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The Proclamation of Peace on the Coinage of Carthage under Constans II

David Woods

By the reign of Constans II (641–668), the mint at Carthage was the second most important in the empire, striking coins in gold, silver, and copper.[1] Over the reign of Constans, it struck only one denomination of silver coin, a third siliqua, but struck this in four different types. Unfortunately, none of these types bear dates, but their order of production can be determined from the changing styles of the portraits on the obverse, in particular the presence or length of the emperor's beard. Furthermore, the approximate dates of these portrait types can also be determined by their use on dated gold and copper coins from Constantinople and elsewhere. The purpose of this paper is to propose a new interpretation of the reverse on the second of the four successive types of third siliqua struck at Carthage under Constans, that

[1] In general see Philip Grierson, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection* II.2 *Heraclius Constantine to Theodosius III (641–717)* (Washington 1968: henceforth *DOC*) 412–413, 468–484; Wolfgang Hahn, *Moneta Imperii Byzantini* III *Von Heraclius bis Leo III. alleinregierung (610–720)* (Vienna 1981: henceforth *MIB*) 126–127, 134–135, 142–145. I refer to the coins of Heraclius and his successors by their numbers under their names in the latter volume. For coins of the earlier periods I cite their numbers under the relevant emperors in Wolfgang Hahn and Michael Metlich, *Money of the Incipient Byzantine Empire: Anastasius I–Justinian I, 491–565* [2] (Vienna 2013: henceforth *MIBE*), and *Money of the Incipient Byzantine Empire Continued: Justin II–Revolt of the Heraclii, 565–610* (Vienna 2009: henceforth *MIBEC*). On wider political and economic developments in North Africa during the seventh century see Susan T. Stevens and Jonathan P. Conant (eds.), *North Africa under Byzantium and Early Islam* (Washington 2016).

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with the legend PAX as its main feature, and to draw attention to the thematic consistency between this reverse type and a mark on the reverse of many solidi struck at Carthage throughout most of the same reign. Furthermore, the same interpretation should also be applied to those issues of Justinian II (685–695, 705–711) which proclaim peace, whether from Carthage again or Constantinople. In summary, it will be argued that when Byzantine coins of the seventh century proclaim peace, this represents a theological rather than a political statement, and should not be interpreted in reference to a specific contemporary event but to the continued state of affairs between God and humankind since the crucifixion of Christ.

The PAX-type in its immediate numismatic and political context

Figure 1: third siliqua (d. 12mm, w. 0.52g) of Constans II, Carthage (*MIB* 156)
Classical Numismatic Group, Auct. 102 (18 May 2016), lot 1163
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Figure 2: third siliqua (d. 10mm, w. 0.49g) of Constans II, Carthage (*MIB* 157a)
Classical Numismatic Group, Auct. 99 (13 May 2015), lot 813
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Figure 3: third siliqua (d. 10mm, w. 0.45g) of Constans II, Carthage (*MIB* 158)
Classical Numismatic Group, Auct. 93 (22 May 2013), lot 1377
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One may begin by describing the four types of third siliqua struck at Carthage under Constans, and the evidence for their dating. The first type (*fig.* 1) depicts a large cross potent on the reverse and a beardless frontal bust on the obverse, and divides into two subtypes according to whether two pellets appear on either side of the cross potent (*MIB* 155, without pellets; 156, with pellets). The second type (*fig.* 2) depicts on the reverse again a small plain cross above the letters P and A with the letter X below these, and a frontal bust with short beard on the obverse, and divides into two subtypes once more according to whether a pattern of five pellets appears on the reverse, one pellet each on either side of the cross, a third between P and A, and one pellet each on either side of X (*MIB* 157a, with pellets; 157b, without pellets). The third type depicts a plain cross on three steps on the reverse and a frontal bust with long beard on the obverse (*MIB* N157). Finally, the fourth type (*fig.* 3) depicts two beardless frontal busts on the reverse, the two younger sons of Constans, and two frontal busts on the obverse, Constans with long beard and his eldest son Constantine without beard (*MIB* 158).

Since the single imperial bust with short beard replaced the single beardless bust on the folles at Constantinople towards the end of regnal year 6, that is, during the summer of 647, and during regnal year 7 on the half-folles at Syracuse, that is, during the autumn of 647, it seems probable that the first type of third siliqua with the single beardless portrait was struck sometime during the period from the accession of Constans in

September 641 until late 647.[2] Furthermore, since the half-folles of Syracuse dated to regnal year 10 (650/1) depict Constans II with a long beard, it remains possible that the mint at Carthage introduced this new portrait even as early as this. Hence the second type of third siliqua was probably struck sometime during the period ca. 647–651. Next, since Constans crowned his eldest son Constantine IV as his co-emperor in April 654, and his two younger sons, Heraclius and Tiberius, as his co-emperors in June 659, it is clear that the fourth type depicting four emperors in total can only have been struck from June 659 onwards. One notes here that the solidi struck at Constantinople depicted the single bust with long beard during the period 651–654, but a bust with long beard accompanied by a beardless bust after the accession of Constantine IV in April 654. Hence it seems likely that the third type was struck during the same period 651–654, and that no siliquae were struck at Carthage during the period April 654–June 659.

Reviewing the reverses on the four types of third siliqua, one is immediately struck by the fact that the reverse of the second type is the only one to bear any legend, the word PAX "peace." In this limited context, this seems potentially significant. Furthermore, the fact that this type was struck sometime during the period ca. 647–651, that is, that it may—and one stresses the may—have begun to be struck in 647 itself, a year of severe political disturbance in North Africa, has encouraged attempts to relate this proclamation of PAX to this disturbance or its resolution. In that year the exarch of Africa, Gregory, seems to have revolted against the emperor Constans, but was almost immediately defeated, and probably killed, by invading Arab forces at the battle of Sbeitla.[3] The Arabs seem then to have

[2] For what follows, see Grierson, *DOC* II.2 403–404.

[3] For a detailed discussion of these events see Walter E. Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa* (Cambridge 2010) 116–144. For translations of some of the earliest sources see Robert G. Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle and the Circulation of Historical Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Liverpool 2011) 130. Despite what the literary sources say, it is noteworthy that there is no evidence that Gregory ever

negotiated some form of treaty and payment before withdrawing once more.

Several possible interpretations of the legend PAX suggest themselves in this political context. First, it could refer to the restoration of peace following the treaty which the local authorities arranged with the Arab invaders, that is, peace between the Arab and Byzantine empires at the purely local level. Second, it could refer to the restoration of peace following the defeat of Gregory's rebellion and the normalisation of relations between Carthage and the rest of the empire once more—that is, peace within the Byzantine empire itself. Third, it could refer to the restoration of peace in a more general sense, celebrating both external peace with the Arabs at the purely local level and internal peace within the empire. Grierson seems to favour this last possibility.[4] However, Kaegi prefers the second possibility, arguing that "there is no record of Byzantine coinage celebrating peace with barbarians in any other case."[5] In contrast, he can cite the fact that the western emperor Anthemius (467–472) struck solidi at Rome, Ravenna, and Milan with reverse depicting him and the eastern emperor Leo holding a globe marked PAX between them as evidence that Byzantine coinage could celebrate peace within the empire.[6] Alternatively, Hahn identifies the PAX-type of third siliqua as the third successive type of third siliqua struck at Carthage under Constans, and so prefers to date it to 652, the start of the third five-year period or *lustrum* during the reign of Constans.[7] Consequently, he suggests that PAX could refer to the general truce reached between the Arab and Byzantine empires in

struck coins in his own name, and this raises doubt as to whether he was ever really a rebel rather than an impetuous but unsuccessful provincial general whom the central authorities then decided to disown.

[4] Grierson, *DOC* II.2 475.

[5] Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion* 152.

[6] *RIC* X nos. 2804, 2872, 2884–2886.

[7] Hahn, *MIB* III p.135.

651.[8] However, Kaegi objects to this on the basis that it makes little sense that the mint at Carthage should have celebrated this truce with a new coin type when the mint at Constantinople did not do so also.[9] Finally, for the sake of completeness, one should also consider the possibility that the type expresses a desire for or promise of peace rather than celebrating its actual achievement, although this particular interpretation does not seem to have won any support. Hence one could even argue that this type actually anticipated the general truce of 651.

A first objection to the traditional political interpretation of PAX

While they may disagree as to the precise date of or reason for the PAX-type of third siliqua, the commentators noted above all interpret the legend PAX in the same way in reference to a contemporary political development. However, there are four main objections to this approach. The first is that it ignores the general numismatic context, the fact that it was almost unthinkable by this time that the precious metal coinage should have celebrated anything except the cross. The reign of Tiberius II (578–582) had marked a turning point in the iconography of the coinage throughout the empire as he caused traditional classical personifications smacking of paganism to be abandoned in favour of various depictions of the cross.[10] He replaced the personification of Constantinople as the main device on the reverse of the solidus with the cross on steps, as the main device on the reverse of the semissis with the cross on orb, and as the main device on the reverse of the tremissis with a plain cross, and did so throughout the empire. Even depictions of the emperor himself were now shunned in favour of

[8] For the main sources on this truce see Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle* 138. On the wider strategic context see James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford 2010) 477–479.

[9] Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion* 151 n.17.

[10] John of Ephesus (*HE* 3.14) reports that Tiberius abandoned the personification of Constantinople in favour of a cross in response to a dream.

more emphatically Christian symbolism. For example, at Constantinople, the traditional standing emperor on the reverse of the miliarense and siliqua was replaced with a large Christogram instead (*MIBEC* 18, 19). Under Maurice (582–602) there were some changes to the iconography of the coinage, so that a standing angel with a staurogram-topped staff replaced the cross on steps on the reverse of the solidus throughout the empire, and Victory even returned to some gold fractions, but the emphasis on the cross remained firm on the silver coinage. As far as the iconography of the precious metal coinage is concerned, the reign of Phocas (602–610) witnessed little change from that of Maurice, and that mainly in the minor silver types produced at the provincial mints. However, the reign of Heraclius (610–641) witnessed a return to the conventions established by Tiberius, so that some form of large cross was depicted as the main device once more on all the gold coins struck throughout the empire, the only exception to this renewed emphasis on the cross being on some of the minor silver types of the provinces. Even then, however, most of these cases involved either the addition of imperial busts to the reverse, so that the cross was reduced to a minor element between these busts, or the replacement of the cross by an imperial monogram, where this often contained a cross.

The result of all this was that it was almost unthinkable by the early reign of Constans that the precious metal coinage should have celebrated anything except the cross. Indeed, when in 659 Constans struck a new type of solidus (*MIB* 39–42) and hexagram at Constantinople alone with reverse depicting the standing figures of his three sons in order to celebrate the promotion of his two younger sons as Augusti, the shock at the sudden removal of the cross from the reverse of these coins seems to have caused one contemporary commentator living under Islamic rule to misidentify them as Muslim coinage instead.[11] Hence the first assumption of any contemporary

[11] See David Woods, "Mu῾awiya, Constans II and Coins without Crosses," *INR* 10 (2015) 169–181.

viewer of the PAX-type third siliqua would have been that this PAX was probably connected to the cross somehow, because that was what the precious metal coinage almost always celebrated on the reverse, and the realisation that what was being celebrated was the peace of the cross, a concept to be explained next, would have followed automatically from this.

A second objection to the traditional political interpretation of PAX

Figure 4: half siliqua (d. 13mm, w. 1.06g) of Tiberius II, Carthage (*MIBEC* 20)
Jean Elsen & Fils, Auct. 125 (13 June 2015), lot 527
Reproduced with permission © Jean Elsen & Fils, S.A.

A second objection to the political interpretation of PAX is that it ignores the tradition at Carthage of striking unique silver types sometimes naming the particular attributes of Christ or his cross that it wished to celebrate, in contrast to the preference for imagery alone elsewhere. The mint there had struck three main types of half siliqua under Justin II (565–578), on which the reverse of the first had depicted the personification of Carthage surrounded by the legend FELIX CART "prosperous Carthage" (*MIBEC* 31a-b), the second had depicted the legend FELIX / RES / PVBL "prosperous state" within a wreath (*MIBEC* 32), and the third had depicted the personification of Constantinople surrounded by the legend SALVS MVNDI "salvation of the world" (*MIBEC* 33a-c). Under Tiberius II, however, the reverse of the one type of half siliqua struck there depicted a cross accompanied by the legend LVXM / VNDI "light of the world" (*MIBEC* 20) (*fig.* 4) in reference to Christ's words in the Gospel of John 8:12:

Iterum ergo locutus est eis Iesus, dicens, "Ego sum lux mundi; qui sequitur me non ambulat in tenebris sed habebit lucem vitae."

And again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me walketh not in darkness but shall have the light of life."[12]

Under Maurice (582–602), the mint at Constantinople initially struck a miliarense with reverse depicting a large Christogram in continuation of the design under Tiberius (*MIBEC* 51), but the second type depicted instead a large cross between two palm branches (*MIBEC* 52). It initially struck a siliqua with reverse depicting a cross within a wreath (*MIBEC* V53–54), then with reverse depicting a *globus cruciger* (*MIBEC* 54a-b), and finally with reverse depicting a large cross between two palm branches (*MIBEC* 55–56), exactly as on the miliarense. As for Carthage, it only struck various fractions of the siliqua, four basic types of half siliqua, one third siliqua, two types of quarter siliqua, and four types of sixth siliqua. The reverse designs were almost entirely religious, with the notable exception of the sixth siliqua. Furthermore, the designs were very different to those preferred at Constantinople. Thus Carthage struck a half siliqua with a reverse depicting the legend SALVS MVNDI "salvation of the world" surrounding a cross (*MIBEC* 57–58) (*fig.* 5), perhaps datable to 583/4, another half siliqua with reverse depicting the busts of Maurice and his wife Constantina on either side of a cross (*MIBEC* 59a-b), a third depicting the legend AME / NITA / SDEI "the pleasantness of God" within a wreath (*MIBEC* 60) (*fig.* 6), perhaps datable to the period 597–602,[13] and a fourth depicting a cross on steps between the letters alpha and omega, all within a wreath (*MIBEC* 61, N61). Turning to the quarter siliqua, one reverse type depicted a cross within a wreath (*MIBEC* V63), the other

[12] Text and translation from Angela M. Kinney (ed.), *The Vulgate Bible* VI *The New Testament* (Cambridge [Mass.] 2013) 524–525.

[13] Older works sometimes mistakenly attribute this coin to Theodosius III (715–717). This is because it was struck in the name of Theodosius, the eldest son of Maurice and Constantina, created Augustus in 590.

Figure 5: half siliqua (d. 15mm, w. 1.04g) of Maurice, Carthage (*MIBEC* 57)
Roma Numismatics, Auct. 8 (28 September 2014), lot 1145
Reproduced with permission © Roma Numismatics Ltd.

Figure 6: half siliqua (d. 13mm, w. 0.59g) of Maurice (in name of son Theodosius), Carthage (*MIBEC* 60)
Jean Elsen & Fils, Auct. 125 (13 June 2015), lot 549
Reproduced with permission © Jean Elsen & Fils, S.A.

Figure 7: quarter siliqua (d. 10mm) of Maurice, Carthage (*MIBEC* NV63).
Private Collection. Reproduced with permission © Wolfgang Hahn

the legend PAX, a small cross above it and star below it (*MIBEC* NV63) (*fig.* 7), probably datable to Maurice's second consulship in 602. As for the sixth siliqua, the final type depicting the legend AMENITAS+ about the imperial bust on the obverse and the legend ΛVX, a cross above and a star below, within a wreath on the reverse (*MIBEC* NN63), was the most

obviously religious type. In contrast, the first two types of sixth siliqua had simply depicted different forms of the imperial monogram on the reverse, although it may perhaps be significant that these were in the form of a cross (*MIBEC* 63a-b).

The immediate inspiration for the various legends on the reverse of the silver from Carthage is not always clear, although the general message is. The phrase SALVS MVNDI does not actually occur in the Vulgate, but the progression from LVX MVNDI under Tiberius to SALVS MVNDI under Maurice recalls the succession in Psalm 27:1: *Dominus illuminatio mea et salus mea* "The Lord is my light and my salvation." Furthermore, the phrase SALVS MVNDI was probably used quite commonly of the cross, as demonstrated by the fact that it appears, for example, immediately below the great jewelled cross in the apse mosaic of the Church of St. Apollinaris in Classe in Italy, dedicated in 549.[14] Of course, its use under Maurice also represents the repurposing of this legend as it had last appeared on the half siliqua under Justin II. In this case, the reference is to the Christian belief that Christ had saved the world by means of his crucifixion, that is, to the spiritual salvation of the people rather than to the physical or political salvation of the state as had traditionally been intended in the use of this phrase. So although the Vulgate does not actually refer to the salvation of the world in these precise words, this is the basic message behind the varied descriptions of the significance of the crucifixion. In contrast, the significance of using the phrase AMENITAS DEI is rather less obvious. Again, the Vulgate does not use these words as such. Clearly, this phrase serves to praise God, but it is not clear why it is his pleasantness in particular that is being praised, or what form this pleasantness took.[15]

[14] See Deborah M. Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 2010) 267.

[15] Sidonius Apollinaris (*Ep.* 4.6.3) comforted a relative who had cancelled a pilgrimage because of disturbed political circumstances with the thought that God would eventually allow him to perform it *sub pacis amoenitate* "during the pleasantness of peace." This association of *amoenitas* and *pax* is

One turns next to the PAX-type. The fact that the mint at Carthage struck a quarter siliqua under Maurice with a reverse depicting the legend PAX in a manner very similar to the coin under discussion suggests that they probably celebrate the same theme.[16] Since both types depict a small cross in association with the legend PAX, and both occur within series otherwise dominated by depictions of the cross, the obvious suggestion is that both celebrate some aspect of the cross once more, the peace of the cross. The explanation as to what this might then mean lies in the letters of St. Paul. In Ephesians he emphasizes how Christ's death on the cross brought about peace:[17]

> *Ipse est enim pax nostra, qui fecit utraque unum et medium parietem maceriae solvens, inimicitias in carne sua, legem mandatorum decretis evacuans, ut duos condat in semetipso in unum novum hominem, faciens pacem, et reconciliet ambos in uno corpore Deo per crucem, interficiens inimicitias in semet ipso. Et veniens evangelizavit pacem vobis qui longe fuistis et pacem his qui prope.*
>
> For he is our peace, who hath made both one and breaking down the middle wall of partition, the enmities in his flesh, making void the law of commandments in decrees, that he might make the two in himself into one new man, making peace and might reconcile both to God in one body by the cross, killing the enmities in himself. And coming he preached peace to you that were afar off, and peace to them that were nigh.

The emphasis here is on how the death of Christ created peace between Jews and non-Jews, but it is difficult to understand why the mint at Carthage would have wanted to proclaim such a narrow understanding of the peace of the cross under either

noteworthy here, given the celebration of *pax* on the silver coinage also. In effect, the coins declaring the *amoenitas dei* and those declaring *pax* may have been celebrating the same thing

[16] As noted by Cécile Morrison in her online review of Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion*, although without comment as to the precise nature of this peace in either case: *The Medieval Review* 13.09.12, https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/tmr/article/view/17895/24013

[17] Eph 2:14–16; text and translation from Kinney 1018–1019.

Maurice or Constans.[18] Perhaps the key point here, therefore, is that the death of Christ also reconciled both groups to God, that is, that it established peace between God and mankind as a whole. St. Paul makes the same point much more emphatically in Colossians:[19]

> *Et ipse est caput corporis, ecclesiae, qui est principium, primogenitus ex mortuis, ut sit in omnibus ipse primatum tenens, quia in ipso conplacuit omnem plenitudinem habitare et per eum reconciliare omnia in ipsum, pacificans per sanguinem crucis eius sive quae in terris sive quae in caelis sunt.*
>
> And he [Christ] is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may hold the primacy, because in him it hath well pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, making peace through the blood of his cross both as to the things that are on earth and the things that are in heaven.

This then is the true peace of the cross, the reconciliation of the whole of creation to God, a spiritual rather than a physical or political peace. This is not to say that the former could not result in the latter also, but the primary emphasis in scripture is on peace as a spiritual rather than a political phenomenon. Many church fathers had commented on this passage over the centuries, and there is no reason to doubt that this message would have been readily understood in this way by a large part of the population in what was a far more religious and theologically literate age than the present.[20]

[18] The emperor Heraclius ordered the forced conversion of Jews, resulting in the baptism of the Jews at Carthage in 632, so that would have been the most fitting time to celebrate a new "peace" or unity between Jew and non-Jew if the mint at Carthage had ever really wanted to do so. See Gilbert Dagron and Vincent Déroche, *Juifs et chrétiens en Orient byzantin* (Paris 2010) 28–38. More importantly, however, Byzantine coinage of this period almost never celebrated specific events or policies in this way.

[19] Col 1:18–20; text and translation from Kinney 1060–1061.

[20] See T. C. Oden and P. Gorday (eds.), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament* IX (Chicago 2000) 20–21. Other mentions of peace

It is my argument, therefore, that the PAX-type third siliqua under Constans celebrated the peace of the cross in accordance with the specific tradition at Carthage of celebrating religious themes in legend as well as in iconography, all in accordance also with the continued general emphasis on the cross on the precious metal coinage struck throughout the empire.

A third objection to the political interpretation of PAX

A third objection to the traditional interpretation is that it ignores the evidence that the celebration of the peace effected by the crucifixion was a major thematic concern, seen in the solidi struck at Carthage throughout the reign of Constans. When the Heraclii revolted against Phocas in 608, they restored the cross on steps, abandoned under Maurice and Phocas, as the main device on the reverse of the solidus, and it remained the main device, with a few noteworthy exceptions, until the reign of Justinian II. The various mints often placed different letters or symbols in the field to either side of the cross. Sometimes these served to identify the weight of the coins. For example, in continuance of earlier practice, the mint at Constantinople placed a star in the field to one side of the cross, sometimes both, in order to distinguish light-weight solidi (23 siliquae in weight) from full-weight solidi (24 siliquae).[21] This ended under Heraclius ca. 613 (*MIB* 54–55), although it did briefly reccur under Constans ca. 651 (*MIB* 44–45). Alternatively, these letters or symbols could sometimes serve to date the coins. For example, the solidi struck at Constantinople during the period 646–650 bore Greek numerals in the field to the right of the

in the New Testament could also be explained in reference to the peace of the cross. For example, when the baby Christ was presented at the temple, Simeon witnessed this and declared that God was dismissing him "in peace" by allowing him to see the promised Messiah (Lk 2:29). In the fifth century Hesychius of Jerusalem (*Homily* 1.6) explained what Simeon meant as the peace of the cross, the promise of salvation: Michel Aubineau, *Les Homélies Festales d'Hésychius de Jérusalem* I (Brussels 1978) 37.

[21] In general see Enrico Leuthold, "Solidi leggieri da XXIII silique degli imperatori Maurizio, Tiberio, Foca ed Eraclio," *RIN* 62 (1960) 146–154.

Figure 8: class one solidus (d. 11mm, w. 4.37g) of Constans II, Carthage (*MIB* 57)
Classical Numismatic Group, Auct. 100 (7 October 2015), lot 299
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Figure 9: class five solidus (d. 12mm, w. 4.35g) of Constans II, Carthage (*MIB* 72b)
Classical Numismatic Group, Auct. 100 (7 October 2015), lot 302
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Figure 10: class five solidus (d. 11mm, w. 4.36g) of Constans II, Carthage (*MIB* 71)
Classical Numismatic Group, Electronic Auct. 304 (12 June 2013), lot 426
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cross denoting indiction years five to eight (*MIB* 9–19). However, in many other cases, it remains unclear what the significance of these letters or symbols is.

Under Heraclius, the mint at Carthage began placing a letter or symbol on one side or other of the cross in 628/9, the second year of the new indiction, but these letters or symbols succeeded each other fairly rapidly every year or two until

635/6 in the order Γ, Π, Θ, and ✳.[22] Under Constans, however, a very different pattern emerged. Overall, the letter P was the dominant symbol used throughout the first five classes of solidi of his reign until ca. 661, although Θ enjoyed equal use at times. In the case of the first class of solidi with a single beardless bust on the obverse struck ca. 642–647, most solidi depicted either a P (*MIB* 57–58) (*fig.* 8) or a Θ (*MIB* 59) in the field to the side of the cross. In the case both of the second class of solidi with the single bust with short beard struck during the period ca. 647–651 and the third class with the single bust with long beard struck ca. 651–654, the letter P was the only symbol used (*MIB* 63, 65). In the case of the fourth class of solidi with two busts on the obverse struck 654–659, the dominant symbol was P once more (*MIB* 67), although it sometimes appeared in combination with an I (*MIB* 68), one each on either side of the cross. Finally, in the case of the fifth class of solidi depicting two busts on either side of the coin struck ca. 659–661, the only two symbols were P or Θ, where the P was depicted under a cross upon a globe (*MIB* 72) (*fig.* 9) and the Θ formed a sort of globe towards the base of the cross (*MIB* 71) (*fig.* 10).

So what was the significance of the letters P and Θ? Since they were both used for all, or a large part, of the period ca. 642–661, it seems unlikely that they served to date these coins in any way. The fact that they do not form any sort of obvious numerical sequence reinforces this impression. However, the balance between their use during the production of the solidi of classes one and five suggests that they served the same basic function, whatever this was. This is important because the manner in which the Θ is integrated as part of the cross on steps on the class five solidi points to an intrinsic relationship with the cross, suggesting that it describes it in some way. The obvious suggestion is that it abbreviates some form either of θεός "God" or θεῖος "divine," describing either the cross "of

[22] For an overview of the symbols on Carthaginian solidi see Table 14 in Grierson, *DOC* II.1 118, or the relevant chart at the end of *MIB*.

Figure 11: solidus (d. 14mm, w. 4.35g) of Constantine IV, Carthage (*MIB* 28)
Classical Numismatic Group, Auct. 103 (14 September 2016), lot 931
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God" or the "divine" cross, and this means that the P ought to describe the cross also.[23] This argument is reinforced by the fact that the P was also integrated within the cross on steps on a solidus struck at Carthage in indiction year I (= 10), that is, during 681/2, under Constantine IV (*MIB* 28) (*fig.* 11). Indeed, it appeared towards the base of the cross much as did the Θ on the class five solidi of Constans. As to how exactly it described the cross, the obvious place to start is with the qualities attributed to the cross in scriptural passages such as those quoted above. This suggests that the P abbreviates either *pax* "peace," *pacificans* "peace-making," or some cognate term.

It has previously been assumed that this P is a Greek rho rather than a Latin p, and that the other letter used in the same way, Θ, is Greek would seem to support this.[24] However, this assumption downplays the bilingual character of Byzantine

[23] One notes that a theta replaced the globe of the cross on globe on steps depicted on the reverse of a hexagram struck at Constantinople under Constantine IV during the period ca. 674–681 (*MIB* 66). Grierson, *DOC* II.2 535, speculates that the theta may refer to Thessalonica, but the parallel with the solidus struck at Carthage surely excludes this possibility. A theta had also been depicted in the field to the left of the cross on hexagrams struck ca. 668/9 (*MIB* 62b, 65). I suggest that it abbreviates θεός or θεῖος in all these cases.

[24] Grierson, *DOC* II.1 117: "evidently the P on the coins of Constans should be understood as *rho*."

society in the West, and the fact that the majority of the inhabitants of Byzantine Africa would have spoken Latin rather than Greek, even if many of the officials appointed there by Constantinople probably had Greek as their first, or only, language. It also downplays the fact that Latin remained the main language of the coinage, even in the Greek-speaking East. In this context, it is not at all surprising that a Latin P should be paired with a Greek Θ as the two dominant marks in the field of the solidus struck at Carthage under Constans, as this simply reflects the compound linguistic reality of the situation. Indeed, one should also note that the letter P was never used as a mark, either in the field or after the reverse inscription, where extra marks were sometimes added also, at any eastern mint during the period 602–700.[25] The only other mint to use this letter as a mark was Syracuse, where Latin influence was also strong.[26] Syracuse placed either I (*MIB* 97) or P (*MIB* 104) in the field to the right of the cross during the striking of class one solidi with beardless bust ca. 642–647. This was surely related to the production of class one solidi with these marks at Carthage, where, even though the marks P and Θ predominated, I was also used (*MIB* 60). Syracuse resumed using the mark P under Tiberius III (698–705) when it struck a solidus depicting I and P to either side of the cross (*MIB* 30), but this was only one combination within an otherwise bewildering array of marks. It is surely much more significant that it was the sole mark appearing in the field under the emperors Philippicus (711–713) (*MIB* 10) (*fig.* 12), Anastasius II (713–715) (*MIB* 9), and Theodosius III (715–717) (*MIB* 6), and continued into the early reign of Leo III (717–741) (*MIB* 6).

The sudden re-emergence of P as the sole mark in the field at Syracuse ca. 711–720 should perhaps be compared to the decision by Justinian II to depict himself holding a *globus cruciger* inscribed with the legend PAX on the reverse of the gold coins struck at Constantinople during his second reign 705–711 (*MIB*

[25] See Table 12 in Grierson, *DOC* II.1 112–113.

[26] See Table 15 in Grierson, *DOC* II.1 120–121.

Figure 12: solidus (d. 20mm, w. 3.68g) of Philippicus, Syracuse (*MIB* 10)
Ira & Larry Goldberg, Auct. 93 (6 September 2016), lot 1773
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Figure 13: solidus (d. 20mm, w. 4.48g) of Justinian II, Constantinople (*MIB* 1)
Classical Numismatic Group, Triton XVIII (6 January 2015), lot 1323
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1) (*fig.* 13). In the standard treatment of this type, Breckenridge claims that the *globus cruciger* "proclaims that Peace has been restored to the world by the vindication of the legitimate dynasty."[27] Grierson agrees, but is inclined to read an even broader meaning into it, arguing that "the PAX on the globus has no specific connotation, unlike that used on Carthaginian silver coins under Constans II; it refers to the emperor's restoration, and in a more general way to his function of ensuring peace on earth, the globus itself symbolizing the

[27] James D. Breckenridge, *The Numismatic Iconography of Justinian II* (New York 1959) 96.

latter."[28] One problem with the political interpretation of the PAX inscribed on the *globus*, whatever the precise emphasis, is that Justinian II had pursued an aggressive military policy during his first reign, and continued to do so during his second reign as well, while all the time pursuing harsh policies against any perceived domestic threats, so that even though tyrants do not necessarily see themselves as they really are, it strains belief that he could really have presented himself as a peace-maker in any serious political sense.[29] Another, greater problem is that this interpretation intrudes an incongruous secular element into a coin whose concerns are otherwise overwhelming religious, emphasizing Christ and his cross. A large cross is depicted behind the bust of Christ on the obverse, and on the reverse Justinian is depicted bearing a cross on steps in one hand and a *globus cruciger* in the other. It is arguable, therefore, that this type is all about the cross, and the *globus cruciger* with inscribed PAX is best interpreted as the most explicit statement yet of the effect of Christ's crucifixion, the reconciliation of the whole of creation, the *globus*, to God, peace in that sense. In other words, it explains the significance of the cross on steps in the emperor's other hand.

What then is the reason for this most explicit statement yet of the power of the cross? It was probably a reaction to the continued hostility of the Muslim caliphs towards the cross as best exemplified by the decision of ʿAbd al-Malik (685–705) to strike the so-called standing caliph dinar with deformed cross on steps on the reverse during the period AH 74–77 (693–697) in direct imitation of the traditional type of Byzantine solidus, followed by his striking of the purely epigraphic dinar from AH 77 onwards which did not show any cross at all, even deformed.[30] It is possible, therefore, that the emergence of P as

[28] *DOC* II.2 645.

[29] On the reign of Justinian see Andreas N. Stratos, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century* V (Amsterdam 1980) 1–74, 113–178.

[30] It seems probable that Justinian's decision in 690 to strike a new type of solidus depicting the bust of Christ on the reverse (*DOC* II.2 nos. 7–8), an

the sole mark at Syracuse ca. 711–720 may represent a local response to the same phenomenon, the striking of gold coins with deformed crosses at Carthage after its final loss to the Arabs in 698 followed by the striking of gold coins with no cross at all.[31] Alternatively, this may simply represent an imitation of a key theme on the Constantinopolitan solidi of Justinian as just noted. In either case, it reinforces that idea that P in association with the cross had always referred to its role as peace-maker.

It is arguable, therefore, that many of the solidi struck at Carthage during the period ca. 642–661 depict the letter P in association with the cross in order to emphasize its role as peace-maker. They cannot celebrate a particular period of peace, a mere freedom from war, because the first of these coins was struck in 644/5, several years before either the local peace apparently agreed to in Africa in 647 or the larger peace between the Byzantine and Arab empires in 651. These coins also continued to be struck long after the peace of 651 had collapsed, probably in 653. Indeed, the P enjoyed renewed popularity again as a mark in association with the cross on steps at Carthage in 681/2 and at Syracuse during the period ca. 711–720, and political peace was not much evident during this latter

earlier version of the type under discussion, helped provoke ʿAbd al-Malik's decision to engage in an increasingly radical reform of Arab coinage. See Michael Humphreys, "The 'War of Images' Revisited. Justinian II's Coinage Reform and the Caliphate," *NC* 173 (2013) 229–244. Various attempts have been made to explain the deformed cross in some more positive manner other than as a deformed cross, but none convince. See e.g. Stefan Heidemann, "The Standing Caliph Type – The Object on the Reverse," in A. Oddy (ed.), *Coinage and History in the Seventh Century Near East* II (London 2010) 23–34, arguing that it represents an urban column as a symbol of civic pride.

[31] Unfortunately, the imitative gold coins with deformed crosses do not bear any dates. However, they were replaced by a purely epigraphic type in 703/4. See Trent Jonson, "The Earliest Dated Islamic Solidi of North Africa," in T. Goodwin (ed.), *Arab-Byzantine Coins and History* (London 2012) 157–167.

period which saw a rapid succession of revolts within the Byzantine empire, to say nothing of the continued struggles with the Arab empire in particular. All of this renders it increasingly unlikely that the PAX-type of third siliqua should have celebrated one or both of those peace treaties of 647 and 651.

A fourth objection to the political interpretation of PAX

The final objection to the political interpretation is that a comparison of this type to the celebration of PAX on folles struck at Carthage under Justinian II suggests that this PAX is better identified as a religious rather than a political concept.[32] During the first reign of Justinian 685–695, the mint at Carthage struck seven successive classes of follis in his name. According to the order accepted by both Grierson and Hahn in their catalogues, the reverse of the first class depicts a small cross above a cursive denomination m with the mintmark KTϚ below this again and no other legend (*MIB* 52), that of the second class depicts a small cross above a capital denomination M with the mintmark KΓѠ below this again and no other legend (*MIB* 53), that of the third class depicts the legend PAX above a capital denomination M with the mintmark KΓѠ below this again and the legend ЧITOR running up the left side of the denomination mark and the legend IA running down the right side (= *victoria*) (*MIB* 54: *fig.* 14), and that of the fourth class depicts the letters Θ and Δ above a capital denomination M with the mintmark KΓѠ below this again and no other legend (*MIB* 55: *fig.* 15). All these reverse types were paired with a similar obverse type, a frontal bust. In contrast, the last three classes of follis are of a very different type (*MIB* 56–58). On the reverse, they depict a monogram of Justinian above the denomination mark M, and a Greek numeral denoting the

[32] A mint in Sardinia seems also to have struck folles (*MIB* 62) and half-folles (*MIB* 63–64) celebrating PAX at or about the time that the mint at Carthage did. Unlike the coins of Carthage, however, these displayed the legend PAX on the lower reverse where the mintmark had normally appeared.

Figure 14: class three follis (d. 18mm, w. 4.64g) of Justinian II, Carthage (*MIB* 54)
Dumbarton Oaks Collection (*DOC* 31.3), accession no. 1956.23.1537
Reproduced with permission © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington DC

Figure 15: class four follis (d. 18mm, w. 2.74g) of Justinian II, Carthage (*MIB* 55)
Jean Elsen & Fils, Auct. 91 (24 March 2007), lot 436
Reproduced with permission © Jean Elsen & Fils, S.A.

indiction year to the left of the denomination. As for the obverse, they all depict a standing emperor rather than an imperial bust. However, this arrangement of the classes has been thrown into disarray by the publication of a class three type overstrike on a class six type.[33] This suggests that the class three type was much later than previously accepted, particularly if the letters H and I to the left and right of the

[33] Simon Bendall, "A Class 3 Carthaginian Follis of the First Reign of Justinian II," *NCirc* 88.6 (June 1980) 213.

denomination mark on the class six type refer to the eighth indiction and tenth regnal years respectively (694/5) as suggested by Hahn.

If one accepts that the class three follis with the PAX inscription dates to ca. 695, then this legend clearly cannot celebrate the truce which Justinian made with the new caliph ʿAbd al-Malik in 685. It could perhaps celebrate some temporary truce at or about the time of the Muslim capture of Carthage in 695, but this would be pure speculation.[34] Two points need to be made here. First, the fact that the legend PAX interrupts the legend ЧITOR – IA suggests that it was never intended to be read in association with or in continuation of this legend. It is an entirely different element within the overall design. Second, in order to understand the significance of PAX, one needs to compare it to the other letters or objects appearing in the same position on the reverses of the other folles struck at Carthage during this period. These other objects consist of a cross, a monogram of Justinian, and a curious combination of the Greek letters Θ and Δ. The significance of the combined letters Θ and Δ is unclear. Grierson treats them as a combination whose meaning is unknown, but Hahn treats the Δ separately as a date in indiction years (year 4 = 690/1).[35]

The first problem with Hahn's interpretation is that it is inconsistent with his treatment of the letters H and I on the reverse of the folles of class six as indiction year 8 and regnal year 10 (694/5), since as the overstrike already noted proves, folles of class three were actually struck after folles of class six. The second problem is that the folles that do display the in-

[34] It is not particularly problematic that a follis apparently struck at or about the time of the Muslim capture of Carthage should proclaim victory. After all, Carthage had continued to strike solidi with reverse type proclaiming the victory of the emperor even as late as 695 (*MIB* 18b). Indeed, the reverse of the gold coinage struck throughout the empire had declared the same almost continuously throughout the seventh century despite all experience to the contrary. In this case, as in so many others, it is best treated as a pious hope for the future rather than a present reality.

[35] Grierson, *DOC* II.2 589; Hahn, *MIB* III 172.

diction year on the reverse, those of the fifth to seventh classes, display it to the left side of the denomination mark rather than above it. Accordingly, Θ and Δ are best treated as a pair. They presumably abbreviate two separate words. If one then examines the sort of slogans or phrases used by Justinian elsewhere, one notices that he describes himself as the *servus Christi* "servant of Christ" on the reverse of the new type of solidus with the bust of Christ which he introduced probably at Easter 690 (*MIB* 8). In conjunction with such language, the combination Θ and Δ is probably best expanded as θεοῦ δοῦλος "servant of God." This means that the letters or symbols above the denomination mark consist either of the imperial monogram or of some religious symbol, as they had throughout the seventh century, although the cross had always dominated. In fact, the cross had traditionally appeared there ever since the Anastasian reform of the coinage in 498, and the imperial monogram only began to intrude under Heraclius (*MIB* 164); and even then, that the particular type of monogram used had also included a cross within it seems to have served to ease this transition. In this context, therefore, it is clear that PAX is best understood as a religious concept. It anticipates the PAX inscribed on the *globus cruciger* held by Justinian on the reverse of his new type of solidus struck from 705 onwards, and confirms that this had nothing to do with Justinian's restoration of his dynasty. Furthermore, the fact that PAX appeared exactly where a small cross had traditionally appeared ensured that the viewer would make the mental connection between the two and recognise that this was not just any peace, but the peace of the cross in particular.

In summary, the PAX on the folles struck at Carthage under Justinian II is best treated as a religious concept. Its position, the fact that it appears where a small cross had traditionally appeared even since the Anastasian reform in 498, proves as much. In the face of this evidence, it is increasingly hard to argue that the PAX on the third siliqua under Constans must represent a political rather than a spiritual or theological idea. It is not so much that this would be impossible, but that there is

no other evidence to support the use of PAX in this way on the coinage of this period.

Conclusion

There has been a curious refusal among both numismatists and historians to accept that the celebration of peace on seventh-century Byzantine coinage can refer to anything except a political peace, the conclusion of some temporary truce or treaty between the Arab and Byzantine empires. However, this says more about the dominance of secular assumptions and approaches in the modern West, and the pressing need felt for new sources that might throw some light on the often poorly documented military and political history of the seventh century, than it does about the nature of Byzantine society. The close association between peace as celebrated on the coinage of the seventh century and the cross suggests that what is actually being celebrated is the peace of the cross, that is, the effect of the crucifixion of Christ in reconciling mankind to God. The celebration of this theme began when the mint at Carthage placed a P, abbreviating PAX, in association with the cross on steps on the reverse of the solidi in 644/5, but was made much more explicit when it spelled PAX out in full on a new type of third siliqua struck ca. 647–651. It continued striking solidi displaying P in association with the cross on steps on the solidi to ca. 661. In so doing, the mint at Carthage displayed an independence and religiosity characteristic of much of its output since it had reopened in 533. It maintained both right up until its celebration of PAX once more on the folles of Justinian II, just before the Arab capture of Carthage brought production of Byzantine coinage there to an end.

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