


New data about the use of coinage in Late Antique Tridentum (Trento, Italy)

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Abstract: In 2003, rescue excavations at Piazzeta dell'Anfiteatro, Trento, identified an extramural funerary area dated to the 5th c. CE. The necropolis yielded 45 coins (3rd–5th c.), most of which were involuntary losses. Owing to the sound stratigraphy of the site, these coins present a reliable sample of coinage circulating in *Tridentum* during the 5th c. This study presents a brief synthesis of the transformations undergone by the Late Antique city, so as to understand the dynamics attested in Piazzeta dell'Anfiteatro, a description of the stratigraphic units that contained coins, and a detailed analysis of the coins from several perspectives. The aim is to improve our understanding of the Late Antique monetary history of the city and Trentino's territory.

Keywords: numismatic, Late Roman bronze coinage, Late Roman economy, rituality, Trentino, northern Italy

Monetary circulation during Late Antiquity has been studied in several northern Italian urban centers of different sizes. Well-stratified contexts have allowed the identification of well-dated 4th- and 5th-c. coin assemblages, which provide a sound base from which to examine the social and economic role of coinage in the region. These studies span the whole of northern Italy, allowing for inter-regional comparative studies. Coin assemblages from such cities as Milan, Brescia, Verona, and Aquileia¹ (Fig. 1) can be used to undertake a diachronic analysis of the use and circulation of coinage from the Roman Republican period to the Early Middle Ages, including Late Antiquity, a period during which interesting dynamics (e.g., reuse of old coins, supply flows) and regional differences have been identified.²

Several authors have addressed the issue for the city of Trento, beginning with Callegher's pioneering study of the finds from the excavation of Teatro Sociale.³ This excavation revealed several domus along the city's secondary decumanus, which underwent significant transformations during Late Antiquity, including the subdivision of spaces and the installation of a glass workshop. The recovery of approximately 1,500 coins allowed Callegher to carry out a diachronic study of monetary circulation in the city from the Roman Republican period to the late 5th c. The numerous coins dated to the 4th and 5th c., which were found within a relatively small area, were originally interpreted as a hoard, the contents of which were dispersed as a result of post-depositional processes. However, the consistency of the assemblage, which came from several layers dated to the 5th c., and the associated presence of a number of weights, led Callegher to suggest that the abundant coins were the result of loss during the weighing of large groups of copper coins, either for tax purposes or as a way to calculate equivalences with gold coinage, in line with

¹ Arslan 1991 (Milan); Arslan 1999b (Brescia); Arzone 2008 (Verona); Stella 2018, Stella 2019 (Aquileia).

² Asolati 2018a.

³ Callegher 1998.



Fig. 1. Location of sites mentioned in the text. (N. Conejo.)

imperial measures adopted in the late 4th c.⁴ This was followed by Pavoni's study of the coins found in the excavations of Palazzo Tabarelli,⁵ a Renaissance building erected in a city block in the southwest of the Roman city that previously housed an Early Imperial domus, abandoned in the 3rd c.⁶ Later, the domus was partially demolished and transformed to make room for a series of humbler residences and production areas.⁷ In the late 5th c., these buildings were demolished to create a necropolis, which remained in use until the 7th c. Study of the coins allowed for the characterization of several monetary episodes in the history of the city, notably during Late Antiquity. Pavoni could confirm some of the phenomena attested in Teatro Sociale (survival of old coins and use of imitations) and also identify several monetary series that had not previously been seen in the city.

Other interesting examples in Trento are the Late Antique contexts found in the excavations of Chiesa di S. Maria Maggiore and Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro. The former yielded a significant number of coins related to the abandonment and transformation of an Early Imperial baths building in the 4th and 5th c.⁸ The latter revealed a funerary area active only during the 5th c. above the former amphitheater, which was by that time covered by soil, largely as a result of flooding from the Fersina, a tributary of the Adige River.

⁴ Callegher 1998, 80–84.

⁵ Pavoni 2015.

⁶ Ciurletti 2000, 311–13.

⁷ Pavoni 2015, 78.

⁸ Baroncioni 2012.

The necropolis has yielded an interesting archaeological assemblage, including 45 coins from a range of periods. The site is well stratified and dated, so the numismatic analysis of the coins found in Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro can substantially increase our understanding of the economic and social role played by coinage in Late Antique Tridentum. In the following sections, the archaeological changes undergone by the city in this period will be summarized, and the archaeological context and the stratigraphic relations will be described in detail. Finally, the coins will be examined from several perspectives and compared with previous numismatic assemblages both in the city and in northern Italy more broadly.

Late Antique Tridentum: a brief archaeological synthesis

The creation of a funerary area in the sector occupied by the Tridentum amphitheater reflects the transformations undergone by the city in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, transformations which are comparable to those attested in other urban contexts of the region.⁹ Change began in the mid-3rd c., after the Alamannic invasion and sacking of the city and its territory. Tridentum strengthened its walls, possibly as a consequence of this incident, and consolidated itself as an Alpine hub on the annona routes that connected the Italian Peninsula with Central Europe.¹⁰ One indication of this strategic role is that the emperor Constantius II passed through the city in May 357 CE, on his way to Illyria in the context of the tensions generated by the Alamanni and Suebi west of the Danube.¹¹

The strengthening of the city's walls required the reconfiguration of part of the urban layout, the opening of new gates, and the reorientation of the urban water evacuation system, especially in those areas in which the new walls cut through existing sewers.¹² The new wall was also projected up to buildings that had gone out of use but could be suitably incorporated into the new defensive system, such as the amphitheater.¹³ A similar phenomenon is attested in Verona and Ariminum (Rimini), where the amphitheaters took on a military role from the mid-3rd c. and were integrated into the defensive systems of both cities.¹⁴ In both instances, these public spaces kept their ludic function during Late Antiquity, as attested in other Mediterranean cities, while in the early medieval period they adopted new functions, as domestic or funerary areas or as quarries.¹⁵

The inner city also underwent significant changes, following the relocation of most of the population *intra moenia* and the depopulation of the peri-urban areas, which caused the reorganization of the urban layout and the abandonment of some earlier buildings.¹⁶ The territory's political instability may have benefited these new population dynamics. From the mid-4th, but mostly the early 5th c., the north of Italy, especially the Alpine region,¹⁷

⁹ Brogiolo 2011, 88–96.

¹⁰ Buonopane 1990, 120.

¹¹ Amm. Marc. 16.10.20: *die quartum kal. Iunias ab urbe profectus per Tridentum iter in Illyricum festinavit.*

¹² Ciurletti 2003; Bassi 2004; Bassi 2005.

¹³ Bassi 2006, 18.

¹⁴ Cavalieri Manasse and Hudson 1999, 75–78.

¹⁵ Brogiolo 2011, 59–65.

¹⁶ Cavada 1998; Cavada 2005; Ciurletti 2003.

¹⁷ Cavada 2005, 244.

was subjected to several barbarian incursions, like the one led by Alaric between 401 and 402 or by Radagaisus between 405 and 406; both were stopped by the general Stilicho, at the Battle of Pollentia (402) and the Battle of Faesulae (406) respectively.¹⁸ Contemporaneous sources do not mention Tridentum's role in these conflicts. However, owing to its position on the Alpine routes, it seems likely not only that the city played a significant role supporting the imperial troops, but also that the population must have suffered the consequences of these incursions, bringing the inhabitants of the suburban areas inside the greater safety of the city walls.

Another key factor leading to the abandonment of the suburban areas of Tridentum were the violent floods of the Adige River and its tributary the Fersina (Fig. 2). Floods regularly destroyed or silted over peri-urban residences, until they were definitively abandoned during the 4th c.,¹⁹ with the sole exceptions of production areas, which were still in use, and small funerary areas.²⁰ The flooding also affected some sectors within the walls, which were levelled for agricultural use and pasture as well as for funerary purposes.²¹ These funerary areas, however, and tombs cut into the debris of older buildings, were rare, as the traditional necropolises, situated outside the walls, continued to be used until at least the 5th c., as attested by well-arranged funerary clusters just outside the upgraded wall system.²² For some authors, the emergence of scattered small necropolises has a social explanation, responding to the funerary expressions of different social groups and families;²³ this phenomenon has also been observed in other nearby contemporary urban contexts.²⁴

Inside Tridentum, considerable activity to make way for new residential areas is attested from the 3rd c. onwards, but the new housing that appeared was not all alike (Fig. 2). During the 4th c., some existing residential areas were divided into smaller habitational units and productive spaces, as best illustrated by the city sector, discussed above, beneath the Palazzo Tabarelli.²⁵ Similar examples have been documented in Via Verzesi, near the Istituto Sacro Cuore, where a residential building was abandoned and reused as a glass workshop,²⁶ and in the vicinity of Teatro Sociale, where Early Imperial buildings were demolished to create a large production area.²⁷ In other areas, large residences with ample representation rooms and high-quality decorative programs, including mosaic floors and paintings, were also being built. This is prestige architecture, linked with the urban elite, including the senior imperial officials deployed in Tridentum when the city assumed new strategic roles in the territory.²⁸ The most interesting example of this type of residence is a building found during the excavation of Vicolo delle Orsoline and Vicolo Beato Stefano Bellesini,²⁹ the structures of which remained in use for centuries, as we shall see shortly.

¹⁸ Heather 2012, 205–6, 231; Wolfram 2021, 261–63.

¹⁹ Bassi 2019, 147–49.

²⁰ Bassi 2015a; Bassi 2015b; Bassi 2019, 147–49; Cavada 2019, 105.

²¹ Bassetti et al. 1996, 365–66; Cavada 1998, 124–26.

²² Bassi 2015b; Cavada 2019, 105–6.

²³ Cavada 2019, 106.

²⁴ Brogiolo 2011, 145.

²⁵ Paissan 2007, 668; Pavoni 2015, 78.

²⁶ Cavada and Endrizzi 1998, 178; Ciurletti 2000, 311.

²⁷ Cavada 2019, 113.

²⁸ Bassi 2015c, 113.

²⁹ Bassi 2019, 155.



Resti archeologici della Tridentum romana

- 1 via Roma / Portela
- 2 piazza S. Maria Maggiore
- 3 piazza Verzeri (già Bellesini)
- 4 piazza Duomo - casa Crivelli
- 5 piazza Duomo - palazzo Thun - torre Mirana
- 6 via Manci / via Belenzani
- 7 via Belenzani - casa Terlago
- 8 via Belenzani - palazzo Malfatti/Marzani
- 9 piazza Duomo - Porta Veronensis
- 10 via Oss Mazzurana - palazzo Tabarelli

Archäologischen Überreste des römischen Tridentum

- 11 piazza Lodron - palazzo Lodron
- 12 vicolo dell'Adige
- 13 piazza Manci
- 14 piazza C. Battisti - S.A.S.S. Spazio Archeologico Sotterraneo del Sas
- 15 via Mantova
- 16 piazzetta Anfiteatro / vicolo degli Orbi
- 17 chiesa di San Lorenzo
- 18 via Prepositura / via S. Margherita
- 19 via Rosmini - Villa di Orfeo
- 20 via Rosmini / via Zanella casa Maestranzi

Archaeological remains of Roman Tridentum

- 21 via Rosmini
- 22 via Tommaso Gar
- 23 piazza Duomo - Basilica Paleocristiana
- 24 via S.Trinità - palazzo Roccabruna
- 25 via Verdi - facoltà di Sociologia
- 26 via Pilati - istituto Canossiane
- 27 vicolo Benassuti - torre Bellesini
- 28 piazza Duomo - palazzo Pretorio
- 29 via Esterle

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Fig. 2. Plan of the city of Trento in the Late Antique period. The detail shows the location of the excavation of the Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro. (Archivio Ufficio beni archeologici della UMSt. Soprintendenza per i beni e le attività culturali di Trento [Prot.333/2023/25.4-2019-28].)

Despite the obvious differences of status, the inhabitants of both the humbler and the grander residences consumed imported products. The discovery of ARSW and LR3 and LR4 amphorae demonstrates some economic dynamism in the city and its inclusion in trade networks during the 4th and 5th c.³⁰ The presence in the city during this period of merchants from the eastern Mediterranean, attested by funerary epigraphy, points in the same direction.³¹

Another important phenomenon is the construction of the earliest Christian buildings in Tridentum over abandoned public areas, which again finds parallels in other cities of the time.³² The first church in the city was built in the location of today's Chiesa di S. Maria Maggiore, upon the remains of an Early Imperial bath complex, which during

³⁰ Maurina 1995, 260; Oberosler 1995, 323–24; Bassi 2019, 154.

³¹ Buonopane 1990, 172–73.

³² Brogiolo 2011, 109.

the 4th and 5th c. was occupied by humble residential buildings.³³ In the mid-5th c., the area was overtaken by a Christian church with three naves and a presbytery mounted on a podium and decorated in opus sectile. The choice of this place for the construction appears not to have been casual, as there seems to be a direct connection with the residential building in Vicolo delle Orsoline and Vicolo Beato Stefano Bellesini. This last space kept its residential character during the 5th and 6th c. The presence of some Christian decorative motifs has led some to argue for the existence of a *domus ecclesiae*, where the primitive Christian community of Tridentum met.³⁴ Other authors, however, think that the building was part of the episcopal complex. All of these hypotheses have proved hard to demonstrate.³⁵ The basilica *ad martyres* traditionally associated with Saint Vigili was also built outside the walls in the 5th c. Tradition holds that the saint decided to build a basilica to house the remains of saints Sisinnius, Martyrius, and Alexander, who died as martyrs in Anaunia in 397.³⁶ The building, which had several construction phases and stood in the current location of the Duomo, was organized around a large central aula³⁷ that during the 5th c. hosted a carefully arranged necropolis that remained in use until the mid-6th c. At that time, the area was paved in mosaic covering all the tombs as part of a wider reconstruction program.³⁸

The impact of these buildings on the Late Antique city is clearly reflected in the urban layout, which sought to keep a direct connection between both cult areas and a thoroughfare (the modern Via Cavour) that is entirely at odds with the preceding orthogonal arrangement.³⁹ As such, the city's new topography is the result of new political-social dynamics. It was now the bishop, who gradually became the city's main protector and sponsor, and a heterogeneous elite, living in both the city and its immediate hinterland, who kept the urban center alive during this period.⁴⁰

The excavation of Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro

Works to improve the water supply in Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro triggered an archaeological excavation carried out between July and September 2003. The aim was to document the amphitheater of Tridentum and its different construction phases. The excavation was undertaken by Cora Snc Trento, under the technical direction of A. Granata and the scientific direction of G. Ciurletti and C. Bassi, both from the Ufficio Beni Archeologici, Provincia autonoma di Trento.⁴¹

Owing to the structural tensions caused by nearby buildings, the excavation consisted of five closely arranged test pits, with a total area of 70 m².⁴² Test pit 2, at the center of the Piazzetta, was the largest (>50m²) and had the deepest stratigraphic sequence (3.5 m) (Fig. 3). It was also the source of the coins analyzed in this paper. The sequence spanned

³³ Guaitoli 2019, 131–33.

³⁴ Bassi 2015c, 110–13; Guaitoli 2019, 130.

³⁵ Bassi 2019, 161.

³⁶ Cavada 2019, 108–10.

³⁷ Cavada and Ibsen 2013, 123; Seebach 2001, 297.

³⁸ Cavada and Ibsen 2013, 125.

³⁹ Paissan 2007, 658.

⁴⁰ Paissan 2007, 630; Cavada 2019, 111.

⁴¹ Granata 2003; Bassi 2006, 13.

⁴² Granata 2003, 2–3.

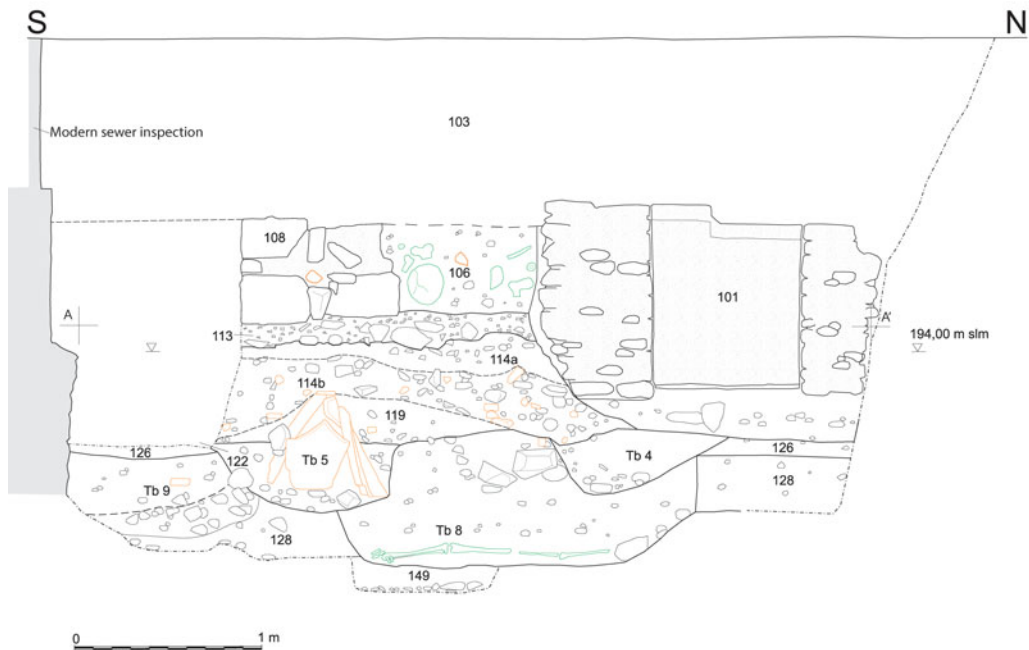


Fig. 3. Section no. 2, north–south orientation, test pit 2. A majority of the identified contexts are represented in this section of the excavation, so it illustrates well the diachronic evolution of the site. (Archivio Ufficio beni archeologici della UMSt. Soprintendenza per i beni e le attività culturali di Trento [Prot.333/2023/25.4-2019-28].)

eight occupation phases between the 2nd c. CE and today, with different hiatuses that respond to well-defined Late Antique and medieval events. Some of these phases could also be documented in nearby test pits, which were variously affected by modern constructions. Occupation phase 5 is the most relevant for the issue at hand, yielding a significant numismatic assemblage of 45 coins. Although this phase will be described in further detail below, it is important to briefly summarize the preceding and succeeding phases, in order to better understand the context (CXT) in which the coins were lost.

The earliest occupation level found in test pit 2 corresponds to the construction of the amphitheater in the 2nd c. CE. The building's foundation trenches and perimeter walls and an accessway to the building were attested.⁴³ However, owing to the small size of the sounding, no occupation levels could be found to establish the life cycle of the building or its incorporation into the 3rd-c. wall. A second phase corresponds to the amphitheater's abandonment, at some point between the 4th and 5th c., and the robbing out of construction materials. This phase was represented by a layer generated during the quarrying activities that partially dismantled the gate structure,⁴⁴ although the duration of this process could not be established owing to the absence of dating material. Next, the remains of the complex were covered by deposits after a flood of the Fersina. The layer above became an occupation level, as indicated by the presence of pottery fragments on a levelled-out

⁴³ Granata 2003, 8–15.

⁴⁴ Granata 2003, 15–17.

surface, which suggests an attempt to recover this sector for the city, although the material found is too generic to establish with what function.⁴⁵ Later, another floor covered this occupation level, with an even more substantial quantity of fluvial deposits. The excavators decided to merge both floods and the intervening reoccupation into a single occupation phase, the third, although it represents three separate events and chronologies. The fourth phase corresponds to the occupation level above the preceding flood deposits (CTX 137), when a ditch was also dug, according to the excavators in an attempt to reach the ruins of the amphitheater for reuse.⁴⁶

The fill (CTX135) of this ditch is part of the fifth phase,⁴⁷ during which the area was again levelled out (CTX128) to install a necropolis between the early and mid-5th c., in line with broader urban dynamics. The earliest use of the necropolis corresponds to a small group of inhumation tombs (numbers 6, 7, 8 and 9). Tombs 6 and 9 were outlined with stones and other materials, which were absent from tomb 8; tomb 7 could not be fully excavated, as it extended beyond the limits of the sounding. All were individual adult graves. These tombs were covered soon after their construction by a short-lived occupation level (CTX 126 and 125) into which tombs 4 and 5 were cut; both were later disturbed by the construction of modern sewers.⁴⁸ Tomb 5 was an adult grave surrounded by small stones, while tomb 4 was covered with a gabled tegulae roof. This funerary structure allowed the exhumation of a nearly complete adult individual, as the construction of the sewers had only affected the lower part of the body. These tombs were covered by what the excavators interpreted as the necropolis's final occupation level (CTX 119). Above this, a new deposit (CTX 114) sealed the necropolis and prepared the ground for the sixth phase, with the construction of the Chiesa dei Santi Pietro e Paolo on one of the sides of Piazzetta dell' Anfiteatro, which began in the 9th c.⁴⁹ In this construction layer, related to the building of the church, new funerary activity was attested, including three tombs associated with the church, which represent the seventh occupation phase.⁵⁰ The final phase corresponds to modern construction activity, the most aggressive of which was the construction of a water supply system in the early 20th c.⁵¹

The coin assemblage of the fifth phase

As noted above, the phase corresponding to the earliest funerary use has yielded the richest archaeological assemblage of the site, not only coins but also pottery, which has allowed the tombs to be tightly dated. The following paragraphs discuss the stratigraphy and briefly describe the archaeological contents of each context (CTX), including the coins, with inventory numbers given (Table 1 and Figs. 4 and 5).

The earliest context to yield numismatic evidence was CTX 135, the fill of the ditch (CTX 136) cut into the latest layer of fluvial sediment (CTX 138) to reach the structures of the amphitheater. The layer consists of brown soil with multiple brick fragments, unlike the

⁴⁵ Granata 2003, 16–17.

⁴⁶ Granata 2003, 16–17.

⁴⁷ Granata 2003, 17–21.

⁴⁸ Granata 2003, 23–25.

⁴⁹ Granata 2003, 27.

⁵⁰ Granata 2003, 30–32.

⁵¹ Granata 2003, 32.

Table 1.
Distribution of coins according to chronological phases and stratigraphic data.

N°	Invent. N°	CTX	Coin (Denomination, issuer, mint and reverse type)	Dating	W	M	A	References	Materials and structures	
Phase VIII: modern and contemporary transformations.										
1	RR47	101	AE4, Illegible	4th–5th c.	0.57	14	–	–	Contemporary trench	
Phase VII: funerary area Chiesa di Santi Pietro e Paolo. Phase VI: construction of the Chiesa di Santi Pietro e Paolo.										
2	RR1	114	Rad. Frac. Diocletian, Cyziko, <i>Concordia Militum</i>	295–299	2.16	20	16	<i>RIC</i> VI 16a. p. 581.	Preparation of the area for the construction of the church	
Phase V: necropolis										
3	RR4	119	AE3, Valentinian I, Siscia, <i>Gloria Romanorum</i> 8	367–375	2.33	18	1	<i>RIC</i> IX 14a.xxii.var, p. 147	Layer that covers tombs 4 and 5. Last level of occupation of the necropolis area. ARS Hayes 61b plate fragment (ca. 400–450 CE).	
4	RR5		Ant, Aurelian, Imit., <i>Divo Claudio</i>	post 270	1.64	16	5	<i>RIC</i> V-I 261, p.233		
5	RR6		AE4, Valentinian II/Theodosius I/ Arcadius/ Honorius/ Joannes, Aquileia, <i>Salus Reipublicae</i> 2	388–425	1.19	14	7	<i>LRBC</i> II, 1105		
6	RR7		AE4, Arcadius, Rome, <i>Salus Reipublicae</i> 2	388–393	0.99	12	11	<i>RIC</i> IX 64c.1, p. 133		
7	RR50		AE4, Honorius, Uncertain mint, <i>Victoria Avgg</i> 1	393	0.91	14	2	<i>RIC</i> IX 47b, p. 53 o 30g, p. 70.		
8	RR51/1		AE3, Constantius II/Constantius Gallus, Uncertain mint. <i>Fel Temp Reparatio</i> FH3	352–355	1.20	18	11	<i>LRBC</i> II, 2625		
9	RR51/2		AE3? House of Constantine, Uncertain mint, Uncertain type	after 355	0.51	15	–	–		
10	RR52		AE4, Arcadius, Rome, <i>Salus Reipublicae</i> 2	388–395	0.71	14	6	<i>LRBC</i> II, 1105		
11	RR53		AE4, Valentinian III, Rome?, <i>Victoriae Avgg</i> 3	425–430	0.71	14	6	<i>RIC</i> X 2118–2120, p. 377.		
12	RR 54		AE4, Warrior imitation, Uncertain mint	5th c.	1.15	11	2	--		
13	RR2	120	AE4, Uncertain	5th c.	0.89	11	--	--		Fill of grave 4. fragment of ARSW lamp Alt VIII-2b (post. AD 425)
14	RR3		Num, Constantine, Arelate, <i>VOT/IS XX</i>	320–321	2.33	19	5	<i>RIC</i> VII 216, p. 258		
15	RR17		AE4, Valentinian II, Aquileia, <i>Salus Reipublicae</i> 2	388–393	0.98	13	2	<i>RIC</i> IX 58 a2, p. 106		
16	RR18		AE3, Valentinian I/Valens, Rome, <i>Securitas Reipublicae</i>	367–375	0.98	17	12	<i>RIC</i> IX 24 a/b, p. 121		

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

N°	Invent. N°	CTX	Coin (Denomination, issuer, mint and reverse type)	Dating	W	M	A	References	Materials and structures
17	RR12	122	AE3, House of Constantine, Uncertain mint, Uncertain type	post 348	1.43	14	--	--	Fill of grave 5.
18	RR13		AE4, Valentinian III, Rome, <i>Salus Reipublice</i> 2	425–430	0.91	13	6	<i>RIC</i> X 2106, p. 376	
19	RR 14		AE4, Victory imitation, Uncertain mint	5th c.	0.89	11	--	--	
20	RR 15		AE4, Zeno? Uncertain mint, Monogram	475–476	0.52	9	--	<i>RIC</i> X 1017?, p. 303	
21	RR16		AE4, Victory imitation, Uncertain mint	5th c.	0.26	9	--	--	
22	RR20		AE4, Gratian/Valentinian II/Theodosius I, Uncertain mint, <i>VOT/XV/MVLT/XX</i>	378–383	1.48	12	3	<i>LRBC</i> II, 337	
23	RR22		AE4, Arcadius, Uncertain mint, uncertain type	388–392	1.29	12	--	--	
24	RR38	125	AE4, Honorius, Uncertain mint, <i>Salus Reipublicae</i> 2	393–403	0.84	12	7	<i>LRBC</i> II, 1105	Level of occupation.
25	RR39		AE4, Valentinian II, Aquileia, <i>VOT/V/MVLT/X</i>	378–383	1.73	15	11	<i>RIC</i> IX 36b1, p. 101	Fragment of ARSW lamp
26	RR40		AE4, Theodosius I, Aquileia, <i>Salus Reipublicae</i> 2	388–392	0.98	13	1	<i>RIC</i> IX 58b, p. 106	Deneneae Rom X B (5th c. CE)
27	RR41		AE4, Magnus Maximus, Aquileia, <i>Spes Romanorum</i> 1	383–388	1.28	12	11	<i>RIC</i> IX 55 a1, p. 105	
28	RR 42		AE4, Valentinian II/Theodosius I/ Arcadius/ Honorius/ Johannes, Uncertain mint, <i>Salus Reipublicae</i> 2	388–425	1.33	14	7	<i>LRBC</i> II, 1105	
29	RR 43		AE4, Warrior imitation, Uncertain mint	5th c.	1.72	15	3	--	
30	RR44		AE4, Constans/Constantius II, Uncertain mint, <i>Victoriae dd avgg q nn</i>	347–348	0.83	10	3	<i>LRBC</i> I, 140	
31	RR21		AE4, Uncertain	4th–5th c.	0.58	11		--	
32	RR19		AE4, Theodosius I, Aquileia, <i>VOT/V/MVLT/X</i>	378–383	1.50	16	7	<i>RIC</i> IX 38c1, p. 102	
33	RR33		AE4, Valentinian II, Uncertain mint, <i>Salus Reipublicae</i> 2	388–393	0.53	12	3	<i>LRBC</i> II, 1105	

34	RR28	126	AE4, Valentinian III, Rome, <i>Victoria Avgg</i> 3	430–435	0.76	12	8	<i>RIC</i> X 2138–39, p. 379	Level of occupation. Small indeterminate fragments of ARSW
35	RR29		AE4, Valentinian II/Theodosius I/ Arcadius/ Honorius/ Johannes, Uncertain mint. <i>Salus Reipublicae</i> 2	388–425	0.28	11	10	<i>LRBC</i> II, 1105	
36	RR30	AE3, Valentinian I/Valens, Uncertain mint. <i>Gloria Romanorum</i> 8	364–378	1.31	14	2	<i>LRBC</i> II, 338		
37	RR32		AE4, Victory imitation, Uncertain mint	5th c.	0.44	9	9	--	
38	RR26	132	Ant, Aurelian, Imit. <i>Divo Claudio</i>	post 270	0.91	12	3	<i>RIC</i> V-I 261, p. 233.	Fill of tomb 8.
39	RR 46		AE4, Theodosius I, Uncertain mint, <i>Salus Reipublicae</i> 2	388–395	0.75	15	12	<i>LRBC</i> II, 1105	
Phase IV: new dismantling of the amphitheatre?									
40	RR25	135	AE3, Maxentius, Rome, <i>VOT/QQ/MVL/XX</i>	310–311	1.77	17	22	<i>RIC</i> VI 281c, p. 385.	Trench fill over alluvium. small fragments of kitchen ceramics and a fragment of a Loeckele X skylight (2nd c.).
41	RR24		Ant, Gallienus, Asia, <i>Genio Avg</i>	266	2.31	17	5	<i>RIC</i> V-I 638, p. 187.	
42	RR23		AE3, Magnentius, Aquileia, <i>Victoriae dd nnavg et caes</i>	350–352	4.66	22	1	<i>RIC</i> VIII 170, p. 331.	
43	RR55		AE3, Gratian, Aquileia, <i>Securitas Reipublicae</i>	375–378	2.23	18	7	<i>RIC</i> IX 18b-xix.a, p. 97.	
44	RR56		AE4, Eugenius, Aquileia, <i>Spes Romanorum</i> 2	393–394	1.05	12	8	<i>RIC</i> IX 59.1, p. 107.	
45	RR58		AE4, Constantius II/Julian II, Uncertain mint. <i>Spes Reipublicae</i>	355–363	1.77	15	5	<i>LRBC</i> II, 2504	

Phase III: alluvium, reoccupation, alluvium

Phase II: abandonment and dismantling of the amphitheatre

Phase I: construction of the amphitheatre



Fig. 4. Coins numbers 1–28. (Photo by Noé Conejo [Prot.333/2023/25.4-2019-28].)

layer that sits above it, CTX 128, on which the earliest tombs rest and where there are no ceramic fragments. CTX 135 yielded six small-denomination coins, struck between the mid-3rd and late 4th c.: an *antoninianus* by Gallienus, *Genius Avg* type (Table 1, no. 41); a AE3 by Maxentius, *Vota* type (no. 40); a *nummus* by Magnentius, *Victoriae avgg qq nn* type (no. 42); a AE4 by Constantius II/Julius III *Spes Reipublice* type (no. 45); a AE3 by Gratian, *Securitas Reipublicae* type (no. 43); and a AE4 by Eugenius, *Spes Romanorum 2* type (no. 44). The last of these sets the terminus post quem for the fill of the ditch as 395 CE, because the only ceramic item to be identified is the base of a Loeckle X-type lamp, dated to the 2nd c. and, therefore, an intrusion. Although the differences are subtle,



Fig. 5. Coins numbers 29–45. (Photo by Noé Conejo [Prot.333/2023/25.4-2019-28].)

the distinction between CTX 135 and CTX 128 suggests that, originally, the former was deeper, corresponding to an occupation level on the fluvial sediment that could not be clearly determined. Therefore, it is likely that the top of the layer was removed when the area was refurbished for funerary purposes, leading to CTX 128, which was found to be archaeologically sterile and is different in consistency from CTX 135; the contents include fragments of brick and mortar, gravel of different sizes, and small charred remains.⁵² This would

⁵² Granata 2003, 17.



Fig. 6. Image of tomb 8 with detail of the coin found on the hip. (Archivio Ufficio beni archeologici della UMSt. Soprintendenza per i beni e le attività culturali di Trento [Prot.333/2023/25.4-2019-28].)

explain the considerable presence of coins in CTX 135, which stands in sharp contrast to later layers.

The next unit to yield coins was CTX 132, which corresponds to the fill of tomb 8, the only one of this set of graves to surrender any numismatic material. The grave, which was simply cut into the ground, contained a *decubito supino* male adult with the head pointing north; the anatomical connection was not complete, probably because the north and east sides of the tomb were disturbed by the construction of the 20th-c. water drains. This likely also explains the loss of part of the right arm.⁵³ Two coins were found in the fill. One is an AE4 by Theodosius, *Salus Reipublicae* 2 type (no. 39), discovered between the fingers of the left hand, which rested on the hip (Fig. 6). The coin dates the tomb to the opening decades of the 5th c., when the type was in circulation. The second piece is an *antoninianus*, *Divo Claudio* type (no. 38), found in the soil that covered the body. Archaeologists did not note the precise find spot or its elevation, so it is possible that the coin was accidentally lost in the soil used to fill the grave.

The layers that sealed these four tombs, CTX 126 and CTX 125, were both interpreted as occupation levels. The former is found in the eastern sector of the sounding and is only ca.

⁵³ Granata 2003, 19–20.

10 cm deep. Four copper coins issued between the last third of the 4th c. and the first half of the 5th c. were discovered there: an AE3 by Valentinian I or Valens, *Gloria Romanorum* 8 type (no. 36); an AE4, *Salus Reipublicae* 2 type, issued by the House of Valentinian and the House of Theodosius (no. 35); an AE4 imitating the Victoria type (no. 37); and an AE4 by Valentinian III, *Victoria Augg* 3 type (no. 34). The latter sets the terminus post quem for the context as 435 CE, as the remaining finds, including several amorphous fragments of ARSW, cannot be more precisely dated. However, this terminus post quem is consistent with the materials found in CTX 125, in the opposite side of the sounding and physically connected with CTX 126 until the ground was cut by later graves. CTX 125 yielded an interesting coin assemblage and several ARSW lamp fragments, one of which was identified as a Deneauve Rom XI B with a broad central channel, dated to the 5th c., although some authors have narrowed down the chronology of the type to the second quarter of the 5th c. to the mid-5th c.⁵⁴ This suggests a terminus post quem for the occupation level in the mid-5th c. Ten coins were found in the context, all of which were small denominations issued between the second half of the 4th c. and the opening decades of the 5th c. They are, as noted, consistent with both the ceramic material and the coins found in CTX 126: an AE4 by Constans/Constantius II, *Victoriae dd Augg q nn* type (no. 30); an AE4 by Valentinian II and another AE4 by Theodosius, *Vot V Mult X* type (nos. 25, 32); an AE4 by Theodosius, *Salus Reipublicae* 2 type (no. 26); an AE4 by Magnus Maximus, *Spes Romanorum* 1 type (no. 27); an AE4 by Valentinian II, another by Honorius, and another which is harder to assign, of the *Salus Reipublicae* 2 type (nos. 33, 24, 28); an AE4 imitating the warrior emperor type (no. 29); and an illegible AE4 (no. 31).

Tombs 4 and 5 were built over CTX 125 and 126 in the second half of the 5th c., as suggested by a fragment of ARSW lamp of the Atl. VIII C2 a-B type found in the fill of tomb 4 (CTX 120), which postdates 425 CE,⁵⁵ like some of the coins found in the fills. The tombs were empty of grave goods, except, in tomb 5, for two pig astragals, one over the right hand and another near the left rotula, and one pig intermediate phalanx near the left foot. This stands in stark contrast to the significant number of coins found in the fills, all of which were issued between the mid- and the late-4th c.: a *nummus* by Constantine, *Votis XX* type (no. 14); an AE4 by Valentinian II, *Salus Reipublicae* 2 type (no. 15); an AE3 by Valentinian I/Valens, *Securitas Reipublicae* (no. 16); and an illegible AE4 (no. 13). CTX 122, the external fill of the gabled roof, yielded seven coins with a chronological range that was much wider but consistent with that of the occupational phase to which the fill belongs, from the mid-4th to the second half of the 5th c.: an AE3 of the House of Constantine (no. 17); an AE4 of the House of Valentinian, *Vot XV Mult XX* type (no. 22); an AE4 by Arcadius (no. 23); two imitations of the Victoria type (nos. 19, 21); an AE4 by Valentinian III, *Salus Reipublice* 2 (no. 18); and an AE4 with monogram by Zeno (?)(no. 20).

Initially, it could be suggested that the pieces came from the earlier contexts (CTX 125 and CTX 126) when they were cut to open the new graves. After all, the strata are in direct contact and the material from all of them falls within a relatively narrow chronological range. However, CTX 122 and 120 substantially differ from CTX 125 and 126 in thickness, color, and composition, so the idea that the material comes from the fills of tombs 4 and 5 is

⁵⁴ Bonifay 2004, 351.

⁵⁵ Bonifay 2004, 354.

not entirely convincing. It could also be argued that the presence of the coins is the result of a ritual action; that is, that they were tossed in by the mourners at the funeral when the graves were being filled. As argued in relation to tomb 8, the incidental presence of coins in a grave fill, meaning that the coins were already lost in the soil before it was used to fill the grave, cannot be ruled out; however, the number of coins found in these fills appears to be too high for this to be the case, especially considering the small volume and the function of these contexts. Unfortunately, the excavators noted neither the position of the coins within the context nor their elevation, so conclusions must remain tentative.

The gabled structure built over tomb 5 was covered, except at its very top, by CTX 119, which was interpreted by the archaeologist as the last level of the necropolis. The context is highly homogeneous, although it varies greatly in thickness, probably because of the refurbishment of the area in the following occupation phase. Based on the latest materials found in connection with it, especially a stamped plate of Hayes 61b type (ca. 400–450 CE) a fragment of an African Atlante VIII C lamp (post-425 CE), and, above all, the coin with monogram found in the preceding context, CTX 119 is dated to the second half of the 5th c. This chronology is consistent with the 10 coins found, which were issued between the mid-3rd c. and the first half of the 5th c.: an *antoninianus*, *Divo Claudio* type (no. 4); two AE3 by the House of Constantine (nos. 8, 9), including one of the *Fel Temp Reparatio* (FH3) type (no. 8); an AE3 by Valentinian I, *Gloria Romanorum* 8 type (no. 3); an AE4, *Salus Reipublicae* 2 type, which is difficult to ascribe (no. 5); two similar AE4 by Arcadius (nos. 6, 10); an AE4 by Honorius, *Victoria Avgg* 1 type (no. 7); an AE4 by Valentinian III, *Victoria Avgg* 3 type (no. 11); and an AE4 imitating the warrior emperor type (no. 12).

CTX 119 is sealed by CTX 114b, one of two layers (with CTX 114a) that form a very substantial stratigraphic sequence associated with the construction of the Chiesa dei Santi Pietro e Paolo. The first sub-unit yielded a range of highly worn ceramic materials, probably the result of earlier soil-shifting works in units like CTX 119. This explains the presence in CTX 114b of a fraction by Diocletian, *Concordia Militum* type (no. 2), probably from earlier layers and the last Late Antique coin found in the excavation. The coins found in the top layers are all medieval and modern, except for an illegible AE4 (no. 1) (CXT 101) which has no connection with the preceding layers.

Numismatic analysis in relation to monetary dynamics in the region

The stratigraphy and the materials from the site strongly suggest that the coins found in Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro are representative of the money in circulation in Tridentum during the 5th c. CE. From a quantitative perspective, the site pales in comparison with other assemblages from the city, for instance, from Teatro Sociale and Palazzo Tabarelli, each of which yielded several hundred coins.⁵⁶ However, from a qualitative point of view, the assemblage from Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro is an ideal complement to these larger collections and allows us to think about hitherto unnoticed monetary uses in the city during this period.

Two monetary uses that are coeval but totally different can be inferred from the position of the coins in the archaeological contexts: one is related to ritual practices, which incorporated coins in circulation into funerary rites; the other is related to small everyday transactions, which led to the loss of petty coinage in areas where people circulated. Both uses

⁵⁶ Callegher 1998 (Teatro Sociale); Pavoni 2015 (Palazzo Tabarelli).

derived from a highly heterogeneous circulating mass dominated by small, low-value coins issued over a broad chronological range, from the second half of the 3rd c., with the imitations of the *Divo Claudio* type, to the second half of the 5th c., with the AE4 with monogram.

Coins in funerary rituals

The ritual use of coins continued well into the Late Antique period, as is shown by the coin held in the hand in tomb 8. It could also be argued that coins were deliberately deposited while tombs 5 and 4 were being filled in, a practice attested elsewhere in the region, but this cannot be ascertained in this instance on the basis of the available evidence.

The use of coins in funerary rituals in northern Italy peaked in the Early Imperial period, when it became common to place or toss one or more *asses* into tombs, regardless of the age, sex, or social status of the deceased.⁵⁷ During the Late Roman period, especially from the late 3rd c. onwards, the practice became significantly rarer, while the number of ways coins were deposited, and the combinations thereof, increased significantly.⁵⁸ As such, alongside the traditional places mentioned by classical authors in relation to the myth of Charon (mouth and hands),⁵⁹ in northern Italian graves, coins are found on either side of the head, near the arms, and between the legs/feet; they are also found not in direct association with the body, in the bottom and sides of the grave, and upon the soil that covered the body.⁶⁰ The preference for inhumation over cremation from the 3rd c. on probably encouraged this diversity.⁶¹ The fact that not all tombs, even those found in the same necropolises and from the same periods, contain coins, suggests that different practices coexisted, and that these reflected complex meanings in which family/personal choices carried considerable weight. Regardless of these differences, the practices were all short-lived. From the late 4th c., the use of coins in funerary ritual disappears almost completely in northern Italy,⁶² perhaps as a consequence of the recommendations of the Church Fathers, who criticized the survival of some pagan practices, including the ritual use of coins in tombs.⁶³

In a more regional perspective, the ritual use of coinage in Trento follows the same evolution as for the rest of northern Italy, as illustrated by numerous tombs dated to between the mid-3rd and the second half of the 4th c. Interesting examples include the rural necropolis of Casa di Cura “Eremo”, Chiarano (Arco, Trento), where the five tombs (of a total of 24) that contain coins present different arrangements: near the mandible (tomb 1), near the left arm (5), and near the hip and the left femur (6).⁶⁴ In the necropolis of San Cassiano de Riva del Garda (Trento), only late Roman tombs 27, 84, and 58, of a total of 57 tombs, yielded coins, always arranged in different ways: a group of 10 *antoniniani* near the head in the first, three small coins between the feet in the second, and an *as* by Hadrian near the cremated bones in the third.⁶⁵ In Tridentum, the situation is similar, as several examples

⁵⁷ Gorini 1999; Arslan 1999b.

⁵⁸ Asolati 2015; Conejo 2023.

⁵⁹ Gorini 1999; Arslan 1999b.

⁶⁰ Conejo 2023, 57–58.

⁶¹ Gastaldo 1998.

⁶² Conejo 2023, 58.

⁶³ Asolati 2015; Asolati 2022.

⁶⁴ Oberosler and Bonato 2017, 44, 46–48.

⁶⁵ Granata 2010, 24.

illustrate. The *extra moenia* necropolis of Via Esterle comprised a total of 14 tombs, one dated to the second half of the 3rd c. (tomb 14) and the rest to the mid-4th c. (tombs 1–13). Only six contained coins, and no two of them presented the same arrangement: the coins were near the right elbow (tomb 14), near the left leg (3), beneath the body and in the fill (5), and only in the fill (7 and 8).⁶⁶ The small necropolis of Via Tommaso Gar, which emerged in the 4th c. after the abandonment of a rural Early Imperial building,⁶⁷ comprised 23 tombs, of which only tomb 11 yielded (two) coins, although we do not know their exact arrangement. The chronology of all these examples demonstrates that the use of coins in funerary ritual ceased in the city and its hinterland in the 5th c., in line with observations in the rest of northern Italy. However, the examples from Piazzetta dell’Anfiteatro suggest that this ritual practice was not abandoned altogether, at least in the city, until at the second half of the 5th c., being maintained by families who either had not adopted Christianity or had bestowed a different meaning upon this pagan custom after their conversion.

In addition to positions and chronologies, we also need to examine possible symbolic interpretations of the practice. For the Roman period, coins in tombs have traditionally been interpreted as a *viaticum* paid by the dead on their trip to the netherworld.⁶⁸ Other interpretations, especially common in the study of Late Roman coins, give these coins a talismanic and/or apotropaic value, sometimes related to the iconography, read in scatological and/or prophylactic terms.⁶⁹ In other instances, they are associated with family-specific meanings which are not altered but prolonged by the death of the family member.⁷⁰ Both are valid interpretations for the coin in the hand of the remains found in tomb 8 (no. 39), the reverse of which presents the *Salus Reipublicae* 2 motif, a widely circulating type during this period that can plausibly be endowed with a protective value, because of both its invocation of health and the presence of a Christogram (the Chi-Rho symbol) in the left field of the reverse.

The tossing of coins into the tomb or onto the body, as in tombs 4 and 5, might have had more abstruse meanings. Although this ritual practice cannot be ascertained in Piazzetta dell’Anfiteatro (see above), there are numerous contemporary examples of it in northern Italy. For instance, several tombs in the Late Roman necropolis of Piazza Maor de Vidor (Montebelluna, Treviso) (numbers 39, 1124, and 1119) yielded six, four, and four coins respectively, found in the soil that covered the bodies.⁷¹ The fact that they appear in different positions but at similar elevations and in all cases very close to the body strongly suggests that they were tossed in when the body was being covered with soil. Rather than a premeditated action, like the carefully placed coins in other tombs, this must have been a spontaneous gesture, in which the mourners at the funeral used whatever coins they were carrying in their pockets. This would explain the great chronological and typological consistency of these coins with the circulating monetary mass; these coins were simply those

⁶⁶ Asolati 2022.

⁶⁷ Bassi 2015a.

⁶⁸ Duchemin 2012, 132; Doyen 2019, 14–15.

⁶⁹ Perassi 2011.

⁷⁰ Duchemin 2012, 133; Doyen 2019, 17.

⁷¹ Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per l’area metropolitana di Venezia e le province di Belluno, Padova e Treviso. Piazza Maor, Vidor: 2000, 09/10-2006 and 10/11-2006 technical reports (Prot.24295.26-06-2022.-Soprintendenza ABAP Ve Met-Padova).

available, rather than being chosen because of their iconography. We cannot, on the other hand, forget that tomb 5 contained pig bones, placed on different parts of the body, so this inhumation was accompanied by a strictly codified ritual, complemented by the “tossing” of coins. Therefore, the interpretation of coins in tombs 4 and 5 as evidence of a deliberate act is convincing, but it must remain tentative because of the shortcomings of the available evidence.

Circulating money

The monetary types found in occupation levels, on the other hand, represent accidental losses between the opening decades and the second half of the 5th c. and so present a reliable sample of the coins in circulation during this period.

The sample is widely heterogeneous, but consistent with the monetary dynamics attested across northern Italy in the 5th c.: small-denomination coins circulated for long periods because of the interruption of a regular supply following the closure of most mints⁷² and the gradual devaluation of these denominations in the preceding decades.⁷³ Also important are the monetary reforms of 395, which limited the use of large-denomination bronze coins in commercial transactions,⁷⁴ and those of 396, which imposed a fixed equivalence between gold and bronze coinage (1:25 pounds). This meant that the face value of bronze coinage was thereafter to be calculated by weight, not by nominal value.⁷⁵

From a typological and chronological point of view, the record suggests the coexistence of different monetary types. Their relative proportions, in addition, correspond to those attested in other archaeological contexts in the city (Fig. 7). The characterization of these groups will help clarify the series in circulation in the area during this period.

The earliest pieces in the assemblage form a group dated between 260 and 330. The oldest types correspond to series issued in the second half of the 3rd c., during the reigns of Gallienus (one *antoninianus*) and Aurelian (two imitations of the *Divo Claudio* type [nos. 4, 38]). The presence of these *antoniniani* in such a late context is far from extraordinary: it is also attested in other, coeval contexts in Tridentum⁷⁶ and other northern Italian cities, such as Brescia, Verona, Aquileia, and Altino.⁷⁷ The long circulation of these types is explained by different factors. First, these coins represent massive series, especially the imitations of the *Divo Claudio* type, which inundated western coin supply channels in the decades following their issue.⁷⁸ Second, the negligible amount of silver present in these types, which discouraged hoarding, fostered instead their use for their nominal value, equivalent to that of later series with a comparable metal content.⁷⁹ The presence of Diocletian's fraction from the Cyzicus mint in CTX 114bs (no. 2) responds to similar factors: small silver

⁷² Asolati 2018b, 121–22.

⁷³ Depeyrot 1992, 94–96.

⁷⁴ *Cod. Theod.* 9.23.2: see Depeyrot 1992, 94 and Moorhead 2012, 616.

⁷⁵ *Cod. Theod.* 11.21.2: see Moorhead 2012, 616 and Stella 2019, 139.

⁷⁶ Callegher 1998, 26–28; Pavoni 2015, 81; Baroncioni 2012, 142–44.

⁷⁷ Arslan 1999b, 358 (Brescia); Arzone 2008, 536 (Verona); Stella 2019, 24–26 (Aquileia and Altino).

⁷⁸ Pereira et al. 1974, 259; Depeyrot 1987, 83–84; Depeyrot 1999, 32; Marani 2020, 288.

⁷⁹ Depeyrot 1992, 45.

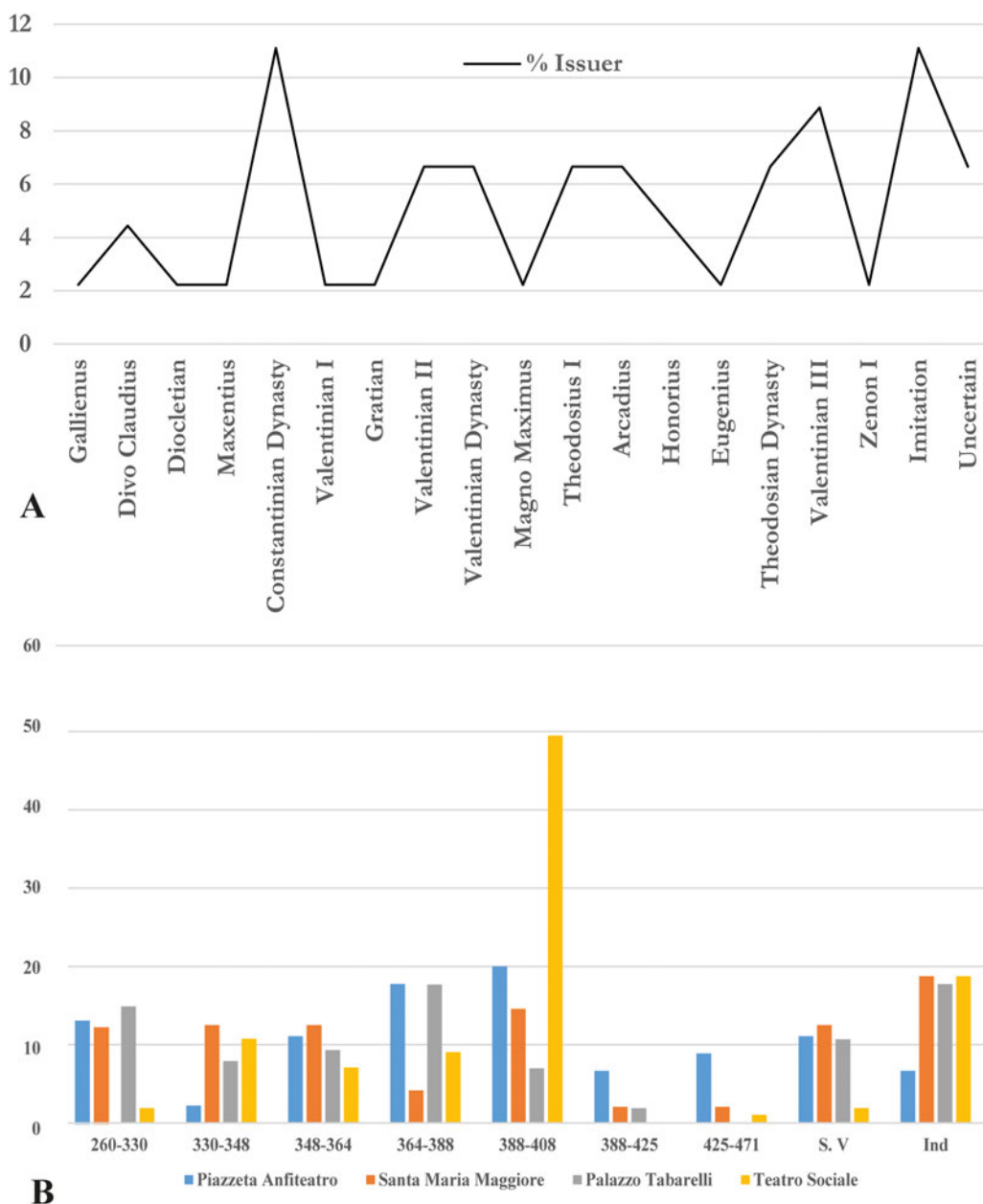


Fig. 7. Graph A: Percentage of issuers documented in Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro; Graph B: Comparison of the percentage of coinage per period documented at other Trento sites. (Graphs by Noé Conejo.)

content and metrological and iconographic similarities with later *antoniniani*,⁸⁰ with which they merged fairly seamlessly.⁸¹

Another member of the group is an AE3 by Maxentius found in CTX 135 (no. 40). The piece follows the weight reduction of 310–311, when new fractional denominations were

⁸⁰ Estiot 2012, 548.

⁸¹ Depeyrot 1992, 45.

created to fight mounting inflation.⁸² Although no specimens by Diocletian and Maxentius have been found in Trento in contexts as late as those in Piazzetta dell' Anfiteatro, examples from nearby cities such as Aquileia and Verona suggest that these low-weight fractions or *follis* were indeed in circulation.⁸³

The most recent piece in the group is a *nummus* of Constantine struck in the Arelate mint (no. 14), found in CTX 120. Although the specimen belongs to the large series of the *Vota* type issued to promote the emperor and his family, its presence is very rare in Trento and its hinterland.⁸⁴ The discovery of the type in Piazzetta dell' Anfiteatro highlights the absence of earlier series (e.g. 313, 318), which are, moreover, poorly represented in other, coeval contexts, such as Teatro Sociale and Palazzo Tabarelli.⁸⁵ This is significant because in other Italian and Mediterranean contexts, these large series displaced the *antoniniani* and fractions that were still in circulation in the opening decades of the 4th c.⁸⁶ It is likely that the large presence of these earlier types in Tridentum⁸⁷ and its hinterland⁸⁸ curtailed the arrival of the new series. This phenomenon has been attested in other western cities,⁸⁹ in which these earlier types continued to predominate as late as the 320s.

The next group comprises coins struck between 330 and 348. Although this period witnessed a general increase in the circulating mass,⁹⁰ following the issues that resulted from further weight reductions,⁹¹ in Piazzetta dell' Anfiteatro this group is represented by only a single coin, a *Victoriae dd avgg q nn* type by Constans/Constantius II struck in 347–348 (no. 30) and found in CTX 125. This scarcity must respond to random factors, considering that similar samples found in other excavations in the city and its hinterland are quite numerous.⁹² Concerning the group spanning 348–364, all specimens postdate 350, as no examples of the series issued by Constantius II in 348 – which was, however, documented in abundance in Teatro Sociale and Palazzo Tabarelli – were found.⁹³ The most recent piece is an AE3 by Magnentius, *Victoriae dd nn avg et caes* type, minted in Aquileia (no. 42), found in CTX 135. The type was also found in Teatro Sociale and Palazzo Tabarelli, and in Trento's hinterland.⁹⁴ The presence of these coins in the city bears witness to the deployment of the usurper's troops in northeastern Italy, as well as to the position of his headquarters in Aquileia,⁹⁵ whence many of these coins flooded the monetary mass in the region. These

⁸² Depeyrot 1992, 45.

⁸³ Stella 2019, 26 (Aquileia); Arzone 2008, 535–37 (Verona).

⁸⁴ Callegher 1998, 31–32.

⁸⁵ Callegher 1998, 31–32 (Teatro Sociale); Pavoni 2015, 82 (Palazzo Tabarelli).

⁸⁶ King 1993, 22; Elkins 2015, 176; Stella 2018, 35.

⁸⁷ Callegher 1998, 29–30; Pavoni 2015, 82.

⁸⁸ Callegher 1994, 157; Bassi 2007, 372.

⁸⁹ Pereira et al. 1974, 259–60; see also Stella 2019, 25; Marani 2020, 288.

⁹⁰ King 1993, 25–26.

⁹¹ Depeyrot 1992, 55.

⁹² On the monetary production of this period, see: Depeyrot 1992, 72–73; Harlt 1996, 167–69. For examples from the city and hinterland, see: Callegher 1998, 36; Pavoni 2015, 82; Callegher 1994, 162; Bassi 2007, 372.

⁹³ Callegher 1998, 36 (Teatro Sociale); Pavoni 2015, 82 (Palazzo Tabarelli).

⁹⁴ Callegher 1998, 37 (Teatro Sociale); Pavoni 2015, 83 (Palazzo Tabarelli); Callegher 1994, 162, Bassi 2007, 372 (hinterland).

⁹⁵ Stella 2018, 39.

coins remained in use for many decades because of their quality; they were heavier and more carefully minted than official coinage. The wide distribution of these series has likewise been attested in other cities like Verona,⁹⁶ Altino, and, naturally, Aquileia,⁹⁷ where the usurper's coins account for a far from negligible proportion of all coins found. Other series from this period include an AE3, *Fel Temp Reparatio* type (FH3) (no. 8), found in CTX 119, several poorly preserved pieces that, based on metrology, can be dated after 355, found in CTX 119 and 120 (nos. 9, 16), and an AE4, *Spes Reipublice* type (no. 45), found in CTX 135. These series represent the monetary reform undertaken by Constantius II after his victory over Maxentius. This involved the issue of a reduced AE2 in 351–354, the AE3, *Fel Temp Reparatio* type (FH3), issued in 353, the weight of which was reduced again in 355, and the AE4, *Spes Reipublice* type; the two latter series, issued between 355 and 361, were the most numerous.⁹⁸ The significant increase in the circulating mass is attested not only in Trento⁹⁹ and other northern Italian cities,¹⁰⁰ but also elsewhere in the west.¹⁰¹ The state of preservation of the examples ascribed to the House of Constantine makes it impossible to establish if they are in fact imitations of the *Fel Temp Reparatio* type (FH3), which in Trento have only been found in moderate numbers in Teatro Sociale,¹⁰² being absent from Palazzo Tabarelli and S. Maria Maggiore,¹⁰³ as well as from the nearby sites of Mezzocorona, Monte S. Martino, and S. Andrea di Loppio.¹⁰⁴ The picture is similar in cities such as Brescia,¹⁰⁵ Verona,¹⁰⁶ and Aquileia, where the absence of imitations can be explained by the volume of production of Aquileia's and Siscia's mints,¹⁰⁷ on which the coin supply of northern Italy largely relied.

The series for the period 363–388 are better represented in the assemblage, accounting for 15.55% of the total, significantly more than the preceding groups (Table 2 and Fig. 7). The period can be divided into three sub-phases. The first is monetary types issued early during the House of Valentinian, which are metrologically similar to earlier series:¹⁰⁸ AE3, *Gloria Romanorum* 8 and *Securitas Reipublicae* types (two specimens each: nos. 3, 36 and 16, 43). These series, especially the latter type, must have circulated widely in Trento and its hinterland, as attested by both urban and rural finds.¹⁰⁹ This phenomenon has been

⁹⁶ Arzone 2008, 539–40.

⁹⁷ Stella 2019, 76–77.

⁹⁸ Depeyrot 1992, 72–73; Harl 1996, 167–69.

⁹⁹ Callegher 1998, 38; Pavoni 2015, 83; Baroncioni 2012, 142–44.

¹⁰⁰ Arslan 1999b, 363; Arzone 2008, 540–41; Baldi 2015, 87–89; Stella 2019, 80; Marani 2020, 289–90.

¹⁰¹ Pereira et al. 1974, 277–80; Depeyrot 1987, 88–89; Depeyrot 1999, 32.

¹⁰² Callegher 1998, 42.

¹⁰³ Pavoni 2015, 83 (Palazzo Tabarelli); Baroncioni 2012, 142–44 (S. Maria Maggiore).

¹⁰⁴ Callegher 1994, 162 (Mezzocorona); Bassi 2007, 373 (Monte S. Martino); Calomino 2016, 615 (S. Andrea di Loppio).

¹⁰⁵ Arslan 1999b, 364–65.

¹⁰⁶ Arzone 2008, 540.

¹⁰⁷ Stella 2019, 80–81.

¹⁰⁸ Depeyrot 1992, 78.

¹⁰⁹ Urban: Callegher 1998, 48; Pavoni 2015, 83. Rural: Bassi 2007, 393; Calomino 2016, 615; Callegher 1994, 173–74.

Table 2.
Summary of issuers, types and mints between 363 and 435 CE.

Chronol.	Issuer	Type	Aquileia	Rome	Siscia	Uncertain	Imitation	Total
363–383	Valentinian I	<i>Gloria Romanorum</i>	8		1			1
	Gratian	<i>Securitas Reipublicae</i>	1					1
	Theodosius I	<i>Vot V Mult X</i>	1					1
	Valentinian II	<i>Vot V Mult X</i>	1					1
	House of Valentinian	<i>Gloria Romanorum</i>	8			1		1
		<i>Securitas Reipublicae</i>		1				1
		<i>Vot XV Mult XX</i>				1		1
383–388	Magnus Maximus	<i>Spes Romanorum</i>	1	1				1
	Arcadius	Uncertain				1		1
388–395	Valentinian II	<i>Salus Reipublicae</i>	2	1		1		2
	Theodosius I	<i>Salus Reipublicae</i>	2	1		1		2
	Honorius	<i>Victoria Avgg</i>	1			1		1
		<i>Salus Reipublicae</i>	2			1		1
	Arcadius	<i>Salus Reipublicae</i>	2	2				2
	Eugenius	<i>Spes Romanorum</i>	2	1				1
383–425	Uncertain	<i>Salus Reipublicae</i>	2	1		2		3
425–435	Valentinian III	<i>Salus Reipublicae</i>	2	2				2
		<i>Victoriae Avgg</i>	3	1				1
475–476	Zenon?	Monogram				1		1
s. V	Uncertain	Victory Type					3	3
		Warrior Type					2	2
Total			7	7	1	10	5	30

detected in other northern Italian and Mediterranean contexts, suggesting that Trento was part of existing monetary supply channels.¹¹⁰

The second sub-phase is a series issued between 375 and 383, represented in Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro by two AE4, *Vota* type, one struck in Aquileia (no. 32) and the other in an unknown mint (no. 22). The absence from the assemblage of AE2, *Reparatio Reipub* type (LRBC II, 1512), widely distributed in northern Italy during this period, should not be surprising, as they are also absent from other assemblages of Tridentum and have only been found in Teatro Sociale.¹¹¹ This responds to later monetary policies: as the AE2 were notably heavy, they were the first to be taken out of circulation after the 395 reform, while the AE3 and AE4, metrologically similar to later series, became the coins of choice for everyday use in the following decades.¹¹²

The third sub-type is issues struck between 383 and 388. Although their presence in the city, its hinterland, and elsewhere in northern Italy is significant, the *Victoria Avggg* 1 and 2 types by Valentinian II, Theodosius, and Arcadius are absent from Piazzetta

¹¹⁰ For northern Italian cases, see: Arlsan 1999a, 367; Arzone 2008, 540–41; Stella 2019, 96 with earlier bibliography. For Mediterranean contexts, see: Pereira et al. 1974, 286–88; Depeyrot 1987, 89–90; Depeyrot 1999, 40–41.

¹¹¹ For northern Italian cases, see: Callegher 1998, 47; Arzone 2008, 541; Stella 2019, 96–97. For other cases from Tridentum, see: Pavoni 2015, 83; Baroncioni 2012, 142–45. For Teatro Sociale, see: Callegher 1998, 47.

¹¹² Depeyrot 1992, 79–80, 94.

dell'Anfiteatro, probably for random reasons.¹¹³ The only specimen from this sub-phase is an AE4, *Spes Romanorum* 1 type, by Magnus Maximus (no. 27) found in CTX 125. It is widely accepted that this,¹¹⁴ and other specimens found in the city,¹¹⁵ are direct testimony to the usurper's troop movements in Italy during his struggle against Theodosius.

Coins struck between 388 and 408 (or 425) constitute the largest group (20% of the total assemblage: see Table 1 and Fig. 7), as they do in other Tridentine contexts, such as Teatro Sociale and Palazzo Tabarelli (40% and 15% respectively).¹¹⁶ In Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro the most widely represented type is the AE4, *Salus Reipublicae* 2 type (nos. 5, 10, 24, 28, 33, 35, 39), issued from 388 to 393 (eastern mints) or 403 (western mints).¹¹⁷ The adoption of the same typology by other series from 403 to 425 requires some of the pieces to be broadly dated to 388–425, although the iconographic style sometimes allows for a narrower chronological range (388–403) to be suggested.

The predominance of these AE4 is linked to the 395 reforms, which encouraged the issue, circulation, and use of small denominations.¹¹⁸ The finds in Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro illustrate some interesting aspects of this phenomenon. First, the relatively large number of specimens found reflects the increase in the monetary mass in circulation in Tridentum in the closing decade of the 4th c. This is also attested in Teatro Sociale, Palazzo Tabarelli, S. Maria Maggiore, and Trentino's territory,¹¹⁹ as well as in other northern Italian contexts, where the *Salus Reipublicae* 2 is also to be found in abundance: Brescia, Verona, and Aquileia.¹²⁰ Owing to their poor state of preservation, the mints from which the specimens found in Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro originate could not be established, except in the cases of two pieces from Rome, one from Alexandria, and one from Aquileia. This distribution cannot be regarded as significant, as the other contexts from Tridentum and nearby cities clearly demonstrate that the most widely represented mint in northern Italy was Aquileia. This mint was not only close to these cities but also increased its production after the closure of the mint in Siscia in 387.¹²¹

This explains the scarce presence of coins issued in the Roman and eastern mints in northern Italy cities.¹²² It is likely that coins from Rome only arrived into northern Italy indirectly, as a result of commercial activity along the Italian Peninsula. The Roman mint was the main source of coinage for central and southern Italy,¹²³ so the indirect distribution

¹¹³ For presence in the city, see: Callegher 1998, 53–54; Pavoni 2015, 83. For the hinterland, see: Callegher 1994, 163; Bassi 2007, 394. For other cites, see: Arzone 2008, 541–42; Stella 2019, 99–101 with earlier bibliography.

¹¹⁴ Arslan 1999a, 367; Arzone 2008, 541; Stella 2019, 101.

¹¹⁵ Callegher 1998, 54; Pavoni 2015, 83.

¹¹⁶ Callegher 1998, 61–63; Pavoni 2015, 83.

¹¹⁷ Depeyrot 1992, 94–96.

¹¹⁸ *Cod. Theod.* 9.23.2: see Depeyrot 1992, 91 and Moorhead 2012, 616.

¹¹⁹ For the cases from the city, see: Callegher 1998, 62 (Teatro Sociale); Pavoni 2015, 83 (Palazzo Tabarelli); Baroncioni 2012, 104, 142–44 (S. Maria Maggiore). For the cases from Trentino's territory, see: Callegher 1994, 163; Bassi 2007, 393; Calomino 2016, 615.

¹²⁰ Arslan 1999b, 367 (Brescia); Arzone 2008, 541–42 (Verona); Stella 2019, 111–12 (Aquileia).

¹²¹ Stella 2019, 119–20.

¹²² Callegher 1998, 62; Pavoni 2015, 83 (Tridentum); Arslan 1999b, 367 (Brescia); Arzone 2008, 542 (Verona); Stella 2019, 119 (Aquileia).

¹²³ Stella 2019, 135; Marani 2020, 293.

of these coin issues throughout northern Italy must have been common. The presence in Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro of an AE4, *Victoria Augg* 1 type, by Honorius, minted in Arelate (no. 7), found in CTX 119, and an AE4, *Spes Romanorum* 2 type, issued by Flavius Eugenius in the mint of Aquileia (no. 44), found in CTX 135, must reflect a similar monetary phenomenon. These types were found in small numbers in other contexts in the city, as well as in Verona and Aquileia.¹²⁴

These last series were contemporary with the frequentation of Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro, although their presence in the sample is scarce, as it is in other sites of the city.¹²⁵ This situation is not exclusive to Trento, but has also been observed in nearby northern Italian cities.¹²⁶ This is clearly a reflection of the scarcity of coinage experienced by Italy fairly early in the 5th c.¹²⁷ This does not appear to have hampered the city's economy, judging by the volume of imports.¹²⁸ In fact, the supply issues were met with the continued use of coins already in circulation, crucially the large number of AE4, *Salus Reipublicae* 2 type, that arrived in the city in the late 4th and early 5th c. This explains the physical characteristics of this last monetary series: the poor state of preservation of specimens, caused by both the metal alloy used and the type's prolonged use-life during the 5th c.

Archaeology thus demonstrates the coexistence of these last types with other 5th-c. series as well as with 3rd- and 4th-c. types whose metrology is comparable with that of these AE4. Similar instances of coexistence have been attested in Brescia, Verona, and Aquileia, and within Tridentum at Teatro Sociale and Palazzo Tabarelli.¹²⁹ The prolonged use of some types is particularly obvious in Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro, owing to the well-defined stratigraphic sequence. As shown in Table 1, the most significant contexts in this regard are CTX 122 and 119, followed by 125 and 126. CTX 122, which corresponds to the fill of tomb 5, yielded Constantinian and Valentinian coins alongside 5th-c. imitations, an AE4 by Valentinian III, and another one with a monogram. CTX 119, which represents an occupation level and accidental losses, shows an identical dynamic of the coexistence of coins struck between the 3rd c. and the early or mid-4th c. – including numerous examples of AE4, *Salus Reipublicae* 2 type – and 5th-c. series: an imitation of AE4 and another by Valentinian III.

Concerning the 5th-c. series, Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro, like other contexts in the city, yielded both official coins and imitations. In my tally, I have not considered those AE4 of the *Salus Reipublicae* 2 whose state of preservation means that it cannot be clearly determined whether they were struck in the first quarter of the century. It is likely that the large size of the last series made up for the scarcity of types issued in the opening decades of the century, such as the AE3, *Gloria Romanorum* 11 type (LRBC II, 1114), which was struck in the final years of Honorius and was numerous in northeastern Italy. None of these coins have been found in Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro, and their presence elsewhere in the city is

¹²⁴ Arzone 2008, 543 (Verona); Stella 2019, 114 (Aquileia).

¹²⁵ Callegher 1998, 75–76 (Teatro Sociale); Pavoni 2015, 84 (Palazzo Tabarelli); Baroncioni 2012, 105 (S. Maria Maggiore).

¹²⁶ Arslan 1999b, 368–69 (Brescia); Arzone 2008, 542–45 (Verona); Stella 2019, 123–26 (Aquileia).

¹²⁷ Asolati 2018b, 121–23.

¹²⁸ Oberosler 1995, 323–24; Bassi 2019, 154.

¹²⁹ Arslan 1999b, 367 (Brescia); Arzone 2008, 545–46 (Verona); Stella 2019, 131 (Aquileia). In Tridentum: Callegher 1998, 76 (Teatro Sociale); Pavoni 2015, 84 (Palazzo Tabarelli).

very rare.¹³⁰ Let us recall that the distribution of this series reflects military events, as its purpose was the coin supply of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* defensive system.¹³¹ The discovery of some specimens in cities near Trento, such as Verona and Brescia,¹³² suggests that the city was peripheral to the area of influence of the type,¹³³ and that its presence was the result of commercial dynamics. The last official legible issues are four pieces of Valentinian III's early series, that is, two AE4, *Victoriae Avgg* 3 type (nos. 11, 34), and one of the *Salus Reipublice* 2 type (no. 18) dated from 425 to 430. This number of specimens is consistent with the presence of the type in other Tridentine contexts, both in Teatro Sociale, with three types of similar chronology, and in Palazzo Tabarelli and S. Maria Maggiore, with an AE4, *Salus Reipublice* 2 type, and an AE4, *Victoriae Avgg* 3 type, respectively.¹³⁴ These series are not rare in northern Italy compared with earlier and later issues.¹³⁵ The ease with which these types entered circulation demonstrates not only the need for coinage in this territory but the fact that small transactions were still largely carried out according to the principles of a monetary economy.¹³⁶ The specimens found in the last occupation level in Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro further support this idea, extending the survival of a coinage-based economy in Tridentum until the second half of the 5th c.

Coin production decreased again in the final years of Valentinian III's reign, leading to a more acute scarcity of coinage in northern Italy,¹³⁷ as well as the continued use of existing series and the swift acceptance of new issues in a context of an increasingly ageing circulating mass. This is illustrated by the latest series of this period, the AE4 with monogram on the reverse (no. 20). Although the style could point to a series by Zeno,¹³⁸ dated to 475–476, the bad state of preservation of the obverse makes confirmation impossible. However, I have broadly dated this coin to the second half of the 5th c., in line with the wider type. These coins are very rare in Tridentum (the only similar piece was found in Palazzo Tabarelli¹³⁹), although they attest to the persistence of a monetary economy in the mid-5th c.

Finally, along with the official types, Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro has yielded five imitations of various types, a significant number in view of the size of the total assemblage. These small pieces are badly preserved, and their identification is based on the crude execution of the iconography. The few whose obverses are visible display a bust, while reverses can be divided into two groups: one with a highly schematic palm-wielding crowned victory facing left (nos. 19, 21, 39); the other with a front-facing soldier or warrior with various attributes (nos. 12, 29). Although the chronology of these pieces is a matter of debate,¹⁴⁰

¹³⁰ One specimen in Teatro Sociale: Asolati 2018a, 105, following Callegher 1998, 263, no. 1210, and another in Palazzo Tabarelli: Pavoni 2015, 84.

¹³¹ Asolati 2018a, 101; Asolati 2018b, 127.

¹³² Arzone 2008, 554 (Verona); Arslan 1999b, 391 (Brescia).

¹³³ Asolati 2018b, 127–28.

¹³⁴ Callegher 1998, 76–77 (Teatro Sociale); Pavoni 2015, 84 (Palazzo Tabarelli); Baroncioni 2012, 146 (S. Maria Maggiore).

¹³⁵ Asolati 2018b, 126–28. See also Arslan 1999b, 365, pl. 18 (Brescia); Arzone 2008, 546 (Verona); Stella 2019, 129–31 (Altino and Aquileia).

¹³⁶ Asolati 2018b, 128–29; see also Rovelli 2018, 67–68.

¹³⁷ Asolati 2018b, 130.

¹³⁸ *RIC* X 1017.

¹³⁹ Pavoni 2015, 84.

¹⁴⁰ Asolati 2018a, 82–83.

those found in Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro must have been struck in the first half of the 5th c., as they are inspired by types dated to the century's opening decades: *Salus Reipublicae* 2 and *Salus Reipublice* 2 / *Victoriae Avgg* 2.¹⁴¹ This is in line with finds in other contexts in the city,¹⁴² and in other nearby cities.¹⁴³ The volume of imitations is a direct function of the scarcity of money, making up for the shortage of official coinage and meeting the demand for small change; their similarity to official types made them easy to accept.

Final considerations

This review of the coins and the stratigraphic sequences recorded in the excavation of Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro has led to a better understanding of other monetary finds from the city of Trento, for instance, in Teatro Sociale and Palazzo Tabarelli, and of the use and circulation of coinage in Late Antique Tridentum.

From an ideological perspective, despite the limitations of the available evidence, it has been possible to verify that coins were still used in funerary ritual. Not all tombs found contained coins, but this is in itself interesting, especially considering that the emergence of small necropolises during Late Antiquity has been interpreted as the funerary expression of different social and family groups. As such, the use of coins in funerary ritual was restricted to some families or groups, perhaps a relic of past traditions maintained by recently converted groups of Christians, and demonstrates the coexistence of multiple funerary ideologies within the same community.

In addition, the different occupation levels in Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro contribute to defining monetary mass in circulation in the city until the second half of the 5th c. This mass was characterized by heterogeneity and the coexistence of different small-denomination monetary types with a wide chronological range (from the late 3rd to the first half of the 5th c.). A careful analysis of these issues reveals the impact of major money-supply episodes during the Late Imperial period. The presence of these series in such a late context is, in turn, the result of monetary dynamics that began in northern Italy in the early 5th c., including the decreasing supply of coinage, caused by multiple factors including the closure of nearby mints, and political and military events. This period also witnessed a change in the monetary economy triggered by laws enacted in the closing years of the 4th c. that forbade the use of heavy bronze coins in economic transactions, fostering instead the use of small-weight denominations. The combination of both factors forced users to continue using old coins that were metrologically comparable to the types minted in the 5th c., incorporating into circulation whatever coins reached the city and its hinterland. New coinage, which either arrived through casual small transactions, following military issues, or was officially introduced in fairly large numbers (e.g., Valentinian III's series) gave some oxygen to a monetary mass that had remained stagnant for decades.

The finds from the latest occupation levels in the necropolis of Piazzetta dell'Anfiteatro reflect not only these monetary dynamics but the large volume of coinage in circulation in the city at the time. This material evidence allows us to argue that, despite the monetary

¹⁴¹ Callegher 1998, 79; Asolati 2018a, 81–82; Stella 2019, 141–42.

¹⁴² Teatro Sociale (7 imitations): Callegher 1998, 79–80; Palazzo Tabarelli (14 imitations): Pavoni 2015, 84.

¹⁴³ Arslan 1999b, 370–71 (Brescia); Arzone 2008, 545 (Verona); Stella 2019, 142–43 (Aquileia).

crisis of the period, coinage was available in sufficient quantities for the everyday transactions of the inhabitants of Tridentum to operate according to the principles of a monetary economy until at least the second half of the 5th c. This fact is further proof of the city's economic dynamism, manifest as well in the number of imports and the active construction of religious buildings, in which coinage must have also played a major role. Future archaeological finds can only contribute to defining these processes even more precisely, leading to a better understanding of the city's complex economy during the 5th c. and beyond.

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