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Constantinian Coin Motifs in Ancient Literary Sources

by

Charles Odahl
Boise State University

Classical numismatists have long assumed that Roman emperors used the imperial coinage as a medium of propaganda.¹ The obverses advertised the emperor's visages and titles, while the frequently changed reverses announced military victories, peace and prosperity, imperial beneficence and building programs, or religious beliefs, etc. Often beautifully designed, stamped with a much higher and more vivid relief than modern coins, and spread throughout the empire, Roman coins and medallions certainly seem to have been minted and disseminated with the intention that the imperial populace would note the figures and read the inscriptions thereon — not merely exchange them in economic transactions. As Michael Grant has said, "Roman coinage . . . was intended to be looked at, and was looked at."²

Yet, numismatists admit that this contention is based mainly on the internal evidence of the coins, since ancient writers showed scant interest in economic matters, and said "lamentably little about coinage."³ Though this is largely true, corroboratory data is not entirely lacking on this issue. A few pieces of relevant literary evidence are available to support the numismatists' assumption that the imperial coinage was employed as a propaganda medium and its motifs and messages were noted by the imperial populace. Some of this evidence is found in late antique literary sources chronicling the reign and policies of Rome's first Christian emperor, Constantine the Great (306–337 A.D.).⁴

The primary, and more important, source is Eusebius of Caesarea (Ca. 260–339).⁵ A contemporary of Constantine, he was the metropolitan bishop of Roman Palestine, a learned theologian active in the Christological debates surrounding the great ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325), and a prolific writer, especially famous for his *Historia Ecclesiastica* tracing Christianity's rise from Apostolic times to Constantine's day. His literary talents were recognized by Constantine who chose Eusebius as the official panegyrist for his Vicennalia and Tricennalia celebrations (325 & 336),⁶ and also commissioned the bishop

to oversee the production of particularly resplendent Bibles for the new Christian capital city of Constantinople.⁷ Upon Constantine's death, Eusebius in turn honored the emperor with a eulogistic biography, the *Vita Constantini*.⁸ Unlike the biographies and histories of many earlier emperors which were composed by authors removed in time from their subjects,⁹ this one was written by a personal acquaintance of the emperor portrayed, and an important participant in the events described – and for the issue at hand, by an author who viewed and handled the coins minted by the emperor he eulogized. It is here in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* that literary references to Constantinian coin motifs may be found. However, since the *Vita* was primarily devoted to the religious acts of the emperor,¹⁰ one need not be surprised that the coin types Eusebius chose to mention were either related to, or interpreted in the light of, Constantine's Christian confession.

In a section of the *Vita* where Eusebius was describing the emperor's piety, devotion to prayer and Sunday worship, he went on to write:

"How deeply his soul was impressed by the power of divine faith may be understood from the circumstance that *he directed his likeness to be stamped on the golden coin of the empire with the eyes uplifted as in the posture of prayer to God; and this money became current throughout the Roman world*. His portrait also at full length was placed over the entrance gates of the palaces in some cities, the eyes upraised to heaven, and the hands outspread as if in prayer."¹¹

The numismatic reference here is to the beautiful series of gold solidi and medallions which depicted the emperor wearing a diadem and gazing heavenwards in the ancient manner of prayer. This motif was introduced in the year 324 when Constantine defeated the last pagan emperor in the east, Licinius, and became the sole Augustus and Christian sovereign of the whole empire. It appeared on the gold coinage of the major imperial mints in conjunction with the emperor's travels up through the end of the reign in the year 337. Trier, Rome, Ticinum, Siscia, Sirmium, Thessalonica, Constantinople and Nicomedia all produced this type periodically; and most of these mints as well as a few others used the motif occasionally on silver and bronze coins.¹² Particularly rich and regular issues of the gold coinage Eusebius mentions were produced at Nicomedia and Constantinople. Constantine's favored residences and capitals during the later part of his reign.¹³

Though the celestial gaze motif had antecedents in the "portraits of the divinely inspired Hellenistic ruler,"¹⁴ neither Constantine nor Eusebius left any doubt that it was to the Christian God that the imperial eyes were upraised in

prayer. In edicts, laws, monetary grants and building programs, the emperor was propagating the Christian religion while openly castigating the "errors" of pagan polytheism;¹⁵ and in the *Vita* Eusebius recorded as many of his Christian ruler's pious actions as he could. The widespread prayer pose coins – and their palace painting prototypes – seemed to be a witness to the emperor's Christian confession which the eulogizing bishop felt were worthy of note.

Whatever their religious import, they certainly were noteworthy. The obverses carried the upward looking prayer pose, with or without imperial nomenclature, while the reverses varied with motifs and inscriptions celebrating the emperor's valor, glory or victories. For example, a large medallion specifying men from Siscia, 326–27, presented the diademed, heavenward gazing emperor, surrounded by the inscription "Constantine the Augustus" on the obverse. He was depicted in helmet and military dress, holding a spear and military trophy, and treading over a captive with the inscription "The Valor of Our Lord Constantine the Augustus" on the reverse (Figure 1a-b).¹⁶



Figure 1a-b: Siscia mint gold medallion, 326–27, with obverse of Constantine's prayer pose, and reverse of military VIRTUS (Dumbarton Oaks Museum, Georgetown)

Another, smaller type from Nicomedia, 328–29, showed the prayer pose without an inscription on the obverse. The emperor was portrayed in armor but without helmet, holding a victory on globe and a spear in either hand, while stepping on one captive in front and apparently spearing another behind him on the reverse. The inscription around the latter motif translates as "The Glory of Constantine the Augustus" (Figure 2a-b).¹⁷

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Figure 2a-b: Nicomedia mint gold medallion, 328-29, with obverse of Constantine's prayer pose, and reverse of military GLORIA (Dumbarton Oaks Museum, Georgetown)

Other coins later in the reign emphasized "The Victory of Constantine the Augustus."¹⁸

Presumably the military valor and victories advertised on the reverses of these coinages were the results of the prayers offered to, and the inspiration provided from the celestial Deity whom Constantine was depicted as gazing toward on the obverses. Eusebius would have thought so since he reported in the *Vita* that the emperor pitched a prayer tent at battle sites in which he and accompanying clergy could implore God for divine guidance and assistance in war.¹⁹ In the very section in which he described the prayer pose coins, Eusebius also related that the emperor encouraged Christian worship in the army and taught his soldiers how to pray to the Divinity.²⁰ The new motif on coins and medallions seemed to advertise Constantine in the very act of prayer, and, as Jocelyn Toynbee has said, "symbolize the heavenward aspirations of Rome's first Christian Emperor."²¹

Eusebius' second explicit reference to coinage occurs in the part of the *Vita Constantini* devoted to Helena, the emperor's mother. After describing her pilgrimage to Palestine and church building at the holy sites therein, her pious actions and generosity to the churches and populace along her route through the east (Ca. 327-28), and her subsequent death and burial (329),²² he wrote thus of the honors Constantine had bestowed upon her:

"He rendered her through his influence so devout a worshiper of God (though she had not previously been such), that she seemed to have been instructed from the first by the Savior of mankind. And besides this, he had honored her so fully with imperial dignities, that in every province, and in

the very ranks of the soldiery, she was spoken of under the titles of *Augusta* and *empress*, and her likeness was impressed on golden coins. He had even granted her authority over the imperial treasures, to use and dispense them according to her own will and discretion in every case."²³

The gold coinage mentioned here advertised the elevation of Helena to the rank of *Augusta*. Like Constantine's prayer pose coinage, it was initiated in 324, but was only issued from the four imperial mints of Ticinum, Sirmium, Thessalonica, and Nicomedia in single or double solidi sizes for a year or two.²⁴ The obverse carried a bust of Helena with diadem and necklace, and the inscription "Flavia Helena Augusta." The reverse portrayed the personification of *Securitas*, lowering a branch with one hand and raising her robe with the other, and was inscribed "The Security of the Commonwealth" (Figure 3a-b).



Figure 3a-b: Sirmium mint gold coin, 324-25, with obverse of Helena's bust, and reverse of *SECURITAS* (British Museum, London)

The same type was reproduced on the aes folles or bronze coins of all the active mints of the empire at this time, and was issued from many of them until Helena's death.²⁵ The bronze version was thus more widespread in circulation and more commonly in use among the imperial population (Figure 4a-b).

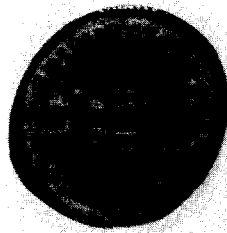
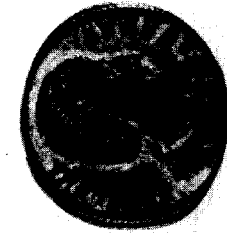


Figure 4a-b: Antioch mint bronze coin, 328-29, with obverse of Helena's bust, and reverse of *SECURITAS* (Author's collection)



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Figure 3a-b: Sirmium mint gold coin, 324-25, with obverse of Helena's bust, and reverse of SECURITAS (British Museum, London)

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Patrick Bruun has noted that it was "typical of the time that the figures on the reverses may be ordinary personifications of the ideas expressed in the legends, but that they should more likely be identified with the imperial personages of the obverses."²⁶ The Security motif turned out to be a most appropriate one for identification with Helena. Her fervent prayers in churches, building projects at holy sites, and generous largesses to the clergy and people of the east were offered in behalf of the security of the Constantinian dynasty.²⁷ Her pious conduct on pilgrimage advertised the imperial court's connections with the Christian God, and the hopes it had for the security of the realm under the protection of that Divinity.²⁸

Eusebius and other eastern bishops undoubtedly received much money from the imperial treasury during these years. Imperial letters instructing the bishops to demand what they needed from the prefects and governors for church building were inserted by Eusebius in the *Vita Constantini*.²⁹ Receipt and use of imperial monies in heretofore unknown amounts certainly helped the imperial coinage catch the eyes of the Christian clergy. Eusebius' references to the coin types of Constantine and Helena here described seem to indicate as much.

The third explicit reference to coin types by Eusebius concerned the posthumous coinage minted to commemorate Constantine's death. After describing the emperor's burial in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, and the succession to the throne by his three Christian sons,³⁰ Eusebius reported:

*A coinage was also struck which bore the following device. On one side appeared the figure of our blessed prince, with the head closely veiled; the reverse exhibited him sitting as a charioteer, drawn by four horses, with a hand stretched downward from above to receive him up to heaven.*³¹

The reference here is to the bronze consecration coins, Ca. 337-40, issued by the sons of Constantine from two western and six eastern mints (Figure 5a-b).³²

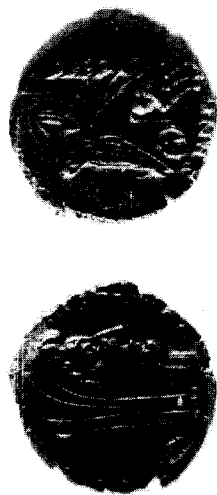


Figure 5a-b: Nicomedia mint bronze coin, 337, with obverse of veiled Constantine, and reverse of ascending chariot (Author's collection)

Though the obverse with its motif of the veiled emperor and with the title *DIVUS* in the legend echoed pagan antecedents,³³ the reverse seemed biblically inspired. In the motif of the imperial charioteer beckoned heavenward by a celestial hand, Mattingly and Jacob see a symbolic representation of God and "some reminiscence of the ascent of Elijah."³⁴ The biblical scholar Eusebius would have appreciated such a graphic analogy since he himself was wont to liken Constantine to the Old Testament figure of Moses.³⁵ As the latter had been chosen by God to lead the Hebrews out of Egyptian bondage and to the promised land of Canaan, so Constantine was God's agent to lead the Christians out of the Roman persecutions and to a new age of blessings in a Christianized empire. Eusebius saw Constantine as the prophet of a new world order,³⁶ and presented his burial between the cenotaphs of the Apostles and his ascending chariot consecration coins as symbolic of his special position and heavenly reward in the kingdom of God.

A secondary, and less important, source who mentioned Constantinian coinage is Sozomenus (Ca. 375-450).³⁷ A third generation Christian from Palestine, he settled in Constantinople mid way through the reign of the eastern Christian emperor Theodosius II (408-50). There in Constantine's beautiful — and much expanded — Christian capital of the east, he worked as a lawyer and *scholastikos* for nearly a quarter century. In his later years he took up the Eusebian tradition of Christian historiography and wrote a nine book *Historia Ecclesiastica* continuing Eusebius' "glorious history of the Christian Empire"³⁸ from Constantine's conversion a century earlier down to his own time. The first two books covered Constantine's reign, and therein is found the numismatic reference.

In a passage on the emperor's generous benefactions to the Church, and his pious practices in the faith, he wrote:

He honored the Lord's day, because on it Christ arose from the dead, and the day above mentioned (Good Friday), because on it he was crucified. *He regarded the cross with peculiar reverence, on account both of the power which it conveyed to him in the battles against his enemies, and also of the divine manner in which the symbol had appeared to him.* He took away by law the crucifixion customary among the Romans from the usage of the courts. *He commanded that this divine symbol should always be inscribed and stamped whenever coins and images should be struck,* and his images, which exist in this very form, still testify to this order.³⁹

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Figure 5a-b: Nicomedia mint bronze coin, 337, with obverse of veiled Constantine, and reverse of ascending chariot (Author's collection)

Though the obverse with its motif of the veiled emperor and with the title *PIVS* in the legend echoed pagan antecedents,³³ the reverse seemed biblically inspired. In the motif of the imperial charioteer beckoned heavenward by a celestial hand, Mattingly and Jacob see a symbolic representation of God and "some reminiscence of the ascent of Elijah."³⁴ The biblical scholar Eusebius would have appreciated such a graphic analogy since he himself was wont to liken Constantine to the Old Testament figure of Moses.³⁵ As the latter had been chosen by God to lead the Hebrews out of Egyptian bondage and to the promised land of Canaan, so Constantine was God's agent to lead the Christians out of the Roman persecutions and to a new age of blessings in a Christianized empire. Eusebius saw Constantine as the prophet of a new world order,³⁶ and presented his burial between the cenotaphs of the Apostles and his ascending chariot consecration coins as symbolic of his special position and heavenly reward in the kingdom of God.

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rather spoke only of a general practice of Constantine to use Christian symbols on his coins. Eusebius neglected the latter point, but had emphasized Constantine's veneration for the cross and name of Christ, and had reported how he impressed these "salutary signs" on his helmet,⁴⁰ on his soldiers' shields⁴¹ and standards,⁴² and also employed them in statuary and painting.⁴³ Though Constantinian war implements and art objects so marked are no longer extant, coins of the era exhibiting such symbols do still exist.⁴⁴

The first use of such symbols occurred on Constantine's Decennalia in 315 when he struck some silver medallions at Ticinum as luxury donatives for selected citizens of note in his realm. The obverse depicted the emperor in a high crested war helmet, holding a horse in one hand and a shield and scepter in the other. At the top front of the helm was a small badge marked with a * monogram—the first two letters of Christ in Greek intersected to make the Christogram. Over the shield was an implement which many scholars identify as a Christian cross scepter with a globe atop it, representing the emperor's new political awareness that he ruled as an agent for Christ on earth. The inscription read "The Emperor Constantine the Pious and Happy Augustus" (Figure 6). The reverse showed the emperor addressing his troops under the inscription "The Safety of the Commonwealth."⁴⁵



Figure 6: Ticinum mint silver medallion, 315, with obverse of Constantine wearing helmet with chi-rho badge and holding globular cross scepter above shield (Staatliche Münzsammlung, Munich)

The obverse motif of these silver medallions commemorated Constantine's miraculous conversion under the vision of the cross, and his victory behind Christian signs in the contest for control of Rome and the western empire with the usurper Maxentius three years earlier (312).⁴⁶ Here was the emperor's numismatic testimony that he had won the Battle of the Mulvian Bridge and held power on earth through the aid of Christ, his new patron Deity. A small and basically private issue, this medallion was a cautious and limited use of the coinage for pro-Christian propaganda purposes.

Christian mint officials and engravers, however, got the message and began to employ Christian crosses and monograms as control marks and decorative embellishments on the regular bronze coins of the realm thereafter. Greek or tau crosses and Christograms so used appeared in the next decade from the western mints under Constantine's control at Trier, Ticinum, Rome, Aquileia, Siscia and Thessalonica.⁴⁷ A typical example from Ticinum, 316, displays a Greek cross (✕) as a mark of issue in the left reverse field of "The Unconquered Sun Our Companion" type (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Ticinum mint bronze coin, 316, with reverse of SOL INVICTUS and Greek cross (Author's collection)

The sun god, Sol, and the other pagan deities were fast disappearing from the coins of Constantine, and being replaced gradually by neutral, or Christian motifs and symbols. This Ticinum coin reveals the transition stage when the old and the new order co-existed while a Christian emperor was ruling a still predominantly pagan empire.

The passing of this transition stage was greatly accelerated when Constantine defeated his pagan co-emperor of the east, Licinius, in a war with frankly religious overtones for control of the whole empire in 324.⁴⁸ The prayer pose coins described above helped propagate the new order of a Christian sovereign governing a Christian empire with inspiration from the Christian Deity. Yet a motif that even more explicitly symbolized the triumph of Christianity over paganism appeared on bronze coins of the newly rising Christian capital city of Constantinople in the aftermath of Constantine's victorious eastern campaign. They were issued between 326–28, with the obverse portraying the imperial profile and titles as usual. The reverse, however, showed Constantine's Christian war standard, the *labarum*, piercing a fallen and wriggling serpent—biblical apocalyptic imagery indicating the defeat of the devil and his earthly agents, and inspiring Christian hopes for an age of blessing and Christ's millennial kingdom (Figure 8).⁴⁹

Eusebius had seen the artistic prototype for this coin motif in a painting posted over the imperial palace portico, and he described it at length in the *Vita Constantini*, marvelling at "the intellectual greatness of the emperor" in commissioning a motif that echoed what the scriptures had foretold concerning the defeat of the devil and his agents.⁵⁰

rather spoke only of a general practice of Constantine to use Christian symbols on his coins. Eusebius neglected the latter point, but had emphasized Constantine's veneration for the cross and name of Christ, and had reported how he impressed these "salutary signs" on his helmet,⁴⁰ on his soldiers' shields⁴¹ and standards,⁴² and also employed them in statuary and painting.⁴³ Though Constantinian war implements and art objects so marked are no longer extant, coins of the era exhibiting such symbols do still exist.⁴⁴

The first use of such symbols occurred on Constantine's Decennalia in 315 when he struck some silver medallions at Ticinum as luxury donatives for selected citizens of note in his realm. The obverse depicted the emperor in a high crested war helmet, holding a horse in one hand and a shield and scepter in the other. At the top front of the helm was a small badge marked with a $\times$ monogram — the first two letters of Christ in Greek intersected to make the Christogram. Over the shield was an implement which many scholars identify as a Christian cross scepter with a globe atop it, representing the emperor's new political awareness that he ruled as an agent for Christ on earth. The inscription read "The Emperor Constantine the Pious and Happy Augustus" (Figure 6). The reverse showed the emperor addressing his troops under the inscription "The Safety of the Commonwealth."⁴⁵



Figure 6: Ticinum mint silver medallion, 315, with obverse of Constantine wearing helmet with chi-rho badge and holding globular cross scepter above shield (Staatliche Münzsammlung, Munich)

The obverse motif of these silver medallions commemorated Constantine's miraculous conversion under the vision of the cross, and his victory behind Christian signs in the contest for control of Rome and the western empire with the usurper Maxentius three years earlier (312).⁴⁶ Here was the emperor's numismatic testimony that he had won the Battle of the Mulvian Bridge and held power on earth through the aid of Christ, his new patron Deity. A small and basically private issue, this medallion was a cautious and limited use of the coinage for pro-Christian propaganda purposes.

Christian mint officials and engravers, however, got the message and began to employ Christian crosses and monograms as control marks and decorative embellishments on the regular bronze coins of the realm thereafter. Greek or tau crosses and Christograms so used appeared in the next decade from the western mints under Constantine's control at Trier, Ticinum, Rome, Aquileia, Siscia and Thessalonica.⁴⁷ A typical example from Ticinum, 316, displays a Greek cross ($\times$) as a mark of issue in the left reverse field of "The Unconquered Sun Our Companion" type (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Ticinum mint bronze coin, 316, with reverse of SOL INVICTUS and Greek cross (Author's collection)

The sun god, Sol, and the other pagan deities were fast disappearing from the coins of Constantine, and being replaced gradually by neutral, or Christian motifs and symbols. This Ticinum coin reveals the transition stage when the old and the new order co-existed while a Christian emperor was ruling a still predominantly pagan empire.

The passing of this transition stage was greatly accelerated when Constantine defeated his pagan co-emperor of the east, Licinius, in a war with frankly religious overtones for control of the whole empire in 324.⁴⁸ The prayer pose coins described above helped propagate the new order of a Christian sovereign governing a Christian empire with inspiration from the Christian Deity. Yet a motif that even more explicitly symbolized the triumph of Christianity over paganism appeared on bronze coins of the newly rising Christian capital city of Constantinople in the aftermath of Constantine's victorious eastern campaign. They were issued between 326–28, with the obverse portraying the imperial profile and titles as usual. The reverse, however, showed Constantine's Christian war standard, the *labarum*, piercing a fallen and wriggling serpent — biblical apocalyptic imagery indicating the defeat of the devil and his earthly agents, and inspiring Christian hopes for an age of blessing and Christ's millennial kingdom (Figure 8).⁴⁹

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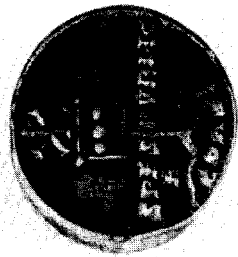


Figure 8: Constantinople mint bronze coin, 326–28, with reverse of SPES PUBLICA showing Constantine's Christogrammed *labarum* piercing a wriggling serpent (British Museum, London)

The triumphant war standard depicted on the coins and palace painting piercing the "dragon and crooked serpent" was the one that Constantine had adopted at his conversion in 312. He had used it at the head of his army when defeating Maxentius for control of the west in 312, and against Licinius in the conquest of the east in 324. Eusebius had seen it on several occasions and described it in the *Vita*,⁵¹ as did Sozomenus later in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*.⁵² It combined the two Christian symbols with which Constantine believed he could tap into the power of the Christian God for aid in times of need—the cross and name of Christ.⁵³ The standard was composed of an ornate spear overlaid by a crossbar and topped by an enwreathed Christogram. Hanging from the crossbar was usually a banner with portraits of the emperor and his sons. Neither the original standard, nor paintings and sculptures of it, have survived the ravages of time. But the Constantinopolitan coin motif does preserve its image, and corroborates the literary testimonies regarding it.

A simplified version of the *labarum*—merely a pole with a monogrammed banner—came into common use in the armies. It appeared on silver medallions of Rome in 326, and on bronze coins of Arles in 336.⁵⁴ Various forms of the cross and Christogram employed as minting control marks also continued to appear occasionally in the later part of the reign as they had earlier on.⁵⁵ Such reflections of the emperor's pro-Christian policies only reached a limited audience since they were only issued from a few mints for a short duration. It is no wonder that contemporary literary sources failed to mention them.

Sozomenus' reference to the cross on coins and Eusebius' testimonies to Constantine's veneration of it may be reflected in a more widespread and longer lasting coin motif. On 11 May 330 Constantinople was consecrated as the emperor's Christian capital. For five to seven years thereafter all the active mints of the empire issued bronze coins with an obverse carrying the inscription "Constantinople" and portraying a helmeted bust of the city's personification with a cross scepter over her shoulder. The reverse, without inscription, showed the figure of victory standing on a prow and holding a spear and shield.⁵⁶

Some of the specimens only carry a transverse bar at the top of the scepter (Figure 9a-b); but others have a globe above the crossbar (Figure 10a-b).

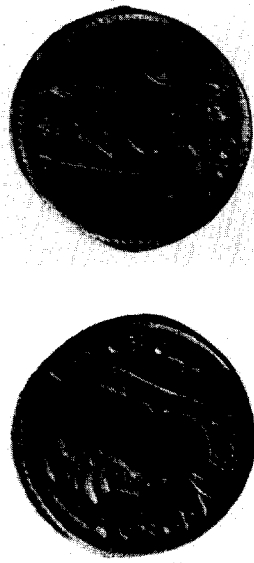


Figure 9a-b: Constantinople mint bronze coin, 330–33, with obverse of CONSTANTINOPOLIS personification holding cross scepter, and reverse of victory on prow (British Museum, London)



Figure 10a-b: Heraclea mint bronze coin, 330–33, with obverse of CONSTANTINOPOLIS personification holding globular cross scepter, and reverse of victory on prow (Author's collection)

The latter are similar in shape to the globular scepter seen many years earlier on the silver medallions of Ticinum. As the rare Ticinese medallions witnessed quietly in court circles to the emperor's personal change in religious convictions, so these common bronze coins announced loudly throughout the realm Constantine's public policy of Christianizing the empire as a whole.⁵⁷ If Sozomenus actually saw any Constantinian coins with crosses on them when he was writing a century later in Constantinople, this late and common type was most probably the one he was referring to in his *Church History*.

This case study of Constantinian coin motifs in ancient literary sources would seem to support the assumptions of numismatists that Roman coinage was a propaganda medium employed by the emperors to inform the populace of changes in imperial policy, and that the coins were noticed by the people to whom they were issued. At least Eusebius and Sozomenus noted and recorded the coins and medallions of Constantine which they felt illustrated his change



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in religious orientation. The prayer pose, Helena and ascending chariot motifs mentioned by Eusebius, and the use of Christian symbols suggested by him and recorded by Sozomenus, reveals that the coinage was an effective medium of propaganda that was appreciated by perceptive individuals.

As the coinage therefore often represented or reflected changes in the political, military, social and religious policies of the emperors, historians attempting to chart and analyze such changes would be wise to take the numismatic evidence into consideration.*

NOTES

1. Harold Mattingly, *Roman Coins* (London: Spink & Son, 1977), pp. 140–41, and 231; Michael Grant, *Roman History from Coins* (Cambridge: University Press, 1968), pp. 11–17; and Patrick M. Bruun, *Roman Imperial Coinage, Vol. VII: Constantine to Licinius* (London: Spink & Son, 1966), pp. 46 ff.
2. *Roman History from Coins*, p. 13.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 12; Cf. p. 58.
4. For Constantine, see: Andrew Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome*, Tr. H. Mattingly (Oxford: University Press, 1969), and Ramsay MacMullen, *Constantine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). The seminal study on Constantian coinage was Jules Maurice, *Numismatique Constantinienne*, 3 Vols. (Paris: Leroux, 1908–12), now largely superseded by Bruun, *Roman Imperial Coinage, Vol. VII* (note 1 above – hereafter abbreviated as *RIC, VII*).
5. For Eusebius, see: F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *Eusebius Pamphili: A Study of the Man and His Writings* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1933); and Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981).
6. Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* III, 15, & IV. 46. Cf. Kenneth M. Setton, *Christian Attitude Towards the Emperor in the Fourth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941); and H. A. Drake, *In Praise of Constantine: A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius' Tricennial Orations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).
7. Euseb., *Vita Const* IV. 34–37. The *Codex Sinaiticus* in the British Museum may be one of these imperially commissioned Bibles.
8. The Greek text used here is in *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller*, Eusebius Werke, Bd. 1 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1975); and the English translation is in the *Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd Series, Vol. I: Eusebius (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1971 – reprint of 19th century original).
9. E.g., Suetonius, Tacitus and the authors of the *Historia Augusta*.
10. Euseb., *Vita Const* I. 11.
11. *Ibid.*, IV. 15 (Italics mine). The Greek word Eusebius here and elsewhere used for coin(s) was *nomisma*, whence cometh our modern derivative “numismatics.”
12. Maurice, *Numis. Const.*, I, pp. cxxvii, clxvi, clxxii, & II, pp. lxxi, & lxxiv; M. R. Alföldi, *Die constantinische Goldprägung* (Mainz, 1963), p. 128, n. 5; & Bruun, *RIC, VII*, p. 44, & *passim*.
13. Bruun, *RIC, VII*, pp. 562–635, & Chronology chart, pp. 76–78.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 33ff. Cf. J. M. C. Toynbee, *Roman Medallions*. Numismatic Studies, No. 5 (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1944), p. 175; and H. P. L'Orange, *Apotheosis in Ancient Portraiture* (Oslo: Instituttet for sammenlignende kulturforskning, serie B xlv, 1947), pp. 93–94.
15. E.g., “Constantine's Edict to the People of the Provinces Concerning the Error of Polytheism” in Euseb., *Vita Const* II. 48–60.
16. Bruun, *RIC, VII*, Siscia # 108, p. 451; Alfred R. Bellinger, “Roman and Byzantine Medallions in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), # 7, pp. 132–33.
17. Bruun, *RIC, VII*, Nicomedia # 151, p. 624; Bellinger, “Roman & Byzantine Medallions,” *DO Papers* 12, # 11, p. 134.
18. Bruun, *RIC, VII*, Nicomedia # 171, 175–177, pp. 629–631.
19. *Vita Const* II. 12, & IV. 56.
20. *Ibid.*, IV. 18–21.
21. *Roman Medallions*, p. 175.
22. *Vita Const* III. 41–47.
23. *Ibid.*, III. 47 (Italics mine).
24. Bruun, *RIC, VII*, lists Ticinum for 324–25, Sirmium for 324–25, Thessalonica for 324 and 326, and Nicomedia for 324–325.
25. There were fifteen active mints extending from London to Alexandria at this time. See Bruun, *RIC, VII, passim*; and P. V. Hill, J. P. C. Kent, & R. A. G. Carson, *Late Roman Bronze Coinage, A.D. 324–498* (London: Spink & Son, 1972), *passim*.
26. *RIC, VII*, p. 53. For another famous contemporary portrait of Helena in ancient art, see: M. R. Alföldi, “Helena nobilissima femina: Zur Deutung der Trierer Deckengemälde,” *Jahrbuch für Numismatische und Geldgeschichte* (1959–60), pp. 79–90.
27. See especially: Euseb., *Vita Const* III. 42.
28. Cf. the *Spes Publica* coins of the Constantinople mint, Ca. 326–28 (Figure 8 below). The ostentatious pilgrimage was all the more necessary because of recent domestic turmoil in the imperial family that included the executions of a son and the wife of Constantine. E. D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire, A.D. 312–460* (Oxford: University Press, 1982), pp. 32ff, and Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, p. 221, see Helena's pilgrimage as both a penance for, and publicity to detract attention from, the turmoil of 326.
29. *Vita Const* II. 46, & III. 30–32.
30. *Ibid.*, IV. 70–72.
31. *Ibid.*, IV. 73 (Italics mine).
32. Hill, Kent, & Carson, *LRBC*, p. 35, & *passim*, list the mints of Trier and Lyons; and Heraclea, Constantinople, Nicomedia, Cyzicus, Antioch, and Alexandria for this type of coin motif.
33. Mattingly, *Roman Coins*, p. 240, sees “a new shade of meaning” in the *Divus* legend.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 240, and Kenneth A. Jacob, *Coins and Christianity* (London: Seaby, 1959), p. 25; cf. Maurice, *Numis. Const.*, I, clxxvi, and L. Koep, “Die Konsekrationsmünzen Kaiser Konstantins und ihre religionspolitische Bedeutung,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, I (1958), pp. 94–104.
35. Especially in Book I of the *Vita Constantini*.
36. W. Telfer, “The Author's Purpose in the *Vita Constantini*,” *Studia Patristica*, I, Texte und Untersuchungen, LXIII (1957), pp. 157–67; and Alföldi, *Conversion of Constantine*, pp. 34–35.
37. For Sozomenus, see: Glen F. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories: Eusebius, Sozomen, Theodoret, & Evagrius*. Theologie Historique, 46 (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1977), pp. 192–200. The Greek text used here is in J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae Graecae*, Vol. 67 (Turnholt, Belgium: Typographi Brepols, n.d.); and the English translation is in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd Series, Vol. II: Socrates, Sozomenus (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1973 – reprint of 19th century original).

38. Chesnut, *First Christian Histories*, p. 196.
39. *Historia Ecclesiastica* I. 8 (Italics mine).
40. *Vita Const* I. 31, & III. 2.
41. *Ibid.*, IV. 21. Cf. Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 44 – Latin text in the *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, Vol. 27 (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1965), and English translation in the *Ante Nicene Fathers*, Vol. VII (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1970 – reprint of 19th century original).
42. *Vita Const* I. 31–32; II. 3–9, & 16; III. 1; & IV. 21.
43. *Ibid.*, I. 40; & III. 3. Cf. Euseb., *Historia Ecclesiastica* IX. 9.
44. For general studies on Constantinian coins with Christian symbolism, see: Maurice, *Numis. Const.*, II, pp. xii–cix, and especially the Tableau Résumé Des Signes Et Symboles Chrétiens, II, p. ex; Guido Bruck, “Die Verwendung christlicher Symbole auf Münzen von Constantin I. bis Magnentius,” *Numismatische Zeitschrift*, LXXVI (1955), pp. 26–32; Patrick Bruun, “The Christian Signs on the Coins of Constantine,” *Arctos*, Series 2, Vol. 3 (1962), pp. 5–35; Pierre M. Bastien, “Le chrisme dans la numismatique de la dynastie Constantinienne,” *Collectionneurs et collections numismatiques* (Paris: Hôtel de la monnaie, 1968), pp. 111–119; and Charles Odahl, “Christian Symbols in Military Motifs on Constantine’s Coinage,” *SAN*, XIII, 4 (1983), pp. 64–72.
45. Bruun, “Christian Signs,” pp. 9, 17–18, & 23–24; Bastien, “Chrisme,” pp. 112–113; Odahl, “Christian Symbols in Military Motifs,” pp. 67–68; Toynbee, *Roman Medallions*, pp. 210–211; A. Alföldi, “The Initials of Christ on the Helmet of Constantine,” *Studies in Roman Economic and Social History in Honor of Allen Chester Johnson* (Princeton, 1951), pp. 303–311, and “Das Kreuzzepter Konstantins des Grossen,” *Schweig. Münzblätter*, 4, Heft 16 (1954), pp. 81–86; Konrad Kraft, “Das Silbermedaillon Konstantins des Grossen mit dem Christusmonogram auf dem Helm,” *Jahrbuch für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte* (1954–55), pp. 151–78; and in opposition to A. Alföldi’s interpretation of the implement above the shield as a cross scepter, see M. R. Alföldi, *Goldprägung*, pp. 146–153, who interprets it as an inverted spear.
46. Euseb., *Vita Const* I. 26–40; & Lactantius, *De Mort Pers* 44. That the Christogram (☩) rather than the Crossogram (✚) was the original Christian monogram used by Constantine at the Battle of the Mulvian Bridge, see: Charles Odahl, “The Celestial Sign on Constantine’s Shields at the Battle of the Mulvian Bridge,” *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association*, Vol. 2 (1981), pp. 15–28.
47. Bruun, “Christian Signs,” pp. 5–21; Bastien, “Chrisme,” pp. 113–114; and Odahl, “Christian Symbols in Military Motifs,” pp. 68–69.
48. Euseb., *Vita Const* I. 49–II. 19.
49. Charles Odahl, “The Use of Apocalyptic Imagery in Constantine’s Christian Propaganda,” *Centerpoint*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1981), pp. 9–19.
50. *Vita Const* III. 3 – referring to scriptural passages in Isaiah 27 and Revelation 12–13, 17, & 19. For Constantine’s use of serpent imagery in art and letters, see the article in note 49 above.
51. *Vita Const* I. 31.
52. *Hist Eccl* I. 4.
53. See the Emperor’s testimony to this apotropaic power in Euseb., *Vita Const* II. 55.
54. Odahl, “Christian Symbols in Military Motifs,” pp. 69–70.
55. P̄tah cross at Aquileia (✚ – 333), Christogram at Arles (☩ – 334), and Crossogram at Antioch (✚ – 336–37) – see Bruun, “Christian Signs,” pp. 25–31; and Odahl, “Christian Symbols in Military Motifs,” pp. 70–71.
56. Hill, Kent, & Carson, *LRBC*, pp. 4–35; & Bruun, *RIC*, VII, *passim*.
57. Bruun, “Christian Signs,” pp. 23–24; and A. Alföldi, “On the Foundation of Constantinople: A Few Notes,” *Journal of Roman Studies*, XXXVII (1947), p. 15.

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