – The actions of Victory as main or side figure

of a 'numismatic idiom' underlying the iconography of imperial coinage is explored in detail in Betjes, 2022.

[39] For the cross-topped globe, see p. 31-32.



Graph 5 – Left/right moving Victory as % of total of types showing Victory as main figure



Graph 6 – Attributes in the hands of Victory as main figure

Fig. 6 – Æ3 of Arcadius, 395-401 (*RIC X Arcadius 66*)

Fig. 7 – Solidus *of Constantine I, 330* (*RIC VII* Constantinople *46*)

Fig. 8 – Antoninianus *of Aemilian, 253* (*RIC IV Aemilian 21*)

Fig. 9 – Tremissis *of Theodosius I, 383-388* (*RIC IX* Constantinople *75B*)

Reverse images of Victory that created the impression that she bestowed her favour upon the obverse emperor were predominant throughout the period under scrutiny. As such, the main contribution of Victory to a coin's overall message was to render victorious the emperor who appeared on the obverse. In the associative framework of Roman imperial art, the addition of objects and supportive figures could at times strengthen, specify, or nuance these generic Victories. Victory was therefore occasionally flanked by captives or trophies to emphasize her link to the emperor's successful martial enterprises.[40] By occasionally depicting weapons and shields associated with certain conquered peoples or depicting a captive in a stereotypical way, coin images could render the victories they celebrated in a more specific way.[41] These images were thereby the visual parallels to such identifying legends as **VICTORIA GERMANICA** and **IVDAEA DEVICTA**.

The Victory with extended wreath was by no means the only image of Victory. Roman engravers regularly resorted to other renderings of Victory to imbue a coin's reverse with certain nuances or additional meaning. These were often

[40] Examples of this are discussed below at p. 25-28.

[41] See Cody, 2003: for references to the conquered in Flavian coinage. In times of civil war, trophies as found on coins could also consist of Romans arms, for which see R.-Alföldi, 1996: 35-36.

sought in numismatic precedent. This in part explains why some imperial Victory compositions could be traced back to the earliest days of Roman coinage. The composition in which Victory figured on *victoriati* in the third century BCE (Fig. 10), for example, may still be recognized on *aurei* of Probus from the third century CE. Coin design could also be inspired by other forms of Roman art, however. Notable in this respect are the Victories appearing in the same way as a common statue type of Aphrodite, the so-called Aphrodite of Capua type, which was introduced as a coin type under Claudius (Fig. 11).[42] For this common motif in Roman imperial art in general, Rachel Kousser has made a compelling case that Victory thereby borrowed the goddess' beauty to cast (Roman) rule in terms of desirability.[43] Besides this aesthetic component, a further factor in this motif's durability – from a numismatic point at least – was the mirror held by the figure. In later imperial renderings, this mirror became an inscribed shield that expressed a variety of ideological messages, to which we turn in some detail below.[44] As a consequence, this image containing Victory would likewise continue to appear under the Christian emperors of the fourth century, by when the motif had most likely lost its connection with Aphrodite. These coins are thereby a strong attestation of the longevity of motifs that were deeply rooted in a cross-medial iconographic tradition, which would continue to impact late Roman iconography even when Victory's iconography altered significantly.[45]

Fig. 10 – Victoriatus, *211-210 BCE* (*RRC 102/1*)

Fig. 11 – Quinarius aureus *of Claudius, 41-42* (*RIC I² Claudius 18*)

The emperor's companion: subtle changes from the late second century onwards

For the first two centuries of Roman imperial coinage, crowning scenes and the reverse Victories interacting with the imperial portrait on the obverse made it abundantly clear that the emperor and Victory had a special connection. Nevertheless, nothing about her presence on imperial coinage suggested anything else

[42] *RIC* I² Claudius 18.

[43] Kousser, 2006.

[44] See p. 22-24.

[45] The Capuan Aphrodite is not the only statue type that can be recognized in coin typology. Other notable examples are the Victoria Virgo cult statue (Hölscher, 1967: 137) and the Victory in the Curia Iulia (see *e.g.* Kremydi-Sicilianou, 2002: 68-69; Cornwell, 2017: 98-101).

than Victory still being the divine personification of military outcome, for she was pretty much the same figure as the one who had appeared in different art forms before the imperial period. The only hint of a special connection between the emperor and Victory lay in the obvious fact that they were part of the same coin. From the late second century onwards, however, subtle changes to the standard images of Victory attest to an intensifying bond between Victory and the emperor.

Among the clearest examples of an intensified association between the emperor and Victory are coin types of Severus Alexander that introduced the winged goddess to a depiction of the emperor's *profectio*, a ceremonial departure.[46] This was a significant innovation. Indeed, Victory's presence in a scene of the emperor's departure underlined the expectation of victory even before successfully completing a campaign. Victory was hereby presented as always siding with the emperor more than as the 'neutral' personification of fortunate outcome.[47] The changing role of Victory clearly appears from these coins of Severus Alexander, yet this follows from a combination of text and image, more than a change in the imagery alone.[48] Already before this emperor's reign, however, there are a few developments in the images themselves that point us to a similar change in Victory's significance. This appears to have originated under Commodus and Septimius Severus. Even though standard images of Victory remained the norm on their coins, their reigns witnessed the introduction of a few novel elements in types involving Victory. These images showed her as more than a mere personification of outcome, and would in various forms be repeated under later emperors. Three novelties can be distinguished that are discussed respectively below: (i) the depiction of more than one Victory, (ii) the use of Victory in *vota* messages, and (iii) the changing objects and subordinate figures in Victory's surroundings.

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[46] *RIC* IV Severus Alexander 524, 596B-E, 640-641, 652-653, 666A. *Adventus* and *profectio* scenes were a common theme in imperial art. The bibliography on the *adventus* and *profectio* is extensive. See *e.g.* Hölscher, 1967: 48-67; Koeppel, 1969; Meister, 2013. Lehnen, 2001, deals with the *profectio* alone.

[47] Hölscher, 1967: 65-67. *Profectio* coins disappeared in the third century, as emperors decreasingly resided in Rome. This made the propagation of imperial entries into the city all the more topical for coins struck at Rome, so that types celebrating the emperor's *adventus* prospered during the third and early fourth centuries. On these *adventus* coins the introduction of Victory in the imperial train was continued after Severus Alexander: *RIC* IV Maximinus Thrax 115, 121; Gordian III 325; Trajan Decius 43; Trebonianus Gallus 128; V Valerian and Gallienus 4; Gallienus (joint reign) 260; Gallienus and Saloninus 1; Probus 261, 582-584, 890.

[48] Another example of a changing perception of Victory that may be deduced from a combination of image and text are scenes of Victory crowning the emperor Tacitus surrounded by the legend **AETERNITAS AVG**, which made clear that the emperor's eternity was dependent on the favour he enjoyed from Victory: *RIC* V Tacitus 104-106. For the connection between *aeternitas* and Victory, also see n. 21.

i. Multiplying Victory: dynasty and shared victories

Among the most notable of the third-century deviations from standard images in which Victory appeared are the twin Victories that were introduced on imperial coins under Septimius Severus (Fig. 12).[49] Flanking an empty shield hanging on a palm-tree, these Victories drew upon recognizable imagery, but the novelty of their dual appearance is unmistakable.[50] Their plurality was underlined by the legend **VICT(ORIAE) BRIT(TANNICAE)** on some of these types, which belonged to a series of coins issued to celebrate successful campaigns of the Severans in Britain.[51] The legend and image worked together to indicate that the legend was to be read in the plural nominative rather than the singular dative, which up to then had been more commonly used in imperial coin legends.[52] In an ornamental function, Victory had been multiplied before, resulting in Victories occasionally adorning altars, chariots and roofs of building.[53] By appearing as the sole figures in the field of the reverse, however, the Severan Victories presented a novelty.

Fig. 12 – Sestertius *of Septimius Severus, 202-210* (*RIC IV Septimius Severus 818*)

[49] *RIC* IV Septimius Severus 796, 808, 818; Caracalla 146, 465A-B; Geta 167.

[50] The image was a modified version of a familiar imperial image of Victory placing a shield on a trophy that had appeared under Vitellius and Vespasian: *RIC* I² Vitellius 151-152, 165, 176; II.1² Vespasian 65, 1067-1069.

[51] **VICTORIAE BRIT(TANNICAE)** with single Victory: *RIC* IV Septimius Severus 302-302A, 332-337, 819, 834, 837A-B; Caracalla 172-174, 231-231A, 464, 467, 516, 521-522B; Geta 91-92, 166, 186, 191A-B.

[52] For the legend **VICTORIAE** as a dative form see *RIC* I² Galba 133; II.1² Domitian 297-298, 373, 389, 410, 422, 483, 498, 552, 555; IV Pescennius Niger 82-89; Clodius Albinus 26.

[53] Victories on altar: *RIC* I² Augustus 229-248B; Tiberius 31-32; Claudius 1. Victories on *carpenta*/chariots: *RIC* I² Tiberius 50-51; Nero 4-5; II.1² Titus 360-362; II Trajan 420, 572-573. Victories on roofs of buildings: *RIC* I² Tiberius 55, 61, 67; II Trajan 574, 577-578; II.3² Hadrian 2409; III Antoninus Pius 1148.

The significance of the Severan twin Victories can be deduced from another novel type that was issued around the same time. On these *sestertii*, we encounter the twin Victories again, this time flanking and crowning two sacrificing emperors.[54] The surrounding legend **CONCORDIAE AVGG** stressed the harmony between Septimius Severus and his sons Caracalla and Geta, which was secured because the two Victories bestowed divine favour upon each of them. Consequently, when appearing without the emperors on the coins highlighting the British campaigns, the two Victories in question were not a propagation of multiple successes in Britain, but an indication that the victory was a shared achievement of the Severan dynasty. The idea that Victory thereby favoured all three male members of the Severan household was further underlined by pairing each reverse type involving the twin Victories with the obverse portrait of each of them.[55] Images involving only a single Victory were also imbued with a notion of shared victory through the legends with the plural **VICTORIAE AVGG** rather than the singular **VICTORIA AVG(VSTI)**. **AVGG** had become the proper ending of most reverse legends after Caracalla was made co-emperor in 198.[56] We find the same form added to, for example, *indulgentia* ('clemency'), *libertas* ('liberty'), and *liberalitas* ('generosity'), thus presenting imperial victory as much as the benefits that were its consequence as shared achievements.[57]

The mints of Valerian and Gallienus were the first to pick up the image of the twin Victories after the early Severans, after which the image continued to appear until the Tetrarchy only sparsely.[58] Dynastic motivations may still have inspired engravers on some occasions, but the two Victories also appeared for emperors who otherwise showed little interest in the expression of dynastic messages.[59] In these instances, the multiplication of Victory may reflect other motivations. A clear case is provided by coins of Gallienus: multiple Victories coincided with the unprecedented addition of a numeral in the legends sur-

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[54] *RIC* IV Septimius Severus 814; Geta 165. These types were part of a series of bronzes that had the sacrificing emperors crowned by alternating figures, including deities. As such, these bronzes propagated a combined message of imperial victory and divine association.

[55] Obverses with Caracalla's portrait are not attested for the *sestertii* showing the two Victories crowning the emperors. Given the otherwise systematic propagation of shared victory, this is probably the consequence of such *sestertii* not having survived to the modern day.

[56] See *RIC* IV.1, p. 75.

[57] The two Victories were thereby the visual parallel of the dynastic focus of early Severan coin legends, which had given their rule and all the resulting benefits a sense of perpetuity, for which see n. 21.

[58] *RIC* V Valerian 294-296; Gallienus (joint reign) 459-460; Gallienus 294-295, 302, 311, 519; Gallienus and Salonina (2) 3; Claudius Gothicus 196, 226; Florian 43; Probus 601, 799-800, 875-876; Carus 146.

[59] From a dynastic point of view, the type seems most appropriate for the dual rule of Valerian and Gallienus as well as for the dynasty Carus tried to establish along with his sons Carinus and Numerian.

rounding some of the images, thus suggesting the winged figures represented actual military victories of this hard-pressed emperor.[60] On each coin the numeral corresponded to the number of depicted Victories, which in each case amounted to three. The accompanying image was not that of the facing Victories, but the standard crowning Victory multiplied by three and without the usual crowned figure on her side.[61] Later soldier emperors would revert to the facing twin Victories.

With Diocletian and Constantine, the use of twin Victories became more systematic. Their reigns not only witnessed the standardization of coin typology – and a rationalization of minting practices and designs – but also stressed the importance of sharing the responsibility of imperial rule.[62] These were the ideal circumstances for the twin Victories to blossom.[63] Pretty much the same was true for Constantine's sons, whose coins therefore continued to show the image of facing Victories. On bronzes of the late 340s, for example, we find them without a shield in their midst, each holding a wreath and a palm. The legend **VICTORIAE DD NN AVGG** stressed the shared victory of Constans and Constantius II, the two sons of Constantine whose portraits alternated on the obverse.[64] Once more, Victory's favour appeared to be a dynastic feature.

Multiple Victories as a reflection of shared victory would still have been appropriate for the various emperors that co-ruled the empire during the later fourth and fifth centuries. However, the twin Victories were only sporadically used.[65] The few reverses on which they appeared during this period all had a variant of the legend **VICTORIA AVGG** to indicate that their appearance denoted shared victory.[66] It is in this respect notable that despite the fact that the empire by this time often saw more than two emperors ruling at the same time – often indicated by the surrounding legend – the number of Victories would not exceed two. The three Victories that had appeared on coins of Gallienus suggest that this was due to iconographic convention more than to difficulties in design. The same convention appears to have affected an alternative late-fourth-century depiction of

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[60] *RIC* V Gallienus 295, 519.

[61] Multiplying Victory by simply using the same figure twice (rather than mirroring) was relatively rare, but is again attested under Constantine: *RIC* VII *Treveri* 66-67.

[62] For the various means through which this happened for Diocletian's Tetrarchy, see Hekster *et al.*, 2019. For imperial *concordia* for Constantine and his dynasty, see Frakes, 2006.

[63] Most of the twin Victories appearing under Diocletian and Constantine also carried *vota* shields, and are therefore discussed below at p. 23-24.

[64] Or **VICTORIAE DDD NNN AVGGG** when Constantine II was still alive: *RIC* VIII *Thessalonica* 14.

[65] We find this type twelve times for the Valentinian emperors, whereas *RIC* X only lists this type twice for Valentinian III in the 430s.

[66] Only a few Valentinian bronze types from Thessalonica took a singular ending (**VICTORIA AVG**): *RIC* IX *Thessalonica* 63A-C.

Victory's shared favour, which were images of two emperors being crowned by her.[67] Roman coins had depicted more than two emperors at one and the same time before, but again no new type was introduced when the empire came to be ruled by three or more emperors.[68]

Neither the number of Victories nor the number of emperors crowned by Victory, then, were always an accurate representation of the political environment. The importance of these depictions of shared victory lies elsewhere. They show an ever-growing tendency to represent Victory not merely as a divine being bestowing her favour upon the emperor, but also as a symbol of the emperor's rule and achievements. By using Victory for dynastic claims, for example, her favour was assured for the current emperor as much as for (expected) future emperors. The message of twin Victories thereby implied the same as the *profectio* scenes of Severus Alexander mentioned in the introduction to this section: Victory represented the successful outcome of past battles as much as that of future military efforts.

ii. Victory's vota shields

Victory was often depicted with a shield. These shields were frequently inscribed to specify the message expressed through the image of Victory. For the first two centuries of imperial coinage, such shields were most often inscribed with **OB CIVES SER**[*vatos*] or **SPQR**, which highlighted how the emperor's victory served the commonwealth rather than specifying this victory in a military sense.[69] On coins of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, however, we see Victory's shield inscribed with **VIC**[*toria*] **DAC**[*ica*] and **VIC**[*toria*] **GER**[*manica*] to connect Victory to the successful campaigns of these emperors.[70] From the later second century onwards, the shield inscriptions came to mostly refer to the longevity of the emperor's rule, as Victory became part of *vota* messages.

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[67] *RIC* IX *Treveri* 16A-D; *Thessalonica* 33A-B; 34F-G, 41. In their iconography, they seem to have been inspired by coin types of the Dyarchy of Diocletian and Maximian: *RIC* V Diocletian 291-292, 313, 601, 615-616.

[68] We especially find this reflected on early Severan coins. Examples include the three riding emperors on *adventus* and *virtus* coins (*RIC* IV Septimius 177A-B, 305; Caracalla 56, 177) and the three emperors seated in a *liberalitas* scene (*RIC* IV Septimius Severus 279; Caracalla 159). For the fourth century, we have multiples of Constantine and his sons, which showed three members of the imperial family on the reverse, with each of them being crowned by a different figure: *RIC* VII *Constantinople* 42.

[69] **OB CIVES SER**[*vatos*] shields appeared on coins of Vitellius and Vespasian. **SPQR** shields appeared under Tiberius, Nero, Vitellius, the Flavians, Trajan, and Antoninus Pius. Both were likely inspired by the *clipeus virtutis* of Augustus, on which see Gagé, 1932: 64-67; Fears, 1981b: 808; Zanker, 1987: 101-102.

[70] *RIC* II Trajan 527-531; III Marcus Aurelius 240, 256-257, 1000-1002, 1029-1032, 1722. The **BRITAN** found on the shield of Victory on *asses* of Antoninus Pius appears to specify Victory, too, yet a label for Victory is lacking: *RIC* II Antoninus Pius 732.

Vota were vows uttered by the emperor as tokens of his *pietas* meant to ensure the continuous bestowal of *felicitas* upon himself and the empire, which were normally taken at the beginning of the year and during celebrations of imperial anniversaries.[71] From the early Principate onwards, especially imperial anniversary *vota* were frequently celebrated on coins, often distinguishing vows taken (*suscepta*) for the coming years and those fulfilled (*soluta*). Victory was absent from early *vota* coins, which instead depicted either the sacred act of uttering the vows itself or an inscribed wreath. The wreath already hinted at Victory's domain, so that her first appearance on *vota* coins of Commodus was no radical novelty. On these coins, Victory appeared in the pose of the Capuan Aphrodite inscribing a shield with **VO**[*ta*] **DE**[*cennalia*].[72] The message that followed from this image was that Commodus' ten years of rule were due to the favour Victory had bestowed upon him, a natural consequence of his innate *felicitas* expressed through his *cognomen* Felix on most of the obverses. The inclusion of Victory in Commodus' *vota* coinage, in short, was meant to stress the emperor's exceptionality.

After the Victory in the style of Capuan Aphrodite of Commodus, two more variants of the shield-bearing Victory were introduced as *vota* types in the third century that would prove to be of lasting impact. These were the seated Victory and the twin Victories shown before. The *vicennalia* of Caracalla was the occasion that resulted in the introduction of the seated Victory as a *vota* type (Fig. 13).[73] It depicted Victory seated on a cuirass inscribing a shield resting on her lap, which before Caracalla had been an empty shield.[74] Seated, inactive Victories could be interpreted as a reflection of the peaceful situation brought about by the emperor, thereby symbolizing how all the other benefits expressed through coinage could come to fruition. By making such an image into a *vota* type by an inscribed **VO(T) XX** on the shield, the peace and subsequent prosperity in the empire were connected to the longevity of the emperor's reign. Additionally, the engravers provided the scene with further martial connotations by adding a trophy and two captives on some of the coins, as well as by placing the legend **VIC(T) PART(HICA)** around the image or in the exergue.[75] These elements gave the impression that the peace guaranteed by the seated Victory and the emperor's long reign were interlinked with the emperor's actual achieve-

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[71] For discussions of imperial *vota*, see Mattingly, 1951; Hammond, 1959: 31-33, 49-51; Fears, 1981a: 97-100; Fears, 1981b: 814-815. See Pearce, 1937, and Burgess, 1988, for fourth-century *vota* and its reflection on coins.

[72] *RIC* III Commodus 113, 136b-d, 449A-B, 472A-C, 474, 482. This novelty fits the emphasis on *vota* in Commodan ideology: Beaujeu, 1955: 373-384; Fears, 1981b: 814-815.

[73] *RIC* IV Caracalla 295A-B, 297A-E, 314A-B. The prototype was probably of Commodan origin: *RIC* III Commodus 440, 451-452.

[74] *RIC* IV Caracalla 295A-B, 297A-E, 314A-B. For this type, also see Hölscher, 1967: 118-119.

[75] Some coins have the **VIC(T) PART** of the exergue inscribed in the shield instead of **VO(T) XX**, which is left out entirely on these types: *RIC* IV Caracalla 298A-B.

ments on the battlefield. Victory and the emperor's reign and virtues thereby appeared in close harmony in one and the same scene.

The twin Victories flanking a shield became a *vota* type from Valerian and Gallienus onwards.[76] These types used the double Victories to express shared victory and to stress the importance of this divine favour for the longevity of dual rule. The type was not a very common one in the later third century, and pretty much the same was true for the seated Victory and Victory in the style of the Aphrodite of Capua. Nevertheless, an important novelty was the legend **PRIMIS X MVLTIS XX** around twin Victories appearing for Diocletian and Maximian.[77] This legend suggested not only that Victory guaranteed the fulfilment of vows, but also that she would continue to bestow her favour upon the emperors for the next decade. Once again, we find Victory not so much symbolizing fortunate outcome, but rather continuously siding with the emperor.

Victories with *vota* shields became a standard part of imperial coinage from Constantine onwards. By this time, *vota* coins had become more prominent in numismatic repertoires. This was probably because of an increase in the importance and regularity of donatives related to such anniversary celebrations – and for which these coins were probably produced – as a means of rewarding the soldiery by this time.[78] Constantine restored Victory to imperial coinage after decades of relative disuse under the Tetrarchy, and *vota* Victories took a prominent place in his numismatic repertoire. Both the seated Victory and the twin Victories appeared as *vota* types. The former clearly drew upon Caracallan prototypes.[79] The twin Victories, on the other hand, were follow-ups to later third-century *vota* coins.[80]

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[76] *RIC* V Valerian 294-296; Gallienus (joint reign) 459-460; Florian 43; Probus 601; Carus 146; Diocletian 130, 178-179, 514.

[77] *RIC* V Diocletian 130, 178-179, 514.

[78] King, 1980: 153; Burgess, 1988: 78-79; Duncan-Jones, 1990: 115; Abdy, 2012: 589-590. See Kent, 1956: 193, for the literary evidence on donatives.

[79] The seated Victory mainly appeared on Constantine's precious metal *vota* coins that were struck in celebration of the *decennalia* of Constantine in 315/316: *RIC* VII *Ticinum* 40, 50, 58. Their Caracallan origin is underlined by the presence of the two captives flanking the trophy to the right of the seated Victory, which had only been added to the scene on some of the reverses of Caracalla. When the same type was used again under Constantine to celebrate his *vicennalia* and *tricennalia*, the trophy was in most cases replaced by a genius supporting the shield.

[80] The twin Victories became a standard type on Constantine's bronzes, after **SOL INVICTUS** had ceased to be the standard bronze image after 318, on which see Bruun, 1962; Wienand, 2012: esp. 299-300, 303-304. The post-318 bronzes of Constantine instead focussed on the emperor's anniversaries, which were strongly related to the glory of his rule. Not only Victories were used in this respect, but also other symbols denoting victory and world rule, such as globes, wreaths, standards and captives.

As with so many other aspects of imperial numismatic representation, Constantine paved the way for his successors by more commonly associating Victory with his *vota* messages. The twin Victories were prominent under his sons (Fig. 14), whereas under the Valentinian emperors the Aphrodite of Capua Victories were more common. Of the post-Constantinian continuations of the three main Victory types involving *vota* shields, however, the seated Victory was the dominant *vota* type involving Victory. (Fig. 15). As we shall see in the next section, a variant of this type would also be among the first to feature Christian iconography.

Fig. 13 – Denarius *of Caracalla, 213-217* (RIC IV *Caracalla 314A*)

Fig. 14 – Solidus *of Constans, 340-350* (RIC VIII Siscia *132*)

Fig. 15 – Solidus *of Arcadius, 402-403* (RIC X *Arcadius 22*)

The increasing use of Victories in the context of imperial *vota* serves as another indication that from the late second century onwards, the relation between Victory and the reign of emperors became ever more close-knitted. In her early appearance under Commodus, she may still have been regarded as simply symbolizing the victory that had allowed the emperor to fulfil his vows. The later tendency to also include in the image the *vota* that were taken for a further five or ten prosperous years of rule, however, suggested that Victory would favour the emperor again in the future. In other words, this favour was not to be obtained, but was understood as being with the emperor perpetually. The standardization of *vota* types involving Victory from Constantine onwards made sure that this logic became an integral part of the numismatic repertoires of Christian emperors.

iii. The changing surroundings of Victory: subjugation and metaphors

So far a shift has been deduced in Victory's significance on imperial coins from various changes in her iconography and the legends surrounding her. Victory appears to have increasingly become a figure who actually sided with the emperor. This companionship is not quite reflected in the figure of Victory herself. Metaphorical images of a warrior Victory fighting the emperor's battles, for example, are not attested, and she rarely appeared armed or armoured.[81] In her direct surroundings, however, slight changes may be traced that make it appear as if Victory was acting on the emperor's behalf.

Victory's interaction with captives suggests an active role for her in subjugating the emperor's enemies. Captives or personifications of subdued regions frequently appeared on Roman imperial coins. They usually played a passive role in such compositions, seated below a trophy or on the side to symbolize vanquished foes. In scenes with Victory, captives already appeared in the first two centuries to underline that the depicted Victory was to be related to actual campaigns.[82] These early captives were still nothing more than passive side figures. Captives became more involved in the reverse image on coins of Septimius Severus, showing the trophy-bearing Victory leading what appears to be a captive by the hand.[83] By means of the trophy and the reference to the British campaigns in the legend, the winged goddess was presented in her traditional guise as the personification of successful outcome. Still, the act of guiding the emperor's captives herself suggest a more active role for Victory in the emperor's campaigns. An even clearer example of how the inclusion of captives attest to a changed perception of imperial victory comes from *profectio* scenes of Caracalla, on which Victory herself is absent.[84] Following a similar logic as the later *profectio* scenes of Severus Alexander, including captives into this scene of the

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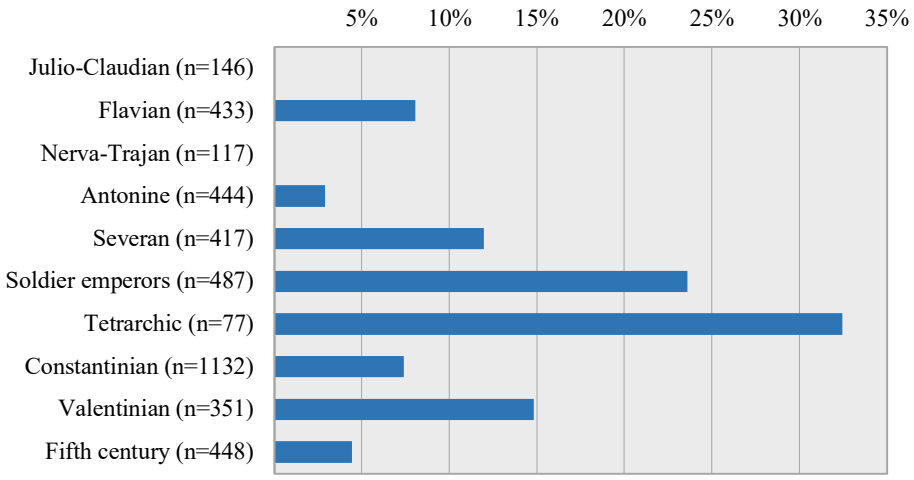
[81] Constantinian bronzes with Constantinopolis on the obverse are notable exceptions, showing Victory with shield and sceptre in images reminiscent of numismatic representations of Virtus, Mars and Minerva rather than standard images of Victory. Perhaps also inspired by the iconography of warlike figures are mid-fourth-century medallions showing a helmeted Victory placing her foot on a captive: *RIC* VIII *Rome* 394, 414. Otherwise, the only martial depiction of Victory is the spear-wielding variant on *dupondii* of Postumus: *RIC* V Postumus 229. Postumus' coins were commonly modelled upon early coin design; this type may well have followed coins of Severus Alexander, which – similarly extraordinarily – showed Victory holding a sceptre: *RIC* IV Severus Alexander 467.

[82] *RIC* I² Vitellius 111-112, 151,152, 165, 176; II.1² Vespasian 14, 65, 68-69, 215, 221-226, 256, 283, 328-330, 332, 1067-1069, Titus 363-364, 368; Domitian 285, 365, 405, 475-476; III Marcus Aurelius 890-892, 1360-1363, 1408-1411, 1723; Commodus 67, 79, 87.

[83] *RIC* IV Septimius Severus 237, 302; Caracalla 172. The pose of Victory on these coins was unprecedented yet has a compositional precedent in the depiction of Aeneas taking Ascanius by the hand on coins of Antoninus Pius: *RIC* III Antoninus Pius 91, 615, 627.

[84] *RIC* IV Caracalla 107-108, 431-433, 438-440, 445-446, 449A-B.

emperor leaving for battle implied that the anticipated campaign was already decided before it even began.[85]



Graph 7 – Captives/enemies flanking Victory as % of total of types showing Victory as main figure

The inclusion of captives made the changed role of Victory even more explicit in the remainder of the third century. As Graph 7 shows, captives became more common in Victory scenes under the soldier emperors. In most instances, these captives were merely flanking Victory. The implications of their presence was thereby not much different from the seated figures that had occasionally appeared in the preceding centuries. They were the consequence of the emperor's efforts on the battlefield, the outcome of which was personified by Victory. The increased appearance of captives nevertheless suggest that she came to symbolize actual victories more than the general notion of imperial victory as a guarantee for the empire's prosperity. Like the growing inclination of the same period to specify victories in the legend, the growing number of images that showed Victory being flanked by captives correspond to increased military activity during the third century. Although fewer in number, some images of the soldier emperors show Victory placing her foot on the captive.[86] This was not a Victory crowning the emperor after a successful battle, but rather his companion, actively assisting him in acts of subjugation. Captives less frequently flanked Victory on fourth- and fifth-century coins, but the occasional return of Victory lead-

[85] For a similar interpretation of these types, see Hölscher, 1967: 66. The *profectio* types of Caracalla fall in line with the messages of *victoria aeterna* that we read around early Severan Victory images, on which see n. 21.

[86] *RIC* v Valerian 22; Gallienus (joint reign) 3, 44-45, 62-63.

ing a captive and the subduing Victory continued to show her as the emperor's companion.[87]

Besides continuing to show Victory interacting with captives, coins of the fourth century also used Victory's surroundings in different ways to underline her close association with the emperor. As mentioned above, the language of contemporary panegyrics regularly found reflection in fourth-century legends surrounding scenes of Victory. Sometimes the scenes themselves formed a pictorial parallel to such legends. A neat example are bronzes with the legend **FEL**[*icium*] **TEMP**[*orum*] **REPARATIO** ('the restoration of the prosperous times'). These show the emperor holding a *labarum* (a military standard showing the Christogram, or Chi-Rho symbol ☧) standing on a ship steered by Victory (Fig. 16). Victory had commonly appeared standing on top of a prow on Roman coins, yet she had never been depicted steering a ship before. Equally odd, iconographically speaking, was the emperor standing on top of this ship. When seen in line with panegyrics, however, this image made perfect sense, as the emperor as pilot of the ship of state was a commonly employed metaphor.[88] Inspiration for this type may thus have been drawn from non-numismatic sources, but the resulting iconography is still deeply rooted in numismatic tradition, even despite the fact that the winged pilot of the ship was an iconographic novelty. The combination of the image of a galley and a legend referring to *felicitas* had notable predecessors in coins of the second and third centuries.[89] This continuation of traditional iconography notwithstanding, the Victory steering the ship provided a novel way to emphasize that her eternal favour lay at the foundation of the success of the emperor's enterprises.

By introducing Victory as the pilot of the care of the state, the **FEL TEMP REPARATIO** coins continued a long line of modifications to the contexts in which Victory appeared. All of these had managed to establish a subtle yet significant shift in the role of Victory in imperial ideology. Although still able to symbolize successful military outcome, Victory was at the same time turned into a powerful allegory for an imperial regime that was eternally favoured by the divine,

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[87] The subduing Victory motif was used to propagate Constantine's successes against the Sarmatians and the Alemanni: *RIC* VII *Londinium* 289-290; *Lugdunum* 209, 212, 214, 219, 222; *Trier* 337-338, 429, 435-438; *Arles* 257-258; *Sirmium* 48-52. More common were the Victories leading a captive, which continued to appear until the late fifth century: see *e.g.* *RIC* X Zeno (East) 947, 949-950, 952-952A.

[88] For the link between this type and panegyrics, also see Mattingly, 1933: 191-192; Tybout, 1980: 56-58; Vaneerdewegh, 2017: 159. The 'ship of state' metaphor was a commonplace in fourth-century panegyrics yet far predated this period. Comparisons between leadership and sailing already appeared in the works of Plato, for example, the impact of whom on imperial panegyrics has been discussed by Greenwood, 2017.

[89] With the **FELICITAS TEMP**[*orum*] *denarii* of Elagabalus showing a galley, there was even a precedent for the explicit link between the golden age and ship symbolism: *RIC* IV Elagabalus 188A-D. A more generic *felicitas* legend was combined with ship imagery for Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, Gordian III, and Gallienus.

bringing glory to wherever imperial ventures required her to be.[90] Being so intertwined with imperial ideology, Victory was also an indispensable figure for the Christian emperors of the fourth and fifth centuries. The continuation of the various Victory motifs discussed so far in this period attest to this fact, while also pointing to a strong sense of continuity in her iconography. Nevertheless, the *labarum* in the hand of the emperor on the **FEL TEMP REPARATIO** scenes is a subtle yet clear indication that Victory steering his ship of state had now sailed into Christian territory. The *labarum* was only the first Christian element to appear in Victory images. All subtle iconographic developments we have witnessed up to this point had done little to the appearance of Victory herself. This was about to change when even more Christian elements were introduced into Roman coin design.

Fig. 16 – Æ2 of Constans, 348-350 (*RIC VIII* Rome *109*)

The appearance of an angel? Christianizing Victory's iconography

It has been mentioned above how Eusebius presented a Christianized theology of victory for Constantine.[91] The importance of the notion of victory for both this emperor and his successors was also reflected in their ideological expressions. Most notable is the continued appearance of its personification as a frequent figure on coins, as opposed to all divine beings and most of the personifications that until Constantine had appeared in abundance on imperial coins. In this new context, there was an important change in the meaning of personified Victory, which needs to be briefly addressed before turning to her actual iconography.

In early imperial ideology, Victory had been a goddess and an allegory at one and the same time. Even when the allegorical element became increasingly explicit from the late second century onwards with the developments discussed

[90] This idea found a quite literal translation in the images of Victory in chariot surrounded by the legend **VBIQVE PAX** ('peace everywhere') under Gallienus and Probus: *RIC* V Gallienus 15, 72-74, 121, 359-360; Probus 139, 296; with Hölscher, 1967: 167.

[91] See above at p. 3.

in the previous section, Victory would not lose her cultic significance.[92] Hence, coins showing Victory with a **VICTORIA GERMANICA** legend, for example, signified that an actual victory had been won against Germanic tribe *and* that this triumph had occurred because the divine figure favoured the emperor. In a Christian world view, the cultic aspect was problematic, yet the allegorical far less so. This is probably best exemplified by the way she figured in the reigns of Constantius II and Gratian. Both emperors were strongly engaged in the famous episodes that led to the removal of the altar of Victory from the Curia Julia, yet at the same time had coins struck that frequently featured the very same figure.[93] This Christian dealing with Victory's original dual nature also follows from Augustine, who held that it is not Victory – *quae nulla substantia est* ('who is no real being') – who is sent by God to conquer whom he pleases but angels.[94] In other words, in a Christianized imperial ideology Victory only symbolized the divine favour of victory, without having a divine nature herself.[95]

Even if, for Eusebius at least, the above logic must have already applied to Constantine's Victory, it is hard to discern from the language and imagery found on this emperor's coins. In fact, in spite of Constantine's well-known reputation of having favoured Christianity, his coinage is quite notable for barely containing any Christian symbols.[96] Divine association was notably absent after the disappearance of Sol from Constantine's bronze coinage in 318, as the full focus came to be on military, dynastic and ceremonial affairs. Quite possibly this religious ambiguity in Constantine's coinage was meant to reconcile his polytheistic audience with his Christian followers.[97] For the numismatic appearance of Victory, Constantine is mainly to be credited for her return, after she had been virtually ignored by the Tetrarchs. The Christianization of Victory and her sur-

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[92] For discussions of Victory's nature, see Hölscher, 1967: 173-179; Fears, 1981b: 740-749. For the earliest use of Victory on coins struck at the Italian peninsula, see Miano, 2016.

[93] The first removal of the altar of Victory under Constantius: Ambr. *Ep.* 18.32; Symm. *Rel.* 3.4-6. The second removal under Gratian: Ambr. *Ep.* 17.16; Symm. *Rel.* 3.20. The episode has been frequently discussed in modern scholarship, see *e.g.* R.-Alföldi, 1961: 223-224; Hölscher, 1967: 21; Pohlsander, 1969; Rosen, 1994; Roueché, 2002: 541-545; Thompson, 2005; Chenault, 2015.

[94] August. *De. civ. Dei* 4.17. Cf. Ambr. *Epist.* 18.30.

[95] One may compare the use of Victory in Christian imperial ideology to the continued use of Hercules as *exemplum virtutis*, on which see Eppinger, 2020.

[96] The debate that these Christian elements has sparked in modern scholarship is nevertheless extensive, see *e.g.* Alföldi, 1932; Alföldi, 1951; Bruck, 1955; Bruun, 1962; Odahl, 2009; Wienand, 2012: 265-274; Wigg-Wolf, 2014.

[97] For the ambiguous element in Constantinian coin iconography, see DiMaio *et al.*, 1988; Woods, 2018. For discussions of Constantine's reverse repertoire, see *RIC* VII, p. 46-56; and more recently Woods, 2018: 376-378; Alguacil-Villanúa, 2020: 453.

roundings only occurred under his sons and – especially – their successors.[98] This saw two stages with, first, the introduction of the *labarum* to Victory's surroundings and, second, placing Christian objects in the hands of Victory.[99]

The *labarum* was the military standard with the Christogram that emerged as (and would remain) a symbol of Constantine's divine victory.[100] Only under his sons, however, was the *labarum* first paired with the personification of victory (Fig. 16). From these coins it may appear as if the religious ambiguity of Constantine's coinage came to an immediate end after his death. Unlike their father, the novice *Augusti* appeared holding the *labarum* on the earliest *solidi* and gold multiples following their accession.[101] Victory appeared as part of the same scene, crowning the emperor from the right. As we are nowadays well aware of the Chi-Rho sign as a reference to Christ, it is tempting to see in these coin types a Christianization of imperial coinage. Christian coin images would surely have been appropriate to Constantine's sons, who expanded their father's policy of favouring the Christian faith.[102] However, the *labarum* was also the *only* Christian symbol to frequently appear on their coins. It is therefore a bit excessive to see in the small Christogram on the already quite small field of a coin a mark of thorough Christianization of imperial coin design.[103] It has been variously held, moreover, that the Chi-Rho sign was in fact a rather ambiguous sign that had the potential to also refer to various other (non-Christian) cults.[104] Rather than denoting religious transformations by means of the Chi-Rho symbol, therefore, the significance of the *labarum* on the coins of Constantine's sons is more likely to be sought in the standard as a whole. Having originated under their father as a symbol of victory, the *labarum* on these coins expressed that the divine favour that had made Constantine victorious lived on through his kin.[105] Consequently,

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[98] For an overview of the Christianization of Roman imperial coin types, see Williams, 2007: 159-162.

[99] As an attribute of Victory herself, the *labarum* only appears once: *RIC* x Zeno (East) 950.

[100] For the origins of the *labarum*, see *e.g.* *RIC* VII, p. 61-64; Drake, 2000: 203-204; Singor, 2003. Its first numismatic attestations are *RIC* VII *Constantinople* 19, 26; with Odahl, 1981, for the debate on their significance.

[101] *RIC* VIII *Aquileia* 1-2; *Siscia* 9-11.

[102] Especially Constantius II's Christian policy has been much debated, for which see Flower, 2013: 80-81.

[103] As was also argued by Mattingly, 1933: 190-191.

[104] *RIC* VII, p. 61; Drake, 2000: 203.

[105] For the *labarum* as a symbol of Constantine's victory, see *RIC* VII, p. 61-62; Drake, 2000: 203-204; Singor, 2003: esp. 484. The connotations of victory also appear from a later use of the image showing Victory crowning the *labarum*-holding emperor under Vetranio, which was surrounded by the legend **HOC SIGNO VICTOR ERIS** ('in this sign you will be the victor') – a reiteration of the message Constantine supposedly received in a vision before the battle at the Milvian Bridge (Eus. *Vit. Const.* 1.28-32). For these coins, see Dearn, 2003. For the legacy of such Constantinian symbols of victory, see Bruun, 1997.

the religious ambiguity that had characterized Constantine's coinage remained largely unchanged under his sons.[106]

The Victories that appeared for much of the remainder of the fourth century were virtually the same as those of the preceding centuries. Then, at the end of the fourth century, two types were introduced at roughly the same time that showed Victory in far more explicit Christian fashion. One of these was a variant of the seated *vota* type discussed in the previous section, which first appeared for the empress Aelia Flaccilla of the Valentinian dynasty (Fig. 17).[107] On this type, the *vota* inscription in Victory's shield was replaced by a Christogram that was more conspicuous than its Constantinian precedents.[108] The Chi-Rho shield may well have been devised as an alternative to the *vota* inscription, which was not used for empresses.[109] Rather than indicating the continuation of one's *felicitas* as was expressed by *vota* inscriptions, the Christogram instead highlighted the *pietas* of the person depicted on the obverse. This *pietas*, so the reverse legend **SALVS REI PVBLICAE** claimed on each of these types, subsequently guaranteed the well-being of the state. This ideological potential was exploited for emperors in the fifth century, whose portraits also came to be paired with the seated Victory with Chi-Rho shield.[110] For the emperors, the *pietas* implied by Victory's shield underlay their shared victory, with **VICTORIA AVGG** legends mostly surrounding such images.

Roughly coinciding with the introduction of the Christogram in the shield of the seated Victory, was Victory's first unambiguous Christian attribute: the cross on a globe (Fig. 9).[111] This was a notable iconographic novelty, all the more so because Victory may have commonly topped a globe until then to symbolize

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[106] A notable exception to this rule are the bronzes struck for Constantius II at the mint of Trier with a large Chi-Rho flanked by an *alpha* and an *omega*: *RIC* VIII *Treveri* 332-337. The *alpha* and *omega* left the Christian connotations of the Christogram beyond doubt. This was not a Constantinian type by origin, however, but a short-lived continuation of bronze types of Magnentius. For this type, see Kellner, 1968: 57-80; Wigg-Wolf, 2014: 140-141. For its continuation under Constantius II, see Kent, 1954: 216; Kellner, 1968: 106.

[107] *RIC* IX *Antioch* 43, 61; *Constantinople* 48-49, 55, 61, 72, 81; *Heraclea* 13, 17, 23; *Nicomedia* 28, 36, 42; *Siscia* 34-35; *Thessalonica* 46-47.

[108] An intermediate step between the seated Victory with *vota* shield and her Chi-Rho counterpart may have been the Valentinian *vota* types with a Christogram in the field next to Victory: *RIC* IX *Antioch* 21A-22D.

[109] For the practice of making 'appropriate' coin types for Roman empresses, also see Alexandridis, 2004: 19-28.

[110] *RIC* X Theodosius II (East) 210, 222-223, 246-247; Johannes 1903; Valentinian III 2008, 2013, 2047-2050, 2149. More common, still, were the equivalents of these types struck for fifth-century empresses: *RIC* X Arcadius 10-15, 28, 32-32A, 101-105; Theodosius II (East) 205-206, 420; Leo I (East) 655-656; Honorius 1333; Valentinian III 2082-2083.

[111] *RIC* IX *Mediolanum* 11A-C, 23A-C, 37A-C; *Constantinople* 75A-B.

world rule, yet in her hands spherical objects had been an oddity.[112] Perhaps to avoid tautology, the Victoriola had been a very uncommon attribute for Victory herself.[113] Also rare were coins showing Victory holding a globe without an additional symbol on top.[114] The reason that Victory frequently placed her feet on an orb but not commonly held one is perhaps to be sought in her original nature as personification of outcome. This meant she could symbolize the necessity of imperial victory for world rule by topping the globe, yet she could not bestow world rule herself. This was the privilege of the divine, as a consequence of which we especially find such figures as Jupiter and Sol holding a globe or giving one to the emperor. With Victory handing a globe to Jupiter (under Diocletian) or to the emperor (under Maxentius), we see the first deviations from this iconographic convention at the turn of the fourth century.[115] This appears as yet another attestation of an increasing tendency to regard Victory not as the divine representation of outcome but as an allegory of imperial victory securing world dominion.[116] The cross on a globe that appeared in the hands of Victory in the late fourth and fifth centuries could be regarded in the same way.[117] The victories of the emperor secured world rule, as such allowing for the glory of Christ to be secured all over this world.

The cross topping the globe demonstrates that the cross was no longer (solely) associated with the humiliating death of crucifixion by the end of the fourth century. In Christian literature, the cross had gradually become a symbol of Christ conquering death and overcoming his enemies, a development that was also reflected in visual art forms.[118] Christ's victory was paralleled with imperial victory, thus allowing for the cross to be integrated into the iconography of Victory.[119] Due to their similarity in form, the cross was closely associated with

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[112] For a detailed discussion of the iconographic convention of Victory topping a globe, see Hölscher, 1967: 6-47.

[113] Victories holding Victoriolae are only attested for Gallienus and Constantine: *RIC* V Gallienus 311; VII *Ticinum* 179; *Sirmium* 56; *Thessalonica* 131; *Nicomedia* 70.

[114] Victories holding a globe only appeared for Diocletian, Maxentius and the usurper Constantine III: *RIC* V Diocletian 127; VI *Rome* 152; *Ostia* 7, 10; X Constantine III 1524.

[115] *RIC* V Diocletian 127; VI *Rome* 152; *Ostia* 7, 10.

[116] Jupiter was to be understood as an allegory for Diocletian, whose victory and world rule are symbolized by Victory offering him the globe.

[117] For the fifth-century Victories holding a cross-topped globe, see *RIC* X Arcadius 19-20, 34-36; Theodosius II (East) 212-213, 249-251, 273-279, 341-344; *Marcia* 517-520; Leo I (East) 517-520; Leo II and Zeno 807, Zeno 903; Basiliscus 1008-1009; Basiliscus and Marcus 1030-1031; Zeno (East) 907-909, 914-926, 937; Honorius 1214-1215, 1258-1259, 1290-1291, 1313, 1338-1342; Theodosius II (West) 1802; Johannes 1904-1906; Valentinian III 2003-2004.

[118] Christian literary tradition: Storch, 1971: 105-106, 111-117; Holum, 1977: 164-165. Visual art: Harley-McGowan, 2018.

[119] For the parallel between Christ's victory and imperial victory, see Fears, 1981b: 749-752.

the trophy. Since Justin Martyr had come up with the equation between the cross and the trophy, this equation had been a common literary trope among Christian writers.[120] The equation had already been translated to visual arts before the cross made its appearance on coins. On a mid-fourth-century sarcophagus now in the Vatican Museum, for example, we find the cross held over the shoulders of Simon of Cyrene in a way reminiscent of sculptural and numismatic representations of the trophy-bearing Mars or Victory.[121] The message of victory – over death – was brought home by wreaths adorning both the sarcophagus and the other figures and symbols pairing the cross-bearing Simon, together being a clear attestation of how Christ's passion was translated into a message of victory.[122]

Following such precedents, the equation between the trophy and the cross would lead to the introduction of the cross in Victory's numismatic iconography in the early 420s. It appeared in Victory's hands on coins struck in the eastern part of the empire under Theodosius II (Fig. 18).[123] These coins followed up coin designs of Constantine and his sons, which had showed Victory advancing left with a palm and a trophy (Fig. 19).[124] Trophies had frequently appeared cross-shaped under earlier emperors without Christian connotations. In line with the Constantinian tendency to apply ambiguous iconography, the potential to make a traditional object appear as a symbol referring to the glory of Christ seems to have been exploited on the coins of Constantine and his sons, as the trophy in the image was in each instance cross-shaped. For Theodosius II's engravers it

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[120] Justin Mar. *Apol.* 1.55; with Charles-Picard, 1957: 494-508; Dinkler-von Schubert, 1964; Storch, 1971: 105-106, 111-117; Holum, 1977: 164.

[121] Domitilla Sarcophagus. Musei Vaticani, Museo Pio Cristiano, inv. nr. 31525. As Christianity developed in a world in which Greek and Roman art forms were dominant, it is only natural that early Christian iconography borrowed many symbols and motifs from these cultural traditions. Another attribute of Victory that found new use in a Christian context was the wreath. Not only did the wreath allow the crown of thorns to be perceived as a symbol of victory (Harley-McGowan, 2018: 295), but it was also used in wedding ceremonies, for which see John Chrys. *Hom.* 9 on 1 *Tim.* 2; with Walter, 1979: 91; Ellison, 2018: 337.

[122] Harley-McGowan, 2018: 297.

[123] *RIC* X Theodosius II (East) 218-221, 225-231. As with Victory's eventual inclusion in *vota* messages (see p. 21-24), so too Victory's association with the cross seems a logical follow-up to the fact that this symbol first appeared surrounded by Victory's main attribute, the wreath. The cross surrounded by a wreath first appeared as a reverse type for Aelia Eudoxia at the turn of the fifth century: *RIC* X Arcadius 21, 50.

[124] *RIC* VII *Siscia* 225; *Thessalonica* 173-175, 181-182, 189, 205, 208; *Constantinople* 114-115; *Nicomedia* 139-141; *Antioch* 83, 93, 96, 99-104; VIII *Treveri* 122-123; *Aquileia* 40; *Siscia* 6, 39, 164-168, 268-269, 299; *Thessalonica* 2-5, 11-13, 25-29; *Antioch* 3-8. The Constantinian coins themselves seem to have been loosely based on early imperial images of Victory crowning a trophy: *RIC* II.1² Vespasian 1551; Domitian 297-298, 373, 389, 410, 422, 483, 498; II Trajan 523-526; III Marcus Aurelius 1126-1128, 1438-1439.

was therefore only a small step to replace this trophy with an actual cross. In spite of a general inclination to use standardized coin imagery in this period, the cross' introduction as a jewelled staff-like attribute of Victory likely followed recent events. Only shortly before these coins were issued, Theodosius is known to have donated a golden cross set with precious stones to the archbishop of Jerusalem, which was to be erected on Golgotha.[125] This event has been quite logically connected to the jewelled cross that would appear on coins.[126] The coins thereby forged a visual connection between Christ's victory over death and the divine favour that was the emperor's victory, while the cross also highlighted the emperor's *pietas*. The potential of simultaneously expressing imperial victory and *pietas* was recognized by Theodosius' successors, as Victory with the long jewelled cross became a standard image during the remainder of the fifth century.

Fig. 17 – Solidus *struck for Aelia Flaccilla, 378-383* (*RIC IX* Constantinople *48*)

Fig. 18 – Solidus *of Theodosius II, 420-422* (*RIC X Theodosius II* (*East*) *219*)

Fig. 19 – Solidus *of Constantine I, 335-336* (*RIC XVII* Antioch *96*)

Fig. 20 – Solidus *of Justin I, 519-527* (*DOC I Justin I 2c*)

In modern scholarship, Theodosius' Victory with her Christian attributes as well as later adaptations of this type have often been associated with angels, her winged Christian counterparts.[127] In fact, it has been a common trope to describe

[125] Theoph. AM 5920; with Holum, 1977: 163, for a correction of the date of this donation.

[126] Frolow, 1948: 78; Kent, 1960; Holum, 1977.

[127] Modern discussions include Vasiliev, 1950: 421-423; Bellinger & Berlincourt, 1962: 62-64; Fears, 1981b: 824; Martin, 2001; Peers, 2001: 26-27; Nikolau, 2004: 62-63.

the development as Victory *transforming* into an angel.[128] For some, this may merely have been a figure of speech, yet – also with the earlier cited reference of Augustine in mind – it is important to underline the nuance that the angel was more of a replacement than an actual transformed Victory. Probably the most notable distinction between the two was that Victory was always portrayed as female, whereas angels were in language and image presented as male.[129] Even on the miniature scale of a coin and in the increasingly abstract style of fifth-century coin design, Victory was still recognizably female (Fig. 1).[130] Following this distinction, the first time we witness an actual angel on imperial coins is on mid-sixth-century *solidi* of Justin I, when the figure surrounded by the legend **VICTORIA AVCCC** was depicted in male attire (Fig. 20).[131] In his hands were placed both the long cross and the cross-topped globe. This was a further step in the Christianization of imperial numismatic messages, as now the imperial victory that until that point had been placed in the hands of Victory was transmitted by one of the messengers of the Christian god. The source of the divine favour of victory in a Christian context was thereby finally revealed in imagery, thus translating Augustine's abovementioned words into iconography.

The introduction of the angel slowly saw to the gradual disappearance of Victory from imperial coins. She continued to appear on occasion in a number of familiar motifs until the early seventh century. On a now lost medallion of Justinian I, we find her, for example, preceding the riding emperor in an *adventus* scene, whereas Justin II still commonly appeared holding the Victoriola on the obverse of his coins.[132] In the early seventh century, however, both Victory and the angel disappeared from coins to make room for the cross on a pedestal, which was still surrounded by (a version of) the legend **VICTORIA AVCC**.[133] This complete erasure of Victory sealed her numismatic fate, yet her shadow

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[128] See *e.g.* Voirol, 1944: 18-19; Vasiliev, 1950: 422; Bellinger & Berlincourt, 1962: 62-64; Storch, 1971: 105; Fears, 1981b: 824; Nikolau, 2004: 62-63.

[129] For detailed studies on the early iconography of angels, see Stuhlfauth, 1897; Felis, 1912; Beck, 1936; Berefelt, 1968; Martin, 2001; Peers, 2001. These also show that in early Christian iconography, angels were wingless. As argued by *e.g.* Martin, 2001: 17-18 and Peers, 2001: 23-25, wings only became a standard iconographic feature of angels by the fifth centuries. This feature, allowing them to swiftly oscillate between divine and mundane spheres, was probably borrowed from winged Olympian messengers such as Victory and – although rendered differently – Mercury. For Christian iconographic borrowings from Greek and Roman art, also see n. 121.

[130] See *e.g.* the *solidi* of Zeno: *RIC* X Zeno 901.

[131] See *e.g.* *DOC* I Justin I 2a-i. The AVCCC ending followed from the continuation of Latin in an environment that was predominantly Greek-speaking, on which see *RIC* X, p. 60-62.

[132] *MIB* I Justinian I 1 (= *BMCIB* I Justinian, Frontispiece (p. 25)). For the many Victoriolae on Justin II's coins, see *MIB* II, pp. 21, 79-113. The persistence of Victory was not restricted to coins, see *e.g.* the Victoriola on the Barberini ivory: Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. OA 9063.

[133] The cross on a pedestal may well have been a reference to the Golgotha cross: *RIC* X, p. 55.

still loomed over Byzantine iconography. When the angel reappeared in later Byzantine coinage, he took over the roles formerly played by Victory.[134] Crowning the emperor and handing him objects to signify military glory, the Christian angel had by now truly become Victory's replacement.

Victory's continuing presence on the coins of Byzantine emperors is suggestive for the extent to which emperorship and Victory had become interwoven. This was undoubtedly facilitated by the various developments in the presence of Victory on imperial coins and the rationale underlying this presence. Until the late fourth century, these developments had hardly affected the appearance of Victory herself as she had only sporadically held other attributes than the palm, the wreath, or the trophy. With the cross and the cross-topped globe, however, Christianity finally brought a fundamental change to the iconography of Victory. These attributes symbolizing the glory of Christ gave Victory an appearance that was undeniably Christian. Otherwise, however, this was still the same draped female winged figure we saw on coins of the early Principate, still appearing in pretty much the same compositions as before. What is more, the addition of these attributes may have signalled that Victory had lost her cultic significance at this point, yet they only marginally affected Victory's significance from an ideological point of view. She still stood as a symbol of the continuous divine favour that made the emperor appearing on the obverse portrait victorious.

Conclusion

This article has focussed on the continuity and change in the appearance of the figure of Victory in Roman imperial coinage. It has for the first time examined these elements systematically by means of a long-term quantified assessment and iconographic analysis of the data provided by *OCRE*. This approach has allowed us to spot significant continuities as much as breaks in iconographic traditions. We have seen throughout that, overall, a strong sense of continuity first of all appeared from the general message conveyed by this winged personification of imperial glory. Imperial coins always presented a divinely favoured emperor whose victory allowed the empire to be peaceful, safe and prosperous. Equally consistent was the way Victory's role in a coin's message was visualized, with the frequent repetition of known compositions and the common motif of Victory extending her divine favour to the obverse portrait.

Changes can especially be traced through a meticulous examination of details in her iconography and surroundings. As already appeared from an initial brief analysis of the legends around images of Victory, these changes basically came down to processes of personalization and Christianization. Victory's favour had been integral to emperorship from the very beginning of the Principate, yet from

[134] For examples, see Nicolau, 2004: 63.

the late second century onwards Victory tended to be associated more narrowly with the emperor's name and feats. Part of this personalization of Victory was an increasing tendency to regard Victory as the ever-present companion – or guardian – of the emperor, rather than as the neutral personification of out-come whom she had been originally. As a result, she was increasingly presented as favouring the emperor even before he fought his battles, while also securing military fortunes for his kin.

The intensifying association between the emperor and Victory made the latter ever more a metaphorical extension of emperorship. This had made her into an indispensable figure by the early fourth century, thus facilitating her incorporation in the standardized repertoires of the Christian emperors. Until that point changes to Victory's iconography had been slight alterations that only marginally affected the overall message. A coin's user may therefore have easily missed such nuances to only make an association between the emperor and Victory in the most general sense. From the late fourth century, however, changes to Victory's iconography became more conspicuous, as her traditional attributes came to be replaced by undisputed Christian elements, such as the cross and the cross-topped globe. Nevertheless, even with these Christian attributes, she was still the recognizable winged figure who had been used as an emblem of imperial power since the beginning of the Principate, until she was eventually replaced by a Christian angel.

Motifs that had already integrated the emperor's bond with Victory in long-standing iconographic traditions in the early empire are still recognizable even in Christian repertoires. This is telling for how little the compositions in which Victory featured actually changed over time, and may even be suggestive of a certain overall conservatism in Roman coin typology. The benefit of such conservatism to imperial coins was twofold. On the one hand, it gave to imperial messages a familiarity that strengthened their impact, while on the other hand, it served a coin's function as an object of value that needed recognizability for the sake of signalling it as trustworthy currency. Nevertheless, the conservatism was of a flexible kind rather than a rigid one. Without losing her recognizability, subtle alterations to Victory's iconography adapted her to new political and cultural realities. As such, Victory would remain the omnipresent emblematic incarnation of imperial glory for centuries.

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Biographical note

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Photo credits

Fig. 1 – *Solidus* of Zeno, 476-491 (*RIC* X Zeno (East) 910). ANS 1966.181.4. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society

Fig. 2 – *Aureus* of Divus Vespasian, struck under his son Titus in 79 (*RIC* II.1² Titus *363*). ANS 1947.2.429. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Fig. 3 – *Sestertius* of Domitian, 86 (*RIC* II.1² Domitian 474). *ANS* 1944.100.42591. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Fig. 4 – *Solidus* of Theodosius II, 408-420 (*RIC* X Theodosius II (East) 355). *ANS* 1948. 19.1928. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Fig. 5 – *Antoninianus* of Carinus, struck under his father Carus in 283-284 (*RIC* V Carus 463). *ANS* 1944.100.36642. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Fig. 6 – Æ3 of Arcadius, 395-401 (*RIC* X Arcadius 66). ANS 1964.187.1. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Fig. 7 – *Solidus* of Constantine I, 330 (*RIC* VII *Constantinople* 46). ANS 1967.153.48. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Fig. 8 – *Antoninianus* of Aemilian, 253 (*RIC* IV Aemilian 21). ANS 1944.100.27140. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Fig. 9 – *Tremissis* of Theodosius I, 383-388 (*RIC* IX *Constantinople* 75B). ANS 1944.100. 25691. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Fig. 10 – *Victoriatus*, 211-210 *BCE* (*RRC* 102/1). ANS 1896.7.1. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Fig. 11 – *Quinarius* aureus of Claudius, 41-42 (*RIC* I² Claudius 18). Images courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Fig. 12 – *Sestertius* of Septimius Severus, 202-210 (*RIC* IV Septimius Severus 818). ANS 1954.203.232. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Fig. 13 – *Denarius* of Caracalla, 213-217 (*RIC* IV Caracalla 314A). ANS 1985.140.160. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Fig. 14 – *Solidus* of Constans, 340-350 (*RIC* VIII *Siscia* 132). ANS 1969.1773.1. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Fig. 15 – *Solidus* of Arcadius, 402-403 (*RIC* X Arcadius 22). ANS 1968.131.441. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.)

Fig. 16 – Æ2 of Constans, 348-350 (*RIC* VIII *Rome* 109). ANS 1944.100.20794. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Fig. 17 – *Solidus* struck for Aelia Flaccilla, 378-383 (*RIC* IX *Constantinople* 48). ANS 1977. 158.929. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Fig. 18 – *Solidus* of Theodosius II, 420-422 (*RIC* X Theodosius II (East) 219). ANS 1944. 100.54820. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Fig. 19 – *Solidus* of Constantine I, 335-336 (*RIC* VII *Antioch* 96). ANS 1967.153.47. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Fig. 20 – *Solidus* of Justin I, 519-527 (*DOC* I Justin I 2c). ANS 1966.196.3. Images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Abbreviations

BMCIB = W. Wroth (1908), *Catalogue of the imperial Byzantine coins in the British Museum* (London).

DOC = A.R. Bellinger (1966), *Catalogue of the Byzantine coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection. Volume I: Anastasius to Maurice, 491-602* (Washington, D.C.).

MIB = W. Hahn & M.A. Metlich (2000-2009), *Money of the Incipient Byzantine Empire* (Vienna).

RIC = *Roman Imperial Coinage*, vols. I-X, London; digitized version available on https://numismatics.org/ocre/.

RRC = M. Crawford (1974), *The Roman Republican Coinage*, Cambridge; digitized version available on https://numismatics.org/crro/.

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