

# СТАРИНАР



*На корицама:* Локалитет Велика хумска чука, огрлица из оставе откривене приликом ископавања 2022. године, 15–14. век пре н.е. (Народни музеј, Ниш)  
фото: Петар Милојевић, Археолошки институт

*Sur la couverture:* Localité Velika humska chuka, un collier provenant d'un trésor découvert lors de fouilles en 2022, 15–14. avant JC (Musée national, Niš)  
Photo: Petar Milojević, Institut archéologique, Belgrade



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## NIKE/VICTORIA REPRESENTATIONS IN LATE ANTIQUE CENTRAL BALKANS

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*Abstract.* – During the archaeological excavations in the north-eastern part of the *thermae* at Constantine the Great's villa in Mediana, in the 2022 campaign, in a layer of debris two fragments of marble relief with a representation of Nike/Victoria standing on a globe were discovered. The fine grain white marble used for the icon, with its exquisite modelling, suggest that it was made from expensive marble by the hands of a skilful artisan in the period from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The fact that the relief was discovered in the area of an imperial residential complex relates it to other known Central Balkan finds with Victoria representations, discovered in Galerius' imperial domain Felix Romuliana and Moesia Superior's capital Viminacium. All these mythological objects can be dated into the period of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> century, attesting that the goddess' symbolism did not lose any of its popularity in the period of Late Antiquity – on the contrary, it announced the transformation of the goddess into an angel and, later on, as the one who blessed the emperors during their coronation. Thus, the question of Victoria's different roles (goddess or personification) again arises, gaining a new meaning in the early Byzantine period.

*Key words.* – Nike, Victoria, marble relief, statue, wreath, victory, Late Antiquity

During archaeological excavations in 2022, with the goal to obtain data important for the conservation works which were to follow, in the northern part of the *thermae* of Constantine the Great's villa with peristyle, in a layer of debris discovered north of the apse of room 8 of the *thermae*, a fragmented relief of white marble was discovered (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> The layer of debris consisted of thick soil with fragments of stone, marble, ceramic and glass. The two marble fragments represent the middle and lower part of the plate and are well preserved.<sup>2</sup> The iconographic presentation is framed by a double moulding and represents the lower part of a figure dressed in a flowing himation, which covers its left leg, while leaving the right leg uncovered; the figure is standing on a globe. Although the representation of the figure is not complete, it could be said with some certainty that the figure in question represents the goddess Victoria who was often shown in an identical pose – standing

with one leg on a globe, her richly plaited dress flowing, and frequently with one leg uncovered. In her hands, the goddess usually holds a palm branch and a wreath, which we can presume was the way in which she was also depicted in the Mediana relief. This particular

<sup>1</sup> The archaeological excavations were conducted from the 20<sup>th</sup> September to the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2022, with the goal of finishing the research of the three northern rooms of the *thermae*, due to the conservation works which were to follow afterwards. The members of the excavation team were: Dr Nadežda Gavrilović Vitas, director of archaeological research (Institute of Archaeology Belgrade), MA Marija Jović (Institute of Archaeology Belgrade), Dr Igor Bjelić architect (Institute of Archaeology Belgrade), Dr Gordana Milošević Jevtić consultant (Faculty of Architecture Belgrade), Slobodan Mitić (National Museum in Niš) and Željko Cajić photographer (National Museum in Niš).

<sup>2</sup> Dimensions of the bigger fragment of the marble votive icon are 18 x 13.5 x 2.5 cm, while the smaller fragment of the icon measures 12 x 6.5 x 2.5 cm, documentation of the Institute of Archaeology Belgrade.



Fig. 1. Marble icon with representation of Victoria on a globe, from Mediana (Photo: Ž. Cajić, National Museum Niš)

Сл. 1. Мермерна икона са представом Викторије на глобусу из Медијане (фотографија: Ж. Цајић, Народни музеј Ниш)

iconographical representation of the goddess Victoria standing on a half or full sphere or globe was very popular in Roman art and the introduction of the element of a sphere or globe should be considered as a Latin addition, since it is almost non-existent in Hellenistic period artefacts.<sup>3</sup> Victoria has always been associated with victorious battles, which were limited in time and space, while the concept of political power, towards which the Roman state strived, involved a long term plan that needed a clear manifestation and its visual communication, and single military victories or victorious individuals were insufficient for this purpose. In such a way, the motif of a *tropaion* (trophy) needed to be upgraded into the more powerful symbol of the *orbis Romanus* and its expansion from a city state to vast territorial power – Victoria on the globe, whose image was widely adopted in all realms of public and private life, from state monuments to small objects of everyday life.<sup>4</sup> The iconographic variant of Victoria standing on a globe was introduced to Rome by Augu-

stus, who brought a similar statue of the goddess from Tarentum to commemorate his victory at Actium. The statue of Victoria was then placed on an altar in the house of the Roman senate *Curia*<sup>5</sup> and in front of it, Roman senators took their oaths and prayed for the wellbeing of the emperor and Roman state<sup>6</sup>, until probably 408, when the law against heathen statues

<sup>3</sup> Hölscher 1967, 22–47; Graillot 1919, 851.

<sup>4</sup> Hölscher 1967, 22–47, 180–182; Hölscher 2006, 27–48.

<sup>5</sup> Töpfer 2015, 11. A. Reinach writes that a statue of Victory was set up in Tarentum by Pyrrhus of Epirus to commemorate the victory over the Romans at Heraclea in 280 B.C. A. Reinach also suggests that the statue was modelled by a student of Lysippus, Eutychedes of Sicyon. However, although Dio Cassius records that a statue of Victory was transferred from Tarentum to Rome, there are no historical sources that confirm the presence of the statue in Rome before 29 B.C. when it was placed by Augustus in the Curia Iulia, Pohlsander 1969, 589–590; Moustaka, Goulaki-Voutira, Grote 1992, 850–904; 882, no. 383.

<sup>6</sup> Sheridan 1966, 187.

was introduced.<sup>7</sup> Prudentius writes that the goddess' statue was made of gilded bronze, presenting the goddess with wings and in a flowing robe, standing on a globe with a laurel wreath in her right hand.<sup>8</sup> This iconographic type of Victoria presentation maintained its popularity through the antique and late antique period, with sub variants of Victoria standing on the ground, holding different attributes, such as a palm branch,<sup>9</sup> garland, a phiale/patera, a vase, *thymiterion*, a whip, etc.<sup>10</sup>

The find of a marble relief with representation of Victoria at Mediana's baths only contributes to our knowledge of mythological statues and sculptural groups that decorated rooms of the *thermae* of Constantine the Great's villa with peristyle: marble fragmented statue of a Satyr, marble statue of a lion, marble statuary composition of drunken Dionysus with a Satyr, marble sculptural group of Hercules with Telphos, fragmented marble base with part of the left foot,<sup>11</sup> marble female hand holding a *patera* with an egg (probably Hygieia), and a marble oversized male hand holding a sceptre (probably Zeus or the emperor).<sup>12</sup> Particularly interesting is a find of a fragment of a marble relief with the remains of mortar, discovered in one of the bath's rooms in 1962, on which a right hand holding a laurel wreath is presented.<sup>13</sup> The detail of a wing above the thumb of the hand implies another presentation of the goddess Victoria and that this marble relief was also decorating one of the rooms in Constantine the Great's baths.

As can be clearly seen from the previously written, the sculptural compositions depicting Hercules' heroic deeds, Dionysus with the members of his *thiasos* and the iatric goddess Hygieia were part of Mediana's *thermae* scenery, but also represented a common choice of deities for statues decorating other late antique *villae*.<sup>14</sup> In Late Antiquity, the particular choice of deities as part of an educated man's life (in literature, poetry, art, decoration of his house, etc.) presented a cultural trait that distinguished him from the average man. In short, it represented his common culture, origin and education – his *paideia*.<sup>15</sup> In that context, in late antique imperial domains and *villae*, Victoria's image presented in the form of statues or reliefs is not rare either – appearing at *villae* at La-Garenne-de-Nérac, Montmaurin and Lamarque.<sup>16</sup> The late antique torso of the goddess Victory from the villa at La-Garenne-de-Nérac was discovered in the *thermae* of the villa<sup>17</sup> and the choice of a goddess closely associated with the Roman emperor and the imperial family in general should not be surprising, bearing in mind the already

established incorporation of Victoria into the domestic environment,<sup>18</sup> then additionally inspired by her image presented in public buildings (like, for instance, in

<sup>7</sup> In 403, Claudian writes that the statue of the goddess Victoria was again in the Roman Senate, but it was probably removed in 408 when the law against heathen statues was introduced, *De VI Consulatu Honorii Augusti*, XXVIII, 585; Sheridan 1966, 206.

<sup>8</sup> Prudentius describes the statue as "shining, glittering", because of her golden reflection, Prud. *Contra Symmachum*, II. 28. The statue of Victory was presumably monumental and of considerable size, perhaps even seven to eight meters high, Pohlsander 1969, 589.

<sup>9</sup> Nike's connection with an obverse image on 5<sup>th</sup> century BC coinage signifying victory is associated with the mint of the ancient city of Terina and the reverse type of Nike standing, holding a wreath and a (palm) branch in hand. Bellinger 1962: <http://numismatics.org/digitalibrary/ark:/53695/nnan62016>; [https://greekcoinage.org/iris/id/terina.hn\\_italy.2568](https://greekcoinage.org/iris/id/terina.hn_italy.2568); Later on, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, on the reverse of silver didrachm minted in Rome, Victoria is presented again, attaching a wreath to a palm branch, <http://numismatics.org/crro/id/rrc-22.1>

<sup>10</sup> The attribute of a palm branch, a typical Greek symbol of victory given as a prize to the winners of athletic contests from probably the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., was introduced in Rome during the games in 293 B.C., Graillot 1919, 850, 852.

<sup>11</sup> Vasić et al. 2016, 96–97, no. 19–21; Gavrilović 2017, 193–203.

<sup>12</sup> The marble female hand holding a *patera* with an egg in it and a male oversized hand with missing sceptre were discovered in the northern room of the *thermae* of Constantine the Great's villa at Mediana during the excavations in 2019, documentation of the Institute of Archaeology in Belgrade.

<sup>13</sup> The fragment of white marble relief was discovered during archaeological excavations of Constantine the Great's baths at Mediana, in 1962. The dimensions of the fragment are 9.5 x 7,5 x 2.1 cm and although the authors of this paper hoped that this was a part of the marble relief found in 2022, unfortunately it is not.

<sup>14</sup> So-far discovered mythological sculptural compositions and statues from other late antique imperial domains and *villae*, like the Palace of Theodosius in Sirmium, Felix Romuliana (Gamzigrad) near Zaječar, the villa at Chiragan, the villa at Montmaurin, the Panaya Domus in Corinth, the villa Valdettorres de Jarama in Spain, etc., show that the most frequent deities presented were Aesculapius, Hercules, Dionysus and members of his *thiasos*, Venus, Diana etc., Videbech 2015, 452, 474, ft. 21; Stirling 2005, 30, 37, 179, 241–242 ft. 115.

<sup>15</sup> Watts 2012, 468–469.

<sup>16</sup> Stirling 2005, for the statuette of Victory from the villa at La-Garenne-de-Nérac see 64, fig. 30; for Venus–Victoria in Montmaurin see 39–40, fig. 12–13; for the Victory statuette from the villa Lamarque see Beckmann 2016, 299, ft. 737.

<sup>17</sup> Stirling 2005, 67, 81.

<sup>18</sup> The image of Victoria decorated private homes of Romans in fresco-painting (frescos from Pompei or from Livia's house on Palatine Hill), minor arts, but also in funerary art (in the iconography of funerary monuments or decorating sides of sarcophagi), Graillot 1919, 852.

the theatre of Philippi, and theatres in general)<sup>19</sup> and public monuments, particularly favoured by late antique aristocrats and the elite of Roman society.<sup>20</sup> In that context, the appearance of the goddess Victoria in imperial domains, like Mediana and Felix Romuliana, is completely expected and understandable – there could be no deity more suitable for accompanying a Roman emperor and to watch over him and his triumphs, than the goddess Victoria.

In the context of the iconography, the goddess' presentation on the Mediana relief is similar to the image of the goddess from the relief discovered in Obernburg am Main,<sup>21</sup> but it also bears iconographic analogies with the image of Victoria from the stone of the four gods from Aschaffenburg<sup>22</sup> and to the relief presentation of Victoria from the inscription plate discovered in Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt<sup>23</sup> (although this Victoria is static, while Victoria from the Mediana relief is presented actively flying). Stylistically, the marble relief presentation from Mediana shares similarities with the relief from Szombathely, formerly known as Savaria (in the details of the framing of the relief and modelling of the drapery).<sup>24</sup> The marble relief with the presentation of Victoria from Mediana was discovered in the layer belonging to the second building phase (330–378), but the modelling of the goddess' naked right leg, globe and particularly the quite shallow shape of the drapery that covers the deity's left leg, suggest the period in which the relief was made to be from the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Although we cannot say with certainty whether the primary function of the Mediana Victoria relief was votive, it can be presumed that its function in Constantine the Great's baths was to adorn one of its rooms, thus being purely decorative. The reuse of statues is an already confirmed custom in imperial palaces and villas on the territory of Serbia and two practices are known, reuse with a decorative or with a cult/religious/votive purpose. A head of the goddess Venus, dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, was found during excavations of the imperial palace in Sirmium in the archaeological layer of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, probably later reused as decoration for the fountain, of which decorative elements were excavated in the vicinity of the head's discovery.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, in the Mediana villa with peristyle, a large hoard of ancient sculptures was discovered in 1972.<sup>26</sup> This hoard consisted of various pagan deities such as Aphrodite, Hygeia and Aesculapius, whose worship remained popular in the time of Christianity, probably due to the personal religious aspira-

tions of Constantine's heirs, namely Julian the Apostate.<sup>27</sup> Considering the presented examples, it can be concluded that the reuse of ancient works of art can suggest respect of artistic and aesthetic values during the reign of Constantine and his heirs, but at the same time their aspiration towards the retrospective – based upon the nostalgia and cultural continuum that provided the desired everlasting concept of *Roma Aeterna*.<sup>28</sup> For this reason, the decorative role of Victoria's relief is clear, but cultic – the symbolic role of the motif closely associated with the imperial propaganda should not be completely neglected.

<sup>19</sup> Victoria's presentations in theatres are related to the close connection between the deity and the goddess Nemesis, but also to the connection of Nemesis with the *Victoria Augusta* type, Gavrilović 2011, 198; For the goddess Victoria in the theatre of Philippi, see Aristodemou 2015, 74–75; As a result of her victorious character and symbolism, being particularly exploited in the imperial propaganda of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and appearing on the official coinage with different variations, the goddess Victoria's image is present in theatres and was, thus, closely associated with the goddess Nemesis, who was also, as was Victoria, considered *regina caesarum et arbitra rerum*, Pastor 2011, 90.

<sup>20</sup> Graillot 1919, 852; Stirling 2005, 87–88.

<sup>21</sup> Fragmented votive relief (the upper part with goddess' head and half of torso is missing) from Obernburg am Main was discovered in the *principia* of the fort (now in the Roman Museum in Obernburg am Main, inv. no. R 1901.3), <http://lupa.at/6940?query=851617666>

<sup>22</sup> The stone of the four gods was discovered in the foundation of the parish church in 1984. in Mömlingen (now in the Abbey Museum in Aschaffenburg). It is a column base with images of four deities (Victoria, Silvanus, Fortuna, Mars or Hercules?) on each side of the column, <http://lupa.at/6888?query=851617666>

<sup>23</sup> The votive plate with inscription and two Victorias was found in Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt (now in Stuttgart-Württemberg State Museum, inv. no. RL 199), <http://lupa.at/7800?query=2075730329>.

<sup>24</sup> The votive relief from Szombathely (now in Savaria Museum, inv. no. 10/67/65) presents winged goddess Victoria in a rectangular niche, with a cloak covering her right arm and legs and with a palm branch in her left and wreath in her right hand, <http://lupa.at/3390?query=2075730329>.

<sup>25</sup> Anđelković Grašar 2020, 117; Popović 2008, 153–159, Fig. 2; Popović 2009a, 267–269, Fig. 1; Jeremić 2009, 488–489, Fig. 22/a–b; Davidović, Subašić 2011, kat. 1; Popović 2012, kat. 9.

<sup>26</sup> In one of the western rooms of the “villa with a peristyle”, a collective find of a marble and two porphyry sculptures was found, which were hidden in that location after the demolition of the villa. Јовановић 1975, 59, Т. XIII, сл. 17; Петровић 1976, 67, Сл. 28; Срејовић, Цермановић-Кузмановић 1987а, 146, kat. 64; Томовић 1992, 67–69, cat. 96; Срејовић 1993, kat. 85; Петровић 1994, 37, сл. 23.

<sup>27</sup> Anđelković Grašar 2020, 177; Popović 2006, 84;

<sup>28</sup> Поповић 2013, 181



Fig. 3. *Tabula ansata* with relief representation of Victoria, from Viminacium (Source: <http://lupa.at/28645?query=1896210798>)

Сл. 3. *Tabula ansata* са њрегсѿавом Викѿорије из Виминацијума (извор: <http://lupa.at/28645?query=1896210798>)

Fig. 2. *Statue of Victoria*, from Viminacium (Source: <http://lupa.at/29725>)

Сл. 2. Сѿаѿѿа Викѿорије из Виминацијума (извор: <http://lupa.at/29725>)

Judging by the so-far known Central Balkan presentations of the goddess Victoria, it seems that this particular iconographic type was quite popular in Roman provinces in the mentioned territory. The goddess is presented in finds known from Singidunum, Margum, Viminacium and Felix Romuliana – with the most numerous presentations discovered in Moesia Superior’s capital – Viminacium, where a fragmented torso of the goddess, a *tabula ansata* with Victoria’s image and a votive icon with the deity’s representation were found. A fragmented limestone torso of the goddess Victoria is, unfortunately, missing the goddess’ head, hands and feet, yet it is well enough preserved that a certain identification of the winged divinity can be made (Fig. 2). The divinity is presented dressed in a long, richly folded himation belted under her chest, with large wings that extend to the full height of the statue, and summarily modelled feathers.<sup>29</sup> Although the goddess’ head is missing along with her hands and attrib-

utes, based on other known statues it can be presumed that she was shown with a palm branch in her left hand and a wreath in her raised right hand, while standing on a globe or a sphere. Ichnographically, the statue of Victoria from Styberra is very similar to the statue from Viminacium, particularly in the context of the himation and the modelling of the wings,<sup>30</sup> while stylistically, judging by the linear shaping of the goddess’ figure, it can be presumed that the statue from Viminacium was probably made in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. A marble *tabula ansata* with a relief presentation of the goddess

<sup>29</sup> The statue’s preserved height is 0.67 m, it was discovered in the site Kostolac, and is now in the National Museum in Požarevac, <http://lupa.at/29725>

<sup>30</sup> The statue (height 38.5 cm) was discovered during archaeological excavations in 2008 in the locality of Styberra, and is now kept in the Heritage Institute and Museum in Prilep (inv. no. 2008/5), <http://lupa.at/28645?query=1896210798>.

Victoria was also discovered in Kostolac, near the southern rampart of the military camp of Viminacium (known by the toponym the “Kapija”), unfortunately in quite a fragmented state with some parts missing (Fig. 3).<sup>31</sup> The deity is presented walking, dressed in a *tunica paliolata*, which does not cover her right arm and breast, richly plaited and flowing around the goddess’ body. Victoria’s face is very carefully modelled with almond eyes and a small nose and mouth, with wavy hair divided in the middle and gathered into a bun. Her wings are plastically emphasised like fish scales in the upper part. The wings terminate at the level of the goddess’ waist. In her right hand, Victoria is holding a palm branch, while in her raised left hand she probably held a now lost wreath. The epigraphic field in the form of *tabula ansata* has only a part of the preserved inscription, which was reconstructed as: *Im(p(erator)...co[ll(onia)?*<sup>32</sup> In the triangular field of the *tabula*, there is an image of Medusa’s head, above the field an eagle with stretched wings is presented, while under the field a motif of a rosette can be seen. The modelling of the relief implies very careful and skilful work, certainly made in the period when Viminacium had already become a colony, after 239. The image of Victoria presented as the goddess in the moment of crowning relates to her close connection with Roman emperors and the State, in this case, however, to the emperor (and his triumph, implied with the image of an eagle) to whom the inscription was dedicated, possibly Gordian III. In that context, the coinage from Viminacium’s mints could help since several uncusomary series have the image of Victoria crowning Gordian III on their reverses.<sup>33</sup> S. Dušanić thinks that these types of coins relate to Gordian’s triumph over the Sassanids, who he defeated in 243 at the battle of Resaena.<sup>34</sup> B. Borić-Brešković, however, does not think that the presentations on Viminacium coinage reverses are related directly to Gordian’s triumph over the Sassanids, but are connected to the stay of Gordian’s father-in-law, the praetorian prefect Timesitheus, in Moesia in 242 and his efforts to gather an army from Moesia.<sup>35</sup> D. Spasić Đurić believes that the relief from Viminacium was made to commemorate Gordian’s victory at the battle of Resaena.<sup>36</sup> Whatever the reason for the making of the Viminacium triumphal relief dedicated to the Roman emperor might have been, it was an impressive dedication, whose reconstruction of over 2.4 m in length and 0.7 m in height implies its placement on some monumental architectural construction, like one of the military camp’s gates

or triumphal arches.<sup>37</sup> Ichnographically, the Victoria relief from Viminacium bears a great similarity to the stone relief of the divinity discovered in Ephesus<sup>38</sup> and, to a certain extent, to a marble relief from Rome (now in the NY Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen),<sup>39</sup> while stylistically it resembles the Victoria image from the Solin relief.<sup>40</sup> but the richly plaited dress swirling around the goddess’ body, the palm branch and the wings show a certain linearity and, thus, imply a dating for the relief to the last decades of the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

The limestone votive icon with the goddess’ representation from Viminacium (Fig. 4) presents a quality local work, which is unfortunately in a poor state, with most of the iconographic details erased due to advanced calcification. The rectangular icon with an arc-shaped top is missing a part of its upper right angle and lower part of the right lateral frame.<sup>41</sup> The figure of Victoria is chiselled in deep relief and the goddess is presented walking to the right, dressed in a long himation flowing

<sup>31</sup> In 1981, in the locality of Kapija – Mali čair, near the southern rampart of the military camp Viminacium, a fragmented *tabula ansata* was discovered with a relief presentation of the goddess Victoria. Some of the relief’s parts are lost and the dimensions of the preserved object are 1.00 x 0.60 x 0.20 m. The relief is now kept in the National Museum in Požarevac, inv. no. 2243 (02/2551), Спасић Ђурић 2011, 277.

<sup>32</sup> *IMS* II, 106, no. 65.

<sup>33</sup> Душанић 1961, 145–146, no. 6; Борић-Брешковић 1986, 136–137.

<sup>34</sup> Душанић 1961, 146.

<sup>35</sup> Борић-Брешковић 1986, 158–162.

<sup>36</sup> Спасић Ђурић 2011, 286.

<sup>37</sup> Спасић Ђурић 2015, 43, 44, fig. 47–48 (reconstruction of Victoria relief from Viminacium)

<sup>38</sup> The marble relief of Nike/Victoria was placed on one of the spandrels of the arch over the “Herakles Gate” on Kuretes Street in Ephesus. Although the relief probably dates from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, it was built on the gate in a later period, in the 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century, when it was erected by the Proconsul Flavius Const(antius), and, thus, constituted the frame for the display of imperial authority. Bammer 1976/77, 93–126; Töpfer 2015, 7, fig. 4.

<sup>39</sup> Vollkommer 1997, 255, no. 234.

<sup>40</sup> The relief from Solin, Salona (now in the Archaeological Museum in Split) shows Victoria crowning an emperor who is riding to the right, with a winged griffin beside the horse. The god Mars is also presented on the right side, along with a running youth (prisoner) and a male figure, <http://lupa.at/25025?query=851617666>

<sup>41</sup> The votive icon (dim: height 42 cm, width 28 cm in lower part and 22 cm in upper part of the icon, thickness 12–15 cm) with the Victoria representation was accidentally discovered in the locality of Čair, Kostolac (Viminacium), and is now held in the National Museum of Požarevac (inv. no. 720), Томовић 1989–1990, 109.





*Fig 4. Votive icon with representation of Victoria, from Viminacium*  
(Source: <http://lupa.at/25025?query=851617666>)

Сл. 4. Војивна икона са њредсѡавом Викѡорије из Виминаѡијума  
(извор: <http://lupa.at/25025?query=851617666>)

around her legs. The barely visible half-stretched wings can be noticed on the deity's back. Unfortunately, all of Victoria's facial details are quite unrecognisable, although her wavy hair can be still observed. In her half-raised right hand, Victoria is holding a large wreath, while her left arm is placed next to her body. Although the deity is not standing with one foot on a globe, as in the votive icon from Mediana, this iconographic type of walking Victoria represents a sub-type that was also very popular in Roman art. The closest iconographic analogy representing the image of Victoria comes from a relief discovered in Sisak (Siscia)<sup>42</sup> Certain details, like the goddess' flowing dress and the skilfulness with which it is modelled, imply a talented local artisan, who made the votive icon most probably from limestone from one of the quarries in the vicinity of Viminacium. Additionally, the linearity present in the modelling of the goddess' body and dress clearly imply the period from the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century as the time span in which the icon was made.

In this context, porphyry fragments of wings, feet and hands, found in Felix Romuliana–Gamzigrad, most likely belong to the goddess Victoria crowning Emper-

or Galerius (Fig. 5)<sup>43</sup> or perhaps crowning two Augusti – Galerius with Severus or with Licinius, as in coins minted in 293 in Cyzicus and Antioch.<sup>44</sup> Also originating from Gamzigrad is a small pilaster with a representation of Victoria that belonged to the facade of the eastern, main gate of Felix Romuliana (Fig. 6).<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> The relief of Victoria was discovered in Sisak (now in the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, inv. no. 107). Under the image of the goddess, a fragmented inscription is present *Ti(berius) Claudius [---]* <http://lupa.at/22782?query=2075730329>

<sup>43</sup> Живић 2010, 123, сл. 81, 82.

<sup>44</sup> Поповић 2017, 76.

<sup>45</sup> The pilaster (dim. height 0.48, width 0.35 m) was found in 1986, on a façade of the eastern gate of the younger fortification in Felix Romuliana, Gamzigrad (now in the National Museum in Zaječar, inv. no. Г/1456). Only the middle part of the pilaster is preserved, with decoration on the front and lateral sides. The goddess Victoria is presented on the front side under two standing figures, with outstretched wings and a laurel wreath in her right hand. M. Živić presumes that the two standing figures represent the Augusti or Caesars from the period of the second tetrarchy and that Victoria holding a laurel wreath is an allusion to Galerius' triumph over the Persians, celebrated in Rome in 303, Живић 2015, 475, no. 4, T. LXXVII.



Fig. 5. Possible reconstruction of a portrait of Emperor Galerius crowned by Victoria, from Felix Romuliana, Gamzigrad (After: Popović 2017, 76)

Fig. 6. Pilaster with a representation of Victoria, from Felix Romuliana, Gamzigrad (After: Живић 2015, Т. LXXVII)

Сл. 5. Могућа реконструкција портрета цара Галерија, која крунише Викторија из Феликс Ромулијане, Гамзиград (према: Поповић 2017, 76)

Сл. 6. Пиластер са представом Викторије из Феликс Ромулијане, Гамзиград (према: Живић 2015, Т. LXXVII)

On the front side of the pilaster, parts of two standing figures are visible, possibly rulers (Augusti and Caesars of the second tetrarchy), below whom is represented Victoria with spread wings, with a laurel wreath in her right hand. This could be interpreted as an allusion to Galerius' great triumph over the Persians, celebrated in 303 in Rome.<sup>46</sup> The scene in which Victoria crowns the ruler or overhangs the globe in the emperor's hand, remained common on the reverse of the coins of the Roman and Byzantine emperors.<sup>47</sup> Of course, Victoria appears in other Galerius monuments (as previously on Diocletian's too), such as on the panel relief on the west face of the south pier of the Arch of Galerius in Thessalonica, carrying the same message of the military

strength and success behind the Roman emperor and Roman state.<sup>48</sup>

There are only three bronze finds that present the goddess Victoria – two statuette-appliques from Kostolac (Viminacium) and Dubravica (Margum) and one applique from Belgrade (Singidunum). Both statuette-appliques belong to the iconographic type of the winged Victoria standing on a globe – the statuette-applique

<sup>46</sup> Живић 2010, 110, сл. 64 а, б.

<sup>47</sup> Васић 1981, 135–140; Јанковић Михалчић 2004, cat. 296, 297; Поповић 2001, cat. 67, 67а.

<sup>48</sup> Rees 1993, 182.



Fig. 7. Bronze statuette-applique of Victoria, from Viminacium (After: Величковић 1972, fig. 88)

Fig. 8. Bronze statuette-applique of Victoria, from Dubravica, Margum (After: Величковић 1972, fig. 89 a–b)

Fig. 9. Bronze statuette-applique of Victoria, from Belgrade, Singidunum  
(After: *Antička bronza Singidunuma* 1997, fig. 51)

Сл. 7. Бронзана сивајуа-апликација Викторије из Виминацијума (према: Величковић 1972, fig. 88)

Сл. 8. Бронзана сивајуа-апликација Викторије из Дубравице, Марјум (према: Величковић 1972, fig. 89 a–b)

Сл. 9. Бронзана сивајуа-апликација Викторије из Београда, Сингидунум  
(према: *Antička bronza Singidunuma* 1997, fig. 51)

of Victoria from Kostolac has both arms out-stretched with both hands missing, as are the attributes the goddess held, most probably a palm branch and a wreath (Fig. 7).<sup>49</sup> The deity is dressed in a long flowing chiton quite basically modelled, as is the goddess herself, and it bears certain similarities to a bronze applique from Boston.<sup>50</sup> However, the statuette-applique from Kostolac is a provincial work, which can be dated into the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. More skilful work is presented in the statuette-applique from Dubravica (Margum), where Victoria is presented standing on a globe, dressed in a chiton with a himation, with an *aegis* on her chest (Fig. 8).<sup>51</sup> The goddess' wavy hair is divided in the middle and gathered into a low bun on her neck, while the front part of her hair is fashioned into a diadem like ornament. Her facial details are emphasised by incision and punctuation, as are the rich folds of her chiton. The unfurled wings on the divinity's back are decorated with lines that imitate bird feathers, while in her out-stretched hands she holds an oversized garland deco-

rated with lines and dots, which also ornament the quadrant base on which the figure is placed. As on the statuette-applique from Kostolac, on the figurine from Dubravica the presence of a ring-shaped quoit and an iron peg imply that they were used as decorative elements of furniture, army equipment, or a wagon (?).<sup>52</sup> The third bronze find in the shape of Victoria from Belgrade (Singidunum) represents a very interesting applique that shows the goddess *en face*, standing dressed in a long tunic (*talaris tunica*), over which a short shift

<sup>49</sup> The bronze statuette-applique of goddess Victoria from Kostolac, Viminacium is quite badly preserved, height 5.9 cm, now placed in the National Museum of Serbia, Величковић 1972, 59, no. 88, fig. 88.

<sup>50</sup> Moustaka, Goulaki-Voutira, Grote 1992, 886, no. 483.

<sup>51</sup> The bronze statuette-applique from Dubravica (Margum) represents an accidental find from 1948. year, height 9.3 cm, now placed in the National Museum of Serbia, Ibid, no. 89 a–b, fig. 89 a–b.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

(*colobium*) is placed (Fig. 9).<sup>53</sup> The divinity's hair is divided in the middle with wavy hair gathered into a low bun, while on her face, large round eyes dominate with a small nose and mouth. On her back, large unfurled wings with linearly incised plumes are presented, with one part of the right wing missing. Above her head, in her raised hands, Victoria is holding a clypeus or disc with an inscription in three lines:

CAIS  
SACE  
RD

On the deity's nose and belly, there is a quadrant hole for fixing the applique on a clamp, a piece of furniture, a cult object, etc.<sup>54</sup> The possibility that this applique was part of some cult object is emphasised by the presence of the inscription, which could be reconstructed as CA(esar)IS SACERD(os), the priestess of Caesar. Although the iconography of the Singidunum applique makes it currently unique in the territory of the Central Balkan provinces, the presentation of Victoria with a clypeus is analogous to the image of the goddess holding a shield, from a fragmented relief discovered in Augst (Augusta Rauricorum),<sup>55</sup> while its stylistic characteristics underline its provincial origin towards the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> or the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

As the symbol of victory, strength and triumph, the Roman goddess Victoria has, as a predecessor, the Greek goddess Nike, whose name is first mentioned by Hesiod, as the name of the daughter of Styx and the giant Pallas.<sup>56</sup> Her iconography was similar to the iconography of some other goddesses (like the goddess Eris who was a deity of strife and discord, but also as Nike was a mediator between gods and human beings) because of her quite impersonal appearance – she was presented with wings and a *kerykeion*, a “messenger's” staff, a characteristic attribute of the god Hermes/Mercury.<sup>57</sup> However, from this period originates the first sculpture that shows Nike at the same time running and flying, known as Nike of Archermos.<sup>58</sup> In literature from the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Nike is related to success in gymnastic and musical contests and, as such, started appearing on the coins of various cities like Ellis, Camarina, Catana, Gela, Himera, Leontini, etc. A particular “syncretism” that announced the true later role of Nike and, afterwards, the goddess Victoria, appeared in Athens in the shape of Athena Nike, the warlike goddess, whose cult was introduced to the Acropolis

at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., with the goddess' shrine reconstructed after the Persian wars and, during Perikle's reign, a temple was dedicated on the Acropolis.<sup>59</sup> From the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the iconography of Nike became standardised – she is depicted sacrificing at an altar, erecting or crowning a *Tropaion*<sup>60</sup> or crowning kings with a triumphal wreath. The goddess clearly symbolised victory, whether political or military, presenting the divine support of the ruler and the state. The cult of Nike as an independent goddess can be traced from the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>61</sup> and during the Hellenistic period, particularly in visual imagery of Alexander the Great and, later, the Diadochi; she was the key element and a guarantee of victory, on which they constituted a legal and real claim to their rule over the Persian empire.<sup>62</sup> In the Hellenistic period, the goddess of victory was not only praised by

<sup>53</sup> The bronze applique from Belgrade (Singidunum), height 9.4 cm, width 5.3 cm, now held in the National Museum of Serbia (inv. no. 2725/III), Ibid 1972; 178, no. 116, fig. 116; *Antička bronza Singidunuma* 1997, 70, no. 51, fig. 51.

<sup>54</sup> Величковић 1972, 79.

<sup>55</sup> Several relief fragments were discovered before 1847 in the *Castrum Rauracense* and in 1928 at the north exit of the main forum of the locality of *Augusta Rauricorum* (now held in the Roman Museum in Augst, inv. no. 1905.2352, 1928.704-705, 1928.731-732. On the fragmented relief presenting Victoria, the goddess is standing on a globe holding a clypeus, with both raised hands (there is a human bust in the centre of the clypeus), <http://lupa.at/8040?query=851617666>

<sup>56</sup> Hesiod, Theog. 384.

<sup>57</sup> Töpfer 2015, 2.

<sup>58</sup> The statue of Nike running and flying at the same time was sculpted by Archermos and was presumably dedicated to the god Apollon on Delos before the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> The shrine of Athena Nike on the Acropolis was destroyed by the Persians, but reconstructed by the Athenians, who were thankful to the goddess for bestowing them with victory in the battlefield. The goddess' temple built during Perikle's reign may have honoured the battle of Plataea, Hall 2003, 129.

<sup>60</sup> Töpfer 2015, 3.

<sup>61</sup> Nike was associated with different deities, such as Poseidon and Herakles, but most importantly with Zeus and Athena. At Olympia, Zeus was the deity who provided victory, while Nike awarded the prize. The deities had a common altar at Olympia, and the close connection between them, introduced by Hesiod, can be observed in Pheidias' Nikephoros Zeus, who bore Nike in his hand. In later times, Nike was considered Zeus' daughter, Sikes 1895, 282; Fears 1981, 772.

<sup>62</sup> After the battle of Issus in 333, Alexander the Great was represented on decadrachms crowned by Nike. A similar message is repeated on the reverse of tetradrachms struck after Ipsus, where Nike crowns the name of Lysimachus with the wreath of triumph or where the goddess crowns a trophy, Fears 1981, 765–766, 770.

rulers, but also citizens/individuals – one of the most famous monuments dedicated to Nike was the sculpture of Nike of Samothrace, once located in the sanctuary of the Great Gods of Samothrace. The usual opinion was that the statue was dedicated by Rhodians to the divinity to commemorate their naval victory, most probably over the Seleucids.<sup>63</sup> However, new information about the sculpture and its base was provided after a conservation campaign that led to a new installation in the Louvre Museum in 2013–2014, as well as continuous research and excavations, which raised the suggestion that the statue was placed within a *naiskos* located at the highest point of the theatre.<sup>64</sup> The idea that the fragmentary inscription, associated with a small statue base of Lartian marble, originally attributed to Nike's pedestal and associated with the sculptor's signature, in contemporary research has been completely abandoned, based on its small size and position that rather indicates the donor's name. This means that the origin of Nike's sculptor remained unknown, while in stylistic analyses it can be associated with the Gigantomachy of the Great Altar of Pergamon and the chronological frame of the second quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. In terms of its dedication it could even be considered one of the earliest Roman monuments on Greek soil, considering the possibility of its private donation.<sup>65</sup>

In republican Italy, the image of Victoria appeared first from the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. onwards in coins from 24 Italian cities and communities, directly related to the coinage struck in Greek cities.<sup>66</sup> Later, in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries B.C., the deity's image appeared on mirrors and *cistae* from Preneste, presenting her rather as a personification than a goddess, unlike in two dedications from Trasacco (*vicus Supinum*) from the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., which could testify to the existence of Victoria's temple.<sup>67</sup> The goddess' official introduction to Rome took place in 294 B.C., when Lucius Postumius Megellus built and dedicated a temple to the divinity on Palatine Hill.<sup>68</sup> A hundred years later, once again on Palatine Hill, a second, rather small, temple to Victoria Virgo was built by Marcus Porcius Cato, who celebrated his triumph in Spain.<sup>69</sup> Besides Mars and Venus, Victoria was the only deity to whom Sulla erected a dedication celebrating his victory in the battle at Chaeronea in 86 B.C. Later, in 82. B.C. he introduced *ludi Victoriae*, celebrated from 26<sup>th</sup> October to 1<sup>st</sup> November, while in 45 B.C. in honour of Victoria Caesaris, Caesar instituted *ludi Victoriae*, which took place from 20<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> July.<sup>70</sup> The divinity actually had several annual religious festivals, with the most impor-

tant one taking place on 1<sup>st</sup> August, when a white cow was sacrificed to Victoria and when the goddess' devotees prayed to her in the hope that she would provide a victory for the Romans in the battlefield, ensure religious efficiency and protect and guard Roman domination in the conquered territories.<sup>71</sup> As was already mentioned earlier, after Augustus' victory at Actium in 31 B.C., Victoria's statue from Tarentum was placed on an altar in the Roman senate and in Augustan imperial propaganda the goddess as *Victoria Augusta* had a prominent place – on coinage, in literature, in art, etc., making the deity the personal agent of *Divus Augustus*.<sup>72</sup> Images on coinage confirm that Claudius and Nero continued the production of coins with the legend *Victoria Augusti*, alluding to Augustus, as did later emperors, and by the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century the goddess Victoria became *Victoria Romana* – the closest and most powerful protectress of the Roman emperor, the empire and the Roman people. Consequently, her cult spread and gained popularity through all provinces, being particularly favoured among the army, which is

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<sup>63</sup> Nike of Samothrace is a free-standing statue whose base is in the shape of a warship's prow, while the goddess is presented as though she has just landed on the ship, with her himation flowing in the wind. According to H. Thiersch who, in 1931, restored the inscription written on a small fragment discovered near the statue, the name of the sculptor was identified as "Pythokritos son of Timocharis of Rhodes", which dated the sculpture into the period from approx. 210 to 165 B.C. It was believed that the sculpture of Nike was probably placed at the southern end of the portico terrace of the sanctuary of the Great Gods of Samothrace, after the victory, thus, overlooking over the whole sanctuary. Different parts of the sculpture have been discovered over the years in excavation campaigns from 1863 to 1875, being reconstructed and placed in the Louvre Museum, Paris, Pollitt 1986, 113–116.

<sup>64</sup> Palagia 2021, 149–157.

<sup>65</sup> Palagia 2021, 163–169.

<sup>66</sup> Miano 2016, 115.

<sup>67</sup> In earlier literature it has been suggested that the cult of Victoria was introduced from Rome to Trasacco (*vicus Supinum*), but D. Miano doubts that the goddess was perceived as a Roman divinity in *vicus Supinum*, Ibid, 119.

<sup>68</sup> Livy writes that consul L. Postumius Megellus built a temple to Victoria from collected fines, before he went to war in Samnium, Livy X, 33.9.

<sup>69</sup> The second temple built for Victoria Virgo by Marcus Porcius Cato in 193 was situated only a few metres to the west of the first temple of Victoria. The deity was probably presented as an enthroned Roman Matron, holding a palm branch in her left and a patera in her right hand, Konrads 2016, 130.

<sup>70</sup> Miano 2016, 114.

<sup>71</sup> Konrads 2016, 132.

<sup>72</sup> Ramage 2000, 181–182; Norena 2011, 161.

attested by a large number of votive inscriptions, offerings made by soldiers and military equipment,<sup>73</sup> but also among the Romanised population outside Rome. In the context of the army, the high level of popularity of Victoria's symbolism as the goddess of triumph, particularly military triumph, can be observed in the appearance of her image in the iconography of two military cults *par excellence* – Jupiter Dolichenus and Mithras.<sup>74</sup> In the iconography of Jupiter Dolichenus, the goddess Victoria is frequently shown (sometimes standing on a globe and with a palm branch in one hand) holding a crown either towards the god or over his head.<sup>75</sup> The goddess is mainly shown in votive plates, in the shape of a statuette on the top of triangular votive plates or in the iconography presented on the triangular votive plates of Jupiter Dolichenus, whether the context of the objects is military or civilian. However, her role is more that of a messenger of Jupiter Dolichenus than a goddess, which is supported by the fact that there is no mention of Victoria in a divine context in any currently known votive dedication to Jupiter Dolichenus. In the cult of the god Mithras, the role of the goddess Victoria is somewhat more complex: as D. Boschung states, it was probably the use of the motif of the goddess Victoria killing the bull in the Augustan period (originating from the motif of Athena Nike killing a bull from the parapet of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. goddess' temple on the Acropolis in Athens),<sup>76</sup> that was, in a way, transferred in the iconography of the Mithras cult.<sup>77</sup> However, the image of a flying Victoria on a globe with a crown on votive monuments and reliefs associated with the god Mithras should be understood as primarily the emperor's victory, the deity who secures the success of Roman rulers and who is, thus, closely related to the Roman ruler.<sup>78</sup>

In Christianity, representations of the goddess Victoria remained important, bearing in mind their important symbolic significance, which could not have been abandoned so easily.<sup>79</sup> Constantine the Great placed two figures of the goddess Victoria on his Arch in Rome to commemorate the victory at the Battle of Milvian Bridge, which was a civil war but was, afterwards, treated very symbolically as a result of the vision he had that led him to become a Christian (Fig. 10).<sup>80</sup> Besides the recognisable iconography, naturally clear Christian symbols were also added. On coins of Constantine the Great, the goddess Victoria is represented, signifying the ruler of the entire Roman Empire, pagans as well as Christians, the victor of all enemies

and rivals.<sup>81</sup> In that context, a gold solidus minted in Thessalonica depicting Victoria holding a *tropaeum*, which was of course a clear Roman trophy, reminded Christians of the Cross of Christ and the ultimate victory of their God.<sup>82</sup> The long cross in Victoria's hands entered common iconography from 420, and it became recognisable on solidi minted in the East, while from the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the goddess was shown with a cross,<sup>83</sup> a shield or a wreath and an orb with a cross – *Globus cruciger*.<sup>84</sup> This kind of image of Victoria soon became iconographically recognisable, symbolically well-defined and, thus, often schematically rendered, which led to its duplication on other objects. On an ingot made on the occasion of the celebration of the triumph of Constantius II in Sirmium in 358, after the victory over the Sarmatians in Pannonia and Upper Moesia, in front of the inscription POLIGERNAISIPI, in a circular seal, there is a standing figure of the goddess Victoria, who holds a laurel wreath in each of her

<sup>73</sup> The goddess Victoria was presented on military artefacts like, for instance, breastplates, among other *dii militares* like Mars, Minerva, Hercules, etc. The finds of breastplates from Apulum, Carnuntum, the Rhine area, and Barbaricum (in the vicinity of Orgovany in Hungary) all bear representations of Victoria (either her full figure or bust), Gui, Timofan, Dana, Anghel, Suteu 2020, 222–223.

<sup>74</sup> The image of the goddess Victoria also appears on votive icons of the Danubian Riders, depicted behind the Riders, crowning them. However, since the cult of the Danubian Riders presents a syncretistic cult mainly spread in the Danubian provinces in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, which borrowed many elements from the iconography of different deities, it can be presumed that Victoria's image symbolises the idea of victory, personification and not the goddess herself.

<sup>75</sup> Speidel 1978, 43.

<sup>76</sup> Kunisch 1964, 83f; Smith 1886, 275 etc.

<sup>77</sup> Vermaseren 1950, 154; Cumont 1956, 222; Adrych et al. 2017, 25; The motif of goddess Victoria killing the bull was shown in the coins from the Augustan period, marking emperor's success in Armenia. In later period (around 100. year A. D.), the scene was presented in friezes from the Imperial palace on the Palatine and the Basilica Ulpia, but also in sepulchral art, Boschung 2021, 138.

<sup>78</sup> A. Mastrocinque rightly observes that many dedications on votive monuments to the god Mithras are made for the victory and well-being of the Roman emperors, while an altar discovered in the Mithraeum at Mühlal am Inn (*statio Enensis*) is dedicated to the Victoria of the Roman emperors, Mastrocinque 2017, 68–69.

<sup>79</sup> Grierson 1999, 31–32.

<sup>80</sup> Varner 2014, 48–77; Sande 2012, 277–290.

<sup>81</sup> Borić-Brešković, Vojvoda 2013, 218–233;

<sup>82</sup> RIC VII, no. 174.

<sup>83</sup> Gold solidus minted under Theodosius; Kent 1994, no. 219.

<sup>84</sup> Grierson 1999, 6–7, 33. Some of the examples in: Мано-Зиси 1954–1955, 167; Црноглавац 2004, кат. 303, 304, 305; Kondić 1984, 179–188.



Fig. 10. Reliefs of Victoria, from Constantine's arch, Rome  
(Source: Parco Archeologico del Colosseo, with the permission of the Italian Ministry of Culture / Su concessione del Ministero della Cultura – Parco Archeologico del Colosseo)

Сл. 10. Рељефи Викторија са Констинијиновој славоука, Рим  
(извор: Археолошки парк Колосеум, уз дозволу Министарства културе Италије / Su concessione del Ministero della Cultura – Parco Archeologico del Colosseo)

raised hands, below which war trophies are located.<sup>85</sup> The standing figure of the goddess, frontally represented with her head turned to the left and a laurel wreath in each of her hands, was common as a reverse depiction on coins at the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> century, as well as on imperial lead seals of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>86</sup>

Victoria's standing figure, known from coinage, was also present as the decoration of gems in rings, and here she could be represented with a wreath, an olive or a palm branch. The palm motif is itself associated with the spiritual and physical rise and victory, while in Christianity it symbolises triumph over death and martyrdom, while the olive is a symbol of longevity and union with God, olive wreaths, known as *Corona Natalitia*, were hung on the doors of porticoes of Greek and Roman houses where a child had been born.<sup>87</sup> The combination and variation of the combined symbolism

of motifs and the goddess image in such cases is associated with a more private signification and cult meaning, maybe similar to the imitation of empress coin images for the decoration of cameos on various jewelry types.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Петровић 1976, 132, сл. 55; Дрча 1993, 16, бр. 2, сл. 4; Дрча 2004, кат. 197.

<sup>86</sup> Stepanova 2010, 15–24; From the collection of the National Museum in Belgrade there are three lead seals. on the obverse of the first one, Emperor Justinian is shown, while on the other two there are busts of the emperor and possibly the empress. Stamenković, Ivanišević 2013, 239–252, кат. 11–13; Гај-Поповић 1980, 165–168.

<sup>87</sup> Rogić et al. 2012, 346, 348–349.

<sup>88</sup> Anđelković Grašar 2020, 61–71; Дрча 2004, кат. 140; Поповић 2001, кат. 10.

### Conclusion

Fragments of the marble relief with the representation of Nike/Victoria from Mediana, presumably made between the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, discovered in the layer belonging to the second building phase of the *thermae* between 330–378, inspired the authors to search deeper into the significance of this motif in the period of Late Antiquity. Firstly, it should be expected that at a palace, such as Constantine's villa at Mediana, this marble relief, whose primary function was perhaps a votive one, was used/re-used with a purely decorative function, bearing in mind the tendency of Constantine's heirs towards cultural identity and continuity.<sup>89</sup> Late antique pagan art was a testimony to the tradition of ancient culture and expression of *paideia* and was later Christianised, mostly according to its symbolical meaning and powerful messages, of which people of high social status were very much aware.<sup>90</sup> Another important thing that was discussed is the context of the imperial residential complex, which allowed various associations between Mediana and another imperial palace, Felix Romuliana, or Moesia Superior's capital Viminacium, which was important for military and political affairs. Related to Victoria's importance in the imperial ideology, this paper intended to discuss Victoria's identity, as a personification or a goddess, and whether her cult was imported from Hellenistic monarchies or if she was a Roman deity.<sup>91</sup> In both cases she represented a medium mediator and visual testimony of triumph and power. From the republican era, the cult of the goddess Victoria spread rapidly from Italy and was most often associated with the celebration of military victories, or certain military commanders or emperors, particularly emphasised in coronation scenes.<sup>92</sup> *Victoria Caesaris*, later known as *Victoria Augusti*, was the most important ideological aspect of victory under a single ruler, although Venus was also the victorious goddess (as *Venus Victrix*), but she did not have the kind of the personal significance and attachment to the emperor as Victoria did.<sup>93</sup> Bearing in mind the importance of the Central Balkan provinces during Late Antiquity, the number of Roman emperors originating from this region and their significant building activities, it would be reasonable to expect these kinds of associations and search for the importance of Victoria's symbolism and meaning in this period. Before, the altar was venerated, but with the growing popularity of Christianity various threats arose in the period mentioned here, most notably the law in 408 prohibit-

ing heathen statues, which finally resulted in its removal from its original location.<sup>94</sup> In practice, many pagan deities remained popular even until the 6<sup>th</sup> century. As a common representation on coins in a long tradition from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., Victoria's image remained on the reverse side of imperial coinage until the early Byzantine era,<sup>95</sup> when she appeared for the last time on coins of Heraclius, after his victory over the Persians in 629.<sup>96</sup> The celebration of triumph, in the early Byzantium period, received a new form on Honorius' gold coins, when the goddess Victoria was replaced by the motif of God's hand – *Manus Dei*, which descends from heaven and crowns the emperor with a laurel wreath.<sup>97</sup> The combination of these two motifs – Victoria and *Manus Dei*, appears on the reverse side of a solidus of Galla Placidia, daughter of Theodosius I, minted in Aquileia in 425, from the National Museum in Niš.<sup>98</sup>

The popularity and frequency of the Victoria representations is certainly related to the imperial cult and tools in the service of its propaganda, and even in Christian art the presence of this pagan goddess could be associated with troubles inside and outside the empire and political insecurity in Late Antiquity. These political crises constantly raised doubts about the triumph of the emperor, who, in situations when he was unable to respond otherwise positively to the challenges, could do so by guaranteeing the security and victory of the state through the use of one motif and its centuries-old symbolic heritage.<sup>99</sup> The Christianisation of the image of the goddess Victoria on coins was completed by her transformation to an angel, who, during the Middle Ages, continued to represent a mediator in the coronation of the God-given power of rulers.<sup>100</sup> In terms of the function and protection of the

<sup>89</sup> Поповић 2013, 181.

<sup>90</sup> Saradi 1997, 402.

<sup>91</sup> Miano 2016, 109–124.

<sup>92</sup> Fishwick 1993, 113–117.

<sup>93</sup> Fishwick 1993, 115.

<sup>94</sup> It is not known whether the removal of the Altar of Victory from the Roman Senate included the Statue of Victory, Sheridan 1966, 186–206.

<sup>95</sup> Weinstock 1971, 92.

<sup>96</sup> Grierson 1999, 6, 32–33; Анђелковић et al. 2013, 388.

<sup>97</sup> Doyle 2015, 169.

<sup>98</sup> Јанковић Михалцић 2004, кат. 300.

<sup>99</sup> Doyle 2015, 170–171.

<sup>100</sup> Pohlsander, 1969, 597.



ruler, the emperor/empress and the state, the Virgin Mary/Theotokos appeared as the main figure, whose attributes in this regard are known from the Akathist hymn,<sup>101</sup> and as the visual witness of the ruling legitimacy and imperial power, her image replaced that of Victoria. However, statues of the goddess Victoria remained present in the visual culture of Constantinople into the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>102</sup>

The popularity of the goddess Victoria in art and particularly its longevity during early Christianity can

be explained by its specific symbolical connotations and genuine meaning for the state in which the safety of the emperor's rule needed to be secured, even with motifs of a strong pagan heritage. It is possible that in this heritage Christians found the purpose of personification, which, unlike a true divinity, whether a god or goddess, could co-exist with Christian dogma. This is probably why any pagan deity that originated from a personification continued to be tolerated – such as Tyche, Medusa or Victoria.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Pentcheva 2010, 12–21; Peltomaa 2011, 109–116.

<sup>102</sup> Pentcheva 2010, 19–21.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Anđelković Grašar 2016, 63–72; Milovanović, Anđelković Grašar 2017, 167–182.

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## КАСНОАНТИЧКЕ ПРЕДСТАВЕ НИКЕ/ВИКТОРИЈЕ НА ПРОСТОРУ ЦЕНТРАЛНОГ БАЛКАНА

*Кључне речи.* – Нике, Викторија, вотивна икона, статуа, венац, победа, касна антика

Фрагменти мермерне вотивне иконе са представом Нике/Викторије са археолошког локалитета Медијана, на основу израде, указују на хронолошки период 2. или 3. века, иако су откривени у слоју који припада периоду између 330. и 378. године, што је и временски оквир друге фазе грађења терми. Управо овакав хронолошки контекст подстакло је ауторке овог рада да детаљније истраже значај мотива Нике/Викторије у касноантичкој римској уметности. Из тих разлога значај Медијане, као Константинове палате, разматран је у контексту коришћења или поновне употребе такве вотивне иконе од стране Константинових наследника, који су тежили наглашавању културног идентитета и династичког континуитета. У том смислу паганска уметност била је сведочанство традиције античке културе и често је могла бити хришћанизована углавном према свом симболичком значењу и снажним порукама, којих су људи високог друштвеног статуса били и те како свесни. С друге стране, важност овог палатијалног, царског комплекса везана је и за друге царске палате попут Феликс Ромулијане или пак Виминацијума као главног града Горње Мезије, чији су важност за војна и политичка дешавања посведочени мноштвом археолошког и епиграфског материјала.

Управо због оваквог значаја локалитета разматрана је улога Викторије у империјалној идеологији, те њена идентификација као персонификације или богиње. Од републиканског доба култ богиње се брзо ширио и најчешће се повезивао са прославом ратних победа, одређених војних

заповедника или царева, посебно препознатљивих у сценама крунисања. Ако се има у виду значај централнобалканских провинција током касне антике, те значајан број римских царева пореклом са ових простора и њихову важну градитељску делатност, оправдано је било истражити значење симболике Викторијиних представа у овом специфичном периоду и простору. Иако је познато да је олтар богиње Викторије у Курији Јулији био различито третиран од 357. до коначне 408. године, када је коначно затворен према закону, у пракси, као што је познато, многа паганска божанства, па и Викторија остала су популарна све до 6. века. Популарност и учесталост представљања Викторије свакако је повезана са империјалним култом и алатима у служби његове пропаганде, које је хришћанство толерисало, ако се има у виду политичка атмосфера несигурности и криза током касноантичког периода, управо са циљем отклањања било какве сумње у безбедност и победу државе. Хришћанизација мотива богиње Викторије на новцу завршена је њеним преображајем у анђела, док су се функције заштите владара и државе пренеле на Богородицу.

Популарност и дуговечност богиње Викторије у касноантичкој уметности може се објаснити искључиво због важности поруке коју је њена слика носила, односно снажне симболичке конотације у царском култу и идеологији, што је због самог њеног порекла не строго као паганске богиње, већ пре персонификације могуће допринело хришћанској толеранцији.







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ISSN 0350-0241



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