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The Cult of the Saints and Roman Communities under the Theodosians: Social and Religious Memory on Early Christian *Tesserae*

by

CRISTIAN MONDELLO

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[**PLATES 27-29**]

Abstract: This contribution focuses on an extremely rare series of Roman bronze *tesserae* issued under the Theodosians, which constitute the earliest Christian bronze tokens known to date. In addition to the imperial portraits of Arcadius and Honorius, this limited series of *tesserae* show depictions referring to the cult of saints. These depictions are variations of experimental motifs in early Christian iconography, not otherwise known on coins or coin-like objects from the Roman period. In addition to the presentation of the material, this article discusses the iconographic and technical connections between tokens, official coinage, and Roman contorniate medallions. It also explores the relationship between the imagery portrayed on these tokens and some of the new pictorial schemes that emerged in early Christian art.

These *pseudo-monetae* enhance our understanding of the techniques used in the manufacture of tokens and monetiform objects throughout the Roman imperial period, and also shed light on otherwise unseen intersections in the development of both early Christian iconography and the cult of saints at the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries AD.

Introduction: catalogue and status quaestionis

This article presents a series of Roman bronze *tesserae* that bear the imperial portraits of Arcadius (AD 395–408) or Honorius (AD 395–423) on the obverse, paired with Christian imagery on the reverses. This issue is particularly rare, currently documented by only four specimens. Two (labelled here as nos. 2 and 3) were published by A. Alföldi in a 1975 contribution focusing on bronze and bone *tesserae* interpreted as gaming tokens used by 'pagans' and Christians.[1] In addition to the two pieces discussed by the Hungarian scholar, this paper includes two further specimens (nos. 1 and 4), which are connected to the first *tesserae* due to close morphological, iconographic and technical parallels. This series is understudied, and has had little mention in scholarship since Alföldi. Due to the small number of specimens in existence, this contribution cannot provide definitive conclusions. Hopefully further pieces belonging to this issue might emerge in the future, allowing us to discover more information about the sequence of this token issue and its purpose.

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[1] Alföldi 1975, Taf. 7,12.14; 7,13.15.

1. AE, no recorded data (Glendining & Co., Ltd., H.P. Hall Sale, 16–17, 20–21 November 1950, lot 2190 = *RIC* X, 1272 n).[2] (**Pl. 27, 1**).

Obv.: D N ARCAD-IVS P F AVG, pearl and rosette diademed, draped and cuirassed bust of Arcadius, r.

Rev.: Figure advancing l. carrying a cross over right shoulder, all in incuse; symbols engraved on either side: II in l. field, P in r. field.

The specimen was once part of Wilhelm Fröhner's collection (1834–1925), and then came into Henry Platt Hall's collection (1863–1949). The auction catalogue used for the sale of Hall's collection in 1950, which is kept at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, has a handwritten annotation that indicates Spink as the buyer of the token (Glendining, 1950, p. 151). However, the piece has not appeared since in Spink's auction catalogues and is currently no longer traceable. The H.P. Hall collection sale catalogue suggested the figure be identified as Christ.

2. AE, 19.06mm, 3.09g (Paris: BnF, inv. no. 17082).[3]

Obv.: D N ARCAD-IVS P F AVG, pearl and rosette diademed, draped and cuirassed bust of Arcadius, r.

Rev.: Youthful male figure seated l., reading a *codex* held in his hands, all in incuse; symbols engraved on either side: X in l. field, E in r. field. (**Pl. 27, 2**).

According to the accession register, this *tessera* came from Crimea and was donated to the Cabinet des Médailles by the prefect of the Arno Department (1808–1814) during the First French Empire. The specimen has traces of metal (silver?) inlay on both sides.

3. AE, 21mm, 4.67g (Bologna: Museo Civico Archeologico, inv. no. MCABo 53828).[4]

Obv.: D N HONVR-IVS (*sic*) P F AVG, pearl and rosette diademed, draped and cuirassed bust of Honorius, r.

Rev.: Bearded mature male figure standing r., looking back l., raising his r. hand and holding a *rotulus* in his l. hand, flanked by two palm trees, all in incuse; XIII incised in the exergue. (**Pl. 27, 3**).

This specimen is kept at the Museo Civico Archeologico of Bologna, and came from the Bologna University collection. The piece has traces of silver inserts that were applied on both sides.

4. AE, 19mm, 2.22g (London: British Museum, inv. no. 1844,0425.2592).

Obv.: D N ARCAD-IVS P F AVG, pearl and rosette diademed, draped and cuirassed bust of Arcadius, r.

Rev.: Quadruped standing l. with long neck, flanked by two palm trees, all in incuse; XIIII incised in the exergue. (**Pl. 27, 4**).

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[2] Glendining, 1950, p. 151, pl. LIV, 2190, only stated that the piece was the 'size of a solidus'. This token was also cited by Kent, 1988, p. 282, n. 1, who gave the reference to the Hall collection sale without providing additional information about the size and weight of the piece. See also Göbl 1978, p. 130, no. 99, Taf. 9.

[3] Alföldi 1975, Taf. 7,12.14.

[4] Alföldi 1975, Taf. 7,13.15.

The piece was once part of the 6th Duke of Devonshire William George Spencer Cavendish's collection (1790–1858), and was acquired in 1844 by the British Museum. This *tessera* was published but not discussed by J.P.C. Kent,[5] and shows traces of metal inlays, maybe gilding, on both sides.

From the known data, these monetiform objects are all struck and of small size. Their diameters range from 19 to 21mm, while their weights vary between 2.22 and 4.67g.[6]

The tokens can be placed in pairs by recurring features on their reverses. Pieces nos. 1 and 2 are connected by the combination of a Latin numeral and letter on either side of a figure standing left, while pieces nos. 3 and 4 carry the same typological details: two palm branches depicted on either side of a figure (human or animal), as well as a Latin numeral incised in the exergue.

Furthermore, all four *tesserae* carry incuse types on the reverse and have close stylistic parallels. Three of them (nos. 2, 3 and 4) show traces of metal inlay (maybe silvering or gilding) on both sides; it is likely that piece no. 1, which is currently no longer traceable, was also adorned with metal inserts applied to the surface at a certain stage of manufacture.

Last but not least, this token issue bears on the obverse the busts of Arcadius (pieces nos. 1, 2, and 4) and Honorius (piece no. 3), both accompanied by the legend P(ius) F(elix) AVG(ustus). The imperial portraits and their relevant titles give a *terminus post quem* of AD 393, that is the year the title *Augustus* was given to both Arcadius and Honorius.

As for the function of these *tesserae*, Alföldi connected two of them to a larger group of Roman imperial coins carrying obverse types of Julian II and Theodosius I, which were transformed into gaming tokens by erasing their reverses and engraving Latin numbers (from I to XVI) on the surface instead (**Pl. 27, 5-6**). According to Alföldi, the bronze tokens with incuse designs constituted a 'Christian counterpart' to the modified imperial bronze coins, which were reused as chips by 'pagans' around AD 400.[7] In Alföldi's view, both groups would reflect, for opposing sides, the so-called 'pagan revival', believed to have taken place during the fourth and fifth centuries in Rome. Intended to promote Graeco-Roman religion against – above all – the repressive measures carried out by Theodosius I (AD 379–395), this conservative senatorial trend was thought to have been expressed by the alleged anti-Christian polemic of the *Historia Augusta*[8] as well as through a variety of pagan propaganda that included the 'Vota Publica' tokens (also known as the 'Festival of

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[5] Kent 1988, pl. I, no. 6.

[6] This observation does not take into account the metrological data of no. 1, which are not available.

[7] See Alföldi 1975, Taf. 7.1–8 and 11. The group discussed by Alföldi also included a small bronze from Alabanda (Caria) showing a laureate head of Zeus r., as well as a 'Vota Publica' token with a radiate and draped bust of Sol-Serapis r. on the obverse.

[8] Straub 1963.

Isis' tokens), contorniate medallions and the so-called 'Asina' tokens.[9] According to Alföldi's theory both 'pagan' and 'Christian' counters would have been utilised as gaming chips on *tabulae lusoriae* (game boards like those engraved on the floor of the *forum*) or similar contexts, used in games whose rules have been lost. In particular, the 'gaming' tokens bearing Christian images should be considered, according to Alföldi, as 'eine Antwort spielfreudiger Christen auf die Provokation der Heiden anmutet'.[10]

More recently, J.P.C. Kent argued that some of the tokens bearing the portraits of Arcadius and Honorius were talismans or amulets.[11] However, Kent did not provide comparison with similar amulets in order to support the supposed talismanic function of these objects, whose typology and technical features remain unique.

One should note that the incuse *tesserae* are neither coins nor recycled objects, unlike the modified Roman bronze coins. Also, these tokens were struck with a higher technical and stylistic quality than the modified bronze coins, whose Roman numerals were engraved on the surface of the reverse in a very crude style and without a professional tool. This hints at the idea that the tokens in intaglio were made by professional craftsmen, while the coins were modified by private individuals.

In addition, the imagery depicted on the four tokens alludes to Christian themes, whereas any equivalent religious or cultural references are absent from the group of modified fourth century Roman coins. This suggests a significantly different context concerning the function and circulation of the two groups of artefacts. In light of this, it is necessary to distinguish the *tesserae* bearing Christian imagery from the group of coins repurposed as tokens or gaming pieces. The latter were probably a late antique imitation of the bronze and brass tokens with Roman numerals that were issued over the Julio-Claudian period (27 BC–AD 68), whose function is a topic of debate.[12]

Recent scholarship has also reassessed the paradigm of pagan-Christian religious 'conflict' in late antiquity, which embodies an anachronistic way of interpreting the social and religious changes that occurred in late Roman society. Over the past sixty years, specialists have questioned not only the supposed anti-Christian purpose of

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[9] The 'Vota Publica' tokens bear depictions of Roman emperors and Egyptian deities, and were struck from the Tetrarchy to the time of Gratian and Valentinian II: cf. Alföldi 1937. On the anti-Christian nature of Roman contorniate' medallions (*c.*AD 355/60–472) see Alföldi and Alföldi 1976; Alföldi and Alföldi 1990. The so-called 'Asina' tokens were struck under Honorius, and have been regarded as anti-Christian medals by Alföldi 1951a; Alföldi 1951b. The Hungarian scholar also attributed to the alleged 'pagan revival' a few ceramic cake moulds (fourth century AD?) as well as a group of 'amulets' dating to early fifth century: Alföldi 1938; Alföldi 1964.

[10] Alföldi 1975, p. 20. In addition to two of the incuse tokens, Alföldi included among the gaming tokens used by Christians two further bronze coins carrying the portraits of Maxentius and Constantius II, as well as a bone *tessera* showing a fish paired with a Christogram on one side and a Roman numeral on the other: Alföldi 1975, pp. 20–1, Taf. 7.9–10 and 16.

[11] Kent 1988, p. 282, n. 1; *RIC* X, p. 327.

[12] For preliminary thoughts of the author on the coins repurposed as tokens see Mondello 2018.

the *Historia Augusta*,[13] but also Alföldi's interpretation of the 'Vota Publica' tokens, the contorniates, and the 'Asina' tokens as instruments of 'pagan propaganda'.[14]

In this paper, I will examine the obverse and reverse types of the early Christian *tesserae* in question, and I will analyse their connections to early Christian art in order to identify the models and development of the pictorial schemes used. I will then discuss the chronology of the series and the authority behind the production by taking into consideration, among other things, a typological comparison with official Roman coins and contorniate medallions. Finally I will suggest a possible interpretation of the meaning and use of these Christian bronze *tesserae*.

Iconography on early Christian tesserae: the imperial portraits of Arcadius and Honorius

All four specimens from this token series carry the imperial portraits of Arcadius (nos. 1–2, 4) or Honorius (no. 3) on the obverse, and these portraits have stylistic similarities to well dated official coins issued by the Roman mint.[15] In particular, there are close connections between the *tesserae* and some of the obverses of the 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue, which was struck almost entirely at Rome in the names of Honorius, Arcadius and Theodosius II during the period 404–408, with a hypothetical revival after Attalus.[16] According to the internal structure of the 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue, there are two major variants based on the reverse type:

a) head of Roma facing front, and

b) head of Roma facing right, which is in turn subdivided into 3 classes (b1, b2, b3) on the basis of style, legend division, and fabric.

Of these, b2 and b3 rapidly deteriorated in style and fabric, and were apparently struck in the name of Honorius only.[17] On the obverses, the imperial bust appears with a pearl and rosette diadem (variant a and b1, but occasionally a plain pearl diadem appears), but also with a pearl diadem only (variant b2 and b3).

[13] e.g. Momigliano 1954; Cameron 1965; Cameron 2011, pp. 743–82; Mondello 2017, pp. 198–201.

[14] An overview of the academic reception of Alföldi's theory is provided by Mittag 2015, pp. 265–7. The Constantinian 'Vota Publica' tokens have been recently discussed by Ramskold 2016. For the classification and chronology of the contorniate medallions see Mittag 1999; for a reassessment of the so-called 'Asina' tokens see Mondello 2020.

[15] The comparisons discussed took into account comparative material relating to the coinage of Arcadius and Honorius that cannot be illustrated here as a whole. However, the selection of each of the regular issues used here for comparison has been based on criteria that have proven useful in identifying the coin typology adopted, including the obverse legend layout, bust details and style.

[16] See Kent 1988, pp. 282–4; *RIC* X, pp. 130–31 and pp. 140–1; cf. also Grierson & Mays 1992, pp. 207–9. A single known specimen in the name of Honorius (obverse legend divided R-I, mint-mark SMAQ) shows that there was a small issue of the type struck in Aquileia: see *RIC* X, pp. 130–31. For the renewal of the series under Attalus see Bruni 2017.

[17] According to Kent's analysis, differences between variants b2 and b3 lie on the average diameter (b2: 13–14mm; b3: 12mm) and on the obverse legend break (b2: occasionally divided -IVS, but usually -VS; b3: divided -VS only). Additionally, variant b3 appears stylistically cruder than variant b2, especially on the reverse, and occasionally has errors in the reverse legend (e.g. FELX for FELIX): Kent 1988, p. 283.

On the tokens considered here, the portrait of Arcadius is depicted with the rosette variant while the legend is divided –IVS. The imperial bust on tokens nos. 1 and 2 are die-linked, and are smaller in size than that found on token no. 4. The closest coin dies are found on variant b1 of the 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue (with legend break -IVS, but occasionally divided -VS) predominantly showing an imperial bust with a pearl and rosette diadem, generally smaller in size than those attested on variant a (for the variant b type see **Pl. 27, 7**, but the reproduced specimen carries a pearl diadem only and the legend division -VS).[18] The bust of Arcadius on token no. 4 is more elongated and larger in size compared to the depictions on tokens nos. 1 and 2, and shows instead similarities with variant a (-IVS legend on the obverse) (**Pl. 27, 8**).[19] As for the portrait of Honorius, token no. 3 bears an imperial diadem with the rosette variant, while the legend is divided -IVS. By virtue of this, the type was regarded by Kent as 'an exactly similar obverse die' to that of variant a of the 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue (e.g. see **Pl. 27, 9**).[20] However, the stylistic rendering of Honorius' physiognomy, especially the drawing of the facial lines, eyes, and eagle-nose, also evokes some of the best preserved dies of variants b1 and b2, although the imperial bust is frequently only shown with a pearl diadem on these specimens (**Pl. 27, 10**).[21] Furthermore, the metal of the alloy used for this token series is yellowish, as with the 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue and several subsequent coinages of Honorius, whose metal is composed of copper, tin and lead.[22]

However, one should exclude the idea that these artefacts were originally coins belonging to the 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue and repurposed as tokens. Indeed, the *tesserae* are substantial AE3s, with a diameter of 19–21mm, while the 'Urbs Roma Felix' coins have an average diameter of 13–15mm, with an even smaller diameter of 12mm for the variant b2 specimens. In addition, the weight of *tesserae* nos. 2–4, which lies between 2.22g and 4.67g, is much heavier than that of all four variants of the 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue, whose weight range is about 1.90–2.00g. Moreover, these tokens have a larger diameter than that of regular coins struck in the names of Honorius and Arcadius by other imperial mints, and do not match any official coins even in terms of bust details and obverse legend, which is often not divided.[23] Based on the metrology and the lack of any die-links, it is unlikely that obverse dies of the 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue were used to strike these tokens, as suggested by Kent. Moreover, the obverse dies utilised for producing specimen no. 3, whose diameter is significantly smaller than the flan, reads HONVR-IVS (*sic*), a spelling error that has not yet been noted on a coin.

[18] cf. *RIC* X 1277–9.

[19] cf. *RIC* X 1272. The token design labelled here as no. 4 was only considered by Kent as bearing an 'Urbs Roma Felix' style obverse: Kent 1988, p. 293, pl. I, 6.

[20] Kent 1988, p. 282. cf. also *RIC* X, p. 131.

[21] cf. *RIC* X 1280–2.

[22] Thus *RIC* X, p. 20 and pp. 130–1; *contra* Lallemand 1965, pp. 58 and 60, who claimed that the metal used for these coins derived from re-melted orichalcum.

[23] A larger diameter (23mm) and weight (6.31g–7.93g) are attested, for example, on rare specimens belonging to the REPARATIO REI PVBL series, which was struck in the name of Honorius for circulation in Spain, perhaps in AD 417: Kent 1988, p. 285. However, neither the metrological data nor the legend layout of the considered tokens fit this issue.

In terms of imperial portraits occurring on coin-like objects, the closest comparanda to these *tesserae* are the so-called 'Asina' tokens, a small group of bronze *tesserae* named for the type of a donkey suckling a foal depicted on some of the reverses. These were issued in Rome in the early fifth century AD, and bear types drawn from Graeco-Roman mythology and history. The 'Asina' tokens are connected to each other through two recurring depictions: the portrait of Alexander the Great on some of the obverses, as well as the reverse type of the donkey and her young, which is variously accompanied by the legend 'Asina' ('she-donkey'), 'Roma', or a Christian legend reading 'Dominus Noster Jesus Christ Dei filius'.[24] Two pieces within this token issue carry the bust of Honorius on the obverse, with the legend divided – VS. One specimen remains available for examination within the British Museum (**Pl. 27, 11**).[25] Due to the poor quality of the specimen, it is not clear whether the imperial bust wears a pearl and rosette-diadem or merely a pearl diadem. The detail of Honorius' diadem is also not clear in the drawing of the 'Asina' specimen that was once part of Girolamo Tanini's collection (published in the *Supplementum* to Banduri's volume in 1791) and is no longer traceable (**Pl. 27, 12**).[26] However, the style of the British Museum piece appears quite crude, similar to the variants b2 and b3 of the 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue, which carry a pearl diadem and divide the legend -VS. As already noticed by Kent, the British Museum 'Asina' token appears close to the 'Gloria Romanorum' issue struck by the Roman mint, which was probably issued prior to AD 423 (AD 417–418?), based on the typology, legend division and style.[27] As with the *tesserae* in incuse, the 'Asina' token does not match regular coins in terms of weight and diameter.[28]

The imitation of coin types showing Roman emperors of the fourth and fifth centuries is a phenomenon also attested on the so-called 'Kaiserserie' of contorniate medallions (AD 379–472 according to Mittag's dating), whose images reproduce numismatic portraits of the reigning emperors beginning with Theodosius I.[29] Three groups of contorniates bear the imperial portraits of Arcadius and Honorius. Among them, one die has the short legend HONORIO AVGVSTO (Honorius, I-II), apparently not attested elsewhere,[30] while two dies carry imperial titles attested on regular coins

[24] cf. Mondello 2020.

[25] British Museum, inv. no. 1922,0317.164.b; Mondello 2020, p. 277, no. 8, pl. 24.7.

[26] Tanini 1791, p. 352, pl. VIII; Mondello 2020, p. 277, no. 7, pl. 23.6.

[27] Kent 1988, p. 284, n. 6.

[28] In an earlier contribution on the 'Asina' tokens, the author supported the idea of a relationship between the two token specimens bearing the bust of Honorius and the variants a and b1 of the 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue: Mondello 2020, pp. 290–92. However, after a more detailed examination of the British Museum piece, whose diadem's details unfortunately remain illegible, the author's opinion is that the token die is more likely closer to the variants b2 and b3 of the 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue, as well as to the late 'Gloria Romanorum' issue struck by the Roman mint, which may point to a larger time frame between AD 404 and 423 for the manufacture of the 'Asina' tokens. Further archaeological or archival finds might be able to solve this point.

[29] On the relation between contorniates and official coinage in terms of imperial imagery, see Alföldi-Rosenbaum 1997. The portraits of emperors from the first three centuries AD occur on the so-called 'regular' contorniates (AD 355/360–395/423): Alföldi and Alföldi 1976, pp. 33–147 and 170–82; Alföldi-Rosenbaum 1997.

[30] Alföldi and Alföldi 1976, pp. 149–50, nos. 448–52 (Honorius I-II).

(Arcadius: D N ARCADI-VS P F AVG; Honorius, III: D N HONORI-VS P F AVG) and, as seen above, on bronze tokens.[31]

Although it is not entirely clear which coinages inspired the imperial portraits depicted on the 'Asina' tokens and the contorniates, it could be argued, in light of the above, that the busts of Arcadius and Honorius on the 'Urbs Roma Felix' series, specifically its variant a and b1, may have been the model used for the production of the *tesserae* in intaglio. This provides a useful framework for determining a relative chronology of the token series in question.

Reverse types: Christian motifs and pictorial schemes

The tokens in question show various Christian iconography in incuse on their reverses, accompanied by Roman numerals, Latin letters and decorative elements. The Christian meaning of these images, not easily understood on pieces nos. 2–4, is made it evident by the reverse type depicted on specimen no. 1 showing a figure carrying a cross, which has not been studied to date, nor connected with the other specimens of this issue.[32]

i. *Figure carrying a cross (Christ?)*

The reverse type of specimen no. 1 bears a figure advancing left carrying a cross over their right shoulder. According to the description provided in the H.P. Hall collection auction catalogue, this subject should be identified as Christ, with the scene referring to the Gospel episode of the 'Way to Calvary'.

This token constitutes a precious piece of evidence in light of the rarity of episodes from Christ's Passion narrative (or of Passion cycles *per se*) in early Christian art before the sixth century. In art-historical terms, the Passion narrative denotes either a full sequence of episodes, from Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem to the *Anastasis* ('Resurrection'), or a reduced sequence commencing only with the 'Last Supper'. Surprisingly, this narrative cycle was unknown to the earliest Christian artists as it did not enter their pictorial programs until the fourth century.[33] Furthermore, the

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[31] Alföldi and Alföldi 1976, p. 149, no. 447 (Arcadius), and p. 150, nos. 453–5 (Honorius III). According to *RIC* X, p. 137, the contorniate groups showing the bust of Honorius might belong to the 'Third period' of Honorius' coinage (i.e. AD 408–23).

[32] A Christian reading of the reverse types depicted on tokens nos. 2 and 3 was already supported by Alföldi, although he did not know of the piece labelled here as no. 1: Alföldi 1975, pp. 20–1.

[33] A growing development of Passion iconography in private and public art is documented from the second quarter of the fourth century. In this period new pictorial schemes concerning the death and Resurrection of Jesus appeared on the so-called 'Passion sarcophagi', produced around 340–370 in Northern Italy and Gaul, as well as on some ivory reliquary caskets, mostly made in central and Northern Italian workshops during the fifth century; both of these provide complex and iconographically sophisticated Passion cycles: see Schiller 1972, pp. 3–7; Harley-McGowan 2011a; Harley-McGowan 2018, pp. 296–8. Recent scholarly discussion suggests that a set of iconographic conventions for the depiction of the crucified figure of Jesus had been formulated by the early third century and was circulated widely across the Mediterranean basin: see Schiller 1972, pp. 3 and 7; Harley 2006, p. 230; Harley-McGowan 2018, p. 291. Individual episodes from the Passion-narrative were inserted within soteriologically focused decorative schemes before the Constantinian period, as occurs in the catacombs of Rome: see Stevenson 1978, figs. 80 (Commodilla), 81 (Catacomb of Praetextatus) and 82 (Via Latina); as well as in the Baptistery of the *domus-ecclesiae* excavated at Dura Europos, whose cycle of

depiction of the crucifixion was not set within a pictorial narrative context until the fifth century.[34] It is a matter for debate whether or not the reticence to explicitly portray Jesus' death in early Christian art was due to the theological controversies concerning the interpretation of Christ's death and the doctrine of his two natures.[35]

The iconography of 'The Way to Calvary' (also known as 'The Bearing of the Cross'), which shows Christ carrying the cross on his way to the crucifixion at Calvary (or Golgotha), or, alternatively, Simon of Cyrene carrying or helping carry the cross, is attested from the second quarter of the fourth century.[36] This pictorial formula may possibly date back to prototypes in Jewish art, borrowing the scheme of Isaac shouldering the wood as he makes his way up the hill before his sacrifice.[37]

wall paintings (*c.* AD 240) includes a frieze probably depicting the women approaching and entering Christ's Sepulchre at dawn on Easter morning: Weidlé 1950, pp. 10–11. On the Passion iconography, cf. also Viladesau 2006, pp. 3–55; Kupfer 2008.

[34] Thus Harley 2011a, p. 114, who claims that 'the earliest extant image that begins to do so is on one of four ivory panels carved in Rome sometime between 420 and 430 AD, and now known collectively as the Maskell Passion Ivories'; see also Lazzara 2019. The crucifixion, alongside a number of Passion episodes, is also represented on the near-contemporary wooden doors of the Church of Santa Sabina in Rome, still *in situ*, dated *c.* AD 432–44: cf. Spieser, 1991. Before the fourth century, in addition to the controversial Alexamenos graffito excavated on the Palatine Hill in 1856 (see Tomei 1997, p. 104, no. 78), the representation of the crucifixion might be preserved on a gemstone of unrecorded provenance (the so-called 'Pereire gem'), now in the British Museum (inv. no. 1986,0501.1), which may be of the late second or early third century AD, but the exact date is disputed: Michel 2001, pp. 283–4, no. 457; Spier 2007, p. 443; Kotansky 2017. According to Harley-McGowan 2018, p. 291, the iconographic similarities between the 'Pereire gem' and the Alexamenos graffito would hint that a basic formula for picturing a crucifixion existed and was used by different individuals for different purposes. Two other similar fourth century gems, one of which is said to have been found at Constanza (Romania) and now in the British Museum (inv. no. 1895,1113.1), show Jesus crucified on a T-shaped cross amidst the twelve apostles: Spier 2007, p. 444; Spier *et al.* 2007, p. 56; Harley-McGowan 2011b.

[35] Schiller 1972, p. 3; Jensen 2000, pp. 130–6. It is probably no coincidence that the images from the Passion cycle produced in the late Roman West mostly emphasised victory and salvation instead of death, and avoided portraying Christ as a suffering man: cf. Harley 2011a, p. 120, who recalls a passage from 1 *Corinthians*, 15:54, referring to death as effectively 'swallowed up in the victory'. Expression of Christ's suffering from the Passion cycle, which is absent on late antique sarcophagi and ivories, occurs in the Gospels of St Augustine, written and illuminated in Italy in the late sixth century, and was probably influenced by eastern art: Schiller 1972, pp. 6 and 14. Moreover, the notion of a crucified, suffering and dying god constituted a theological contradiction and an objection that was addressed to the first Christians by both the Jews and Romans, since the cross was seen as a *servile supplicium* (Cic. *Pro Cluentio*, 66; *Philipp.*, 1, 2) and the *servitutis summum extremumque supplicium* (Cic. *In Verrem,* 66) before being converted into a *trophaeum Christi*: Leclercq 1914, 3046; Harley 2019.

[36] The earliest surviving pictorial example of 'The Way to Calvary' narrative is attested on the so-called 'sarcophagus of Domitilla' (*c.* AD 340), which illustrates Simon of Cyrene bearing the cross of Jesus (Christ is omitted here); Schiller 1972, p. 5 and 231, fig. 1. Judging from extant evidence, the iconography of the 'The Way to Calvary' was codified between the fourth and late sixth centuries, showing three variants: 1) Simon of Cyrene bearing the cross on his own, 2) Christ bearing the cross combined with the scene of Pilate washing his hands, and 3) Christ and Simon carrying the Cross together; cf. Schiller, 1972, p. 79. From the 15th century devotion focused on the Way of the Cross inspired the creation of the 'Stations of the Cross', which grew out of imitations of *Via Dolorosa* in Jerusalem and were set up at roadsides leading to churches or churchyards; Thurston 1914; Schiller 1972, p. 82.

[37] On the theological meaning of this iconographic dependence cf. Schiller 1972, p. 4: 'Isaac, who is bound and kneels before an altar, was seen as an allusion to Christ's sacrificial Death; his preservation from death prefigures Christ's victory over death'.

However, the figure depicted on token no. 1 differs in some details from the earliest extant images of Christ or Simon of Cyrene bearing the cross. On the Maskell Passion ivories (*c.* AD 420–30, Rome?) as well as on the wooden doors of the Roman Church of Santa Sabina (*c.* AD 432–44), Jesus carrying the cross is portrayed as a non-nimbate, bearded (or otherwise) figure with long hair, wearing tunic, *pallium*, and sandals. A few later examples from the sixth century added the nimbus, placing Jesus on a fully divine and triumphalist footing.[38] On the other hand, Simon of Cyrene carrying the cross on his own[39] or along with Jesus[40] usually has an anonymous physiognomy, and is shown clean-shaven, with short hair, and wearing a short tunic that leaves his legs uncovered. Unlike Jesus and Simon of Cyrene, the figure depicted on the reverse side of *tessera* no. 1 wears a dalmatic. This is a long, wide-sleeved tunic with fringes as well as two vertical stripes of fabric ('*clavi*'), which served as a luxury liturgical vestment; a similar dalmatic is also worn by the figures portrayed on pieces nos. 2 and 3.[41] Furthermore, the figure bearing the cross wears a singular headdress with two flaps covering his ears, missing on pieces nos. 2 and 3.[42] These iconographic details evoke certain ecclesiastical vestments represented on the frescoes from the Roman catacombs.

In addition to Jesus and Simon of Cyrene, other figures holding a cross or carrying a cross over their shoulder were represented in early Christian art. In the depiction of *traditio legis* on the city-gate sarcophagus in Verona (*c.* AD 400), Christ handing over the Law with an imperial gesture is flanked on the right by an apostle (St Peter or St Paul) holding a long cross, which rests on his left shoulder.[43] In the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia (AD 425–450) in Ravenna, a mosaic on the lunette of the south arm depicts a nimbate male figure dressed in a dalmatic with long vertical stripes, who advances holding a long golden cross across his shoulder with his right hand and an open book with his left (**Pl. 28, 13**). Although a number of theories have been advanced for the interpretation of this scene, the lunette figure is probably to be identified with St Lawrence, since he has all the typical attributes of the order of

[38] See a sixth century mosaic depicting the *Via Crucis* on the right wall of the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna: Bovini 1956, p. 26 ff.; Bovini 1957, pp. 90–2; Mauskopf Deliyannis 2010. The nimbus attribute applied to 'The Way to Calvary' episode is also found in the Gospels of St Augustine (MS 286, fol. 125r); see Harley-McGowan 2018, pp. 303–4.

[39] This is the image portrayed on the so-called 'sarcophagus of Domitilla', mentioned above.

[40] cf. Gospels of St Augustine (MS 286, fol. 125r).

[41] The dalmatic was a normal item of clothing around the fourth century, when ecclesiastical clothes began to develop separately, as is evidenced by a number of examples in the frescoes from late Roman catacombs; cf. Martorelli 2004, p. 234. As for the tokens discussed here, both *clavi* are clearly visible on specimen no. 3, while the representation of just one of the two vertical stripes on specimens nos. 1 and 2 is probably due to the position of the figures in profile. A few prescriptions were provided by Christian writers on clothes to wear: these should be sober, neither too elegant nor too humble, and restricted to a few essential items, for instance, cf. Hier. *Ep.* 107, 10; 130, 18. On this point, cf. also Trinci Cecchelli 1983; Noce 2002.

[42] In early Christian art, the headdress is not generally used for men, but it frequently occurs for women in the guise of a veil, bonnet or *palla*, in addition to the tunic and dalmatic; see Martorelli 2004, pp. 234 and 240–2.

[43] Schiller 1972, pp. 6 and 231, fig. 4.

deacons to which this saint belonged (the processional cross, the psalter, the dalmatic) and he approaches a fire, the instrument of his martyrdom.[44]

It thus seems unlikely that the reverse type on token no. 1 should be interpreted as Jesus or Simon of Cyrene, since his clothing does not appear comparable with any of the earliest pictorial examples showing Jesus or Simon bearing the cross. By contrast, the liturgical garments and the processional cross make it more plausible that the figure shown on token no. 1 might represent an apostle, a martyr, or even a deacon, who is portrayed with the symbol of Jesus' martyrdom in the context of a liturgical rite or private meditation.

ii. *Evangelists or 'Saints'*

The reverse types on *tesserae* nos. 2 and 3 show a male figure dressed in a dalmatic, one clean-shaven and youthful and the other bearded and mature; both hold a book in the guise of a *codex* or a *rotulus* in their hands and lack any distinctive facial features or physiognomy.

These depictions reflect some of the pictorial conventions of early Christian art which were applied *lato sensu* to the iconography of the 'saints',[45] whose individual features – usually difficult to distinguish over the first centuries of the empire – began to be seen only from the beginning of the fourth century onwards, especially for the apostles Peter, Paul and Andrew.[46]

The reverse type on specimen no. 2 shows a youthful male figure seated left, leaning forward while reading a *codex* held in his hands. In front of him is the symbol X, a Roman numeral, as the numeral II in the left field of the reverse of piece no. 1 demonstrates. But, given its position and correlation to the main type, the X might also symbolise a bookrest or a desk, thus suggesting the idea of a *scriptorium*, the place for writing used by *librarii* and scribes.[47] It could be argued that this type runs parallel to the motif of the evangelist seated at his desk while reading or drawing up the Gospel, which was the prototype of the monastic scribe tremendously popular in Byzantine and medieval art. The earliest known images of

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[44] Zovatto 1968, pp. 90–7; Deichmann 1974, pp. 75–8; Rizzardi 1996, pp. 223–5. Other scholars have interpreted the lunette figure as an apocalyptic angel (Bottini Massa, 1911–12, pp. 38–9), Christ portrayed in the Last Judgement (Filippini 1923, pp. 187–212; Seston 1945, p. 47), or Saint Vincent of Saragossa, a deacon who was burned alive upon a red-hot gridiron at the time of Diocletian (Mackie 1990, pp. 54–9).

[45] The earliest images of apostles and saints borrowed from the portrait-type of the ancient philosopher, suggesting a continuity between Graeco-Roman philosophical teaching and its Christian-apostolic successor; see Marrou 1965, pp. 220–1, 308–22; Giannitrapani 2000, pp. 180–2. In Christian theological doctrine, the saints were part of a complex structure of mediation and salvation reaching back to God himself, and every saint offered both a bridge into the eternal life proclaimed by Jesus Christ and a guarantee of the salvation made possible by this bridge; see Elsner 2003, pp. 72–3.

[46] Pillinger 1994; Giannitrapani 2000, p. 181; Dijkstra 2016, pp. 8–14 (with earlier literature). The problem of determining when craftsmen actually made the transition from non-differentiated features to an individualized iconography of the saints – as is evident especially on the so-called gold glasses – is highly debated; see Huskinson 1982, p. 54.

[47] Thus also Alföldi 1975, p. 20, who did not recognise the numerical value of the X. A further meaning might also be found in the symbol II on piece no. 1, signifying the columns lining the street on which the figure walks or some other kind of spatial component.

an evangelist seated in this way occur on illuminated gospel books dating to the sixth century. An illumination of the *Codex Purpureus Rossanensis* (*c.* AD 550), one of the oldest surviving illuminated manuscripts of the New Testament, depicts St Mark seated on a chair with no arms in the act of composing his Gospel on a long roll of parchment. He is directly inspired by Sophia, the personification of Wisdom. The female figure standing on the right watches over the saint and lays a hand on his writing, symbolising her intercession in Mark's inspiration (**Pl. 28, 14**).[48] In the late sixth century Gospels of St Augustine,[49] only the portrait of St Luke survives. The full-page miniature shows the saint seated on a marble throne, with his chin resting on his right hand and holding the open *codex* of his Gospel in his left. The scene is placed in an elaborate architectural setting at the top of which is the image of a bull, the symbol of the evangelist.[50]

However, it is quite likely that pictorial examples of the four evangelists at work in the scribal process existed well before the sixth century, given that evangelist portraits were a usual feature of illuminated Gospel books. Such depictions were not limited to the pages of books, but could be found in other media (e.g. ivory plaques, gold glasses). Moreover, it is reasonable to believe that the engraver who carved the bronze token die was inspired by a pictorial scheme that was already canonical. In light of such parallels, the reverse type on *tessera* no. 2 may be the oldest surviving representation of an evangelist seated in the act of reading the Gospel, anticipating the numerous examples occurring in Byzantine and medieval visual arts.[51]

By contrast, on the reverse of *tessera* no. 3 shows a bearded old man standing right, looking left, holding a *rotulus* (also known as *volumen*) in his left hand and raising his right hand to the right in a gesture of acclamation. The grave aspect and solemnity of the pose of this mature figure, with a long face and beard, reveal an origin in classical prototypes of philosophers' portrait-types.

The pictorial formula of a male standing figure, generally bearded, holding a (closed or open) *codex* or *volumen* in one hand and raising the other hand in a gesture of *acclamatio* was frequently used to depict evangelists in early Christian art. This is the case, for example, with the front of the Throne of Maximian, probably made in Constantinople for Maximian (or Maximianus), the first Archbishop of Ravenna (AD 546–554). On the throne the four evangelists are portrayed standing around

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[48] Codex Purpureus Rossanensis (designated by Σ or 042 in the Gregory-Aland numbering system), f. 241r.

[49] See above, footnote no. 35.

[50] Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Lib. MS. 286, f. 129v. Images of the four evangelists seated while keeping their Gospel book open are also shown in the mosaics of the ambulatories of the Byzantine Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, dating to the second quarter of the sixth century: Bovini 1968, pp. 237–8; Deichmann 1974, p. 163.

[51] The iconography of the evangelists portrayed in their human appearance or in the 'tetramorph' version (Matthew the angel, Mark the lion, Luke the bull, and John the eagle) became widespread only from the fifth century, in line with the arrangement of evangelical matter carried out by Jerome. Earlier examples are occasionally attested over the fourth century in funerary paintings and plastic arts, but they do not fit standard pictorial schemes; see Minasi 2000, p. 175.

John the Baptist with a variety of acclamation gestures while holding their Gospel books; there is a strong preference for *contrapposto* poses.[52]

However, the gesture of acclamation, which early Christian artists modelled on the accession *acclamatio* attested in Roman imperial iconography, was also used in depictions of Christ, the apostles, and St Paul. A gold glass vessel base published by Garrucci, held in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, shows a youthful male figure, who might represent Christ, with a beard and short hair, dressed in a dalmatic, holding an open book in his left hand and raising his right hand in the act of declaiming.[53] On some of the fifth century mosaic lunettes of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, four scenes show two symmetrical figures in different compositions, dressed alike in a white tunic and *pallium*, holding out their right hand in a gesture of acclamation. On the lunette on the north side, the two frontal figures stand beneath a hieratic scallop shell holding *rotuli* in their left hands (**Pl. 28, 15**), as with the design of *tessera* no. 3. Although their generalised features make any identification impossible, it has commonly been assumed that the figures portrayed on the mosaic lunettes are apostles, based on their dress and solemn stature.[54] To judge from the apostles' gestures, which are directed towards the apparition of the Cross at the centre of the starry sky, the four lunette scenes, whose repeated schemes create a semantic unity, may be episodes of *acclamatio* instead of *adoratio Crucis*, whose significance would be related to the second Coming of Christ.[55]

As with the image on piece no. 2, the figure reproduced on *tessera* no. 3 might also represent one of the four evangelists, portrayed in a more dynamic gesture of acclamation. Nevertheless, since a number of late Roman and Byzantine examples ascribe the gesture of *acclamatio* as well as the *rotulus* to apostolic figures, one cannot rule out that the type on specimen no. 3 is to be interpreted as one of the apostles, whose physiognomic traits and posture were not clearly defined in the very first stage of Christian art.

iii. *Quadruped*

The reverse of *tessera* no. 4 shows a quadruped standing left, flanked by two palm trees. The design is not particularly detailed, and does not permit us to identify with certainty which animal was intended by the die-cutter. Whilst images of quadrupeds (e.g. horses, donkeys, lions, goats) are found on some Christian media such as gold

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[52] Kitzinger 1977, p. 96.

[53] Garrucci 1858, pp. 54–5, pl. XXVI, no. 10. A vessel base probably from Rome, dated to *c.* AD 360–400, shows four full-length frontal beardless male figures each wearing a tunic and *pallium*, holding a scroll with both hands, of which the second, third and fourth figures are labelled 'PAVLVS' (the apostle Paul), 'SVSTVS' (the martyred Pope Sixtus II) and 'LAVRENTIVS' (Laurence, who was martyred in Rome along with Sixtus in AD 258) respectively; see Garrucci 1858, p. 38, pl. XVII, no. 2; Howells 2015, p. 82, pl. 50.

[54] On the large lunette on the east side, the elongated, bearded figure, with dark hair and a receding forehead, holding a *rotulus* in his left hand, has the typical features of St Paul; to his right is a bearded figure, with a square face and white hair that should be interpreted as St Peter, given that he holds a key in his left hand. See Rizzardi 1996, p. 231 ff.

[55] Seston 1945, p. 49; Deichmann 1974, p. 82; Rizzardi 1996 p. 232.

glasses,[56] the appearance and anatomical features (elongated neck, large ears, short tail) make it likely that the animal on the token is a deer or a roe deer. The females and young of this species are without horns. Appreciated by Christian authors for their mild and innocent nature, both deer and roe deer are praised in Christian exegesis for their hostility towards snakes and reptiles, which makes them a symbol of the fight against evil.[57] Due to these properties, the deer as well as the roe deer are occasionally identified with Christ himself.[58]

Although it is not possible to say if the meaning of the image on the token mirrors the interpretation of the deer found in Christian authors, it is reasonable to suggest that this type, which is connected to the other three specimens discussed above, had a Christian connotation as part of the iconographic cycle conceived for this token issue.

iv. *Roman numerals, Latin letters, and decorative elements*

Additional symbols incised on the reverse of the tokens further connect these objects:

- a Roman numeral (II, X) in the bottom left field, and a Latin letter (P, E) in the right field respectively occur on pieces nos. 1 and 2;

- a Roman numeral in the exergue (XIII, XIIII) as well as two palm trees on either side of the main type on specimens nos. 3 and 4.

The meaning of the numbers and letters is far from clear. Numbers and letters are attested on both bronze and lead tokens in a large variety of combinations, and are one of the most elusive aspects of this category of object.[59] Although they likely served different purposes depending on the context, one may surmise that it is at least probable that numbers and letters were connected to the production and/or function of tokens: indicating the authority responsible or the dedicatee of an issue (imperial authority, private citizen, deity or organisation), a monetary sum or value, or a detail concerning the function or context in which the tokens were distributed. One of these options was presumably the case with the tokens presented here, discussed in more detail below.

The combination of a Roman numeral and a Latin letter on *tesserae* nos. 1 and 2 permits us to exclude Alföldi's theory, which was that piece no. 2 belonged to a series showing Greek numerals (according to this view, the symbols X and E would correspond not to Latin letters but to Greek numbers), while piece no. 3 was part

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[56] Garrucci 1858, pp. 77–9, pl. XXXVII, nos. 2–10.

[57] Orig. *Hom in Cant.* 2, 11; Orig. *Hom. in Ier.* 18, 9; Eus. *Comm. in Ps.* 41; Eus. *Comm. in Is.* 2, 8; Hier. *Tract. in Ps.* 103, 18. In Christian exegesis, there is usually no difference between a deer and a roe deer, see Ciccarese 2002, p. 316.

[58] Orig. *Comm. in Cant.* 3; Greg. Nyss. *Hom. in Cant.* 5; Philo Carp. *Comm. in Cant.* 48; Ambr. *De int. Iob. et Dav.* 4, 1, 2.

[59] For an overview and a reassessment of the Roman numbers occurring on bronze and lead Roman tokens, with particular reference to the so-called '*spintriae*' and tokens with numerals from the Julio-Claudian period, see Rowan 2020.

of a series with Roman numerals.[60] Differences in the arrangement of the numbers and letters, and differences in iconography may indicate the tokens belong to two emissions: one series with a Roman number paired with a Latin letter, and then another series carrying a Roman number etched in the exergue. These two emissions may have been struck simultaneously or one after the other, but presumably within a short period of time.

Moreover, the decision to incise Roman numbers in the exergue after striking has a significant parallel in a small series of brass tokens dating to the first century AD (Julio-Claudian period?). The tokens are connected by an obverse type showing a bare male head accompanied by the inscription C(aius) MITREIVS L(ucii) F(ilius) MAG(ister) IVVENT(utis) ('Gaius Mitreius, son of Lucius, *magister* of the youth').[61] One of the reverse types occurring on this series bears the depiction of a two-story basilica carrying the legend L. SEXTILI · S(uo) P(ecunia) ('*Lucius Sextilius, at his own expense')*, which is supplemented by the secondary incision of a Roman numeral in the exergue. A specimen belonging to the Ashmolean Museum collection has the number X etched into the exergue (**Pl. 28, 16**), but other examples carry the numbers IIII, VI, VIII, and XII. According to Rowan, this *modus procedendi* may have been a cost saving measure: 'instead of paying for a different die for each number for what was evidently a very small emission, a decision was made to use one set of dies and then later incise the numbers required into the exergue'.[62] This theory also fits the case study here, thus revealing a remarkable continuity in terms of production methods.

One cannot determine whether the two palm trees that appear as decorative elements on tokens nos. 3 and 4 also had a symbolic meaning. The palm branch, commonly represented in Greek and Roman material culture as a symbol of victory and triumph, had a variety of semantic values in Christian exegesis, referring, for example, to the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, Christian martyrdom, or a heavenly reward for the devotee.[63]

The palm tree was widespread in early Christian iconography, as both a figurative and ornamental element. For instance, the palm tree appears as a decorative accessory on both sides of Christ in the mosaic of the Apostles from the Arian Baptistery in Ravenna (AD 493–526), on the so-called 'tree and column' and 'city-gate' sarcophagi representing *traditio legis* scenes, as well as on a number of everyday objects, such as gold glasses, lamps, rings and *encolpi*. The palm branch is, significantly, one of the most common symbols engraved on 'contorniate' medallions, often in association with the monogram PE (variously resolved as *palma emerita*, *praemia emerita*, *palma et laurus, palma feliciter*, or *praemiis feliciter remunerabimur*), where it invoked victory, more precisely that one was victorious in agonistic and sporting competitions.[64] As with the aforementioned cases, one cannot rule out that the palm

[60] Alföldi 1975, p. 20.

[61] The Gaius Mitreius token series was recently discussed by Küter 2019, p. 84, and Rowan 2020, pp. 101–7.

[62] Rowan 2020, p. 104.

[63] On the semantic meanings of the palm tree in early Christian art see De Santis 2000, p. 238.

[64] Mondello, 2019, p. 152.

trees depicted on *tesserae* nos. 3 and 4 had an apotropaic and metaphorical value, connected to Christian allegorical ideas, as well as a decorative function.

Typological, stylistic, and technical similarities support the idea that these *tesserae* were not only produced within the same workshop, but were also used in the same context, although some variations occur in the arrangement of numbers, letters and decorative components.

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Based on the analysis of the aforementioned artefacts from late Roman and Byzantine art, it can be argued that the types depicted on the bronze tokens are some of the earliest known examples of pictorial schemes experimenting with the representation of the apostles, evangelists, or more generally saints, whose compositional repertoire largely developed from the fourth century onwards. The iconography attested on the *tesserae* reflect, with a few variations, some of the conventions occurring in funerary sculpture, monumental cycles in mosaics and frescoes, as well as luxury artefacts (e.g. ivory carvings, such as caskets and diptychs) that were produced in Italy and the Roman West over the fourth and fifth centuries, and afterwards on sixth century illuminated manuscripts from the Byzantine East. The evidence reveals a developing Christian pictorial repertoire that circulated from West to East and vice versa. Parallels in iconography and the compositional arrangement of scenes across media also raise the possibility that models were developed and transmitted among artisans as sketches. This may have taken the form of manuscripts, pattern books, or may have occurred via other methods of direct copying within the workshop, as has been suggested for the experimentation with the scenes from the Passion and Crucifixion.[65]

When examined together, all these artefacts, the products of many different craftsmen, build up a composite picture of the tastes and beliefs of some of the Christian Roman groups in the fourth and fifth centuries, and later. In addition to literary sources, archaeological evidence and applied arts show that cultic veneration was increasingly paid to saints and martyrs on an official and 'institutional' basis from the second half of the fourth century, especially in Rome. This is attested not only by sarcophagi and mosaics – which furnish the richest source of evidence for the representations of saints in early Christianity – but also by a range of Christian gold-glass vessels (the so-called 'fondi d'oro') and bronze medallions,[66] which were probably used both for domestic and liturgical purposes. Whilst Roman martyrs received individual attention in the second half of the fourth century, scholars have highlighted how increased attention paid to the evangelists and the apostles in art (with both groups gradually portrayed with more individualised features) occurred in conjunction with the emergence of the official iconographies of the *crux invicta* and the *traditio legis* after AD 350.[67] Such new pictorial schemes not only embodied feelings of piety on behalf of Christian devotees (and perhaps also the polytheistic

[65] cf. Harley 2006, p. 230; Harley-McGowan 2018, p. 305.

[66] On the Roman bronze medallions showing Peter and Paul *in concordia*, which are probably to be assigned to the fourth century, cf. Huskinson 1982, pp. 51–9.

[67] Huskinson 1982, p. 62.

anxiety of a Rome poised between two worlds, the 'pagan' and the Christian), but also clearly helped to separate emerging Christian art and iconography from the 'pagan' culture of classical antiquity. It is noteworthy that a growing and more articulated repertoire of images and legends alluding to saints and their *loca sancta* is also found on the so-called early Byzantine *eulogies* ('blessings'). These were portable objects (including clay and metal tokens as well as *ampullae* for consecrated substances) that were used as souvenirs of pilgrimages to Christian shrines and holy places.[68]

The late Roman *tesserae* in intaglio thus inherited the pictorial development seen in late Roman Christian art and, as 'monetiform' objects, they anticipated the pilgrim Byzantine tokens at least in terms of morphology and typology. While the amount of preserved specimens from this issue is scarce, one imagines that the missing pieces must have completed the iconographic cycle, providing the recipients with all the required details that were needed for the tokens to function.

Dating and manufacturing techniques: tokens and the Roman mint(s) in early fifth century

The imperial busts of Arcadius and Honorius with the 'Urbs Roma Felix' style on the *tesserae* makes it sufficiently certain that the series was struck after the AD 404. A possible date is AD 404–408, based on the style and close similarities with the variants a and b1 of the 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue, which was struck over this time frame by the Roman mint.

A closer look at the manufacturing techniques allows us to shed light on other aspects of production. On all four *tesserae*, the reverse design has been impressed below the surface in intaglio, a technique not attested for Roman coins and medals during the early and middle imperial period. Significantly, these technical features are found on an understudied sub-group of contorniates, the so-called 'graviert/ eingelegt' series.[69] With their raised edge protecting the surface of the flan instead of a circular groove, these contorniate specimens differ significantly in morphology and technique from the 'regular' contorniate series (AD 355/360–395/423) and the so-called 'Kaiserserie' (AD 379–472). The imagery on the 'graviert/eingelegt' issue almost exclusively alludes to races, spectacles and the circus, and all are in incuse (**Pl. 29, 17-18**) or rendered in engraved outlines (**Pl. 29, 19-20**).

It is not clear whether these rare contorniate medallions, almost all found in Gaul and Germany, were produced in Rome as with the other contorniate series or elsewhere, specifically along the Rhine and Danube. It is also uncertain whether

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[68] cf. Gonosová & Kondoleon 1994, pp. 270–3; Foskolou 2012; Foskolou 2018.

[69] The nomenclature mentioned for this series is that of Mittag 1999, pp. 33, 180. See also Gnecchi 1895, pp. 279–83.

they are to be assigned to the fourth or the fifth century.[70] In any case, the images on these contorniates are the most comparable with the late Roman *tesserae* discussed here. The contorniates, however, were hand-engraved (unlike the *tesserae*) and constituted the unique product of an engraver.[71] By contrast, a minting process for the bronze tokens is suggested by the images embossed on the obverse of the extant pieces, whose reverse types were struck with an incuse design;[72] on one of the two token emissions, a Roman numeral was etched in the exergue after striking. The impression on the reverses may have been applied not only to furnish an aesthetic value, but also to differentiate these pieces from coins; at a glance these tokens look very different from regular Roman coins, whose types were struck in relief.

Another technical feature that the tokens share with contorniates are the metal inlays that were applied to both sides of the flan. All three *tesserae* available for examination have traces of metal inserts (maybe silvering or gilding) adorning both the obverse and reverse. A number of contorniate specimens from both the 'regular' series and the 'Kaiserserie' also show metal inlays: these were generally applied on the obverse in order to adorn the main types, as well as the additional symbols (e.g. palm branch, leaf, solar symbol, swastika, trident) that were engraved, scratched or stippled.[73] On many specimens, this imagery was inlaid with different metals (e.g. silver, gold and silver, copper, brass, and other unspecified metals). In certain cases the metal insert originally applied to the surface of specimens has undoubtedly fallen out.[74]

The techniques used for the manufacture of the bronze *tesserae* thus reflect some of the methods that were implemented in Rome to produce contorniates from the mid-fourth century until the AD 470s. Moreover, these similarities with the contorniates, as well as with some of the variants of the 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue and the 'Asina'

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[70] Alföldi 1943, pp. 23–4, regarded the incuse contorniates as non-Roman products, perhaps struck in Gallic and Germanic areas, due to what he considered their characterless imagery, even though he recognised the possibility that some of the reverses may connect to Rome. Mazzarino 1951, pp. 130–1, identified the series as a Roman issue and an 'ideale continuazione delle emissioni *S C* del principato'. More recently, Mittag 1999, pp. 33–4, and 180, has assigned the 'graviert/eingelegt' series to the fourth century on stylistic grounds, and has suggested they may have been produced in the Rhine and Danubian areas where they were found, e.g. Trier and Siscia. An engraved contorniate carrying the mint designation SM SIS (= Sacra Moneta Siscia) on the edge might hint that a contorniate production took place in Siscia: Mittag 1999, p. 34. However, the inscription may have been engraved even later: Alföldi and Alföldi 1976, Kat. no. 663, Taf. 210.

[71] Gnecchi 1895, p. 280.

[72] It is unlikely that these tokens were produced by using a mixed technique (striking obverse types and engraving directly onto the individual flan for reverse types); this would have made the process too slow, and it seems inconceivable for the production of artefacts of low quality metal, as in this case.

[73] The 'graviert/eingelegt' series includes a few specimens bearing traces of metal inlays: Alföldi and Alföldi 1976, Kat. no. 643, Taf. 205,4; Kat. no. 664, Taf. 207,5; Kat. no. 665, Taf. 207,6.

[74] Mondello 2019. One cannot be sure whether the insertion of metal inlays, which imply the work of specialists with professional skills, took place at the time of manufacturing or later, at the request of the owners of the pieces; in some cases, the antiquity of the metal inlays is certainly plausible, although this can only be determined by an in-depth technical analysis, see Mittag 1999, p. 178. During the Renaissance, some of the 'spintriae' and bronze tokens with numerals received private punch marks of the families Gonzaga or Este, which show a tiny eagle inlaid in silver: Riva and Simonetta, 1979; Reggiani, 1992; Campana, 2009, p. 44.

tesserae are suggestive of the idea that the tokens in intaglio originated from the same workshop as these pieces, or at least had the same geographic background: Rome. Moreover, as seen above, the depictions attested on the reverse types of these coin-like objects were part of a Christian pictorial repertoire whose schemes emerge through artworks and artefacts made mainly in Rome and Northern Italy.[75]

The place of production of these *tesserae* poses the same problems that arise when considering the production location of both the contorniates and the 'Asina' tokens. It is a matter of debate whether these two artefact classes were produced by the official mint of Rome or whether they should instead be ascribed to unofficial workshops because of their inconsistencies. Although contorniates and the 'Asina' tokens bear imperial types attested on standard bronzes struck by the Roman mint, they are not official products and share features that make it problematic to determine the context of production (inferior quality, errors in titulature).[76]

In regards to the bronze tokens in intaglio, a set of strong indications provided by imperial imagery and legend (including bust details, legend division), stylistic parallels, manufacturing techniques, and the application of metal inserts makes it highly probable that these monetiform objects were produced within the Roman mint; differences in diameter and weight, however, mean we must reject the idea that the series was struck with the obverse dies used for regular coinage. Yet, the idea that these early Christian *tesserae* were produced by private workshops operating in Rome cannot be completely dismissed, due to the limited volume as well as the imagery of the series, which is suggestive of private interests and sponsorship. Whether Roman citizens and organisations might freely use the official mint to produce coinage themselves – known as 'free coinage' in modern scholarship – remains an open issue, and no consensus has been reached to date.[77] Similarly, we might wonder whether the official mint could be employed at the request of

[75] Admittedly craftsmen could, and did, move from place to place, and the style of one locality could easily emerge at, or merge with, another. The difficulty in determining the place of origin also arises for other Christian artefacts produced in late antiquity, such as the ivory caskets, see Huskinson 1982, p. 60.

[76] For contorniates, earlier literature considered these medallions were produced in the mint of Rome at the request of the Roman senatorial aristocracy: Alföldi and Alföldi 1990, *passim*. Today the consensus follows Mittag's model of private production for 'regular' contorniates, Mittag 1999, pp. 213–14. But there has been cricitism of this thesis: '[…] without such evidence as a series of dies with special mint marks that might establish their provenance (*scil.* of contorniates) in a private mint, the question of mint location is not completely resolved' (Holden 2008, p. 124, n. 19). In regards to the 'Asina' tokens, the manufacture of the series might have taken place at the Roman mint based on the parallels with standard Roman coins; the letters R M on one of the 'Asina' tokens were associated with the mint-mark of Rome by Alföldi 1951a, p. 63. But their unusual imagery, legend and spelling mistakes, as well as the low quality of the metal and style, seems to suggest private workshops; the problem remain unsolved: Mondello 2020, pp. 299–300.

[77] Around the third century, the creation of currency is described as a prerogative of the State by the jurist Julius Paulus, who states that only striking with the *forma publica* marks the transformation of a piece of metal into a Roman coin: *Dig.* 18, 1, 1, pr. (Paul 33 *ad Ed.*). The possibility for private citizens to produce currency through the official mint would thus appear unlikely for the imperial period. For Republican Rome see Woytek 2016, p. 188 ff. (Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* 8.7.3 is a key passage cited here).

private citizens to create paranumismatic objects for use within small communities.[78] If not created at the Roman mint, the quality of the dies of the tokens discussed here suggests that they were products of a workshop that employed well-trained and skilled engravers.

Early Christian tokens as liturgical or community devices?

As outlined above, Alföldi supported the idea that the bronze *tesserae* discussed here were counters employed by Christians as a response to a group of fourth century standard bronze coins that were converted into chips by 'pagans'. Nevertheless, this theory is contradicted by the above highlighted differences found between these two clusters of monetiform objects (which are not die-linked), whose different typology, iconography and technique hint at different purposes. Furthermore, the image of a figure bearing a cross on specimen no. 1 – the piece not known to Alföldi – allows us to exclude a ludic function. This type, probably to be interpreted as a holy figure or an ecclesiastic bearing a processional cross, evokes the dramatic Gospel episode of the 'Way to Calvary', a story central to the biblical narrative of the Passion of Christ as well as subsequent Christian liturgical and theological exposition. In light of the reluctance of early Christian artists to represent Jesus' suffering and dying on the cross, this iconography and, by association, the object on which it is portrayed, had a serious dogmatic meaning, far from suitable for gaming tokens.

Likewise, it is unlikely that *tesserae* nos. 2–4 were amulets or talismans.[79] This interpretation does not explain the complete absence of the reverse imagery amongst the intaglios and magical gems in the Roman imperial and Byzantine periods, although some of these artefacts did reproduce motifs drawn from biblical iconography (e.g. Moses, Solomon, Jesus as the Good Shepherd, Saint Procopius).[80] Furthermore, none of the four bronze *tesserae* have holes or eyelets, which are generally found on Roman coins and coin-like objects that have been converted into pendants or amulets in order to hang around the neck by a *funiculum* (cord). Most importantly, no amuletic function explains the Roman numerals and Latin letters on the reverses. Although their meaning is far from clear, numerals and letters are suggestive of a practical function, giving a certain indication about the purpose of the token in a certain context.

Given their morphological and iconographic features, it might be proposed that these bronze *tesserae* were religious devices used for ritual or community purposes within Christian communities in early fifth century Rome. Although the data is admittedly tiny, some thoughts can be posited.

The information provided by the numerals and letters on the tokens, which must have been intelligible to the recipients, could have had the purpose of regulating particular services or operations on the occasion of rituals, ceremonies, and other

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[78] For the production location and the authority behind the so-called '*spintriae*' and the tokens with Roman numerals from the Julio-Claudian period cf. Martini 1999, p. 13; Campana 2009, p. 54; Küter 2019, p. 79; Rowan 2020, p. 109.

[79] This idea was argued by Kent by analogy with one of the 'Asina' tokens carrying the portrait of Honorius: Kent 1988, p. 282, n. 1; Mondello 2020, p. 277, no. 8, pl. 24.7.

[80] *SGG*, 309–11; Mastrocinque 2014, pp. 187–96.

liturgies connected to the cult of the saints. Recent scholarship has focused on the role of liturgical commemoration, processions, and translations of relics of saints as essential tools for the elaboration of public, ritualised forms of power display by the Church and the episcopate from the second half of the fourth century onwards.[81] An event which has been said to 'marque un tournant décisif dans l'histoire du culte des saints et leurs reliques'[82] is the victory of the bishop Ambrose of Milan against the Arians after the so-called 'fight for the basilicas' in AD 386. The relic translation of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius to the newly erected *basilica Ambrosiana* and the relevant triumphal parade which followed not only testify to the efforts of the bishop of Milan in articulating his dominant political position, but also show how the use of *translatio reliquiae* by the episcopate was converted into ritualised forms of representation in order to strengthen cohesive power in this early Christian Catholic community.[83] Moreover, in the period immediately following Ambrose's actions, the number of known relic translations increased dramatically across France, Africa, Spain and Italy.[84]

The bronze tokens discussed here may have been used in one of these events, with numbers and letters possibly referring to a value or monetary sum linked to some kind of exchange, or providing the recipients with necessary details on the scope of the token in that specific liturgical context. A potential use of these objects as a token of gratitude for attendance or offers made by the devotee might also be considered, thus anticipating the role played by holy cards ('santini') in the medieval and modern Roman Catholic tradition.[85] If this is the case, one might presume that the Roman numerals referred to some aspect of the event being commemorated, alluding for instance to the date (the day or month) on which the considered event took place within the Christian cyclical liturgy.[86] As in the case of some of the medieval and

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[81] Kritzinger, 2011. The bibliography on the cult of the saints in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages is huge: for instance, cf. Heinzelmann 1979; Brown 1981; Howard-Johnston & Hayward 1999.

[82] Rimoldi 1984, p. 1074.

[83] Thus Pritzinger, 2011, *passim*. The reconstruction of the procedure for relic translation in late antiquity is problematic as no written source from the fourth century describes such an event. But a pictorial illustration is provided by the so-called *Trierer Elfenbeinplatte*, a half-relief ivory tablet whose detailed depiction of relic translation probably referred to a specific but not identified event: cf. Fischer 1969; Holum and Vikan 1979; Weber 1979.

[84] cf. Paul. Nol. *Ep.* 31, 1; 32, 10/17; Hier. *c.Vig.* 5; Greg.Gr. *Dial.* 3, 30; 9, 34 and 51; 10, 20 and 34; 10a, 8.

[85] Calamari and Di Pasqua, 2007; Hoffner, 2018, p. 82. In modern times, prayer cards have also become popular among Orthodox Christians and Protestant Christians: Hasinoff, 2011, p. 206; Illes, 2011, p. 68.

[86] References to the days of the month and special days related to traditional Roman and Christian holy days, as well as the birthdays of emperors and days when consuls and praetors took office, are given in Roman numerals under the name of the month in the Christian Calendar or *Laterculus* compiled by Polemius Silvius (*c.* AD 448–49), who attempted to integrate the traditional Roman festival cycle with the new Christian holy days, cf. Paniagua 2018. Around the mid-fourth century, a cyclical liturgy of Christian festivals tied to specific places on specific days – including the *depositiones episcoporum et martyrum* (effectively a festival calendar of local sainted bishops and martyrs, described in sections XI and XII) – was assembled along with a myth-historical chronology rooting the practices in the deep past of Rome's heritage in the *Chronography of 354*, probably written by the calligrapher Furius Dionysius Filocalus. See Salzman 1990; Burgess 2012.

modern holy cards, the token could thus have served as an *in memoriam* ('in memory of') card *ante litteram*.

But the use of these bronze tokens for community (not strictly liturgical) purposes cannot be ruled out. In fact, it is plausible that the tokens were used as devices in a distribution system aimed at controlling access to a given event within ecclesiastical community life, such as banquets, ritual meals, or similar events. Recent scholarly research focusing on the phenomenon of tokens and their evolution in antiquity reveals that the functioning of the religious and social life of communities in the Graeco-Roman world was often based upon the employment of monetiform objects. These artefacts reflect the ways in which people sharing the same religious beliefs acted and interacted on the occasion of religious events, and expressed piety in private settings. A significant parallel are the *tesserae* from Palmyra, produced in clay and lead between the first and third centuries AD, which have convincingly been interpreted as entrance tickets to religious banquets or connected to distributions following certain sacrifices.[87] Moreover, as seen above, the use of tokens as a symbol of religious identity and membership is also found at the time of Honorius on the so-called 'Asina' tokens, which presumably circulated in Rome for use in non-canonical Christian environments. In this author's view, the bronze coin-like objects carrying the enigmatic image of a donkey suckling a foal (the 'Asina' type) may have been used in the first quarter of the fifth century as votive items by (Gnostic?) Roman Christian groups probably influenced by Hellenism, perhaps for a ritual purpose or to express their identity and foster group cohesion.

Whatever the exact purpose of the tokens discussed here, there is no doubt that these early Christian artefacts were uncommon objects, made in incuse and adorned with precious metal inserts, which were probably distributed within small groups or for occasional events, as the small number of known specimens might indicate. As was the case for other Greek and Roman tokens employed in polytheistic cultic contexts, these *tesserae* prove to be crucial documents for understanding unseen components of the development of religious iconography at the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries, whose images, embodying devotion to the saints, presumably made these objects potential icons and devotional items (*devotionalia*) in the minds of the faithful.

As some of the extant earliest Christian *tesserae*, these objects constitute an important material source which allows us to shed light on aspects of liturgical and community life among Christian groups active under the Theodosians in the city of Rome. Like other media (including ivory caskets and diptychs, gold-glass vessels, and medallions), these extremely rare artefacts were part of Roman visual hagiography and, through their images of saints and holy figures, they crystallised the social and religious memory of their Christian recipients, whose local identity was probably tied to an 'institutional' Christianity.

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[87] cf. Dunant 1959; Mesnil du Buisson 1962; Raja 2015.

Conclusions

The discussion of the early Christian tokens presented here reveals the information that can be hidden in these everyday objects.

The iconographic analysis shows that the imperial portraiture depicted on this token series has close similarities to that attested on the 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue struck by the Roman mint from AD 404–408. Technical features of the tokens, such as the impression of the reverse types in incuse, the application of metal inlays, as well as incisions after striking, match some of the manufacturing methods employed for the production of contorniates, which were issued between the mid-fourth century and the third quarter of the fifth century, probably in Rome. This, in addition to the fact that the tokens share some of the Christian pictorial motifs with artworks and artefacts made mainly in late Rome and Northern Italy, makes it highly probable that the tokens had the same geographic background as the 'Urbs Roman Felix' issue and contorniates – that is, the city of Rome. However, it remains unclear whether these tokens were issued at the Roman mint or in a private workshop active in Rome in early fifth century. As for their purpose, the analysis suggests that the *tesserae* were probably distributed and used on the occasion of liturgical events; alternatively, they may have served as devices to access certain services or operations connected to the community life of Christian groups in early fifth century Rome. Roman numerals and Latin letters occurring on the reverses, the meaning of which have been lost to us, may have corresponded to a value or monetary sum of the token, or else they provided the user with detail on the use of the token within a certain event, or on the event itself. In any case, the depictions portrayed on the pieces clearly disclose a Christian cultic background consecrated to saints (apostles, evangelists, and martyrs). In terms of morphology and typology, these late Roman *tesserae* can be regarded as the antecedents of later Byzantine tokens, which have been interpreted as souvenirs of pilgrimages (*eulogies*/'blessings') to Christian shrines of the Holy Land. However, an association of the late Roman bronze *tesserae* to pilgrimages is unlikely, and their function remains unclear.

These artefacts represent some of the earliest extant products of a developing pictorial repertoire experimenting with the representations of saints, which largely developed from the fourth century onwards. Their images shed light on the development of some of the pictorial conventions and schemes introduced in late Roman art, important in understanding the nascent growth of specifically Christian images and narrative cycles, whose origins are a matter for debate due to the scarcity of archaeological and literary evidence.[88] These monetiform artefacts also demonstrate how the visual arts were applied in early Christianity not only to monumental and official art in order to sponsor theological notions and cults, but also to everyday objects. The latter constituted one of the vehicles serving the identity, self-assertion and affirmation of localism in the context of inter-Christian opposition and interaction in late antique Rome.

[88] It is currently assumed that the *incipit* of a properly Christian art should be assigned to the beginning of the third century, cf. Bisconti 2011, pp. 35–6. The issue of the original nature of Christianity as a non-iconic cult, which has been attributed by some scholars to Jewish aniconism and hostility towards images, remains a topic for debate; see Grabar 1969; Finney 1994, *passim*; Jensen 2000, pp. 13–20; Suzawa 2008.

Acknowledgments

Key to Plates 27-29

1. AE token. *Obv.*: Arcadius, pearl and rosette diademed. *Rev.*: Figure carrying a cross (H.P. Hall Sale, Glendining & Co., Ltd., 16-17, 20-21 November 1950, lot 2190). Source: Hall 1950, pl. LIV, 2190). Not to scale. © Glendining & Co., Ltd.
2. AE token (Ø 19.06mm, 3.09g). *Obv.*: Arcadius, pearl and rosette diademed. *Rev.*: Male figure seated l., reading a codex held in his hands (Courtesy of the BnF, inv. no. 17082). (1.5x). © BnF, Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques.
3. AE token (Ø 21mm, 4.67g). *Obv.*: Honorius, pearl and rosette diademed. *Rev.*: Male figure standing r., looking l., raising his r. hand to r. and holding a *rotulus* in his l. (Courtesy of the Museo Civico di Bologna, inv. no. MCABo 53828). (1.5x). © Museo Civico Archeologico of Bologna.
4. AE token (Ø 19mm, 2.22g). *Obv.*: Arcadius, pearl and rosette diademed. *Rev.*: Quadruped standing l. (Courtesy of the British Museum, inv. no. 1844,0425.2592). (1.5x). © The British Museum, Department of Coins and Medals.
5. AE coin repurposed as a token (Ø 20mm, 2.83g). *Obv.*: Julian II, pearl diademed. *Rev.*: XIII incised into a flattened and erased surface (Courtesy of the BnF, inv. no. 17079). (1.5x). © BnF, Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques.
6. AE coin repurposed as a token (Ø 18mm, 2.14g). *Obv.*: Theodosius I, pearl diademed. *Rev.*: XII incised into a flattened and erased surface (Courtesy of the BnF, inv. no. 17081). (1.5x). © BnF, Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques.
7. Copper alloy coin, 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue (1.79g). *Obv.*: Arcadius, pearl diademed. *Rev.*: Roma standing facing, head right, holding spear with trophy attached and Victory on globe (Courtesy of the British Museum, inv. no. 1951,1115.840). (1.5x). © The British Museum, Department of Coins and Medals.
8. Copper alloy coin, 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue (2.10g). *Obv.*: Arcadius, rosette diademed. *Rev.*: Roma standing facing, head facing front, holding spear with trophy attached and Victory on globe (Courtesy of the British Museum, inv. no. 1951,1115.837). (1.5x). © The British Museum, Department of Coins and Medals.
9. AE coin, 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue (2.54g). *Obv.*: Honorius, pearl (and rosette?) diademed. *Rev.*: Roma standing facing, head facing front, holding spear with trophy attached and Victory on globe. Dutch Numismatic Auction, Auction 4, 10.11.2019, lot 402. (1.5x). © Dutch Numismatic Auction (https://dutchnumismaticauction.com/).

10. AE coin, 'Urbs Roma Felix' issue (13mm; 2.08g). *Obv.*: Honorius, pearl diademed. *Rev.*: Roma standing facing, head facing right, holding spear with trophy attached and Victory on globe. Ancient and Medieval Coins Canada, Auction 1, 01.12.2018, lot 279. (1.5x). © Ancient and Medieval Coins Canada (https://www.amcoinscanada.com/).

11. AE token (Ø 15mm, 1.25g). *Obv.*: Honorius, pearl (and rosette?) diademed. *Rev.*: Donkey standing r. suckling a foal (Courtesy of the British Museum, inv. no. 1922,0317.164.b). (1.5x). © The British Museum, Department of Coins and Medals.

12. AE token. *Obv.*: Honorius, pearl (and rosette?) diademed. *Rev.*: Donkey standing r. suckling a foal (Collection of Girolamo Tanini, now lost). Source: Tanini 1791, 352, pl. VIII. Not to scale.

13. Mosaic on the lunette of the so-called 'St Lawrence', South arm, Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna. Source: Wikimedia Commons, public domain (https://commons. wikimedia.org/wiki/File:St._Lawrence._Mosaic_in_the_Mausoleum_of_Galla_ Placidia._Ravenna._Italy.jpg).

14. *Codex Purpureus Rossanensis*, Gregory-Aland Σ or 042, f. 241r (*c.* AD 550), Museo Diocesano e del Codex, Rossano. Source: Wikimedia Commons, public domain (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RossanoGospelsFolio121rStMark.jpg).

15. Mosaic of two apostles beneath a hieratic scallop shell, Large lunette on north side of the drum, Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna. Source: PatER (http://bbcc.ibc. regione.emilia-romagna.it/pater/loadcard.do?id_card=176643). © PatER, Patrimonio Culturale dell'Emilia Romagna, public domain.

16. Brass token (Ø 20mm, 3.58g). *Obv.*: bare male head with legend naming C. Mitreius. *Rev.*: Basilica of L. Sextilius. (Courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum). (1.5x). © The Ashmolean Museum, Heberden Coin Room.

17. Brass contorniate (Ø 37mm, 27.95g). Side A: Charioteer on horse l., engraved and silvered palm branch on r. field. Side B: Charioteer standing facing, head facing to right. Bertolami Fine Arts, Auction 12, lot 1006, 29.10.2014. © Bertolami Fine Arts (https://bertolamifineart.com/).

18. Brass contorniate (Ø 35mm, 26.25g). Side A: Performer in full figure l., holding coils of rope in r. hand and an end of the rope in l. hand. Side B: Charioteer standing right, head left and palm under left arm. Gemini, LLC, Auction 5, lot 862, 06.01.2009. © Gemini, LLC (http://www.geminiauction.com/).

19. Brass contorniate (Ø 31mm, 30.87g). Side A: Large engraved palm. Side B: Engraved laurel wreath. Gemini, LLC, Auction 5, lot 865, 06.01.2009. © Gemini, LLC (http://www.geminiauction.com/).

20. Brass contorniate (Ø 40mm, 38.92g). Side A: Large engraved monogram PE. Side B: Concentric circles centered on the central hole. Roma Numismatics Limited, Auction 4, lot 2886, 30.09.2012. © Roma Numismatics Limited (https://www.romanumismatics.com/)

Abbreviations

RIC VII: P.M. Bruun (ed.), 1966. *The Roman Imperial Coinage. Volume VII. Constantine and Licinius, A.D. 313-317* (London).

RIC X: R.A.G. Carson, J.P.C. Kent and A.M. Burnett (eds.), 1994. *The Roman Imperial Coinage. Volume X. The Divided Empire and the Fall of the Western Parts AD 395-491* (London).

SGG: A. Mastrocinque (ed.), 2003. *Sylloge Gemmarum Gnosticarum*, I (Roma).

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PLATE 27
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PLATE 28

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PLATE 29

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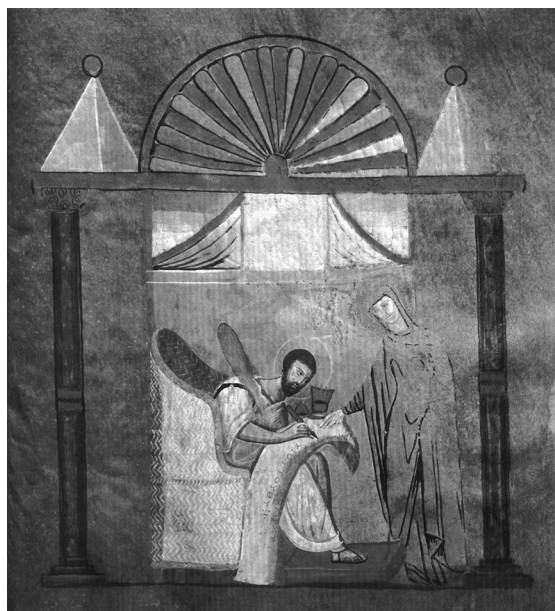

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MONDELLO, THE CULT OF THE SAINTS AND ROMAN COMMUNITIES (3)