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Original scientific paper

THIRTY YEARS LATER ... THE TREMISSSES OF JULIUS NEPOS MINTED IN SALONA IN THE LIGHT OF NEW OBSERVATIONS AND KNOWLEDGE

Thirty years ago an analysis was made of the tremisses of the Western Roman emperor Julius Nepos kept in the numismatic collections of several museum in Croatia (Split), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo), and Slovenia (Ljubljana). On that occasion, in addition to the usual examples minted in imperial mints in the Italic prefecture (Mediolanum, Ravenna, and Rome), a group of six tremisses were attributed to a mint of Nepos identified as having existed in Salona (Dalmatia), five of which were connected by use of the same reverse die. The numismatic material available at that point from European museums and private collections enabled that number to be increased to thirteen in various manners related and evidently well connected coins (dies, style, workmanship, finds, museum collections). In this manner it was possible with greater certainty to distinguish five Salonitan groups (some of them with two or three sub-groups) and to hypothesize their possible chronological arrangement. Throughout the years, the number of examples available for analysis has increased from 13 to 27, the number of sub-groups has increased from 5 to 8, while the quantification of the dies and tremisses in individual groups has begun to indicate specific features characteristic for circulation in a regional and possibly wider distribution of individual groups and sub-groups.

Key words: *Western Roman Empire, Julius Nepos, Romulus Augustus, Odovacar, Zeno, Dalmatia, Salona, Split, mint, gold coinage, tremisses.*

Julius Nepos is the only Western Roman emperor who, after not quite fourteen months of rule and unexpected overthrow, managed to escape, save his life, and successfully replace the imperial throne with a provincial one, less powerful but sufficiently influential and definitely much safer. In his native born Dalmatia, he reigned for almost five years as the legitimate Western Roman emperor, utilizing the imperial prerogatives that he had made relevant in time to serve him if he would ever need them. In this manner, in the first year of his reign, at some point after the 24th or 28th of June 474, he established and implemented the minting of gold coinage, and perhaps also bronze coinage, in the provincial center of Salona on the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea. The move was politically sound and above all meaningful – the return of a mint and minting coinage to the western parts of the Italian diocese (formerly the diocese of Pannoninae / Pannoniarum / western Illyricum), where two mints (*Siscia*, *Sirmium*) had operated in the 4th century¹ – aided Nepos in emphasizing and strengthening his position in Salona and Dalmatia in his absence, arranging in advance and in the case he had to return suddenly to his homeland, which actually occurred on the 28th of August 475, and hence rely on what was prepared and available to him there. The mint forged

¹ For the monetary structure and fiscal system of Late Antiquity from somewhat before AD 300 to ca. AD 400, *Hendy* 1985, 371-393. The transformation that took place during the 5th century, called “disintegration” in the same citation, was presented only as indications (op.cit., 393-397).

tremisses and sometimes solidi in Nepos' name until the violent death that befell him on the 9th of May 480 in his villa near Salona/*haud longe a Salonis, sua in villa*.² The mint continued to operate for another year or two even after Nepos' death, striking tremisses on behalf of the Eastern Roman emperor Zeno until the revenge taken by King Odovacar, in which Nepos' assassins were removed (Ovida and Viator) and Dalmatia was returned to the Italian prefecture. Even these few details more or less clearly show that the coinage of Julius Nepos minted in Dalmatia is not merely just a numismatic curiosity, but on the contrary represents a rare testimony to the little known historical circumstances in which the Western Roman Empire lived and functioned in the last decade of its existence.

Tremisses of group I/A-B (AD 474-475)

After the existence was detected in 1983 of a solidus minted in Salona for Julius Nepos,³ and after five years later this was joined by a not small section/selection of Nepos' tremisses attributed to that same mint in Salona (*Salonae*) or perhaps in Diocletian's Palace in Split (*Aspalathos*)⁴ - considering the vicinity of that imposing and today still existing imperial structure - this mint and its production was placed among imperial mints first by Philip Grierson in 1992,⁵ and subsequently by John P.C. Kent in his volume X, printed in 1994, of the Spink's and Sons Ltd. series *Roman Imperial Coinage*,⁶ dedicated to Harold Mattingly (1884-1964), an English historian, numismatist, and founder of the above numismatic series, and the author of its first volume published in 1923.⁷ In Kent's extensive, and despite occasional often harsh criticism, still important work full of numismatic material but also not always reliable accompanying information, an unexpected imbalance is noticeable between the attributions in the textual part and the presentation of the material in the catalog section where only the rare Salonitan solidi of Nepos are represented,⁸ but not the more numerous Salonitan tremisses of Nepos. Yet one tremissis of the Salonitan Group I is quite recognizable among Kent's coins attributed to the mint in Milan,⁹ primarily because of its most striking Salonitan characteristics: obverse legends with the symbol Γ in place of E in the first part, and

² *Marcel. com., s. a. 480*; Martindale 1980, 778; MacGeorge 2002, 62; Posavec 2007, 25, 46, 196; Handley 2010, 119.

³ *Lacam* 1983, 604-605, 607 (Roma, 474-475), Pl. 37:1-3 (Salona?). In addition to the above, it was unfounded to attribute a group of solidi with his name on the obverse and the mark M-D on the reverse to Nepos' minting in Salona in the period of 475-480 (op.cit., 702-707, Pl. 40:58-59), as well as related solidi and tremisses with the name of Zeno on the obverse (op.cit., 704, 707-709, Pl. 46:168-170/solidi; 709-713, Pl. 46:171-173/tremisses).

⁴ *Demo* 1988, 247-262.

⁵ *Grierson - Mays* 1992, 185, 189.

⁶ *Kent* 1994 (= RIC X), 36, 206-207, 217.

⁷ For his biography and bibliography, see *Carson* 1965, 239-254.

⁸ *Kent* 1994 (= RIC X), 433 no. 3246-3247, Pl. 70:3246-3247.

⁹ *Kent* 1994 (= RIC X), 429 no. 3221, Pl. 69:3221.

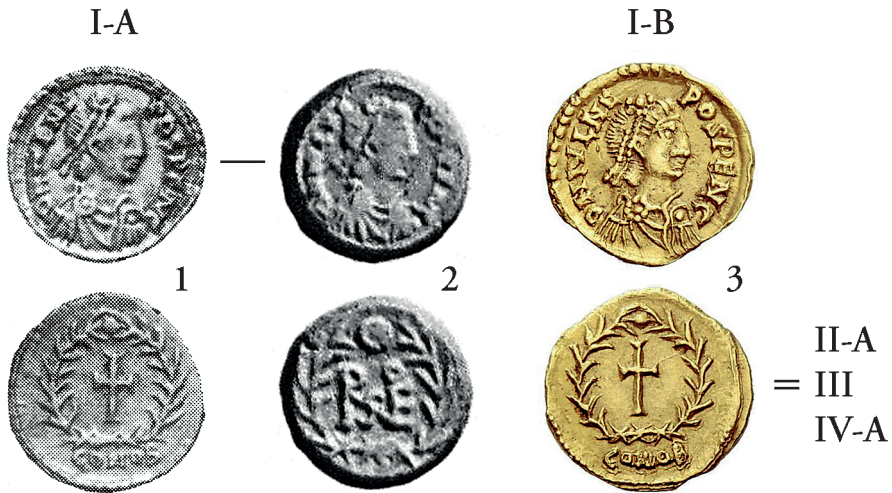


Fig. 1 - Examples of gold and bronze coins minted in Salona during the reign of Julius Nepos in 474-475 (ca. 2:1): **1** - Tremissis of sub-group I-A, Cahn 24/1912, no. 1932. **2** - A bronze coin minted with the same obverse die as the tremissis of the Salonitan sub-group I-A, Hirsch 24/1909, no. 2850 (Weber Coll.). **3** - Tremissis of sub-group I-B, NAC 56/2010, no. 514.

the letter E instead of F in its second part, and with the ligature *NC*, instead of the *AVC* more usual for coins minted in Milan in that period, and also because of the cross within a wreath composed of two branches with an unequal number of leaves in a 14/15 combination (left/right) on the reverse of the coin.¹⁰ Without noticing the mentioned differences, several tremisses with the same die of Salonitan Group I were attributed in a similar way to the mint in Milan in the luxurious catalog by Guy Lacam printed in Paris ten years earlier, from Western European museum collections in The Hague and Paris (La Haye, today in DNB; BN = BfN).¹¹ An even more numerous group of Nepos' tremisses attributed to the Milan mint – more numerous primarily because it includes coinage minted in Nepos' name during both his first and second reigns – is gathered in the catalog of the esteemed French numismatist Georges Depeyrot,¹² in which, among the many cited here, a specimen is mentioned that was known long ago but not yet attributed to Nepos' Salonitan mint,¹³ although it undoubtedly belongs to it. This was a tremissis first offered at the auction of Adolf Cahn in Frankfurt in 1912

¹⁰ *Demo* 1988, 249-250.

¹¹ *Lacam* 1983, 687 (Pl. CLXXIII:1-4), 689, Pl. 41:85-87. Lacam's example no. 5 does not belong among the coinage of the Salonitan mint, while example no. 6 ("Exemplaire d'une Collection particulière") I have left out completely, although I had previously counted on it (*Demo* 1988, 250 no. x), due to the impossibility of establishing its provenience and verifying its actual mint affiliation.

¹² *Depeyrot* 2004, 53 no. 43/1.

¹³ *Demo* 1988, 249, 269 Pl. 1:2.

(**Fig. 1:1**),¹⁴ and then again at the auction of Jakob Hirsch in Geneva in 1930,¹⁵ on which the distinguishing elements of Nepos' early Salonitan tremisses are quite visible (L/PE/NC), i.e. the symbol L for E, the symbol E for F, and finally NC in the obverse legend D N IVL NĒ - POS PE NC (*perpetuus augustus*), in contrast to the contemporary Milan tremisses with the obverse legend D N IVL NE - POS P F AVC (E/PF/AVC - *pius felix augustus*). The above traits and also the reverse with a cross in a wreath of branches with an equal number of leaves (14/14) require an attribution of the tremissis from the auctions in Frankfurt and Geneva to the Salonitan subgroup 1-A, minted before and in a shorter period than the considerably more numerous and previously known Salonitan I group with branches with unequal numbers of leaves (14/15), re-designated here as sub-group I-B (**Fig. 1:3**). It is of particular importance and significance that the same obverse die as the tremissis of the Salonitan sub-group I-A was used to mint the bronze coinage of Nepos,¹⁶ because of which it can be hypothesized that in Salona (or in Split), in addition to *monetae aureae*, at least for some time in the period of the first reign of Nepos (474-475) a *moneta publica* also existed, minting coinage with the monogram of Nepos in a wreath of branches, each with ten leaves, on the reverse (**Fig. 1:2**).

Group I-A

1. Cahn 24/1912, no. 1932* = *Ars Classica* XV/1930, no. 1987.

Group I-B (previously: Group I)

1. NMSlo 25656 = Demo 1988, 250 no. 1 Fig. 1:1 = Demo 2005, 193 Fig. 2:1.
2. Schulman 204/1938, no. 528 = Ulrich-Bansa 1949, 326 no. 169 (*Mediolanum*, 474.-475.) = *MuM* 38/1968, no. 657 (Coll. A. Voirol) = *Sternberg* 1/1973, no. 499 = Lacam 1983, 689, 687 Pl. CLXXIII:2-3, Pl. 41:86-87 (*Mediolanum*, 474.-475.) = Demo 1988, 250 no. 2 = Demo 2005, 194 Fig. 3:1 = *NAC* 56/2010, no. 514.*
3. BnF = Lacam 1983, 689, 687 Pl. CLXXIII:1, Pl. 41:85 (BN) = Demo 1988, 250 no. 3.
4. DNB = Lacam 1983, 689, 687 Pl. CLXXIII:4 (La Haye) = Demo 1988, 250 no. 4.
5. BM R.355 = Kent 1994 (= *RIC* X), no. 3221 (*Mediolanum*, 474-475).
6. FMC CM-1.947-1930.

Tremisses of group II/A-C (AD 475-476)

The *Live Auction* of the agile Paris auction house *CGB Numismatique*, organized in the shadow of the still unbridled corona virus pandemic in September 2020, presented an interesting selection of various ancient coins (555 pieces) to interested collectors, including a small group of Late Roman gold coins, mostly solidi (Gratian, Theodosius II, and Zeno), along with one truly rare tremissis (**Fig. 2:1**) of the last Western Roman

¹⁴ Cahn 24/1912, no. 1932.

¹⁵ *Ars Classica* XV/1930, no. 1987.

¹⁶ Kent 1994 (= *RIC* X), no. 3222 (*Mediolanum*, 474.-475.) = Hirsch 24/1909 (Coll. Weber), no. 2850.



Fig. 2 - Tremisses minted in Salona after Nepos was overthrown in Italy and his return to Dalmatia as a refugee emperor in 475-476/477 (1-3) and the Salonitan sub-groups II-B and II-C with stylistically similar workmanship of the wreath and exergue on individual tremisses of Valentinian III and Julius Nepos (4-5), ca. 2:1: **1** - Tremissis of sub-group II-A, Rauch 108-1/2019, no. 423. **2** - Tremissis of sub-group II-B, Rauch 96/2014, no. 587. **3** - Tremissis of sub-group II-C, KHM-MK (photo: G. Depeyrot). **4** - Tremissis of Valentinian III minted in Rome or Ravenna, NAC 27/2004, no. 537. **5** - Tremissis of Nepos minted in Arles, USB 78/2008, no. 2043 = Ceresio 3/1992, no. 415.

emperor Julius Nepos (474-475 / 476-480). One of the interesting features of this rare but also very well preserved coin is its *pedigrée*, which was not mentioned in the auction catalogue, either by chance, deliberately, or for some unknown reason. This certainly does not mean that this tremissis of Nepos is unknown and new in the numismatic memory, because almost 130 years have passed since its first appearance. In fact, it has been known at least since the catalogue presentation of the huge numismatic collection, which was proudly still owned in 1892 by Manuel Vidal Quadras y Ramón, a Catalan merchant, banker, and collector of ancient money and medals, who was born in Maracaibo, Venezuela in 1818 and died in Barcelona in 1894.¹⁷ After his death, the collection was moved by his heirs to a bank in Paris, where it was stored for years, until it was finally purchased in 1913 by the Parisian antiquarian Etienne Bourgey, who immediately offered it at two consecutive auctions: in November 1913 a section with Roman Republican coinage, and in December 1913 a section of primarily Roman Imperial and a smaller amount of early Byzantine gold, silver, and bronze coinage minted in a span from Augustus to Heraclius (803 coins). The above-mentioned tremissis of Nepos was offered and sold at the latter auction (no. 774).¹⁸ The coin was adequately described on this occasion, but an attribution to one of the late Roman mints of gold coins was lacking due to the absence of letters or other recognizable mint marks, according to the numismatic practice common in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Today, the situation has changed significantly, and for the attribution of coinage from the 5th century, selected numismatic knowledge is mostly utilized from the second half of the 20th century, as synthesized in the already cited work of the English numismatist John P.C. Kent (= RIC X) from 1994. Consequently, Vidal's tremissis of Nepos was attributed with caution, probably because of the reverse depiction, to the mint in Ravenna ("*Ravenna?*"), and was dated to 474-475, i.e. the period of the first reign of Nepos,¹⁹ while a tremissis was cited as "*un exemplaire similaire*" that had been sold in December 2014 at an auction by another well known auction house in Vienna (**Fig. 2:2**).²⁰ The interesting features of these tremisses are first of all contributed to by the fact that the "Viennese" comparison is only a poor striking of the same obverse die of the Salonitan sub-group II-B, which had previously been used by sub-group II-A in combination with the reverse die of sub-group I-B, also utilized in groups III and sub-group IV-A.²¹ The Salonitan group II is characterized primarily by the replacement of the "Milan" obverse image with the "Rome" one, and consequently the change of the obverse legend II, which, while not changing the formation of the letter L for E in the first part, in the final section abandoned the Eastern Roman PE (*perpetuus*) for the Western Roman PF (*pius felix*), while the obverse ending of NC (*augustus*) was shortened to AC (*augustus*). The same obverse die, first in a combination with the "Milan" reverse of the I-B sub-group,

¹⁷ Mora 2016, 32-36; Rambach 2017, 96.

¹⁸ Bourgey 1913, no. 774. A year later, just before the beginning of the Great War, at an auction of the Etienne Bourgey firm in Paris, held on the 15th and 16th of July 1914, yet another valuable segment of his once large numismatic collection was sold: Monnaies des Papes.

¹⁹ Kent 1994 (= RIC X), no. 3214. For the attribution to the mint in Rome, see Depuyrot 2004, 46 no. 89/4.

²⁰ Rauch 96/2014, no. 587, where this tremissis was also attributed with caution to Ravenna and dated to the period of the first reign of Nepos (474-475)

²¹ Demo 1988, 250 Fig. 1 (no. 1), 252 Fig. 4 (no. 8), 253 Fig. 5 (no. 9); Demo 2005, 193 Pl. 2:1, 4-5.

characterized the earlier II-A and later II-B sub-groups, which like the even later II-C sub-group, presented here for the first time²² (Fig. 2:3), instead of the “Milan” reverse used the newly created “Salonitan” reverse modelled on individual specimens of the tremisses of Valentinian III minted thirty some years earlier either in Rome or Ravenna (Fig. 2:4).²³ The branches of the wreaths connected by floral elements and the formation of the exergue on the reverse of the coinage of the II-B and II-C sub-groups were to be used by almost all groups and sub-groups of the Salonitan tremisses. The above features in fact probably depict the chronological sequence of minting the coins of the Salonitan group II: the coinage of the II-A sub-group with a reverse based on a previous period was earlier and as minted during the period of Nepos’ life as an exile in Dalmatia during the reign of Romulus Augustus (475-476), while the coinage of the II-B and II-C sub-groups with a stylistically quite new reverse were later and were minted only after the overthrow of Romulus Augustus, possibly as early as during September 476 and the first months of Odovacar’s reign in Ravenna (476/477) continuing probably up to when Zeno stated his position about the rule of Odovacar in Italy (the prefecture) and the position of Nepos both there and his native Dalmatia in 477.²⁴

Group II-A

1. AMS 125 = *Demo* 1988, 251 no. 5 Fig. 2:5 = *Demo* 2005, 193 Fig. 2:2.
2. AMS 344 = *Demo* 1988, 251 no. 6 Fig. 2:6 = *Demo* 2005, 193 Fig. 2:3.
3. BnF (coll. Rothschild 31-116-81).
4. *Rauch* 108-1/2019, no. 423.*
5. KHM-MK.

Group II-B

1. *Bourgey* 16-18-12-1930, no. 774 (Coll. Vidal Quadras y Ramón) = *Demo* 1988, 252 no. 7 Fig. 3:7 = *Demo* 2005, 194 Fig. 3:2 = *CGB* 2020, no. 612649.
2. *Rauch* 96/2014, no. 587.*

Group II-C

1. KHM-MK.*

²² The numismatic detection and scientific typo-chronological interpretation of this example from the Salonitan mint was enabled by the personal database of the brilliant French numismatist *Georges Depuyrot*, available until fairly recently on the internet. It is to be hoped that the tremissis of Nepos documented there, given that it was minted in Salona (or in Split) during the reign of the last Western Roman emperor Julius Nepos, as such representing a valuable specimen of the Croatian cultural and historical heritage because of its rarity and historical significance, will receive in the near future a more appropriate professional publication, equipped with proper information about the possible provenience of the find and the date and circumstances in which it was acquired.

²³ *Kent* 1994 (= RIC X), 372 no. 2071-2073 (Pl. 51). For a stylistically similar artistic concept of the wreath and the exergue on the tremisses of Nepos attributed to an unknown mint, see *Kent* 1994 (= RIC X), 433 no. 3252, Pl. 70. (Sl. 2:5)

²⁴ *Malchus*, *Frg.* 10; *O’Flynn* 1983, 139-140; *MacGeorge* 2002, 291-292; *Posavec* 2007, 45-46, 194; *Handley* 2010, 118-119.

Tremisses of group III, IV/A-C, and V (AD 476/477-480)

The few examples of Salonitan tremisses of Nepos minted in the period from 476/477 to 480 documented after 1988 belong to the sub-groups IV-A and IV-C. Although the examples of sub-group IV-C are more numerous (5 coins), the most significant “new” specimen can still be considered the tremissis of sub-group IV-A, given that it is located and kept in Dalmatia in the numismatic collection of the Museum of Croatian Archaeological Monuments (MHAS) in Split. The site of discovery of this tremissis was and remains unknown,²⁵ but it can nonetheless be hypothesized that the coin could come from northern or central Dalmatia, where the above museum most often carried out archaeological excavations and acquired the majority of the archaeological material in the museum today, or it could come from Dalmatia and neighboring areas from where antiquities including coins arrived in this museum as the gifts of individuals or societies or even as the rare occasional purchases.²⁶ The tremissis was published on two occasions in 2000 and 2003 as a coin from the Roman mint from the first reign of Nepos (474-475),²⁷ and an attempt was made in 2005 to correct this by pointing out that the coin in fact belonged to the coinage of the Salonitan mint during the second reign of Nepos (477-480).²⁸ The only coins that can be compared to this one were examples minted with the same die, one supposedly found in Pazin in central Istria (Croatia), today in Trieste, Italy, in the collection of the Istrian Society for Archaeology and History,²⁹ while the other is in the numismatic collection of Princeton University (NJ) in the USA.³⁰ (Fig. 3:2) All three coins are characterized by a portrait depiction already presented in the Salonitan group III (476/477) engraved in the manner of the Ravenna tremisses from the period of Nepos’ first reign (474-475), where the head of the emperor was also adorned with a two-row diadem of small pearls without a forehead decoration at its top, while a newly introduced feature in the same period was the final AVC (*augustus*) in the obverse legend, which read *DN IVL NĒ - POS PF AVC* in group III, and from sub-group IV/A onwards *DN IVL NĒ - POS PF AVC*. The reverse die of the above tremisses with a wreath of branches with an uneven number of leaves (14/15) is the same, but it is more worn than that used to mint the tremisses of the I-B and II-A Salonitan sub-groups, and represents the only example known so far from the Salonitan group III.

Group IV-C contains, in addition to two previously known examples,³¹ several other tremisses mostly published in recent periods, representing this group of Salonitan coins as the most numerous so far for the period of the second reign of Nepos (477-480), equal in number to the sub-group I-B (6 coins) minted in the period of Nepos’ first

²⁵ Šeparović 2020, 14-15 no. 24.

²⁶ Briefly about the procurement of ancient coinage for the Museum of Croatian Archaeological Monuments, Delonga 1981, 201.

²⁷ Šeparović 2000, 32-33 no. 13

²⁸ Demo 2005, 187-188, 190.

²⁹ Gorini 1974, 115 no. 12, 178 f.; Demo 1988, 253 no. 9 Fig. 5:9.

³⁰ For the data related to the provenience of this tremisses and the permission to publish it, I would like to thank Dr. Alan Stahl, Curator of Numismatics in the Department of Special Collections, Firestone Library, Princeton University.

³¹ Demo 1988, 254 no. 11-12 (Fig. 7:11-12).

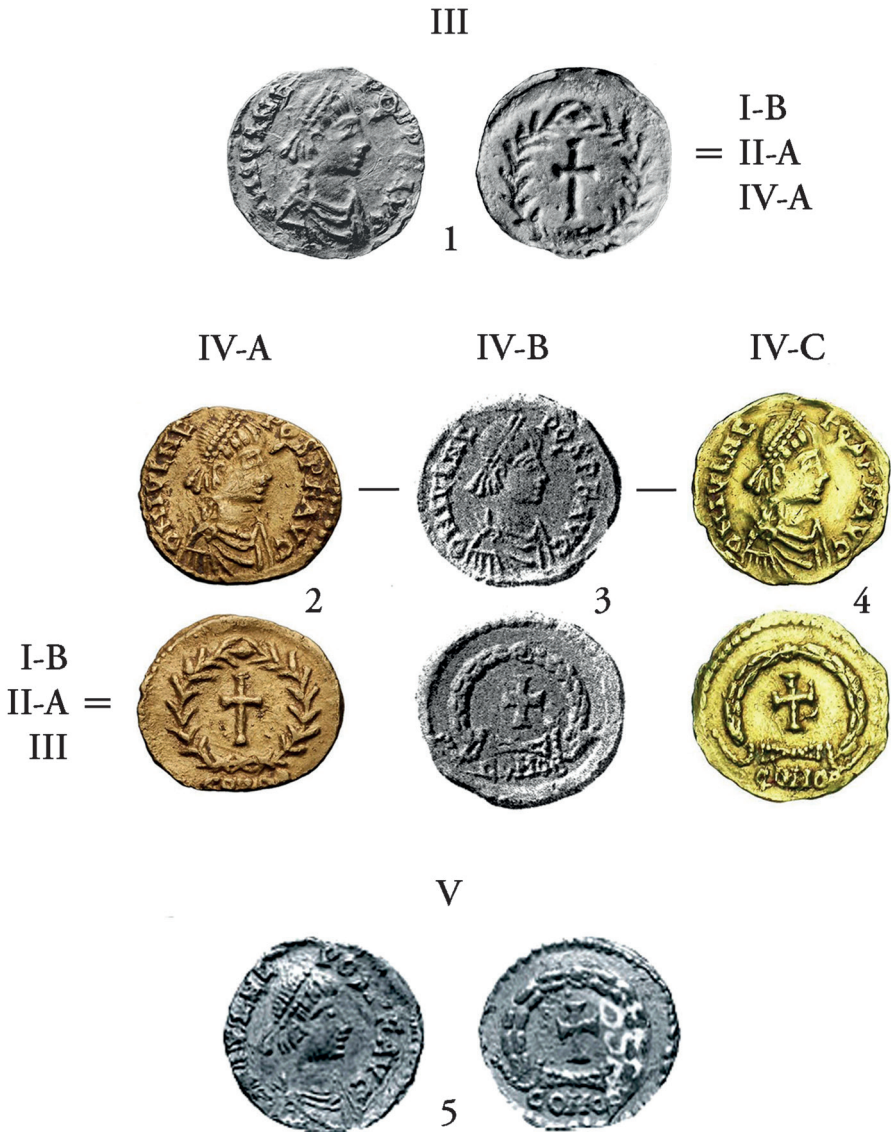


Fig. 3 - Tremisses minted in Salona after Zeno's recognition of Odovacar's administration in Italy and the second reign of Nepos in 477-480 (ca. 2:1): **1** - Tremissis of group III, AMS 189. **2** - Tremissis of sub-group II-A, PUNC 234 (Courtesy of the Princeton University Numismatic Collection, Firestone Library). **3** - Tremissis of sub-group IV-B, Riechmann XX/1922, no. 1481. **4** - Tremissis of sub-group IV-C, Elsen 98/2008, no. 515. **5** - Tremissis of group V, ZMBiH 832.

reign (474-475). The obverse die of the sub-group IV-C is the same as that used for the striking of tremisses of the Salonitan sub-groups IV-A and IV-B, while their reverse die was engraved on the model of the Ravenna die from the period of the first reign of Nepos, to which it is similar, so it acts as a “retro” feature, primarily contributed to by the parallel pairs of leaves on the branches of the wreath surrounding the cross. The number of leaves on the branches of their wreathes is the basis not merely for easy recognition, but also for the chronological order of individual tremisses: fourteen leaves on the branches of the tremisses of sub-group IV-B (**Fig. 3:3**), twelve leaves on the branches of the tremisses of sub-group IV-C (**Fig. 3:4**), and ten leaves on the branches of the only as yet known tremissis of the Salonitan group V (**Fig. 3:5**).

Group III

1. AMS 189 = *Demo* 1988, 252 Fig. 4:8.

Group IV-A

1. *Gorini* 1974, 115 no. 12, 178 (Mediolanum, 474.-476?) = *Demo* 1988, 253, no. 9 Fig. 5:9 = *Miškec* 2002 (= FMRHr XVIII), 65 No. 38/4 (Salonae, 474.-480.).

2. MHAS 1062 = *Šeparović* 2000, 32-33 no. 13 (Roma, 474.-475.) = *Šeparović* 2003, 112, 151 No. 1062 (Roma, 474.-475.) = *Demo* 2005, 187 Fig. 1 = *Šeparović* 2020, 14-15 no. 24 (Roma, 474.-475.).

3. PUNC 234 *

Group IV-B

1. *Riechmann* XX/1922, no. 1481* = *Demo* 1988, 253-254 no. 10 Fig. 6:10 = *Demo* 2005, 194 Pl. 3:3.

Group IV-C

1. *Hirsch* 18/1907, no. 1770 (coll. Fr. Imhoof-Blumer) = *Demo* 1988, 254 no. 11 Fig. 7:11 = *Demo* 2005, 194 Pl. 3:4.

2. *Sternberg* 1975, no. 524 = *Demo* 1988, 254 no. 12 Fig. 7:12 = *Demo* 2005, 194 Pl. 3:5.

3. *Hamburger* 96/1932, no. 1089.

4. *Elsen* 98/2008, no. 515.*

5. *Artemide* XXVIII/2010, no. 1383.

6. *Bertolami* 6/2012, no. 1278 = *Peus* 414/2016, no. 283.

Group V

1. ZMBiH 832* = *Demo* 1988, 255 no. 13 Fig. 8:13 = *Demo* 2005, 194 Pl. 3:6.

* * *

In relation to the situation documented in 1988 (13 coins), the number of tremisses attributed to the Salonitan mint of Nepos in the meantime has doubled, so that there are now (at least) twenty-seven known and available for analysis. (**Tab. 1**) It is important that the new examples noted after 1988 primarily encompass the earliest period of minting

of the Salonitan tremisses, and group I had to be expanded by adding the sub-group I-A, whose only example known to the present was engraved according to the Milan model, but with an already clearly defined obverse with characteristics of the early tremisses created in Salona (L/PE/NC). The stylistic closeness of the portrait depiction with that on the tremisses minted in Milan is confirmation of the hypothesis that the minting of tremisses in Salona began as early as during the summer of 474, and was a part of some broader plan or political program on the part of Nepos related to the eastern provinces of the diocese of Italy and the renewal of minting coinage in this part of the Empire. In this sense, the borrowing of the stylistic characteristics of the Milan mint, as the main mint of the diocese of Italy, was not unexpected, but soon resulted in the need to further differentiate the coins of these two mints. Hence a new Salonitan reverse die was made for the tremisses of sub-group I-B, recognizable because of the modified number of leaves (14/15) on the branches of the wreath that frames the cross. That same reverse is also a recognizable mark for another Salonitan group (III) and two Salonitan sub-groups (II-A and IV-A).

Table 1 - Documented examples of tremisses from the Salonitan mint of Nepos from between 1988 and 2020 arranged according to groups and sub-groups, with the numerical situation and representation of examples, and according to the dies of the obverse and reverse and their stylistic characteristics.

| Groups & sub-groups | No. spec. 1988./2020. | Total trem. | Dies obv./rev. | Stylistic traits of the obverse (a) | Stylistic traits of the reverse (b) |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| I | A (r5) | -/1 | 1/1 | Milan (I-A/a1) | Milan (I-A/b1) |
| | B (r4) | 4/6 | 2/2 | Milan (I-B/a2) | Milan (I-B/b2) |
| II | A (r4) | 2/5 | 3/2 | Rome (II-A/a3) | Milan (II-A/b2) |
| | B (r5) | 1/2 | 3/3 | Rome (II-B/a3) | Salona (II-B/b3) |
| | C (r5) | -/1 | 4/4 | Rome (II-C/a4) | Salona (II-C/b4) |
| III (r5) | 1 | 1 | 5/2 | Ravenna (III/a5) | Milan (III/b2) |
| IV | A (r5) | 1/3 | 6/2 | Ravenna (IV-A/a6) | Milan (IV-A/b2) |
| | B (r5) | 1 | 6/5 | Ravenna (IV-B/a6) | Ravenna (IV-B/b5) |
| | C (r4) | 2/6 | 6/6 | Ravenna (IV-C/a6) | Ravenna (IV-C/b6) |
| V (r5) | 1 | 1 | 7/7 | Ravenna (V/a7) | Ravenna (V/b7) |

13/27

The second period of minting Salonitan tremisses began with a new obverse die with a portrait depiction formed after the model of the Roman mint, which was supplemented by changes to the second part of the obverse legend (L/PF/AC). In the first part of the second period (sub-group II-A), the reverse die of the I-B sub-group was used, represented with almost twice the amount of known examples (5) than the later “Salonitan” reverse dies of the II-B and II-C sub-groups modelled on individual reverse of tremisses from the period of Valentinian III (**Fig. 2:4**). From this it is possible

to perceive a longer (or more extensive) use and striking of this first die (II-A), and a shorter (or less extensive) use and striking of the other two dies (II-B, II-C), while the very appearance itself can be interpreted as first a partial and then complete deviation from the model presented as the norm for formation of the obverse and reverse depictions in the first period of minting activity in Salona. This practice, contrary to the intentions expressed in the first period of operation of the mint, can be linked to the political circumstances of Nepos' overthrow and sudden return, followed by his residence in Dalmatia as a refugee-emperor during the reign of Romulus Augustulus and his father Orestes from 31 October 475 to the beginning of September 476 (subgroup II-A). It can be assumed that the first news from Ravenna about the overthrow of Romulus Augustulus were followed in Salona by the hasty production of a new "Salonitan" designed reverse, which despite the short period of minting was utilized for the manufacture of two reverse dies (II-B, II-C).

It is not known how long the negotiations and discussions lasted of the missions of Odovacar and Nepos to the Eastern Roman emperor Zeno in Constantinople in 477, and how long it took for Zeno to decide and express his opinion and decision. It is possible to assume that monetary issues were then under discussion and that in Dalmatia for that occasion a new, probably never completely finished, obverse die was made, stylistically based on the Ravenna tradition from the period of the first reign of Nepos. Added to this as a reverse was an earlier frequently used, still not discarded, and evidently undestroyed reverse die with Milan features utilized for the striking of the coinage of sub-groups I-B and II-A,³² while the only tremissis minted with the mentioned combination of this obverse and reverse is kept in the Archaeological Museum in Split (**Fig. 3:1**). The coin is classified as the only example of the tremisses of the Salonitan group III, but considering the unfinished state of the die and the lettering DII (in place of DN) in the beginning section of the obverse legend, it could also be considered a possible trial strike, while in the relative chronological sense it represents a reliable predecessor to group IV of the Salonitan coinage.

The completed version of the reverse die of the Salonitan group III with a corrected beginning part of the obverse legend reads DN IVL NĒ - POS PF AVC and surrounds a portrait depiction with Ravenna characteristics, and was utilized by group IV of the Salonitan tremisses in all the sub-groups. Only the reverse dies were added and changed: in the earliest sub-group IV-A it was the same undiscarded although already well worn die with Milan characteristics used in the sub-groups I-B and II-A, as well as in group III, while in the later sub-groups IV-B and IV-C these dies were formed according to the Ravenna models typical for the coins from the period of the first reign of Nepos. The newly made die of the obverse and reverse also based on the Ravenna model was utilized for the minting of the only so-far known tremissis of Salonitan group V, found in Bosnia before 1901, and kept in the State Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo (**Fig. 3:5**).

Tremisses of groups III, IV, and V, a total of twelve, are representatives of the third period of minting Salonitan coinage and they consist of 44,44% of the tremisses known

³² Interesting testimony exists that when older dies ceased to be used, they were not always or as a rule discarded and destroyed, but rather were stored and kept in the treasury of the mint.

to the present from this mint. Considering that they were created in the period of the second reign of Nepos, their number is not merely small in percentage in relation to those minted in the period of 474-476 (55.56%), but rather is significantly smaller in real terms, taking into account that the minting of these others continued almost twice as long (477-480). The basis of the mentioned three groups and their dies on the stylistic traits of the Ravenna mint – at first partial (III, IV-a), and later total (IV-B, IV-C) - does not represent some chance choice by Nepos, but rather an iconographically worded response to the political events in Italy, in which the new leading figure after the overthrow of Romulus Augustulus became King Odovacar, the proclaimed leader of several Germanic military groups and political allies, particularly those in the Roman Senate. The vision fixed on Ravenna that Odovacar had made his capital, as depicted on the coinage of the Salonitan mint in terms of the Ravenna stylistic influence, is an indicator of the mood and hope that prevailed in Dalmatia even after all that had occurred, where the former, and in the minds of many contemporaries, the still legitimate Western Roman Emperor Julius Nepos lived out his days in a safe haven. It is not at all unexpected that the embassies of both interested parties soon set out for Constantinople and certainly met there in 476/477, the mission of Nepos on the one hand and the combined missions of the Senate and Odovacar on the other, who tried to each obtain from the Eastern Roman emperor the most favorable solution for a more secure and better tomorrow. In the end, the emperor Zeno decided to support the *status quo*, confirmed Odovacar's military and administrative authority in the prefecture of Italy, while the imperial insignia (*omnia ornamenta palatii*)³³ returned to Constantinople from Italy was never sent to Dalmatia, and for Nepos only a nominal or titular imperial power was assigned, along with a measure of respect, and something beyond that which certainly included the right to continue undisturbed (up to his death) with the minting of gold coinage bearing his name and image.

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