A Medallion of Constantius II

Julia Ruff

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A MEDALLION OF CONSTANTIUS II

Julia Ruff
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PREFACE

I would like to acknowledge those individuals who have helped to make this work possible. First, I would like to thank Professor Lawton. She suggested the topic to me, provided invaluable guidance in my research, and devoted many hours to the editing of the project. I would also like to thank Ester Fajzi-DeGroot, who facilitated my viewing of this medallion, among other pieces, at the Wriston Art Center. William Metcalf, curator of coins and medals, Yale University Art Gallery, also provided assistance on this endeavor, answering many of my questions, as only a medallion expert could. Finally, I would like to thank Lauren Simonutti and Kate Siplon of the Walters Art Museum, who provided information about the Baltimore medallion. Without the generous help of these individuals this paper would not have been possible.
INTRODUCTION

This study offers a comprehensive examination of a medallion of Constantius II in the Ottilia Buerger Collection of Ancient and Byzantine Coins at Lawrence University (figures 1 and 2).¹ This piece is solid gold and is unusual in that it is one of only three known versions of this type, although each of the three versions of the medallions differs in its details. The Lawrence medallion is further distinguished from other medallions by its sheer size, nine solidi, and is about the size of the palm of a person’s hand. The obverse, or front, of the medallion shows a bust of the emperor draped and cuirassed, facing right.² Constantius is depicted raising his right hand and holding a globe in his left. A Victory stands on the globe, crowning the emperor with a wreath. The inscription is D(ominus) N(oster) CONSTANTIVS NAX(imus) (intended to read MAX) AVGVSTVS, which translates: our lord, Constantius Augustus (a reference to Constantius’ office). The reverse, or back, of the medallion depicts the emperor nimbate, or wearing a halo. Constantius rides in a front-facing six-horse chariot, or seiugis. He raises his right hand and holds a globe in his left. On either side of the chariot is a Victory, crowning the emperor with a wreath. Beneath the chariot is an exergue, in which various goods representing war booty are displayed, along with the mint mark, AN, signifying that the medallion was minted in Antioch. The inscription reads

¹ The comprehensive catalogue of the coins in this collection is contained a volume edited by Carol L. Lawton entitled Bearers of Meaning: The Ottilia Buerger Collection of Ancient and Byzantine Coins at Lawrence University (Appleton, WI: Lawrence University Press, 1995).
² By this period the standard way of depicting the emperor was to show him wearing a cuirass, or breastplate, covered by a drape, which is then fastened with a brooch. Portraits are generally done in profile, and in this case, the emperor faces to the right.
D(ominus) N(oster) CONSTANTIVS VICTOR SEMPER AVG(ustus), which translates: our lord Constantius Augustus, always victorious.

This paper analyses the medallion from various perspectives; it is a work of history, numismatics, and art history, because the conclusions of this paper will draw on all of these disciplines to fully understand the medallion and its significance. From a historical perspective, we must examine the era of Constantius II to comprehend the challenges that confronted the emperor, since it is most likely that he struck the medallion as a statement of propaganda to strengthen his political position in a turbulent age. We will also draw on the work of classical scholars in the field of numismatics to understand the occasions on which ancients struck medallions and how these objects differed from coins, the other product of ancient mints. Numismatic research will also inform our examination of the production of the Lawrence medallion and others like it. Further, we will use the techniques of art historians to analyze the quality and meaning of the images and symbols that appear on this medallion of Constantius II. Because multiple versions of this medallion exist, we will also extend the analytical techniques of the art historian to two other medallions, one in the numismatic collection in the Bode Museum in Berlin (figures 3 and 4) and the other in the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore (figures 5 and 6) to determine how they compare to the Lawrence medallion. We will then draw on all three disciplines in an attempt to link our medallion to a specific historical event and to read the message that it expressed to ancient Romans.
THE SOURCES

The primary source for this paper was the medallion from the Lawrence collection itself. The paper represents an attempt to "read" this material survival of the classical world. More conventional sources, however, presented problems. First, ancient written sources for the history of the reign of Constantius II are virtually nonexistent, consisting primarily of the work of one historian, Ammianus Marcellinus, whose work we will return to. There is also a general lack of secondary sources on Constantius II, since he had the misfortune of ruling between Constantine the Great and Julian the Apostate, two famous emperors on whom historians of the period tend to dwell. Another concern for the researcher is that there is very little information about medallions, despite the importance of numismatics for the study of the ancient world. Jocelyn Toynbee's book (1944) is still the foremost work on medallions, and, as such, my conclusions about medallions as objects are based primarily on her research. My conclusions are thus limited by the nature of my sources.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Analysis of this medallion must begin with an examination of the ruler who issued it, Constantius II, Roman emperor from AD 337 until 361, and the political world of the third and fourth centuries that he inhabited. Rome in the third century experienced a period of crisis characterized both by foreign conflicts and civil warfare in which individual generals employed their armies to seize imperial authority. The attempts to resolve this crisis fundamentally shaped the career of Constantius II and are essential to our understanding of his difficult reign.
The most significant effort to stabilize the Roman world of the third century was that of Diocletian. This general, a native of present-day Croatia, succeeded in establishing himself as the sole ruler of Rome in AD 284/285. He astutely recognized that maintenance of his new power depended on his creation of governmental institutions capable of defending themselves from "outside attack and [preventing] usurpers from within."\(^3\) The new ruler sought to solve two key problems of the Roman world that underlay the crisis of the third century: the sheer size of the empire that made its administration difficult, and the constant struggles for imperial power by commanders of the increasingly professional armies necessary to defend the state's long boundaries. Thus, Diocletian created a new administrative structure known as the Tetrarchy, which empowered four key officials, two Augusti and two Caesars, to administer an empire divided into western and eastern halves. In order to provide more effective rule and to better defend the empire from attacks, Diocletian intended for one Augustus and one Caesar to administer the west, and the other set of officials to govern the east.\(^4\)

With his new structure, Diocletian also sought to establish an orderly transfer of power from one ruler to the next. After a set period, Diocletian stipulated that the Augusti would abdicate their thrones to the Caesars, who would then become the new Augusti and designate two new Caesars. Diocletian did this to establish harmony within the Tetrarchy by ensuring that the Caesars would not resent the power of the Augusti, knowing that they too would eventually hold the position.\(^5\) Furthermore, he required the retired Augusti to dwell in the provinces so that they would not be able to influence or

\(^3\) J.P. L'Orange, *Art Forms and Civic Life in the Late Roman Empire*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 44.
\(^4\) L'Orange, 44
\(^5\) L'Orange, 44-45
challenge their successors. In accordance with his plan, Diocletian made Maximian his co-Augustus in AD 286, and in 293 the two named Flavius Valerius Constantius and Caius Galerius Valerius Maximinus as their Caesars. Maximian and Constantius administered the western half of the empire and Diocletian and Galerius performed the same functions in the east. According to Diocletian's plan, the two Augusti abdicated their titles in 305 and their Caesars, Constantius I and Galerius, became the new Augusti. At the same time, Constantius I and Galerius selected Flavius Severus and C. Galerius Valerius Maximinus as the new Caesars.

The second generation of the Tetrarchy, however, was unable to maintain the stability that Diocletian had hoped to establish. Part of the problem was the tension inherent in the Tetrarchy. Although the four administrators represented themselves as equals, the Caesars were actually subordinate to the Augusti and naturally aspired to full power. More dangerously, Diocletian's new order meant that the ambitious sons of Augusti might be bypassed for the position of Caesar, and the existence of two such men who sought to claim their fathers' positions as a right of inheritance plunged Rome again into civil warfare in the early fourth century. When Constantius I died unexpectedly in 306, his troops elevated his son, Constantine I, to the position of Augustus, ignoring the existence of a designated successor in the east, the Caesar Severus. This act prompted Maxentius, the son of the retired Maximian, to seize power militarily in the west. Out of

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6 L'Orange, 45
8 Hornblower and Spawforth, 472
the unavoidable conflict, which extended from 307 to 324, Constantine I, son of Constantius I, emerged as the sole ruler.\(^9\)

Constantine solidified his position by employing members of his family in the empire’s administration. Three of his sons became administrative Caesars.\(^10\) Thus, Constantine named Constantine II as Caesar and administrator of Britain, Gaul, and Spain, with headquarters at Trier. In 324 Constantius II received the authority of Caesar, administering the wealthy east, including Asia Minor, Egypt, Syria, and the Orient, from Antioch.\(^11\) In 333 Constans, the third son of Constantine I, also received the dignity of Caesar. Resident in Milan, he administered Italy, Illyrium, Pannonia, and Africa. Thus there were three Caesars, but only one Augustus.\(^12\) Constantine also employed his nephews in the administration of his empire; he gave Delmatius control of the lower Danube, Thrace, Dacia, Macedonia, and Greece, while Hannibalianus received Pontus and Cappadocia in eastern Asia Minor.\(^13\) Constantine also removed from the scene any threats to his new order; in 326 he executed his most popular son, Crispus, and his nephew, Licinianus.\(^14\) This division of the Roman world, according to one historian, was “an honorable settlement of a thorny problem, there being so many males of the dynasty at an age for, and capable of, governing, and Constantine may have died in the happy expectation that all would run smoothly after his death.”\(^15\)

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\(^9\) Hornblower and Spawforth, 379  
\(^11\) Hornblower and Spawforth, 379  
\(^12\) Hornblower and Spawforth, 380  
\(^14\) Bourne, 549  
\(^15\) Bowder, 43
When Constantine I died in 337, his three sons were elevated from their status of Caesars to Augusti, and they ordered the army to kill all of Constantine’s nephews as threats to their authority, except the sickly Gallus and the very young Julian. Julian would later claim that it was Constantius II alone who ordered these murders. Having eliminated their competition, the three brothers met to divide the territory of their dead cousins, Delmatius and Hannibalianus. Their negotiations did not allocate any additional territory to Constantine II. Constans, however, received Macedonia and Achaea in addition to his original territory, while Constantius II gained Constantinople and the surrounding area. However, civil war soon followed these negotiations. Constantine II was dissatisfied with the results of the negotiations, and as a result invaded the territory of Constans in 340, initiating a brief conflict that ended with the death of Constantine II in battle. Constans enjoyed only brief control of the western half of the empire, however; he fell victim in 350 to a usurper, Magnentius, who also threatened the territory of Constantius II on the west. The latter’s authority also seemed to be challenged by another usurper, Vetranio, who seized power in Illyrium. There is, however, some suspicion that Constantius II supported Vetranio’s usurpation, since his rise effectively stopped the eastward expansion of Magnentius. Such a theory gains additional support from the fact that Vetranio had the support of Hannibalianus’ widow, who also happened to be the sister of Constantius II.

17 Bowder, 43-4
18 Barnes (1981), 262
19 Barnes (1982), 198
20 Barnes (1981), 263
21 Barnes (1981), 263
22 Bowder, 46
23 Bowder, 46
Out of such complex and bloody conflict, Constantius II emerged as sole ruler of the Roman world in 351. His difficult decade of single-handed power (351-361) requires close analysis for us to fully understand the Lawrence medallion and brings us to the work of Ammianus Marcellinus. The *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus, written about 390, "is by far our fullest, most precise and most reliable narrative source for military campaigns and political events at the imperial court in the fourth century," and thus influenced all histories written about the period, both ancient and modern. 24

Because Ammianus has influenced the majority of written works that deal with the reign of Constantius II, it is important to examine him as an historian before considering the events he reported during the reign of Constantius II.

**AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS**

Unfortunately, the only information we have about Ammianus is what he chose to reveal about himself in his work. 25 He was born around AD 330, possibly in Antioch, to a Greek family belonging to the *curial* (upper middle) class. 26 His family’s status enabled him to acquire a position with the imperial bodyguard in 353, under the command of the general Ursicinius. 27 Ammianus served under Ursicinius until the general’s dismissal in 359. 28 Although Ammianus does not mention what he did immediately following this, it is safe to assume that he remained in the army because he

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26 Rolfe, ix-x
27 Rolfe, x
later served on Julian's campaign to Persia in 363. After this campaign, Ammianus seems to have stayed in Antioch. Although it is not entirely clear what he did in his first years of civilian life, it is known that he traveled to various places, including Greece and Egypt. Eventually Ammianus moved to Rome, where he began to write his history for a primarily Roman audience.

Ammianus was especially qualified to write a history of the late empire because his "wide travels and all too close familiarity with the rough and tumble life of active military service... gave him opportunities for observing the conditions in many provinces and for studying the problems which faced the military leaders of his times." As Ammianus traveled on military campaigns throughout the empire, he recorded what he saw and interviewed witnesses to the events of his time from all levels of society. These people, some of whom he cites, provided Ammianus a fairly complete picture of life in the late empire. In addition, this ancient historian consulted public records to find additional information and to verify facts. Within his text Ammianus also refers to the works of earlier historians that he had consulted. While demonstrating the breadth of his reading, these references have allowed modern scholars to identify most of the sources used by Ammianus, although they have no way of knowing the extent to which he depended on these. Ammianus prided himself on providing a truthful account, and thus, when he did consult other sources, he made an effort to verify the information.

29 Thompson, 10-11
30 Thompson, 12-13
31 Thompson, 14
32 Thompson, 125
33 Thompson, 20
35 Thompson, 21
36 Thompson, 21-22
contained in them. This was not always possible, however, and he forthrightly qualified those facts that he was unable to verify personally.\textsuperscript{37} Ammianus himself says:

So far as I could investigate the truth, I have, after putting the various events in clear order, related what I myself was allowed to witness in the course of my life, or to learn by meticulous questioning of those directly concerned (Amm. Marc., XV, 1, 1).\textsuperscript{38}

The result is that the work of Ammianus contains few contradictions, and for the most part seems to be factually accurate.\textsuperscript{39}

Despite the overall reliability of Ammianus as a source for the reign of Constantius, he, like most historians, could not entirely prevent his own viewpoint from making its way into his selection of the facts that he presented and his interpretation of them. His allegiances must be made clear for us to assess his validity as a source, and his text clearly shows that Ammianus admired two figures in particular: his former commander, Ursicinius, and the future emperor, Julian. Ammianus described these two men in the most flattering terms and condemned those who opposed either man. Since Constantius came into conflict with both, we must assume that the portrayal of Constantius in the work of Ammianus reflects the author's bias.\textsuperscript{40} Ammianus uses literary devices to paint the emperor as a tyrant, and also leaves out certain facts and details that would ameliorate this negative portrayal of Constantius.\textsuperscript{41} We can also detect in the writings of Ammianus the prejudices of his own middle class.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{37} Thompson, 38
\textsuperscript{38} Rolfe, 109
\textsuperscript{39} Thompson, 40
\textsuperscript{40} Thompson, 42
\textsuperscript{41} Thompson, 61
\textsuperscript{42} Barnes (1998), 17
Ammianus relied so heavily on the testimony of his informants, we must be alert to their biases appearing in the historian's work, too.\textsuperscript{43}

The style of Ammianus also presents certain problems. In general, his accounts are richly descriptive in nature, leading some scholars to caution that he may at times have sacrificed truth for artistic value.\textsuperscript{44} His text can also be disjointed and confusing because it consists of a series of dramatic scenes, without much narrative connection.\textsuperscript{45}

Problems of this sort are made worse by the fact that Greek, not Latin, was the first language of Ammianus. Thus, his text at times is halting and grammatically incorrect, possibly altering Ammianus' intended meaning. Yet, despite these difficulties, we can trust the work of Ammianus as a source for the chronology and basic facts of Constantius' major military and political accomplishments, if not the actual character of the emperor.

Fortunately, however, this paper is primarily concerned with the major military accomplishments of Constantius, since these events are most likely those commemorated by this medallion. Thus, the \textit{Res Gestae} of Ammianus is quite useful in studying much of the reign of Constantius. The work originally consisted of thirty-one books, of which the first thirteen, covering the period from the accession of Nerva in AD 96 through the Battle of Adrianople and the death of the Emperor Valens in 378, have been lost.\textsuperscript{46} The surviving history begins in the year 353 and opens with a discussion of the cruelty of the administration of Gallus, the cousin and Caesar of Constantius.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{43} Thompson, 69
\textsuperscript{44} Barnes (1998), 13-14
\textsuperscript{45} Barnes (1998), 15
\textsuperscript{46} Barnes (1998), 2
\textsuperscript{47} Rolfe, xv
REIGN OF CONSTANTIUS II

Ammianus described the tumultuous political life of the fourth century that kept Constantius constantly concerned with maintaining his tenuous hold on power. As will be shown, the Lawrence medallion reflects one aspect of the emperor's struggle to establish and maintain his power.

When Constantius took control of the east in 337 he became responsible for the ongoing conflict with the Persians begun during the reign of his father. In that year Persia's new ruler, King Shapur, invaded the Roman Empire and besieged the city Nisbis for two months. Constantius successfully lifted the siege of Nisbis in 338, although sporadic warfare with the Persians continued. Indeed, Constantius seemed to settle into a defensive routine that changed very little during the next ten years; for most of the year he remained in Antioch, but each summer he campaigned against the Persians. In 343 Constantius took the title "Adiabenicus," when he successfully invaded the Persian province Adiabene, and in 346 he stopped King Shapur's second attack on Nisbis. The tide of the war turned in 348 when the Persians defeated Constantius at Singara (a city to the south-east of Nisbis). In 350 Constantius defended Nisbis for the third time against the Persians.

The Persians, however, were not the only enemies Constantius confronted in the east. He began to fight the Sarmatians of the present-day Ukraine beginning in 337 and took the title "Sarmaticus" when he defeated them in 340. He also dealt with Vetranio,
who had seized power in Illyrium, by forcing him into retirement. This was a lenient
punishment for usurpation of power, which is further evidence that Constantius had been
behind Vetranio’s seizure of power in the first place. In a period of truce he negotiated
in the ongoing Persian wars, Constantius next defeated the usurper Magnentius in the
costly Battle of Mursa in 351. After the Battle of Mursa, Constantius pursued the
defeated Magnentius and his supporters, until the usurper killed himself in Gaul in 352.
This battle gave Constantius sole control of the Roman world for the next decade.

Victory at Mursa and the death of Magnentius left Constantius the master of the
Roman world, but peace eluded him as ruler of an empire grown too large for one
administrator. He, like Constantine I, turned to his family, and named his cousin Gallus
as Caesar. Gallus served until 354, when his brutality and conspiracies against the
emperor resulted in his execution (Amm. Marc., XIV, 7, 1-19). It is with this event
that the surviving texts of Ammianus Marcellinus begin.

The death of Gallus found Constantius in Gaul, which was threatened by the
Alamanni (Amm. Marc., XIV, 10, 1). There, he allowed the Alamanni to successfully
sue for peace, after asking for the consent of his soldiers who were always greedy for the
spoils of victory (Amm. Marc., XIV, 10, 10-16). The ever-critical Ammianus wrote
that the soldiers gave their consent because of the “conviction, which they had formed
from frequent campaigns, that [Constantius’] fortune watched over him only in civil
troubles, but that when foreign wars were undertaken, they had often ended disastrously”

55 Bowder, 46-7
56 Bowder, 47
57 Bowder, 47-8
58 Rolfe, 53
59 Bowder, 51-2
60 Rolfe, 87
Ammianus quoted a speech, which he attributed to Constantius, in which the emperor claimed to have been a peace-loving ruler who wanted allies and not enemies along the borders of the empire (Amm. Marc., XIV, 10, 14). Nevertheless, peace was not his fate.

In 355 Constantius went on campaign against the Lentienses, a tribe of the Alamanni, and was victorious (Amm. Marc., XV, 4, 13). At this time, he turned once again to his family for assistance in governing the empire. He made his cousin Julian, his only surviving male relative, his Caesar, married him to his daughter Helena, and gave him the critical military command in Gaul so that the emperor could deal with the tribes that threatened Rome along the Danube. There Constantius fought a major campaign from 358 to 359 (Amm. Marc., XVII, 12, 1-21).

Further east, the Persian threat continued throughout the decade of the 350s. Constantius attempted to negotiate peace with the Persians from 356 through 358, but King Shapur insisted that the emperor cede Armenia and Mesopotamia to him as part of the peace settlement (Amm. Marc., XVII, 14, 1). The emperor refused to give up this territory, and the Persians invaded Mesopotamia in 359, capturing several Roman cities and forts (Amm. Marc., XVII, 14, 2 and XVII, 4, 1). As peace with the Persians continued to elude him, Constantius also campaigned against the Sarmatians and Quadri of central Europe. Ammianus praised these campaigns of Constantius, finding that his victories over both tribes were the result of his rapid marches against them (Amm. Marc.,

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61 Rolfe, 89
62 Rolfe, 87
63 Rolfe, 133
64 Bowder, 51-2
65 Bowder, 51-2
66 Bowder, 51-2
Indeed, after victory in central Europe, Constantius was hailed “Sarmaticus” for the second time (Amm. Marc., XVII, 13, 25). At this time his troops also acclaimed him as invincible (Amm. Marc., XVII, 13, 33).

Despite such honors, however, the reign of Constantius was one of constant military challenge, and the final crisis developed in 360 when the emperor’s cousin, Julian, was proclaimed Augustus by his troops after defeating the Alamanni (Amm. Marc., XVI, 12, 64). At this time, Constantius was still dealing with the threat of the Persians, and he was only able to turn his attention to Julian in 361 when a threatened Persian invasion of Mesopotamia failed to materialize (Amm. Marc., XXI, 7, 1-7). Constantius refused to recognize Julian as Augustus and civil war seemed imminent. Constantius would have had the advantage in such a war, because he had much greater forces than Julian, but the emperor died of a fever en route to meet Julian’s army in 361 (Amm. Marc., XXI, 15, 2). His last act as emperor was a stately and generous one; he proclaimed Julian as his heir in order to prevent further civil war (Amm. Marc., XXI, 15, 3). Julian was thus left as sole emperor until his own death in 363. Because he left the Christian church, he is remembered as “Julian the Apostate.”

Overall, Constantius attained no significant accomplishments during his reign, but he did rule fairly competently for a relatively long time. He enjoyed a number of military successes, but he is not remembered for any great victories, and so far as we can

67 Rolfe, 371
68 Rolfe, 395
69 Rolfe, 401
70 Rolfe, 299
71 Bowder, 52
72 Bowder, 52-3
73 Bowder, 52-3
74 Bowder, 549-50
75 Bowder, 44
determine, he had only one triumphal procession into Rome. In 357 Constantius made a triumphal entry into the capital to celebrate his victory over Magnentius. The emperor’s visit to Rome was a short one, however. Although he was impressed with the capital, he departed for Illyrium after only thirty days due to yet another military crisis, as reports arrived “that the Suebi were raiding Raetia and the Quadri Valeria, while the Sarmatians . . . were laying waste Upper Moesia and Lower Pannonia” (Amm. Marc., XXI, 10, 20). Characteristically, Ammianus criticized Constantius’ triumphal entrance to Rome because it commemorated a victory not over a foreign enemy, but one in which Roman blood flowed on both sides (Amm. Marc., XVI, 10, 1). Despite such criticism, however, Ammianus described the procession in vivid detail. What is most interesting about this account is that Ammianus described Constantius’ appearance in the procession almost exactly as he appears on the reverse of the Lawrence medallion (figure 2). As the emperor rode through Rome in his chariot:

...he kept the gaze of his eyes straight ahead, and turned his face neither to right nor to left, but . . . neither did he nod when the wheel jolted nor was he ever seen to spit, or to wipe or rub his face or nose, or move his hands about (Amm. Marc., XVI, 10, 10).

The emperor’s dignified stance in the triumphal procession was, of course, part of an ancient public relations campaign to present the emperor in a commanding stance before the people of Rome. The reign of Constantius, as we have seen, was a tumultuous one in which imperial authority faced ceaseless challenge at home and abroad. In response, emperors and their officials developed various propagandistic messages to bolster imperial authority by conveying to the public an image of the emperor as a

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76 Rolfe, 253-5
77 Rolfe, 243
78 Rolfe, 247
powerful political and military leader. We will find that the Lawrence medallion was part of such an effort, as we now turn to an examination of the nature of medallions and their recipients.

MEDALLIONS: Definition

The triumphal procession described by Ammianus may not be the subject of the Lawrence medallion, but analysis of that object in view of the career of Constantius can tell us much. Roman coins and medallions commemorated ideas and events, and served as bearers of imperial messages in a largely illiterate society.\(^7\) The chaos of the fourth century would have dictated that much of Constantius' imperial propaganda, including that appearing on coins and medallions, would convey an image of imperial stability and military prowess. The images on medallions differ from those on coins in that larger and more elaborate images can be put on medallions because of their larger size.\(^8\) Jocelyn Toynbee, in her book *Roman Medallions*, defines medallions as

\[\text{...‘monetiform’ (or ‘coin-like’) pieces which never correspond completely to any of the coin denominations in regular use and which the evidence, external and internal, proves to have been struck by the emperor for special or solemn commemoration and to have been primarily and specifically intended for presentation or distribution as individual, personal gifts, any idea of their circulation as currency being either wholly absent or, at the most, quite secondary and subordinate.}\(^9\)

Toynbee bases her claim that medallions were intended by their imperial creators to be distributed as gifts based on their relative rarity (as compared to coins),

\(^8\) Toynbee, 5
\(^9\) Toynbee, 16
larger size, higher intrinsic value, finer technique and style, and the more "varied
and individual character" of medallions as compared to coins.\textsuperscript{82}

**MEDALLIONS: Occasions for Minting**

According to Toynbee, medallions commemorate particular events. They were
"literally 'occasional' pieces, struck for the actual day," and there are generally clues as
to the nature of that event in the imagery of the medallion itself.\textsuperscript{83} Many medallions were
minted in order to commemorate events such as imperial adoptions, births, deaths,
mariages, and religious celebrations. These occasions, however, can easily be
eliminated as possible occasions for the issue of the Lawrence medallion based on the
complete absence from the medallion of representations of events in the life of the
imperial family, and specific religious symbols are similarly absent. Some occasions can
also be eliminated because they were consistently represented with a set scene that
signified that specific event. These included the *adventus* (imperial arrival, signified by
the emperor riding a horse), *profectio* (imperial departure, also signified by the emperor
riding a horse), *adlocutio* (an imperial address to the troops, signified by the emperor
addressing his troops from a platform), and *liberalitas* (an imperial donation, signified by
the emperor seated, distributing money).\textsuperscript{84}

Some occasions are not as easily eliminated because they are also often
commemorated with the image of a chariot, including the commemoration of the New
Year and the *processus consularis* (when the emperor assumed the consulship, typically
on the first of January). Those New Year's medallions with the image of a chariot

\textsuperscript{82} Toynbee, 23
\textsuperscript{83} Toynbee, 95
\textsuperscript{84} Toynbee, 108-110
typically signify the *processus consularis* because it took place during the New Year celebrations, so these two occasions will be discussed together. The depiction of the *processus consularis* is similar to that used to signify the emperor’s triumphal procession, which will be discussed later, but the *processus consularis* is differentiated from the triumphal procession by an inscription that refers to the consulship and/or the tribunician date.\(^{85}\) Missing from the Lawrence medallion, however, is any reference to the date, which was a consistent element of medallions commemorating the New Year from the third century on, typically in the form of a *vota*, a shield with numbers marking the date.\(^{86}\) Also missing is any reference to some type of New Year’s greeting, generally some form of *felicitas* (which means fertility, luck, and happiness and was a general New Year’s wish), which was also popular on medallions commemorating the New Year.\(^{87}\) Thus, the commemoration of the New Year and *processus consularis* can be eliminated as possible occasions commemorated by the Lawrence medallion.

But chariots also appear on medallions that commemorate a victory to signify the imperial *processus triumphalis*, or triumphal procession of the emperor, generally after a military victory.\(^{88}\) This seems to be the most likely occasion commemorated by the Lawrence medallion. The legend on the reverse refers to victory, and the chariot may be seen as part of a triumphal procession. This conclusion is further substantiated if one interprets the goods that appear in the exergue below the chariot as war booty. But which of the less-than-glorious victories of Constantius did the Lawrence medallion commemorate?

\(^{85}\) Toynbee, 84
\(^{86}\) Toynbee, 82
\(^{87}\) Toynbee, 89
\(^{88}\) A triumphal procession awarded to generals and later emperors who had a glorious and successful military campaign, generally against a foreign enemy.
Several possibilities can easily be excluded from our consideration. We can probably rule out one of the numerous defensive victories of Constantius, such as his three defenses of the city Nisbis from the Persians in 337-8, 346, and 350. Such actions, though they greatly outnumbered the offensive victories of Constantius, would not have been considered glorious victories worthy of commemoration. We similarly can rule out the two victories of Constantius over the Sarmatians in 340 and again in 358, for which he was twice awarded the title “Sarmaticus.” If these were the occasions which the medallion commemorates, Constantius would have included his new title in the inscription. The possibility that this medallion commemorates Constantius’ invasion of the Persian province Adiabene (343) can be discounted on similar grounds. The invasion garnered him the title “Adiabenicus,” yet reference to that honor is also absent from the medallion.

Other victories over foreign armies also seem to have little connection with the Lawrence medallion, because it lacks any reference to a specific, defeated enemy. If the medallion commemorated a foreign victory, like that over Lentienses, the Quadri, or the Danubian tribes in 358, we should expect to see some mention of the enemy’s name or an image of the defeated enemy on the medallion.\(^{89}\) In the same vein, the absence of any mention on the Lawrence piece of generals serving Constantius, like Julian who defeated the Alamanni in Gaul (354), would seem to preclude the notion that the medallion commemorated victories by the subordinates of Constantius.

\(^{89}\) A maiornia of Constans (349), for example, shows the Augustus on the stern of a ship referring to his victory in Britain (J.P.C. Kent, *Roman Coins*, ed. C.H.V. Sutherland and R.A.G. Carson, (London, Spink and Son, Ltd., 1981), 333). Another common image on coins and medallions commemorating victories over foreign “barbarians” is that of the defeated enemy supplicating to the emperor.
The one battle that the Lawrence medallion might commemorate is the biggest and most celebrated victory of Constantius, the Battle of Mursa in 351, as a result of which he became the sole Augustus of the Roman Empire. The omission on our medallion of specific reference to this victory would not preclude our piece from commemorating Mursa because such a reference might resurrect memories that Constantius took Roman lives on the battlefield. Indeed, we have already noted the criticism that Ammianus directed at the emperor in regard to this battle. Nonetheless, it seems highly possible that Constantius would have wanted to commemorate this victory. He regarded it as so important that he was still celebrating it six years later, when he made his triumphal entrance to Rome. Perhaps, too, this medallion could commemorate the triumphal procession itself.

Because of the generic nature of the victory procession, we must also seriously consider the far less exciting possibility that this medallion was simply meant to be a generic commemoration of the emperor’s victories. As we will see, the reign of Constantius coincided with a period of religious change in which pagan imagery was disappearing from Roman coinage and medallions and Christian iconography had yet to appear on the products of Roman mints. In this interval engravers turned to military themes. The possible generic character of the medallion is strengthened by the fact that there are three known versions of this type, made at two different mints, which suggests that this was a stock image that was used on coins and medallions when there were no other occasions worthy of commemoration. This probably happened rather frequently, since Constantius’ reign was marked by few great military victories.
MEDALLIONS: Intended Recipients

Our reading of the Lawrence medallion can lead us to speculate about other information that it can provide, including the identity of its intended recipient. Because no record has survived of the names of any of the actual recipients of medallions, we can only make inferences about the identity of the recipient based on information such as the provenance of the medallion, its size, the material it is made of, images that appear on it, and the artistic quality of these images.90

Sometimes information about the recipient can be inferred from the provenance, or find spot, of the medallion.91 For example, Toynbee asserts that we can assume that those medallions found in cities where military officers and other government officials were known to either reside, be stationed, or frequently travel through in the line of duty were awarded to those military and government officials.92 We also can draw conclusions about medallions' recipients based on the locales in which these pieces typically are not found, which includes commercial areas since individuals involved in commerce were generally not eligible for imperial awards, including medallions.93 Unfortunately, no such conclusions can be drawn about our medallion based on its provenance, because it is not known, and we must search for information about the recipient on the medallion itself.

The relative scarcity of medallions in bronze or gold, compared to coins, indicates that they were minted in much smaller quantities than coins. Thus Toynbee states, “The fact that the great majority of medallions are severally represented by only a

90 Toynbee, 112
91 Toynbee, 117
92 Toynbee, 117
93 Toynbee, 117
comparatively small number of examples, while not a few are represented from one
specimen alone, indicates that they were minted for distribution to circles of selected
individuals." This implies that because medallions were produced in limited quantities,
they would have been reserved for the elite.

In fact, it seems that the size of the medallion was occasionally designed to
correspond to the status of its recipients. Indeed, Toynbee claims that "The
establishment, with Constantine I, of a fixed and carefully graded scale of multiples
certainly implies the grading of the recipients of these multiples in a corresponding
hierarchy of social values." She substantiates this conclusion by noting that smaller
medallions are found with greater frequency, suggesting they were minted on a more
regular basis, while the larger medallions, minted less frequently, would have been
reserved for the few elite. Toynbee writes, "Minor officials drawn from the less exalted
ranks of society were obviously more numerous: those who were high enough up in the
social scale to merit the more expensive prizes were comparatively few." In the case of
the Lawrence medallion, its large size suggests that it would have been intended for an
elite member of Roman society.

The material of the medallion also provides an indication of the status of its
recipient. Bronze medallions have been found with obverse and/or reverse designs that
are identical to those on gold and silver medallions, implying that they were cast from the
same dies. These bronze medallions may have been given as gifts to people of lower

94 Toynbee, 112
95 Toynbee, 116
96 Toynbee, 116
97 Toynbee, 116
status, with the more valuable money medallions reserved for those of higher status.\textsuperscript{98}

This would be consistent with the customary gift-giving practices of Roman society. Typically, Romans gave gifts to their guests and clients that corresponded to their social ranking. Toynbee argues that the gold and silver medallions were the imperial equivalents of these private gifts, and that the emperor would have followed the customary practices of gift giving, providing those of higher status with more valuable medallions.\textsuperscript{99} Thus, the large amount of gold required to create the Lawrence medallion would have further limited the possible identity of the recipient to one of the more elite members of society.

Sometimes the profession of the recipient can even be deduced from the content of the medallion. For instance, medallions with images and inscriptions that refer or allude to the military, such as FIDES MILITVM (faithful or honest army) and GLORIA EXERCITVS (glory of the army), were probably given to officials in the army. Government officials were sometimes given medallions that referred to their office, and the size of the medallion reflected the corresponding status of the officeholder. For example, some medallions with the inscription SENATVS show the emperor in senatorial garb and were most likely intended to be gifts for senators, and range in size from 3 ½ to 4 solidi, while other medallions, ranging in size from 1 ½ to 2 solidi and bearing the inscription EQVIS ROMANVS and a representation of the emperor on horseback, were most likely intended for knights, who were of a lower status than senators.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{98} During the reigns of various emperors from Gallienus to Diocletian, Toynbee identifies bronze pieces which also appear in gold copies, or have a style and content consistent with that of medallions, suggesting that they were produced from medallion dies, and asserts that these pieces "are 'strikes' from small gold and silver medallion dies, issued either as 'proofs,' or trial pieces, or as presentation pieces for individuals of lower standing than the recipients of the precious metals" (Toynbee, 34).

\textsuperscript{99} Toynbee, 116

\textsuperscript{100} Toynbee, 116-7
group of recipients whose identity can be ascertained from the imagery of medallions is the military “youth movement” of upper class boys, who were given medallions on which the emperor himself or his heir appears as Princaeps Juventutis (Prince of the youths). 101 Even within the youth group, there seems to have been differentiation between the statuses of the members; the Princaeps Juventutis types appear in a wide range of sizes. 102 Medallions that were minted to commemorate specific occasions, which I believe is the case with the Lawrence medallion, may have been given to high ranking officials who had some connection to the event itself, either by participating directly in it, or by assisting in its funding. 103 It is also possible that these medallions may have been given to the elite members of the aristocracy to promote their continued support of the emperor.

In determining the intended recipient, the artistic quality of the images on the medallion must also be taken into consideration. Numismatists note a growing tendency, particularly in the laer empire, for coins and medallions to differ in both artistic quality and in the intricacy of the representations that they bore. Medallions increasingly carried more diverse and detailed images than coins:

In the second half of the third century, when coin designs [grew] comparatively more monotonous and stereotypical, medallion types, whether bronze, silver, or gold, [stood] out in contrast for their

101 There was a fixed type for these medallions, showing “the prince standing in military dress, with his title PRINCIPI IVVENTVTIS in the dedicatory dative case.” In the third and fourth centuries these pieces were struck according to a gradation of scale, indicating the various statuses of the recipients (Toynbee, 113).
102 Toynbee, 114
103 For example, the emperor Gordian minted medallions commemorating his crossing of the Hellespont that were probably created either to be given out when he departed on the expedition or when news reached Rome of the safe landing of the expedition (Toynbee, 106). Medallions were also probably given out to officials who helped put on the event commemorated on the medallion; for example, officials were probably awarded medallions depicting the liberalitas for their help with the liberalities itself (Toynbee, 110).
variety and clearly mirror[ed] the distinction and individuality of their recipients.\footnote{Toynbee, 113}

The higher degree of artistry evident in medallions suggests that "the minting authorities had persons of taste and culture in view," as opposed to the general public.\footnote{Toynbee, 112} The fine and intricate detail of the Lawrence medallion indicates that a lot of time and effort was spent on its creation, yet another probable indication of the high status of the recipient. Another indication that medallions were intended for a more educated audience is the character of the representations they bore. While coins frequently bore a literal depiction of events, medallions often employed allegorical allusions to the same events, relying on the recipient to interpret their meaning.\footnote{For example, for the nine-hundredth anniversary of Rome (AD 147), Antoninus Pius used familiar images, like the wolf suckling Romulus and Remus or that of Aeneas fleeing Troy with Anchises, for the common public. The medallions of Antoninus Pius commemorating the same event employed a wide variety of scenes from early Roman history and myth inspired by the works of Ovid, Livy, and Vergil (Toynbee, 112).}

Those possessing the education and culture necessary to appreciate these finer pieces would necessarily belong to the upper classes.

Thus, we can conclude that the recipient of the Lawrence medallion had a high social status, which is implied by the medallion's size, material, and artistic quality. If the Lawrence medallion was indeed minted to commemorate a victory, it may have been distributed at the triumphal procession celebrating that victory. In this context it is likely that it would have been given to a member of the aristocracy who helped put on the event or fund it, or whose favor the emperor either wanted to gain or maintain.
DESCRIPTION OF THE MEDALLION

The Lawrence medallion must be examined not only for what it can tell us about the intended recipient, but also as an object of art. Thus, we must carefully examine and evaluate the images that appear on it. As we have noted, two other versions of this medallion exist, one in the numismatic collection in the Bode Museum in Berlin and the other in the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, and thus we must include these pieces in our examination of the Lawrence medallion. In doing so, we will also compare the varying artistic style and skill evident on these pieces, which I believe provides evidence that the dies of the medallions were made by three different engravers.

The differences between the three versions of the medallion are sometimes so minor that they are not apparent at first glance, and so a detailed comparison of the three versions of the medallion is necessary. This becomes difficult at times because of the natural wear that has occurred over time, obscuring some of the detail, with the Lawrence medallion showing the most signs of wear. For organizational purposes, our analysis will explore these differences working from the top of the medallions down on first the obverses and then the reverses of the three medallions.

THE OBVERSE

Overall, the obverse design, although elaborate in detail, is a fairly standard portrait, which ensures that the engravers would have had experience in depicting this subject. Nonetheless, the images on the obverse would have required an engraver with a certain skill, capable of including intricate details. All three versions of the medallion present the same general obverse, a depiction of a draped and cuirassed bust of the
Emperor Constantius facing right (figures 1, 3, and 5). The inscription on the obverse reads DN CONSTANTIVS MAX AVGVSTVS. The emperor is shown wearing a cloak over his cuirass, a breastplate that covers the torso; the cloak is held in place by a round brooch on his right shoulder. Either Constantius’ armor extends over his arm, or he is wearing armillae, bracelets distributed as military awards. The emperor also wears a diadem, which in all three cases has ties with a jewel at their ends. His hair is depicted with bangs and curls at the nape of his neck. Constantius has certain individualized features on all three medallions, including a large eye, sharp nose, and straight mouth. All three medallions also display the emperor’s hands in the same position, and the little finger of his right hand is even bent the same way in each case. Constantius raises his right hand and holds a globe in his left. A Victory stands on top of the globe, extending a wreath toward the emperor’s head. Despite these basic similarities, the numerous details of obverses of the three medallions vary.

Perhaps the most surprising difference is the unintentional variation between the inscriptions of the medallions. The inscription on the Berlin and Baltimore medallions reads DN CONSTANTIVS MAX AVGVSTVS, but that on the Lawrence medallion reads DN CONSTANTIVS NAX AVGVSTVS, a mistake on the part of the die engraver. The die engraver of the Lawrence medallion used the large surface area of the medallion effectively, and the portrait of the emperor nearly fills the medallion. Constantius’ portrait seems to be smaller on the Berlin and Baltimore versions of the medallion, leaving more empty space between the emperor’s head and the inscription.

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Another obvious way in which the versions of the medallion differ is that the Berlin and Baltimore medallions show Constantius wearing a diadem with rosettes alternating with round jewels while the Lawrence medallion accords the emperor a pearlized diadem. The pearl design of the Lawrence medallion is not as elaborate as the jeweled diadem, consisting only of two rows of pearls. All three diadems have a similar central jewel. As noted earlier, the diadems all have ties that end with a round jewel. On the Lawrence version three ties extend straight out from the diadem and a fourth curves downward, engraved over the emperor’s hair. The ties of the diadem are depicted in the same position on the Berlin version, although the fourth tie has a more exaggerated curve. The Baltimore version, on the other hand, depicts only three ties, with two coming straight out of the diadem, and the third curling sharply over the emperor’s hair, in a manner similar to that on the Berlin version.

Although Constantius’ features are similar in all three versions of the medallion, there is some slight variation between the three portrayals of the emperor. In all three versions the emperor is shown with a large incised eye that appears to be deeply set, a straight nose with a pointy tip that turns downward slightly, and a small, straight mouth with thin lips. Constantius’ face is longer and thinner on the Lawrence medallion, which may be an accurate reflection of the emperor’s appearance. His face and chin appear rounder on the Berlin and Baltimore versions, however, giving the emperor’s head a slightly square or block-like appearance. On the Lawrence medallion Constantius is depicted with a very upright neck and a rather unnatural posture that we also find on the Baltimore version. The die engraver of the Berlin version depicts the emperor’s neck with a more natural forward lean. There are subtle differences between the three
medallions in the portrayal of the emperor’s hair, too. Although the emperor’s hair is
done in the same style on all three medallions, the lines used to texturize it are straighter
on the Lawrence medallion and wavier on the Berlin and Baltimore versions. It is
unclear which depiction is more realistic and which is more stylized, because we do not
know whether the emperor had wavy or straight hair. The ends of Constantius’ hair curl
up in the same stylized manner on all three medallions.

The details of the emperor’s dress also vary between all three versions of the
medallion. The brooch on the Lawrence version consists of a central stone surrounded by
pearls. The central stones of the brooches on the Berlin and Baltimore versions, on the
other hand, consist of concentric circles, giving it the appearance of a bulls-eye. While
the bottom of the brooch is plain on the Lawrence version, three smaller round pendant
jewels appear in a straight line along the bottom of the brooch on the Berlin version. The
pendant jewels are also present at the bottom of the brooch on the Baltimore version, but
are arranged in the shape of a pyramid at the bottom of the brooch.

The drape of Constantius falls straight down from the brooch on the Lawrence
version, whereas the drapery falls down from the brooch in folds on both the Berlin and
Baltimore versions, with the Berlin version having fewer folds than the Baltimore
version. Constantius’ drape also falls over the emperor’s left shoulder in folds on all
three versions, although more folds of fabric are shown on the Lawrence version. The
inclusion of these additional folds probably required additional time and effort on the part
of the engraver.

The decorative details of the portion of the cuirass not covered by the emperor’s
drape vary between the three versions of the medallion, and probably reflect the unique
style of each of the die engravers. On the Lawrence version the portion of the emperor’s cuirass that is visible over his shoulder is depicted as plain, followed by a double band decorated with curved lines, under which are four circles, each with a smaller circle below it. On the Berlin version this part of the cuirass is decorated with two bands over his shoulder, one plain, the other decorated with undulating designs. Again, there are circles underneath the final band, as on the Lawrence version, but there are no smaller circles underneath these. The armor of the Baltimore version is similar to that on the Berlin medallion, with two bands, one plain and one curved, followed by four circles without the smaller circles that appeared on the Lawrence version. In all three versions, vertical bands follow the final circles.

All three medallions portray Constantius wearing either armillae or armor over his lower arms, but again the three versions display slight stylistic differences. The armillae consist of a beaded or pearlized design on the Lawrence version, while the armillae on the Berlin version alternate between a beaded and a curved design. The Baltimore version shows the emperor’s armillae decorated in a fashion similar to that on the Berlin version, alternating between beaded and undulating patterns. The slight variations in the emperor’s dress between the three versions of the medallion are most likely the result of the unique style of the three engravers. Some details, however, such as the additional detail of Constantius’ cuirass on the Lawrence medallion would have required additional time and effort on the part of the die engraver.

All three versions of the medallion depict Constantius holding a globe in his left hand. Two bands cross it, dividing the globe into four sections. On the Lawrence version the globe was decorated with a crescent in the top section and a star in the bottom
section. The globe on the Berlin version, on the other hand, is shown with a star in each section. Unfortunately, the globe on the Baltimore medallion appears to be too worn to determine how it is decorated.

In each case, a Victory stands on top of the globe, extending a wreath towards the emperor's head. A ribbon is attached to the wreath, and the strands of the ribbon fall on either side of the Victory's hand. On the Lawrence version these ribbons extend horizontally, whereas the ribbons hang straight down from the wreath on both the Berlin and Baltimore versions. The garment of the Victories also varies. The bottom of her skirt flares out on the Lawrence version, but on the Berlin and Baltimore versions the Victory's drapery is blown out behind her. Although the Victories are small, the clinging drapery provides a naturalistic outline of the Victory's body, suggesting a finer technique on the part of the engraver. In each case, the Victory's wing is decorated with round shapes to simulate feathers, although the exact arrangement of these shapes varies between the three medallions. On the Lawrence version of the medallion the Victory stands with her weight on her right foot, while her left leg extends behind her. The Berlin and Baltimore versions present the same stance but with the Victory's legs bent.

Overall, the obverse presents a fairly generic imperial portrait. The straightforward nature of the obverse leaves little room for the individual engravers to embellish the design by adding new elements. However, in the handling of the small decorative details, the hands of three different die engravers are evident.
THE REVERSE

All three medallions have the same reverse type as well (figures 2, 4, and 6). They bear the inscription DN CONSTANTIVS VICTOR SEMPER AVG. Constantius is shown frontally, riding a front-facing six-horse chariot, or seiugis. In each case the emperor is shown nimbate, with a halo around his head. He wears a cloak fastened with a brooch on his right shoulder, and he raises his right hand and holds a globe in his left. The horses are shown in profile and are in the same position on all three medallions, with the horse closest to the chariot facing the chariot and the two outside horses facing each other. Each horse raises the leg that is closest to the chariot. There is also a Victory on either side of the emperor, holding a wreath with her right hand and a palm of victory in her left. Below the chariot is an exergue containing various items, including a bag and stacks of round objects. The mint mark of the medallion is also located in the exergue, with the mint mark for Antioch (AN) appearing on the Lawrence and Berlin versions and the mint mark for Nicomedia (MN) on the Baltimore medallion. The appearance of a frontal chariot and items in the exergue is unusual. The engravers would not have had the same level of familiarity with this subject as they would have had with the obverse, and thus the reverse would have presented the engravers with technical challenges. As a result, in addition to stylistic differences, evidence of the varying skill level of the engravers is also evident on the reverse.

The emperor’s chariot is depicted quite differently in each case. The car of the chariot is smaller on the Lawrence version than on the Berlin and Baltimore versions, accentuating the emperor’s disproportionately large size. It is not clear if this is an example of hierarchical scale, in which the most important figure, the emperor, is the
largest, or if the emperor's size is the result of poor technique. The sides of the car slant inwards on the Lawrence and Baltimore versions, but come straight down on the Berlin medallion. On both the Lawrence and Berlin medallions the top of the car is straight, but it curves down on the Baltimore version. The details of decoration also distinguish the cars on the three medallions. The car of the chariot is decorated with vertical ovals on the Lawrence version, as it is on the Baltimore version. A floral design appears above the vertical ovals on the Baltimore version, which was possible because the car is larger on this version, permitting the engraver to embellish it with more detail. The car of the chariot on the Berlin version, on the other hand, is entirely decorated with floral decorations.

Beneath the car, the front of the chariot is depicted as a half circle. On the Lawrence medallion this portion of the chariot is large and has a symmetrically round shape, leaving more room for decorative detail. The front of the chariot is flatter on the Berlin and Baltimore versions. Although the front of the chariot on the Lawrence medallion contains more decorative detail because of its larger size, all three chariots seem to have been decorated in a similar fashion, with a double band across the top and floral designs below that.

All three medallions show two of the chariot's wheels behind the horses. On the Lawrence medallion the wheels were made with a slender line and have an overall symmetrical appearance and circular shape. The wheels on the Berlin and Baltimore versions are not as round, which might reflect the artist's effort to suggest foreshortened wheels, or may be the result of a failed attempt to create symmetrical wheels. The wheels on the Lawrence and Berlin versions were made with one line, while the wheels
on the Baltimore version were made with a double line. Five wheel spokes are visible on
the Lawrence medallion, whereas the wheels on the Berlin version have only four and a
half spokes, and the wheels on the Baltimore medallion are depicted with only three
visible spokes.

The varying level of artistry or technique of the engravers is particularly evident
in engravers' depictions of the horses. In order to fit six horses onto the medallion, the
engraver would have had to have the technical ability to create small and intricate details
within a very limited space. Overall, the horses on Lawrence version are the most
realistic and were done in much finer detail than those on the other two versions. This
difference in style is particularly evident in the horses' legs and hooves, which are much
more defined and elegant on the Lawrence version. The horses on the Baltimore version,
depicted with much shorter bodies than the horses on the other two versions, seem to
have been made in an even cruder style than those on the Berlin version, which are
similar in style to those on the Lawrence version, but with less sharply delineated detail.
The horses lift their legs higher on the Lawrence and Baltimore versions than they do on
the Berlin version. All of the horses' manes have been styled into round sections and the
horses all have decorative bands around their necks and girths. On the Lawrence version
the horses appear comparatively plain and un-adorned, while the horses on the Berlin and
Baltimore medallions are also decorated with bands across their hindquarters. On the
Lawrence and Baltimore versions the horses' tails are left loose, while they are pinned up
on the Berlin version.

The details of the Victories on either side of Constantius II also differ. Although
the Victories' drapery is blowing back in all three versions, the drapery on the Lawrence
and Baltimore versions clings closer to the Victories' bodies and legs, revealing their physical form. This is also evidence of a superior technique. Each Victory also holds up a wreath up with her right hand. On the Lawrence and Baltimore versions the wreaths' ribbons fall on the side of the Victory's arm that is closest to the chariot, whereas the wreath's ribbons on the Berlin version fall on either side of the Victory's arm. Each Victory also holds a palm in her left hand. The palm that the Victory holds on the Lawrence version also has a ribbon attached to it, but the palms on the Berlin and Baltimore versions lack that detail. The left Victory on the Lawrence version holds the palm closer to her body than the left Victory does on the Berlin version. The left Victory on the Baltimore version rests her palm branch over her shoulder.

The exergue is also depicted differently on the three versions of the medallion, which mainly appears to be the result of stylistic variation between the engravers. The most significant difference, however, is the fact that the Lawrence and Berlin versions have the mint mark AN, showing that they were minted in Antioch, while the Baltimore version has the mint mark MN, signifying that it was minted in Nicomedia. Also, the band separating the exergue is thicker and continuous under the chariot on the Lawrence and Baltimore versions. On the Berlin version this line is thinner and disappears when it passes directly under the horses' hind legs and chariot wheels.

There are various items within the exergue. In the center of the exergue is a bag. There are coins in this bag on the Lawrence and Berlin versions, although the coins are contained within the bag on the Lawrence version while they spill out of the bag on the Berlin version. The bag on the Baltimore medallion seems to lack coins altogether. The size of the bag varies, too: the bags on the Lawrence and Baltimore medallions, while
about equal in size, are larger than that on the Berlin version. Decoration of the bags also
differ; the bag on the Lawrence version is decorated with a double horizontal band, that
in the Berlin version features an “X” in addition to the double horizontal band, and
circular decorations follow the outline of the bag on the Baltimore version.

The remaining elements of the exergue all present differences between the three
medallions. On either side of the central bag on the Lawrence version is a palm, followed
by a stack of round objects, one of which is a stack of wreaths, the other a stack of
torques. The stacks of circular objects appear immediately next to the central sack on the
Berlin version, but in this case the engraver depicted the two stacks from different
perspectives, possibly because the engraver did not understand the technical concept of
perspective. A palm is also depicted on the Berlin version, although it appears on the
right side of the exergue, to the right of the stack of diadems. The final object in the
exergue on the Lawrence and Berlin versions is a stack of leaves. On the Baltimore
version the central bag has a stack of torques to its right, in addition to another bag and a
stack of palm leaves. To the left of the central bag is a stack of palm leaves followed by
a stack of wreaths. As was the case on the Berlin version, the stack of wreaths and
torques appear from two different perspectives, again, probably because of a lack of
technical understanding on the part of the engraver. After these objects the mint mark
appears, with the A on the left side, and the N on the right on the Lawrence and Berlin
versions of the medallion. On the Baltimore medallion the M is shown to the left, and the
N to the right.

We may draw certain conclusions from this overview of the obverses and reverses
of the three medallions. It seems clear, first, that different artists created the three
medallions. This conclusion is founded less on the differences in detail, mainly evident in decorative detail that we have noted on the three medallions, than on the level of technical skill or artistry with which each was made. The Lawrence medallion seems to have been made by an engraver with artistic skills superior to those of other two engravers, despite the obvious spelling mistake on the Lawrence version. Even though the die for the Berlin medallion, like the Lawrence version, was created at the Antioch, it cannot compare to the latter in the skill of its designer. Clearly the Antioch mint employed different engravers on essentially the same design. The quality of the Baltimore medallion from the Nicomedia mint, by the same measure, appears to be inferior to the Berlin medallion and suggests yet another engraver produced the die for this piece, despite the fact that the Berlin and Baltimore versions are more similar in details to each other than to the Lawrence version.

**MEDALLIONS: Production**

It is necessary to examine how medallions were produced, and the effects that these methods of production as well as the location of the medallion's mint would have had on the medallion. The existence of three different versions of this medallion raises important questions about the production of medallions in the late Roman world. Because medallions were produced in more limited quantities than coins, we must consider how common it was to produce multiple dies of the same design at at least two different mints. Although the three medallions are of the same basic type, as we have seen there are slight variations between the three medallions, and so we must examine to what extent those differences are the result of regional variation and/or the individual
style of the die engraver. We will also examine the various mint marks used at Antioch because the mint mark that appears on the Lawrence and Berlin medallions is not the customary one used at the mint of Antioch.

Initially it was surprising to find three examples of this medallion type, and there did not seem to be an explanation. Perhaps, however, multiple dies were created not because a large quantity of this medallion type was produced, but because the die broke and had to be replaced. When replacements were made, it would have been difficult to create an exact replica of the original, and small variations between the dies would result, as is the case with the two versions of the medallion produced at Antioch. Toynbee argues that multiple dies may have been made frequently for medallions because these dies were more likely to break due to the intricate detail characteristic of medallions. 108 The die of a medallion would have to be struck harder than the die of a coin, in order to imprint the large amount of detail, with the result that the dies of medallions were broken more frequently. 109 Even so, the wear on the die of the Lawrence medallion probably would not have been too considerable. The size of this medallion suggests that its inherent value would have ensured that the production of this medallion type was even more limited than that for smaller medallions, meaning the die would have been used infrequently and thus endured very little wear. Also, the idea that multiple dies were created to replace broken dies does not explain why the same medallion type would have been produced at two different mints. If this medallion was a generic type, which it seems to be, it is possible that many mints produced this type when there were no imperial events worth commemorating.

108 Toynbee, 19
109 Toynbee, 19
From these observations it may also be possible to draw some tentative conclusions about the order in which these medallions were produced. It seems that the Lawrence version was the first of the three medallions to be produced, or perhaps the original, on the assumption that an original, just because it elicits copies, is always superior to its imitators. If the Lawrence version came first, we might even offer the thesis that officials at Antioch discovered the spelling mistake in the original medallion after a few had been awarded, destroyed the original die, and put a second, more literate engraver to work on a substitute medallion (the Berlin version). In this scenario, the Baltimore medallion would be a crude provincial copy of the two original medallions created by different engravers at the Antioch mints. There is also the possibility that these three medallions are all copies of an earlier original, or, alternatively, that these medallions share the same type because it was a generic type common to all of the imperial mints. Given the fact that the same type was used at at least two different mints, the latter possibility seems to be the most likely conclusion. We will never know for sure the exact sequence of events that produced the three medallions of Constantius, but our conclusion that they were the work of three different artists raises issues about the production of such minted art that we must address before proceeding to analyze the message of the Lawrence medallion.

Whatever the reason for the creation of multiple dies at two different mints, the variation between the three medallions makes it clear that engraving styles varied between the mints and engravers of the Roman world. Constantius mostly likely had medallions made at Antioch because this is where he resided, a location necessitated by the threat to the eastern borders of the empire from the Persians. This made Antioch a
center of imperial activity in the eastern provinces and as such it was fairly cosmopolitan by this time. The mint had been well established by the reign of Constantius and served as the primary mint for the eastern half of the empire. Thus, it is no surprise that Constantius used the mint at Antioch more frequently than any other provincial mint. Although the basic portrait designs, and even detailed reverse types, may have been dictated to the individual mints "the marked variations in style and details, particularly clear in the case of medallions, leave little room for doubt that the actual dies were cut locally" and thus vary according to regional styles. It is to the regional variations of Antioch that are evident on the Lawrence medallion that we now turn.

Despite the cosmopolitan nature of Antioch, it remained culturally backwards in some aspects by virtue of its location at the edge of the empire. This is perhaps most apparent in the misspelled inscription on the obverse of the Lawrence medallion, which reads NAX instead of MAX. Because of Antioch’s peripheral location, the first (and perhaps only) language of many of the native inhabitants, including die engravers, was not Latin. As we have seen, Ammianus, who was most likely from Antioch and was a member of the upper middle class, spoke Greek as his first language, and although he wrote his history in Latin, he still struggled with the grammatical forms of Latin. This lack of familiarity with the language probably explains the multiple mis-spelled and

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111 Carson, 272
112 Toynbee, 54-5
113 Toynbee, 48
114 Kent, 312
grammatically incorrect inscriptions from this mint.\textsuperscript{115} For some reason, these flaws may have gone unnoticed by mint workers and recipients of the medallions alike.

Products of the mint of Antioch could have provincial iconography as well. A gold medallion of Constantine I (figure 7) minted at Antioch (AD 326) depicts Constantine I on the obverse in a manner similar to that of Constantius on the Lawrence medallion.\textsuperscript{116} Constantine I, however, is shown radiate (as the sun-god Sol), draped, and cuirassed. This may reflect the prominent role Sol played in the east, or it could be suggestive of the fact that Antioch, located far from Rome, was slower to embrace the new artistic and religious trends. By the time that this piece was minted, pagan iconography, as we shall see, was largely outdated as the empire became Christian under Constantine I.\textsuperscript{117}

The medallion of Constantine I also illustrates the effect varying skills of die engravers. As we have seen, the Lawrence medallion was created by a highly skilled engraver and has very fine and intricate detail. The die engraver of the medallion of Constantine I, however, was not as skilled in his profession. The depiction of the emperor is rather crude; the features of the emperor are out of proportion and the detail is not naturalistic. The reverse of this piece is also factually inaccurate and depicts Constantine II and Constantius II in consular robes, although the two were never co-consuls.\textsuperscript{118} Thus, the skill of the engraver creating the die could also have a significant

\textsuperscript{115} Another example is a billon issued by Hostilian (251) from the mint at Antioch (Kent, 312). The inscription on the obverse reads C (Gaius) VAL (erius) OSTIL (Hostilian) MES CONVINTOS AVG; the OSTIL should be HOSTIL.  
\textsuperscript{116} Kent, 330  
\textsuperscript{117} Kent, 330  
\textsuperscript{118} Kent, 330
effect on the appearance of a medallion or coin, and thus may explain some of the variations between the three versions of our medallion.

The pieces that Constantius minted at Antioch are readily recognizable because by the fourth century mint marks were in common use and make the mint of a particular piece easily identifiable. But mint marks nonetheless can present challenges to modern scholars. For example, as the practice of using mint marks developed, different mint marks often were used within the same mint for the different metals. These mint marks also changed over time. Probus (AD 276-282) was the first emperor to put a mint mark on a medallion, as well as the first to mark all of the gold denominations minted at Antioch; he used A or ANT as the mint mark on these gold issues.\(^{119}\) This remained the mint mark for Antioch until the reign of Carus (AD 282-3), and from this time until the reign of Diocletian the mint mark SMA was used.\(^{120}\) In the process of reforming the coinage, Diocletian initially changed the mint mark to ANT in 313, but changed it to SMAN in 321, and this remained the mint mark used at Antioch throughout the Constantinian dynasty.\(^{121}\) Constantius II used the mint mark SMAN from 337-42 on gold multiples.\(^{122}\) From 347 until 355 Constantius changed the mint mark to SMANT, and between 355 and 361 he employed the mint mark ANT.\(^{123}\)

The mint mark that appears on the Lawrence medallion, however, was never the official mint mark of Antioch. In fact, the only examples of the use of this mint mark that I was able to find were on the Lawrence and Berlin medallions, which suggests that the mint mark AN was unusual. The fact that the standard mint mark was not used on the

\(^{119}\) Carson, 272  
\(^{120}\) Carson, 148 and 272 and Toynbee, 51  
\(^{121}\) Carson, 272  
\(^{122}\) Carson, 272  
\(^{123}\) Carson, 272-3
Lawrence medallion raises the question: what is the point of creating a standard mint mark if it is not used on all products of the mint? There are several possible explanations for the use of this unusual mint mark. The mint mark seems to have been mainly intended to mark those pieces used as currency. Because medallions were not intended to be circulated as currency, the engraver may not have been required to mark medallions with the official mint mark. Another possible explanation has to do with the placement of the mint mark on the medallion. Typically, when the mint mark appears in the exergue of a piece, it occupies the entire space. On the Lawrence medallion, however, the exergue also contains many objects, and the mintmark may have been abbreviated to provide additional space for these objects.

THE MESSAGES OF THE MEDALLION OF CONSTANTIUS

Although at no point in Roman imperial history could an emperor assume the literacy of his citizens, this became even more pronounced as the empire expanded, and incorporated many regions in which Latin was not the primary or spoken language. Thus, emperors had to rely on visual forms of communication as their official means of communication to convey political messages that were essential to maintain the unity and stability of the state to their citizens. Medallions were therefore a part of this visual mode of political communication in the Roman world, and as such their imagery must be analyzed for the messages they contain. As we would expect, the medallion primarily deals with political propaganda, but there is also religious significance contained in the imagery of this piece.

The images of the Lawrence medallion are full of political meaning, which were intended to convey an image of imperial power and invincibility. On the obverse of the medallion, Constantius is shown in the standard dress of the emperor, draped and cuirassed, which speaks to his status. He also wears a diadem, which was initially adopted as an imperial insignia by Constantine I, at which point it also became a standard feature of imperial portraits, signifying imperial rule.\(^{125}\) Constantius' individualized features and hairstyle allude to the image of his father, and thus are a statement of his legitimacy, succession and thus of rule.\(^{126}\) In his left hand Constantius holds a globe, symbolizing Rome's worldwide rule.\(^{127}\) On the globe stands a Victory, a symbol of invincibility and victory in battle. She crowns Constantius with a wreath, another reference to a victory, since the victorious were traditionally crowned with a wreath. Thus, the overall message of the obverse is one of an emperor who is both victorious and the legitimate heir of Constantine I.

The theme of the victory of the emperor is also evident on the reverse. Again, this message is signified by the presence of two Victories crowning the emperor with wreaths. These Victories also hold palm branches, which were frequently used to hail victorious emperors. Constantius is once again shown holding a globe. The image of imperial victory is further supported by Constantius' appearance in a chariot. This chariot most likely represents the traditional triumphal procession emperors celebrated after a military victory. This victory is made to seem more glorious by the unusual appearance of the


chariot. First, it is frontal, which would have made this image stand out from chariots on other coins or medallions, which were typically shown in profile. It is interesting to note that the use of the frontal chariot resembles Ammianus' description of Constantius' triumphal entrance into Rome, which he describes from a fully frontal perspective.

Second, chariots appearing on coins and medallions are generally drawn by one to four horses; there are few examples of six horses drawing a chariot. The presence of so many horses contributes to the notion that the chariot is part of the victory celebration of a particularly glorious battle.

The presence of objects in the exergue would have further differentiated the medallion because exergues are typically left empty except for the mint mark, and at most contain one or two items. The exergue on the Lawrence medallion, however, is full of items, and thus meaning. These goods were most likely intended to represent war booty, the spoils of war taken by a victorious army. These goods include a bag of money representing the wealth seized from the conquered people or perhaps the wealth associated with being an empire. Next to the bag are palm branches, which, as mentioned previously, were used to hail victorious emperors. Also included is a stack of what appear to be wreaths, an award for victory. There is another stack of circular objects that appears to be a stack of torques, which were the characteristic jewelry of barbarians and which were a symbol of a foreign victory. They were also awarded to soldiers who fought well in battle. Although it is not clear exactly what the leaves in the exergue represent, or what their exact significance is, it is possible that they are simply a variation of the palm branches, and so have a similar meaning. Thus, the goods contained in the exergue all contribute to the message of the perpetual victory of Constantius.
Constantine I died a Christian, and though modern historians debate the sincerity of his conversion, the impact of this act, and more especially the deeper religious changes in the Roman world that it reflected, is evident on the iconography of coins and medallions. Christianity spread in the Roman world in part because of the insecurities bred of the chaos of the third and fourth centuries. Designers at the mints attempted to provide reminders of the security of earlier times of stable government to reassure the state’s citizens, but at the same time cautiously appropriated aspects of Christianity as a new basis on which to unify Rome’s peoples. Thus, the chaos of the third century resulted in the creation of coins and medallions that refer to “eternity” and “perpetuity” to reassure people of the permanence of the empire.  

This is evident in the inscription on the reverse Lawrence medallion, which refers to eternal or perpetual victory of the emperor. At the same time, hints of the Christian promise of heavenly reward also appeared on imperial coins and medallions. The later portrayals of Constantine I on coins and medallions depict the emperor gazing toward Heaven to show his piety and divine connection. More explicit portrayal of Christian symbolism, however, was initially absent from the products of Roman mints in the fourth century, in part because this was a period of religious transition. As one scholar noted, the coins of Constantine I “show a clear, if gradual transition in which pagan types die out to be replaced by images which are neutral (most of them related to the emperor), but rarely specifically Christian.”

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128 Bowder, 89
In fact, Christianity lent itself only with great difficulty to the task of creating a new unifying principle for the Roman world. One aspect of this difficulty had to do with iconography. The religious shift meant that the old pagan symbols had to disappear from coinage or be Christianized. This forced emperors to remove the pagan imagery from the traditional stock types, which were to be replaced with Christian imagery. At the same time, Christianity, which still retained aspects of a mystery religion, could not immediately supply images generally familiar around the empire. This difficult transition in symbols presented Roman mints with limited iconographic options for coins. Only slowly was there a "...timid introduction, here and there, of tiny Christian symbols into some of the coin types." Since this process necessitated banishment of pagan symbols from coinage, the mints turned to military themes, which had wide resonance in a period of seemingly incessant warfare.

The medallions of Constantius appeared in the midst of this period of religious and iconographic transition, and thus provide a rather bland civic message, in which some of the old symbols persisted, although less powerful meaning, while Christian symbols were largely absent. Victory continued to be shown on coins and medallions of this period because she "was far too useful, and if she still possessed the odd temple, not to mention the altar in the Senate-houses, she was scarcely the object of a fervent or dangerous cult." Thus, the Lawrence medallion, although bearing multiple images of

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131 Bowder, 90
132 Bowder, 91
133 Bowder, 91
134 Bowder, 91
135 Bowder, 92
136 Bowder, 91
Victory, does not have any other pagan iconography, such as the god of war, Mars, who frequently appeared on coins and medallions referring to a victory.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The gold medallion of Constantius in the Ottilia Buerger collection of Lawrence University should be of considerable interest to historians, numismatists, and art historians alike. For the historian, this study has shown the medallion to be a good example of the kinds of minted art that the Romans issued in the later years of the empire. As such, it offers students of classical history a valuable window into their period of interest. Its representations well reflect the political problems of fourth-century Rome, showing an emperor trying to shore up his powers with a rather ambiguous nonverbal message. That message drew on traditional images, like that of Victory, while the designers of the period of the Lawrence medallion struggled to identify new symbols with which to define the imperial power. That the Lawrence medallion is very probably a generic commemoration of the rarely decisive battles of Constantius in no way diminishes its significance. Rather, its generic nature enhances its importance because it so well reflects its age of constant warfare and civil strife that could not be solved with battlefield victories alone.

For the numismatist, the Lawrence medallion holds great significance, too. It is the only known specimen made from these dies, an unfortunate, but not uncommon, situation, given the relatively small numbers in which the mints struck such gold pieces. The existence of two similar medallions in major collections in Berlin and Baltimore in no way diminishes the value of the Lawrence piece; as we have seen, it is artistically the
best of the three. Although the Lawrence medallion has a spelling flaw, our analysis of the medallion reveals that it typified the output of the mint at Antioch. Furthermore, the material and execution of the Lawrence medallion tells the student of the minted art work of the ancient world much about why Romans struck such medallions, who received them, and why the recipients benefited from imperial generosity.

Finally, for the art historian, a reading of this medallion provides much insight into the artistic skills of the Romans. The medallion also is a good example of the use of artistic symbolism in an age of growing disorder. It is a fine example of what Roman artists could accomplish, even in an age of apparent decline.
FIGURES
Figure 1

Overse of a gold medallion. Appleton, Wisconsin, Lawrence University Wriston Art Galleries (01.103).
Reverse of a gold medallion. Appleton, Wisconsin, Lawrence University Wriston Art Galleries (01203).
Byzantine belt with obverse of a gold medallion. Baltimore, Walters Art Museum (57.527).
Byzantine Belt with reverse of a gold medallion. Baltimore, Walters Art Museum (57.527).

Figure 6
Gold medallion, Milian, UN collection.
Map of the Roman Empire in the Fourth Century

Source: Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*
Figure 9

The House of Constantine

MAXIMIAN = (2) Eutropia = (1) Afranius Hannibalianus

(1) Helena = CONSTANTIUS CHLORUS = (a) Theodora
(1) Minervina = CONSTANTINE I = (2) Fausta = Maxentius

Crispus

Flavius Julius

Delmattius Constantius = (1) Galla, (2) = Basilia

Constantia = Licinius = Nepotianus = Bassianus

Hannibalianus

Delmattius Hannibalianus

son daughter GALLUS JULIAN

Constantine II = (1) daughter of Julius Constantius

and Galla

= (2) Eusebia

= (3) Faustina

Constantia Postuma

Family Tree of the House of Constantine

Source: Diana Bowder, *The Age of Constantine and Julian*
Bibliography


