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# THE SOLIDI OF JULIUS NEPOS MINTED IN DALMATIA

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## ABSTRACT

For Julius Nepos, the last legitimate Western Roman emperor, gold coinage was minted in Italy in three mints (Roma, Ravenna, and Mediolanum), to which he soon joined another two mints after he ascended to the imperial throne – one each in Gaul (Arelate) and Dalmatia (Salona or Spalatum). As a rule, they all minted solidi and tremisses (only Rome minted semisses), but in accordance with the tradition established as early as the beginning of the reign of the emperor Valentinian III, the mints were marked by symbols only on the reverses of the Western Roman solidi. An exception are the solidi of Nepos minted in Dalmatia as they are the only ones that do not bear a mint mark. Despite this fact, their existence and features were recognized in the 1980s, when the first two examples were singled out. Since then, the number of known Dalmatian solidi of Nepos, although then doubled, has only grown slightly, and still remains far less than the number of Dalmatian tremisses known to the present. Nonetheless, that insignificant greater number of solidi has enabled a more thorough analysis of their stylistic characteristics and a more purposeful recognition of the typological features sufficient for the definition of the various periods of their minting. The scarcity and the complete lack of connection between the dies of the Dalmatian solidi of Nepos provides a warning about the possibility of their short-term nature or even temporary minting in relation to the recognizable continuity of minting characteristic of the Dalmatian tremisses of Nepos.

## REZUMAT: *SOLIDII* EMIȘI DE IULIUS NEPOS, BĂTUȚI ÎN DALMAȚIA

Pentru Iulius Nepos, ultimul împărat legitim al Romei de Apus, monedele de aur erau bătute în Italia în trei monetării (Roma, Ravenna și Mediolanum), cărora le-a alăturat curând alte două monetării după ce a urcat pe tronul imperial – câte una în Galia (Arelate) și una în Dalmația (Salona sau Spalatum). De regulă, toate băteau solidi și tremise (doar Roma bătea semise), dar, conform tradiției stabilite încă de la începutul domniei împăratului Valentinian al III-lea, monetăriile erau marcate prin simboluri doar pe reversurile solidilor romani de Apus. O excepție o reprezintă solidii lui Nepos bătuți în Dalmația, deoarece sunt singurii care nu poartă o marcă de monetărie. În ciuda acestui fapt, existența și caracteristicile lor au fost recunoscute în anii 1980, când au fost identificate primele două exemplare. De atunci, numărul solidilor dalmați cunoscuți ai lui Nepos, deși apoi s-a dublat, a crescut doar ușor și rămâne mult mai mic decât numărul tremiselor dalmațiene cunoscute până în prezent. Cu toate acestea, acest număr nesemnificativ mai mare de solidi a permis o analiză mai amănunțită a caracteristicilor lor stilistice și o recunoaștere mai precisă a caracteristicilor tipologice suficiente pentru definirea diferitelor perioade ale băturii lor. Raritatea și lipsa completă de legătură dintre matrițele solidilor dalmați ai lui Nepos oferă un avertisment cu privire la posibilitatea naturii lor pe termen scurt sau chiar a băturii temporare în raport cu continuitatea recognoscibilă a băturii caracteristică tremiselor dalmațiene ale lui Nepos.

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<sup>1</sup> The mints of the Western Roman emperor Julius Nepos were at one point expanded to include Salona, the centre of the Roman period province of Dalmatia and one of the most important urban centres of the western part of Illyricum in Late Antiquity. If by any chance the minting of bronze coinage were in question, then the location of such a mint (*Moneta publica*) in a provincial centre would be not merely predictable but also expected. The same, however, is not the case for the activities and location of the Late Roman mints of gold and silver coinage (*Moneta auri*), whose site, from the last decades of the 4<sup>th</sup> century onward was always connected to the permanent or temporary residence of the emperor, or with imperial property closely tied to the emperor and the highest state officers, with whom the emperor as a rule was surrounded both where he dwelled, as well as where he travelled. The existence of an imperial palace in Salona was not attested either archaeologically or in historical sources, but an imperial structure of that rank (*palatium*) was built in Split not far from Salona and had existed since the reign of the emperor Diocletian. Due to different convictions related to the possible place of minting and dilemmas that still exist in some scientific circles – from the numismatic point of view they should not even exist – here in place of the term *Salona*, *Salonae*, or *Spalatum*, *Aspalathos*, etc., the mint is simply called the Dalmatian mint of Nepos and the gold coins minted in it are referred to as the coinage of Nepos minted in Dalmatia.

**KEY WORDS:** Croatia, Dalmatia, *Spalatum* (Split), *Salona* (Solin), Julius Nepos, mint of gold coinage (solidi, tremisses).

**CUVINTE CHEIE:** Croația, Dalmația, *Spalatum* (Split), *Salona* (Solin), Julius Nepos, emiterea de monede de aur (solidi, tremisses).

The impetus for investigative research into this topic can be laid at the feet of two numismatists. The first step was taken in 1966 by J.P.C. Kent, when on the basis of selected numismatic material he documented the existence of gold coins minted in Italy on the part of Odovacar in the name of Julius Nepos from 476/477 all the way to the death of the latter in 480, calling this period “a nominal second reign of Nepos in Italy”.<sup>2</sup> In this way, in an indirect but still sufficiently clearly articulated manner, the question was opened for any possible minting by Nepos outside of Italy, if not before then than certainly soon after leaving Italy and the end of his first, actual reign on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 475. The questions and dilemmas that became evident following this, were answered in 1983 by Guy Lacam, who decided to single out individual examples of gold coinage marked by Nepos’ name on the obverse from the production of the Italian mints from the time of Nepos and Odovacar. He attributed them to a mint in Salona, the centre of Nepos’ native province of Dalmatia, where Nepos had taken refuge after fleeing from Orestes, the father of the future Western Roman emperor Romulus Augustus. As Julius Nepos incorporated both of the dominant gold denominations in the West into the scheme of his Salonitan minting (solidi and tremisses), Lacam attributed them to two not entirely connected chronological periods, hypothesizing that:

- a) In Salona, modelled upon the coins of the western mints, and prior to Nepos’ departure for Italy in the spring of 474, solidi were minted in the name of Nepos without a mintmark on the reverse (**Fig. 1:1,4**);<sup>3</sup>
- b) After the overthrow of Nepos in Italy and his return to Dalmatia, and during the above mentioned nominal second reign of Nepos in Salona 476/477 to the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 480, solidi were minted not merely in the name of Nepos,<sup>4</sup> but also in the name of the emperor Zeno,<sup>5</sup> without a mintmark, with the mark of the mint in Milan /M–D, or with the mark of the mint in Ravenna /R–V;
- c) During the nominal second reign of Nepos in Salona, tremisses were minted in the name of the emperor Zeno according to the model of the tremisses of the Milan mint.<sup>6</sup>

Lacam’s observations and assumptions related to the activities of the Salonitan mint – aware of the lack of basic reference data, he considered the last of them (c) to be speculative<sup>7</sup> – prompted me to document the representation and to establish the basic characteristics of the coinage of Nepos present in the numismatic collections of museum institutions in Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Slovenia, as it was specifically this kind of heritage material that they had collected in the region of Roman period Dalmatia, or had acquired from areas in its immediate vicinity. The expectation that such material, inasmuch as it existed, could confirm or refute Lacam’s hypotheses in fact proved to be justified. Immediately an exceptionally poor representation of gold coins minted in the name of Julius Nepos was noted (not a single solidus was documented), followed by the exclusive representation of only one denomination – the tremisses of Nepos.<sup>8</sup> Of the seven examples documented then, only one could be established with certainty to belong to the mint in Rome,<sup>9</sup> while the other six tremisses from four regional museums – whose numbers were only increased slightly through subsequent research<sup>10</sup> – other than unusual combinations of stylistic characteristics from three Italian mints were characterized by the frequent use of the same reverse (more often) or even the same obverse die (less often).<sup>11</sup> The frequent connection of the dies indicated a continuity of the location, period, and duration of their minting, which considering the sites of discovery of individual examples and the presence of this group in regional museum collections pointed to the possibility of their certain local minting. All

<sup>2</sup> Kent 1966, 150.

<sup>3</sup> Lacam 1983, 604-605, 607 (Pl. CXLVIIa: Type 1a-b), Pl. 37:1-3.

<sup>4</sup> Lacam 1983, 702-707 (Pl. CLXXVII-CLXXVIII), Pl. 40:58-62, primarily with the mark M–D, rarely with the mark R–V.

<sup>5</sup> Lacam 1983, 707-709 (Pl. CLXXVII-CLXXVIII), Pl. 46:168-170, primarily with the mark M–D, rarely without a mark.

<sup>6</sup> Lacam 1983, 709-713 (Pl. CLXXIX), Pl. 46:171-173.

<sup>7</sup> Lacam 1983, 709 (“*purement conjectures, car nous manquons de bases de références*”).

<sup>8</sup> Demo 1988, 249-258.

<sup>9</sup> Demo 1988, 250, 268 no. 16, 270 (Pl. 2:16); Kirigin 1998, 431, 438 (Fig. 5). Demo 2005: 188 no. 1, 192 (Pl. 1:1).

<sup>10</sup> To these, an as yet unpublished example was later added of a tremissis of Nepos from the numismatic collection of the Museum of Croatian Archaeological Monuments in Split, Šeparović 2000, 32-33 no. 13 (*Roma*). For the attribution of this tremissis to Nepos’ mint in Dalmatia (*Salona*), Demo 2005, 187-188 (Fig. 1), 190.

<sup>11</sup> Demo 1988, 250-253; Demo 2005, 193 (Pl. 3).

of this, in spite of a series of evident typological differences, presented this entire group of Nepos' tremisses as fairly homogenous, while the site of its minting, despite the lack of a sigla representing a mint mark,<sup>12</sup> pointed to Dalmatia and the centre of this province located in Salona, where Julius Nepos had begun his career and in the vicinity of which it abruptly ended on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 480. It was also presumed that their emphasized stylistic-typological inconsistency was not coincidental – the tremisses utilized various elements and combinations of the Milan, Rome, and Ravenna styles – but that this did not represent the result of inconsistency and arbitrariness on the part of the engravers or even mismatched templates provided to the engravers by the administrative authorities of the newly established mint. The assumption seemed more likely – thirty years later it had to be supplemented with new and previously unknown examples, but not significantly changed<sup>13</sup> – that the variety of the stylistic characteristics and their numerous combinations were a reflection of the attitudes and messages that Nepos had supported, represented, and transmitted in the various periods of his political activities, first as the legitimate Western Roman emperor (475-476) and in the end as a nominal Western Roman emperor, powerless to revive his ruling position and make it actual, and as such to fully consummate it. (**Table 1**)

Table 1. The stylistic traits (obverse / reverse) and chronological arrangement of the typological groups and subgroups of Nepos' Dalmatian tremisses according to research carried out in 1988 and 2020.

| Demo 1988: 249-258 |       |                                            | Demo 2020: 71-85 |                |
|--------------------|-------|--------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Minting period     | Group | Stylistic traits of<br>(obverse / reverse) | Group            | Minting period |
| 474                | –     | <i>Mediolanum / Mediolanum</i>             | I-A              | 474-475        |
|                    | I     | as above                                   | I-B              |                |
| 474/5-477          | II-A  | <i>Roma / Mediolanum</i>                   | II-A             | 475-476        |
|                    | II-B  | <i>Roma / Salona</i>                       | II-B             |                |
|                    | –     | as above                                   | II-C             |                |
|                    | III   | <i>Ravenna / Mediolanum</i>                | III              | 476/477-480    |
| 477-480            | IV-A  | as above                                   | IV-A             |                |
|                    | IV-B  | <i>Ravenna / Ravenna</i>                   | IV-B             |                |
|                    | IV-C  | as above                                   | IV-C             |                |
|                    | V     | as above                                   | V                |                |

Findings similar to those collected through analysis in 1988 of the tremisses of Nepos minted in Dalmatia could not be used in the detection of solidi minted there,<sup>14</sup> as in the numismatic collections of museums in Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Slovenia, the existence of comparative interesting material was not established. Therefore, all that remains is either to depend upon or reconsider the framework of Lacam's scheme, which attributed two groups of rare solidi of Nepos to the mint in Salona. One of them, marked with the reverse marks M-D and R-V,<sup>15</sup> needed to be immediately excluded, not merely because of the inappropriate use of these symbols, but also because of the forms of individual letters, as well as the absence of the characteristic for Salona □ in place of E in the first part of the obverse legend. This very detail could be recognized on two examples of another of Lacam's groups of solidi (**Fig. 1:1,4**), which in 1988 I classified among the solidi of Nepos' Salonitan mint, then dating the example without a dot at the end of the reverse legend VICTORI – A AVCCC (**Fig. 1:1**) to the period from late 474 or early 475 to the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 477,<sup>16</sup> and the example with a semicolon at the end of the reverse legend VICTORI – A AVCCC: (**Fig. 1:4**) to the period between the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 477 and the death of Nepos on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 480.<sup>17</sup> After the above mentioned data and findings were presented to the professional public in March 1988, another solidus of Julius Nepos similar to the previous two appeared at an auction of Bank Leu in Zürich. This gold coin was attributed in the auction catalogue to the mint in Rome and dated to the period of Nepos' first, actual reign

<sup>12</sup> The last Western Roman tremisses with sigle were minted in Rome at the beginning of the reign of Valentinian III, Kent 1994 (= *RIC X*), 161, 166, 364, no. 2003-2004.

<sup>13</sup> Demo 2020, 71-85.

<sup>14</sup> Demo 1988, 259.

<sup>15</sup> Several years later, this not very large group of solidi was classified by J.P.C. Kent among the solidi of the so-called "crude style" attributed to the production of the mints in Milan (M-D) and Ravenna (R-V) during the time of the second reign of Nepos (477-480), Kent 1994 (= *RIC X*), 431-432, no. 3239 and 3243, Pl. 70.

<sup>16</sup> Demo 1988, 260-261 Fig. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Demo 1988, 261-262 Fig. 10.



Fig. 1 – Solidi of the mint of Nepos in Dalmatia (examples ca. 2x1). 1 – SHM 17479 (photo: Gunnel Jansson).  
 2 – Aureo & Calico 300/2017, no. 248. 3 – BM 1860,0329.278 (© The Trustees of the British Museum).  
 4 – Reinhart 1938, 132 no. 104, Taf. 6:104.

in 474-475,<sup>18</sup> despite its appearance and stylistic traits completely unknown to the Roman mint of that time. This incorrect claim had to be corrected immediately, which was done in the following year, in favour of an attribution of the coin to the mint of Nepos in Dalmatia with a date in the period after Nepos' return to Dalmatia and the beginning of the new lustral period on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 477.<sup>19</sup> (Fig. 1:2).

The opinions and observations of two then leading European numismatic specialists were essential for the acceptance of these ideas. The first to comment on this topic, in 1992, was P. Grierson, supporting the importance of local finds in establishing the site of minting, and also considering that the Salonitan solidi as well as the tremisses without a mint mark were from a mint active in the period of 476-480.<sup>20</sup> Two years later, the thesis was supported in a somewhat different manner by J.P.C. Kent, emphasizing that because of Nepos' residence in Dalmatia the existence and work of a mint in which solidi and tremisses were minted from 475-477 was self-explanatory, with some of the tremisses perhaps being minted there after 477.<sup>21</sup> In addition to the two already published solidi from the Dalmatian mint of Nepos from collections in Stockholm and Milan,<sup>22</sup> in 1994 Kent added, unfortunately without an illustration in the catalogue,<sup>23</sup> another only recently truly accessible solidus from the numismatic collection of the British Museum, where that gold coin had been located since 1859 (or 1860).<sup>24</sup> (Fig. 1:3) With this, after many years of delay, the fourth solidus from the Dalmatian mint of Nepos became "visible" to the interested numismatic public, and the current state of research in comparison with that from the end of the 1980s would appear as follows:

#### 1) VICTORI – A AVCCC (Fig. 1:1)

1. *Obv.* D N IVL NЄ – POS P F AVC. Helmeted bust facing, pearl-diademed, cuirassed, holding spear in r. hand over r. shoulder behind head, in l. arm shield decorated with horseman riding down enemy.

*Rv.* VICTORI – A AVCCC. Victory standing l. holding long cross in r. hand; twelve-pointed star (✱) in r. field; in exergue, COMOB.

4.416 g; 20.5 mm; 6h.

SHM 17479\*, Köping sn., Kullen (Sweden); chance find, 1924.

*Lit.* Fagerlie 1967: 28 no. 180/no ill., 188 no. 79 (*Rome* ?); Lacam 1983: 604 no. 1a, 607 Pl. CXLVIIa:Type 1a, Pl. 37:1 (*Salona* ?); Demo 1988: 260-261, Fig. 9 (*Salona*); Kent 1994 (=RIC X): 433 no. 3246/Pl. 70 (*Uncertain Mints; some attributed to Salona*, 475-7).

*Web.* <https://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=111228&g=1>

#### 2) VICTORI – A AVCCC: (Fig. 1:2-4)

2. *Obv.* D N IVL NЄ – POS P F AVC. Helmeted bust facing, pearl-diademed, cuirassed, holding spear in r. hand over r. shoulder behind head, in l. arm shield decorated with horseman riding down enemy.

*Rv.* VICTORI – A AVCCC:. Victory standing l. holding long cross in r. hand; twelve-pointed star (✱) in r. field; in exergue, COMOB•.

4.38/4.39/4.40 g; 21.5 mm; 6h.

Unknown collection.

*Lit.* Demo 1989: 42 Sl. 1 (*Salona*). – *Leu* 45/1988: no. 394 (*Rome*) = *NAC* 5/1992: no. 617 (*Rome*) = *NAC* 24/2002, no. 361 (–)<sup>25</sup> = *Aureo & Calico* 241/2012, no. 394 (*Constantinopole*) = *Aureo & Calico* 300/2017: no. 248 (*Constantinopole*).\*

<sup>18</sup> *Leu* 45/1988, 80 no. 394, Taf. 24.

<sup>19</sup> Demo 1989, 41-43.

<sup>20</sup> Grierson-Mays 1992, 185.

<sup>21</sup> Kent 1994 (=RIC X), 36, 206-207, 217.

<sup>22</sup> Lacam 1983, 604-605, 607 (Pl. CXLVIIa:1a-b), Pl. 37:1-2; Demo 1988: 261-262 (Fig. 9-10).

<sup>23</sup> Kent 1994 (=RIC X), 433 no. 3245. The tremisses of Nepos (no. 3252-3253) that Kent presented in the same part of the catalogue as "*Uncertain Mints; some attributed to Salona*" were most probably minted in Arelate, Demo 2020, 75 Fig. 2:5.

<sup>24</sup> Prior to its donation in 1859, the solidus was located in the collection of Count John Francis William de Salis (1825-1871), who, when it comes to numismatics, is considered one of the greatest benefactors of the British Museum in London. De Salis began his career as an attaché u Torino/Turin (1845-1849), where he certainly must have been interested in numismatics and collecting ancient coinage. Increasing his collection, he soon became a numismatic writer, and in 1859, a member of the Royal Numismatic Society in London. When he decided to donate the collection to the British Museum in the same year, it already contained thousands of coins, minted in a range from early Roman consular emissions to late Byzantine coins, including considerable quantities of Vandal, Merovingian, Ostrogothic, Visigothic, and Lombard coins. Madden 1865, 1, 3-4, 12, 26, 50, 52; Blades 1872, 10-12; Keary 1879, 18; Wroth 1911, xciii-xciv; Walker 1953, 76; Carson & Pagan 1986, 12, 59; Baldi 2017: 67.

<sup>25</sup> It is incorrect that the solidus was offered at one of the auctions of *CNA* in 1991 (XVI/1991, no. 564).

3. *Obv.* D N IVL N□ – POS P F AVC. Helmeted bust facing, pearl-diademed, cuirassed, holding spear in r. hand over r. shoulder behind head, in l. arm shield decorated with horseman riding down enemy.

*Rv.* VICTORI – A AVCCC:. Victory standing l. holding long cross in r. hand; no star in r. field; in exergue, COMOB.

? g; 20.5mm; 6h.

BM 1860,0329.278.\*

*Lit.* Kent 1994 (=RIC X), 433 no. 3245/no ill. (*Uncertain Mints; some attributed to Salonae, 475-7*).

*Web:* <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/1613750290>

4. *Obv.* D N IVL N□ – POS P F AVC. Helmeted bust facing, pearl-diademed, cuirassed, holding spear in r. hand over r. shoulder behind head, in l. arm shield decorated with horseman riding down enemy.

*Rv.* VICTORI – A AVCCC:. Victory standing l. holding long cross in r. hand; six-pointed star (★) in r. field; in exergue, COMOB.

4.35 g; 20 mm; ?.

CRN B 14929<sup>26</sup>, Lesmo-Gernetto, 1818 (Italy); hoard of 273 solidi.

*Lit.* De'Rosmini 1820, Pl. 1/149 no. 3, T.4/405, 413; Reinhart 1938, 120, 132 no. 104, Taf. 6:104 (*Eurich, king of Wisigoths*)\*; Lacam 1983, 604 no. 1b, 607/Pl. CXLVIIa:Type 1b, Pl. 37:2 (*Salona?*); Demo 1988, 261-262 Fig. 10 (*Salona*); Kent 1994 (=RIC X), 433 no. 3247/Pl. 70 (*Uncertain Mints; some attributed to Salonae - 475-7*).<sup>27</sup>

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The analysis of the Dalmatian solidi of Nepos published in 1988 and 1989 relied on the numismatic contents of three solidi, classifying them into two typological groups, formally divided by the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 475, the day when Nepos departed Italy: the earlier group with the reverse ending AVCCC (1 spec.) minted prior to that date, and the later group with the reverse ending AVCCC: (2 spec.) minted after that date. The later group was joined, as the third, by a solidus from the British Museum in London, which as a novelty among the Dalmatian solidi of Nepos was characterized by an unknown and so far non-analyzed feature of the reverse depiction – the absence of a star in the field to the right of Victory with a long cross. Because of this so-far unique detail, the necessity arose of re-evaluating and re-assessing the total reverse content of all Dalmatian solidi documented to the present, i.e. the ending of their reverse legends, the appearance of the star in the field to the right of Victory, and the formation of the exergue. In the comparative sense, their comparison is required with the tremisses of Nepos minted in

Table 2 – The composite elements of the reverses of the Dalmatian solidi of Nepos and their stylistic and typological connection with individual groups and subgroups of the Dalmatian tremisses of Nepos.

| No. | Julius Nepos, solidi<br>( <i>Salona</i> , Dalmatia) | End of rev. legend |         | Star in field right |         |       | Exergue |         | Groups of<br>tremisses |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|-------|---------|---------|------------------------|
|     |                                                     | AVCCC              | AVCCC:  | ★(12)               | ★(6)    | no.   | COMOB   | COMOB•  |                        |
| 1.  | SHM 17479                                           | +                  | –       | +                   | –       | –     | +       | –       | I-B                    |
|     |                                                     | (md)               |         | (md)                |         |       | (md)    |         |                        |
| 2.  | <i>Leu</i> 45/1988, 394                             | –                  | +       | +                   | –       | –     | –       | +       | II-A                   |
|     |                                                     |                    | (rm/rv) | (md)                |         |       |         | (rm/rv) |                        |
| 3.  | BM 1869,0329.278                                    | –                  | +       | –                   | –       | +     | +       | –       | II-B, II-C             |
|     |                                                     |                    | (rm/rv) |                     |         | (sal) | (rm/rv) |         |                        |
| 4.  | CRN B 14929                                         | –                  | +       | –                   | +       | –     | +       | –       | IV-B, IV-C; V          |
|     |                                                     |                    | (rm/rv) |                     | (rm/rv) |       | (rm/rv) |         |                        |

<sup>26</sup> The first data about the hoard from Gernetto (or Gernietto, as it is also cited in the literature), its numerical condition, the composition, and the specimens that arrived in the museum collections in Milan and Vienna – most of the find ended up in private hands – were published only two years after the discovery, De'Rosmini 1820 (T. 1), 36, 149; (T. 4), 404-418. For certain useful information related to this hoard, see Arslan 1978, 20, 24 n. 70-71, 36 no. 21. Prohászka 2009, 205-217. Also about the hoard, although the solidus of Nepos is not mentioned as a composite part, see Fischer and Wood 2020, 170 n. 28, 173 n. 41, 180 (Tab. 4a). The solidus of Nepos is also not mentioned by Ungaro 1985, 56, 71; Kent 1994 (=RIC X), xcvi; Hobbs 1997, 308, 430 (Table 49), Arslan (Ed.) 2004, 32 no. 3680; Gianazza (Ed.) 2022, 255 (Lesmo, loc. Gernetto).

<sup>27</sup> Prohászka 2009, 211, 213. The solidus of Nepos was attributed to the mint in Rome, dated to the period of the actual reign of Nepos (474-475), and identified as type Kent 1994 (=RIC X), no. 3208.

Dalmatia, whose stylistic, typological, and chronological elements and features are better known and studied thanks to the far greater number of examples known to the present. (**Table 2**)

a) The colon at the end of the reverse legend (AVCCC:)

If an important iconographic innovation of the Western Roman monetary system is considered to be the adoption of the Eastern Roman reverse depiction of Victory with a long cross and the reverse legend VICTORI – A AVCCC, then the use of a colon (:) and its placement at the end of the legend should also be considered a significant addition to the latter. Nonetheless, the appearance and choice of a colon and not some other mark (such as a star) is not surprising if the fact is taken into consideration that the placement of a dot at the end of the reverse legend had already occurred early for some probably similar reason, in fact on several occasions on the solidi minted in Thessalonica for the eastern Roman emperors Marcian<sup>28</sup> and Leo I.<sup>29</sup> On the Western Roman solidi, the same reverse image and legend with a colon (:) in combination with an eight-pointed star (✱) in the field to the right of Victory was already located on individual solidi minted in Rome in the name of the Eastern Roman emperor Leo I in 472/473,<sup>30</sup> but also later for his successor Leo II (from the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 474), i.e. in the period that preceded the arrival of Nepos in Rome on the 19/24<sup>th</sup> of June 474.<sup>31</sup> During the actual reign of Nepos (474-475), the colon at the end of the reverse legend adorned the solidi minted in Rome (from the very beginning) and Ravenna (with the exception of the earliest emissions), but not those minted in Milan and Arelate. Under Romulus August(ul)us, the colon was utilized by Milan, but not Arelate (only one such solidus of Romulus is known). After the removal of Romulus, the solidi of Odovacar minted in Rome and Ravenna in the period of the nominal reign of Nepos (476/477-480) continued to use the colon, while in the same period in Milan the use of a colon on the solidi of Odovacar minted in the name of Nepos and Zeno was tied only to the earlier emissions.

A colon (:) at the end of the reverse legend was documented on three of four (75%) Dalmatian solidi of Nepos known to date. The only one without a colon is the solidus SHM 17479 [1], which is connected by this detail, as well as the presence of a (twelve-pointed) star, with the reverse content of the solidi of Milan minted towards the end of the actual reign of Nepos (474-475). The use of exclusively Milan reverse content brings it into connection with the similarly dated Dalmatian tremisses of Nepos in group I-B. The use of a colon at the end of the reverse legend on the remaining three solidi [2-4], where it is combined with Rome, Ravenna or even local reverse content (**Fig. 1:2-4**) dates their origin to a period certainly later than that when the solidus SHM 17479 was minted (**Fig. 1:1**).

b) The star in the field to the right of Victory

The appearance of an eight-pointed star (✱) on the reverse of the Western Roman gold coinage is related to the Eastern Roman solidi of the emperor Arcadius (383-408) minted in Constantinople and Thessalonica in the later years of his reign (*Concordia*, *Nova Spes*, and *Salus*, Victory sitting).<sup>32</sup> From that point onwards, the Eastern Roman eight-pointed star (✱), as a symbolic cross between a cross and the Christogram – rare exceptions include *Vota XX*, Victory standing<sup>33</sup> – was present on most of the series minted for Arcadius' successor emperor Theodosius II (408-450): first as under Arcadius in the field to the left of the image (*Concordia*, Victory sitting<sup>34</sup>; *Gloria Orvis*, emperor standing),<sup>35</sup> and then in the field to the right of the image (*Virtus*;<sup>36</sup> *Vota XXX*, Victory sitting facing l.<sup>37</sup>), then again in the field to the left of the image (*Imp XXXXII*, Victory sitting facing l.<sup>38</sup>), while much more rarely it

<sup>28</sup> Tolstoi 1912, 98-99 no. 15 (Pl. 7); Hahn 1989 (=MIRB), 66 no. 18b (Taf. 6) = Depeyrot 1996, 227 no. 55/2 (Pl. 22).

<sup>29</sup> Hahn 1989 (=MIRB), 68 no. 15b, 16b. (Pl. 8); Depeyrot 1996, 228 no. 56/2 (Pl. 22) = Kent 1994 (=RIC X), 286 no. 617 (Pl. 23).

<sup>30</sup> For an example, see *Santamaria* 13/3/1953, no. 1475 (coll. Signorelli) = Kent 1994 (=RIC X), no. 3204 (Pl. 68). Kent attributed it to the mint in Rome and the reign of the young emperor Leo II and his father Zeno, i.e. the earlier period of the actual reign of Nepos in 474 (op. cit. 294, 427).

<sup>31</sup> Lacam 1983, no. 170 (Pl. 33) = Kent 1994 (=RIC X), no. 3203 (Pl. 68) = Depeyrot 1996, no. 77/2/Milan (Pl. XI).

<sup>32</sup> Kent 1991, pl. 13:16-17, 14:20-21, 26, 15: 44-46; Kent 1994 (=RIC X), no. 29-32 (Pl. 2); Depeyrot 1996: no. 57/1 (Pl. 25).

<sup>33</sup> Kent 1994 (=RIC X), no. 219 (Pl. 8); Hahn 1989 (=MIRB), no. 15a-b (Taf. 1).

<sup>34</sup> Kent 1994 (=RIC X), no. 202 (Pl. 7); Depeyrot 1996, no. 73/1; Hahn 1989 (=MIRB), no. 12a-b (Taf. 1). – An eight-pointed star is located in the field to the left of the reverse depiction on the rare sesquisolidi of Valentinian III (*Adventus*) minted on the occasion of his arrival in Constantinople on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 437 to marry Eudoxia, the daughter of the emperor Theodosius II, *Tkalec* 18/02/2002, no. 279.

<sup>35</sup> Kent 1994 (=RIC X), no. 232 (Pl. 8); Depeyrot 1996, no. 77/1 (Pl. 25); Hahn 1989 (=MIRB): no. 32 (Taf. 2).

<sup>36</sup> Kent 1994 (=RIC X), no. 284 (Pl. 11); Depeyrot 1996, no. 83/1 (Pl. 26); Hahn 1989 (=MIRB): no. 31a-b (Taf. 2).

<sup>37</sup> Kent 1994 (=RIC X), no. 259-260 (Pl. 10); Depeyrot 1996, no. 81/1 (Pl. 26); Hahn 1989 (=MIRB), no. 25-26 (Taf. 2).

<sup>38</sup> Kent 1994 (=RIC X), no. 285-287, 307-315, 320-325 (Pl. 11-13); Depeyrot, 1996, no. 84/2 (Pl. 26); Hahn 1989 (=MIRB), no. 33-34 (Taf. 2).

was located left of the image in its upper section (*Vot XX*, Victory standing<sup>39</sup>) or even in the middle above the image (*Salus Rei Publicae*, two emperors sitting<sup>40</sup>). With Marcian's ascension to the throne in 450 in Constantinople the standard reverse depiction became Victory with a long and broad cross in the right hand and an eight-pointed star (✱) in the field to the right of her, which was assumed and used by all his successors (Leo, Zeno, Basiliscus, Anastasius), so that this combination mostly remained in use up to 507. In the Western Roman mints of gold coinage, the use of a star on the reverse of solidi only began with Anthemius, the Western Roman emperor who arrived from Constantinople, on whose solidi minted in Rome it appears either in the central field of the reverse<sup>41</sup> or even in the exergue<sup>42</sup> – and the latter placement was also utilized on the solidi of Glycerius minted in Ravenna.<sup>43</sup> The reverse depiction of Victory with a long cross and an eight-pointed cross at the end of the reverse legend VICTORI - A AVCCC ✱ appeared only on solidi minted in Rome in 468 or 469 in the name of Euphemia, the daughter of the eastern Roman emperor Marcian and the wife of emperor Anthemius.<sup>44</sup> It was exactly this “female” combination of the reverse image and ending of the reverse legend that would be used several years later by the Western Roman emperor Julius Nepos on the solidi minted in Milan soon after arriving on Italian soil in the spring of 474, and it continued in use up to his abandoning Italy and fleeing to Dalmatia on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 475.<sup>45</sup> It is interesting that in addition to the eight-pointed star (✱), six-pointed (✴), five-pointed (✵), and seven-pointed (✶) stars appear on his reverses from Milan, and the most interesting of all, a twelve-pointed star (✳) appears only on very late, but not the very last Milan emissions of Nepos. This fact is neither coincidental nor insignificant, as other than on the rare solidi of Nepos minted in Milan, the same twelve-pointed star appears elsewhere only on two equally rare solidi of the Dalmatian mint of Nepos. [1-2] On them, in contrast to those on the solidi minted in Milan, the star was placed in the field to the right of the depiction of Victory with a long and broad cross in the right hand, and regardless of the mentioned difference, it could be presumed that the use of the Dalmatian twelve-pointed star (✳) either preceded or was contemporary with that of Milan (**Fig. 1:1**), with a duration that most probably ended only at the beginning of the year 476 (**Fig. 1:2**). The combining of the Rome-Ravenna and Milan reverse contents connects the latter Dalmatian solidus of Nepos with the Dalmatian tremisses of group II-A.

In addition to the twelve-pointed star in the field to the right of Victory on the Dalmatian solidi, the Western Roman six-pointed star (✴) was also in use, which on the solidi of Nepos minted in Italy during his actual reign (474-475) was characteristic only for the solidi minted in Rome.<sup>46</sup> Hence, its appearance in Dalmatia in that period is not to be expected, nor would it be expected in the period of the reign of Romulus August(ul)us (475-476), when it was used in a varied form on the solidi minted in Milan.<sup>47</sup> Seemingly, it was more characteristic for the minting of Odovacar and the period from the last third of the year 476 onwards, when it can already be noted on his early emissions minted in Rome, and subsequently on those minted in Ravenna from the last third of the year 477 onwards. In that period, for these two mints of Odovacar, and particularly for the mint in Ravenna, quite “careless” engraving is characteristic, with an irregular and often insufficiently clear appearance of the six-pointed star, which was evidently also the case with the engraver of the solidus CRN B 14929 [4] – a Dalmatian solidus of Nepos with a six-pointed star in the field to the right of Victory (**Fig. 1:4**). The simultaneous appearance of the six-pointed star in Nepos' Dalmatia and Odovacar's Ravenna certainly would not have been accidental, as it coincided either with the conclusions of negotiations between Odovacar-Zeno-Nepos in Constantinople, or with the beginning of the new lustral period in September 477, which followed soon after those negotiations. The utilization of the Ravenna-Rome reverse content in the period from the last third of 477 to the death of Nepos on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 480, would correspond to the period of minting of the Dalmatian tremisses of Nepos in group IV-B and C and group V.

The solidus BM 1860.0329,278 [3] is the only Dalmatian solidi of Nepos without any star at all on the reverse – whether at the end of the reverse legend, or in the field to the left or right of Victory, or in the exergue (**Fig. 1:3**). The lack is all the more interesting as the omission of the star was not replaced either by a mint mark or any other symbol or image. The absence could be considered a reminder of the period only a few years before the arrival

<sup>39</sup> Kent 1994 (=RIC X), no. 225 (Pl. 8); Depeyrot 1996, no. 75/1; Hahn 1989 (=MIRB), no. 18 (Taf. 2).

<sup>40</sup> Kent 1994 (=RIC X), no. 233-245 (Pl. 9); Depeyrot 1996, no. 79/2 (pl. 25); Hahn 1989 (=MIRB), no. 22-24 (Taf. 2).

<sup>41</sup> Kent 1994 (=RIC X), no. 2801-2802 (Pl. 62), 2824-2846 (Pl. 63); Depeyrot 1996, no. 57/1 (Pl. 10), 63/1 (Pl. 11).

<sup>42</sup> Kent 1994 (=RIC X), no. 2818-2819; Depeyrot 1996, no. 58/1 (Pl. 10).

<sup>43</sup> Hirsch XXIV/1909, no. 2849 (coll. Weber) = Kent 1994 (=RIC X), no. 3105 (Pl. 62); Grierson-Mays 1992, no. 936 (Pl. 37) = Kent 1994 (=RIC X), no. 3106 (Pl. 62).

<sup>44</sup> Kent 1994 (=RIC X), no. 2827-2829 (Pl. 63); Depeyrot 1996, no. 64/1, 66/1 (Pl. 11).

<sup>45</sup> In that sense, the only exceptions are his earliest Milan solidi. For one Scandinavian example of this Milan emission known for quite a long time, see Fagerlie 1967, 27 no. 178 (Pl. VI).

<sup>46</sup> For the example from the DO Collection in Washington DC, see Lacam 1983, Pl. CXLVIIa: Type 3 (D.O.), Pl. 37:5 = Grierson-Mays 1992: no. 946 (Pl. 37). – In the same period, the mint in Ravenna does not feature a cross as the fields to the left and right of Victory were occupied by the mint marks R-V.

<sup>47</sup> Kent 1994 (=RIC X), 440 no. 3414-3418 (Pl. 72).

of Nepos in Italy, when on the solidi of one of his predecessors, Anicius Olybrius, minted in Rome and Milan, and later on those of Glycerius minted in Ravenna and Milan, there were no traces of a star. In that sense, the iconography of the solidi of Nepos' predecessors, although innovative, was nonetheless too Western Roman, in contrast to that which on the model of the Eastern Roman practice was imposed on the mints by Julius Nepos upon his arrival in Italy. Therefore, the creation and minting of the Dalmatian solidus of Nepos without a star in the field to the right of Victory was certainly of a later date, and the omission of the star represented a local feature. This local feature is also recognizable on the reverses of the Dalmatian tremisses of Nepos of group II-B and C minted after the deposition of Romulus Augustulus at the beginning of September 476, the first months of Odovacar's reign in Ravenna in 476/477, and during the negotiations among Zeno-Nepos-Odovacar in Constantinople up until the beginning of the new lustral period in September 477.<sup>48</sup>

### c) Exergue (COMOB / COMOB•)

Through the choice and strict utilization of the exergue COMOB the Dalmatian solidi of Nepos clearly displayed that they belonged to the Western Roman monetary system. The only one somewhat different is the exergue on the solidus *Leu* 44/1989, no. 394 [2], where the legend ends with a period and reads COMOB• (Fig. 1:2). Although rare, even this detail is characteristic for individual emissions of the Western Roman monetary production, as in the third quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century it can be found on the solidi of Majorian minted in Arelate<sup>49</sup> and those of Libius Severus minted in Rome,<sup>50</sup> and then on the solidi of Nepos minted in Rome in the summer of 474.<sup>51</sup> Because of the latter, it seems that this Dalmatian solidus of Nepos would itself have been minted during 474, but the use of the twelve-pointed star in the field to the right of Victory would rather place it either at the very end of the actual reign of Nepos, or, as is more likely, in the period after the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 475, when Nepos, fleeing from Orestes, escaped to Salona and his native Dalmatia.<sup>52</sup>

\* \* \*

In contrast to the thirty-six so far known Dalmatian tremisses of Nepos, the existence of only four of his solidi minted in the same mint is a significant and probably not chance difference. This could speak in favour of either a more extensive minting of tremisses and a reduced minting of solidi, or perhaps a longer minting of tremisses and a brief, perhaps even temporary, minting of solidi. It was shown in 1988 that the tremisses of Nepos were minted in Dalmatia from the summer of 474 all the way to Nepos' death on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 480.<sup>53</sup> The same was confirmed by revisory investigations undertaken in 2020, utilizing earlier known, as well as newly documented numismatic material,<sup>54</sup> additionally supplemented for this occasion.<sup>55</sup> (Table 3)

The value of four solidi is proportional to the value of 12 tremisses, and if that were added to the 36 tremisses of the Dalmatian mint of Nepos, the total amount (48 ex.) would represent only a 25% share of solidi. The existing disproportion in relation to the emphasized high share of tremisses (75%) could truly speak in favour of one of the already cited reasons (a shorter minting of solidi, minting only in a certain period, occasional minting). Occasional minting could in fact justify the unexpected and so far seemingly complete lack of connection between the dies of the obverse and reverse of the four Dalmatian solidi of Nepos in contrast to the frequent connection of the dies of the obverse or reverse of his considerably more numerous Dalmatian tremisses. The cause could in fact be found in some today unknown agreement reached during the negotiations of the embassies of Nepos and Odovacar with Zeno in Constantinople in 476/477. On that occasion, in addition to the amount of the yearly appanage,<sup>56</sup> other rules and details related to minting coinage were probably agreed upon, which both sides undertook to comply with. Indications of the existence of certain rules can be perceived in the production from Odovacar's Italic mints. There only the mint in Milan throughout the entire period of the nominal reign of Nepos (476/477-480) minted

<sup>48</sup> Demo 2021, 59, 62, 74-77.

<sup>49</sup> Kent 1994 (= RIC X), no. 2627, 2634 (Pl. 59).

<sup>50</sup> Kent 1994 (= RIC X), no. 2706 (Pl. 60).

<sup>51</sup> *RomNum* XXIII/2022, no. 1141; Depeyrot 1996, no. 77/1 (no ill.).

<sup>52</sup> Demo 1989, 41-44.

<sup>53</sup> Demo 1988, 257-259.

<sup>54</sup> Demo 2020, 80-83.

<sup>55</sup> The supplementation encompasses group I-A (4 ex.): *Santamaria* 33/1938, no. 1113 = *Leu Numismatik* 8/2021, no. 401\*; *Schulman* 243/1966, no. 2363, coll. R.J. Graham; *NAC* 33/2006, no. 633; *Künker* 382/2023, no. 573; group I-B (1 ex.): GLAHM 35148\* = Robertson 1982, 464 no. 5, no ill.; group II-A (1 ex.): SMB 18309993, 1791 Ansbach\*; group III (1 ex.): *Rauch* 119/2024, no. 294\*; group IV-C (2 ex.): *Künker* 382/2023, no. 572\*; SMB 18310007, 1685 Pfälzer Sammlung.

<sup>56</sup> Kent 1994 (=RIC X), 36, 207.

Table 3 – The numerical status, percentage representation, number of dies, and the stylistic characteristics of individual groups and sub-groups of the documented tremisses of the Dalmatian mint of Nepos in 1988, 2020, and 2024.

| Groups & sub-groups |               | No. of specimens<br>1988/2020/2024 | Total in groups<br>1988/2020/2024 | Total<br>%    | Dies<br><i>obv./rev.</i> | Stylistic trait<br><i>obverse / reverse</i> |
|---------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <b>I</b>            | <b>A (r5)</b> | - / 1 / 5                          | <b>4 / 7 / 12</b>                 | <b>33.33</b>  | 1/1                      | <i>Mediolanum / Mediolanum</i>              |
|                     | <b>B (r4)</b> | 4 / 6 / 7                          |                                   |               | 2/2                      | <i>Mediolanum / Mediolanum</i>              |
| <b>II</b>           | <b>A (r4)</b> | 2 / 5 / 6                          | <b>3 / 8 / 9</b>                  | <b>25.00</b>  | 3/2                      | <i>Roma / Mediolanum</i>                    |
|                     | <b>B (r5)</b> | 1 / 2 / 2                          |                                   |               | 3/3                      | <i>Roma / Salona</i>                        |
|                     | <b>C (r5)</b> | - / 1 / 1                          |                                   |               | 4/4                      | <i>Roma / Salona</i>                        |
| <b>III</b>          | <b>(r5)</b>   | 1 / 1 / 2                          | <b>1 / 1 / 2</b>                  | <b>5.56</b>   | 5/2                      | <i>Ravenna / Mediolanum</i>                 |
| <b>IV</b>           | <b>A (r5)</b> | 1 / 3 / 3                          | <b>4 / 10 / 12</b>                | <b>33.33</b>  | 6/2                      | <i>Ravenna / Mediolanum</i>                 |
|                     | <b>B (r5)</b> | 1 / 1 / 1                          |                                   |               | 6/5                      | <i>Ravenna / Ravenna</i>                    |
|                     | <b>C (r4)</b> | 2 / 6 / 8                          |                                   |               | 6/6                      | <i>Ravenna / Ravenna</i>                    |
| <b>V</b>            | <b>(r5)</b>   | 1 / 1 / 1                          | <b>1 / 1 / 1</b>                  | <b>2.78</b>   | 7/7                      | <i>Ravenna / Ravenna</i>                    |
|                     |               |                                    | <b>13 / 27 / 36</b>               | <b>100.00</b> |                          |                                             |

solidi and tremisses in the name of Nepos (more frequently) or in the name of Zeno (more rarely). In the same period, gold coins in the name of Nepos were barely minted whatsoever in Ravenna, while in Rome they were not minted at all. In Dalmatia, in comparison with the period prior to 476/477, gold coins were further minted only in a reduced amount and only in the name of Julius Nepos – rarely solidi and more often tremisses – up until the death of Nepos on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 480.

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### Abbreviations for auction catalogues

- Aureo & Calicó* – Aureo & Calicó, Subastas numismáticas S.L., Barcelona (E).
- CNA* – Classical Numismatic Auctions, Quarryville/PA–Beverly Hills/CA–London (USA; GB).
- Hirsch* – Jakob Hirsch, München (D).
- Künker* – Fritz Rudolf Künker GmbH & Co. KG., Osnabrück (D).
- Leu* – Bank Leu AG, Zürich (CH).
- Leu Numismatik* – Leu Numismatik AG, Winterthur (CH).
- NAC* – Numismatica Ars Classica AG, Zürich (CH).
- NFA* – Numismatic Fine Arts, Beverly Hills/CA (USA).
- Rauch* – Auktionshaus H.D. Rauch, Wien (A).
- RomNum* – Roma Numismatics Ltd., London (GB).
- Santamaria* – P & P Santamaria, Roma (I).
- Schulman* – Jacques Schulman, Amsterdam (N).
- Tkalec* – A. Tkalec AG, Zürich (CH).

### Abbreviations of museums and collections

BM – The British Museum, London (GB).

CRN – Civiche raccolte numismatiche, Milano (I).

GLAHM – The Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow, Glasgow (GB).

DO – The Dumbarton Oaks Museum, Washington DC (US).

SHM – Statens historiska museer, Stockholm (S).

SMB – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin (D).

### Lista Ilustrațiilor

Fig. 1. Solidi ai monetăriei lui Nepos din Dalmația (exemple cca. 2x1). 1 – SHM 17479 (foto: Gunnel Jansson). 2 – Aureo & Calico 300/2017, nr. 248. 3 – BM 1860,0329.278 (© The Trustees of the British Museum). 4 – Reinhart 1938, 132 nr. 104, Taf. 6:104.

Tabelul 1. Caracteristicile stilistice (avers/revers) și aranjamentul cronologic al grupurilor și subgrupurilor tipologice ale tremiselor dalmate ale lui Nepos, conform cercetărilor efectuate în 1988 și 2020.

Tabelul 2. Elementele constitutive ale reversurilor solidilor dalmați ai lui Nepos și legătura lor stilistică și tipologică cu grupuri și subgrupuri individuale ale tremiselor dalmate ale lui Nepos.

Tabelul 3. Statutul numeric, raporturile procentuale, numărul de matrițe și caracteristicile stilistice ale grupurilor și subgrupurilor individuale de tremise documentate din monetăria dalmată a lui Nepos în 1988, 2020 și 2024.

