

UNPUBLISHED ANTONINIANI OF DIOCLETIAN AND MAXIMIAN VIRTVS AVGVSTORVM FROM THE MINT OF SISCIA

The new type of antoniniani for emperors Diocletian and Maximian is described. Both the obverse which depicts the facing busts of the two rulers and the reverse VIRTVS AVGVSTORVM with the new iconography are unique and unpublished in the literature. These new coins are attributed to Siscia mint and dated to beginning of the 287 AD.

Introduction

Recently on the numismatic market was offered an unpublished antoninianus with the reverse legend VIRTVS AVGVSTORVM and the joint portraits of Diocletian and Maximian on the obverse (Jacquier 38, 13 September 2013, No. 516, **Fig. 1**).¹ The appearance of such extraordinary specimen raised a suspicion of the elaborate forgery, especially since its poor state of preservation, which might be deliberately done by the forger. However, its authenticity was soon confirmed by the appearance of the second specimen superbly preserved (NAC 79, 26-27 May 2014, No. 1118, **Fig. 2**) and by the third coin, which was issued in different officinae (CNG Triton 17, 7-8 January 2014, No. 784, **Fig. 3**). Thus, within one year, three specimens of previously unrecorded type of antoniniani appeared on the market. These are unknown in the specialized numismatic literature of the period, RIC², Voetter³, Šipuš⁴ and Gricourt⁵. The facing busts of Diocletian and Maximian are unrecorded for the antoniniani during Diocletian's reign, as well as the new reverse depiction using the known VIRTVS AVGVSTORVM inscription.

Description of coins

Type A) (**Figs. 1 and 2**)

Obverse: IMPP DIOCLETIANO ET MAXIMIANO AVGG

confronted busts of Diocletian facing right (radiate, draped and cuirassed) and Maximianus facing left (radiate and cuirassed, wide wreath ties)

Reverse: VIRTVS AVGVSTORVM --//XXIB

¹ Similar recent appearance of an unknown siscian tetrarchic antoniniani was described in *Davor Margetić, PRAESIDIA REIPUBLICAE and the last emission of antoniniani in mint of Siscia, Vjesnik arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu* 2012, 45, 359-368.

² *Percy H. Webb, The Roman imperial coinage, Volume 5, Part II, Probus-Amandus 276-286*, Spink, London, 1933.

³ *Otto Voetter, Paul Gerin, Die Münzen der Römischen Kaiser, Kaiserinnen und Caesaren von Diocletianus bis Romulus 284-476. Katalog der hinterlassenen Sammlung und Aufzeichnung des Herrn Paul Gerin*, Wien, 1921.

⁴ *Nikola Šipuš, Antoninijani cara Dioklecijana i njegovih suvladara iskovani u kovnici Sisciji / Antoniniani of emperor Diocletian and his co-regents struck in Siscia mint, Numizmatičke vijesti*, 1974, 32, 31-36.

⁵ *Daniel Gricourt, Ripostiglio della Venèra, Nuovo Catalogo Illustrato, Volume IV Caro-Dioleziano, „L'Erma“ di Bretschneider, Rome, 2000.*

Jupiter standing right, wearing long cloak, holding scepter in left hand and presenting a Victory in right hand to naked Hercules standing left, holding club and lion's skin in left hand (Victory is held by Hercules)

Type B) (Fig. 3)

Similar as type A, but mintmark **XXII** in exergue and Victory is held jointly by Jupiter

These unpublished antoniniani feature the unusual facing portraits on the obverse, which might seem to imply a specially issue, usually employed for medallions more than a regular issue coins. However, the use of mintmarks **XXIB** and **XXII** on the reverse, the coin weight (4.25-4.45 g, while the broken specimen has reduced weight of 2.76 g) as well as the use of the radiate crown would seem to clearly mark it as an antoninianus intended for circulation. Only their rarity may imply the distribution to the people in the special occasion.

Specimens **1** and **2** are die-linked and were struck from the same obverse and reverse dies, and both coins have a flan crack at the same position (5h). The engraver probably comes from the officina G (where Siscia mint at that period had the best engraver). On the reverses of **1** and **2** there is the dot in the centre of coin flan which is the characteristic engraver's mark of this officina. The dot is not visible on the somehow less preserved piece **3**, on which the dot could have been removed in the cleaning process.

Mint attribution

The first question we need to answer is the mint attribution. In the auction catalogues new antoniniani were attributed to either Siscia (specimens **1** and **2**) or Rome mint (specimen **3**). The reverse legend **VIRTUS AVGVSTORVM** is known for both Diocletian and Maximianus at the Rome mint, circa AD 290 (antoniniani RIC V/II 185 and 516), as well as for Maximianus at the Siscia mint (RIC V/II 590 and 591, **Figs. 4-6**). On these antoniniani Rome mint uses short legends **IMP DIOCLETIANVS AVG** and **IMP MAXIMIANVS AVG**, while Siscia mint has long legends **IMP C M A VAL MAXIMIANVS P F AVG** and **IMP C M A VAL MAXIMIANVS P AVG**⁶. On the basis of the style, these antoniniani are unquestionably of the siscian style and fabric, thus enriching the corpus of Siscia mint. In Siscia the same reverse **VIRTUS AVGVSTORVM** (Hercules standing right, nude but for Nemean lion skin draped over left shoulder and arm, leaning with right hand on grounded club behind, bow in left) was also used for aurei (RIC 573 and 574, **Figs. 7-9**). Aureus **7** represents the first issue after the reopening of siscian mint during the first half of December 286⁷, while aureus **8** belongs to the slightly later S-IIc issue (early January 287). The closest numismatic parallel which links the new antoniniani to siscian mint is the similar

⁶ RIC 590 is erroneously described Venera specimen No. 4500 (Luigi A. Milani, *Il ripostiglio della Venèra. Monete romane della seconda metà del terzo secolo*. Salviucci, Roma 1880). An error made by Voetter No. 12, was subsequently carried out by Webb in RIC. New edition of Venera catalogue by Giard properly describes the piece No. 7672 with legend **IMP C M A VAL MAXIMIANVS P F AVG** (Figure 6).

⁷ *Andreas Alföldi*, The first Gold Issue of the Tetrarchy at Siscia, *Num. Chron.* 1929, pp. 280-284.

tetrarchic piece, bronze Abschlag⁸ of gold medallions with the obverse DIOCLETIANO ET MAXIMIANO AVGG (bust of Diocletian right with paludamentum, Maximian looking left with cuirassed bust) and the reverse CONSERVATORES AVGG //SMS (on the left Jupiter standing frontal with sceptre and thunderbolt, on the right Hercules facing with club and lion skin). Two specimens are known to exist, one is from the famous Trau collection (Trau 3371, **Fig. 10**), the other one of similar dies in a German private collection.⁹ There are similar gold medallions IOVIO ET HERCVLIO (depicting two emperors sacrificing over a tripod, above which, in the background are small figures of Jupiter and Hercules, standing side by side upon a platform, **Figs. 12 and 13**). They correspond to issues in Rome marked // SMVR and Ticinum marked // SMT. Bronze piece of this issue is also known, which is thought to be bronze Abschlag of gold medallion (**Fig. 14**). The reverse of the coin **14** has exergual mark for which Toynbee¹⁰ suggests reading SMT, but this is not certain. The only visible letter, the right, in Gricourt's opinion it is more like an S than a T, that probably reads [SM]S, thus could belong to Siscia.¹¹ These pieces **12-14** on obverse depict busts of two rulers distinctly different (laureate and draped busts).

The connection to mint of Siscia could be also found on the double antoninianus of Carus FELICITAS REIPUBLICAE (**Fig. 11**)¹², which could have been used as a model for antoniniani in question. These pieces are the only antoniniani of the period depicting two facing busts (bust of Sol facing right and Carus left) and undoubtedly struck in Siscia. Furthermore, a large bronze medallion VICTORIAE AVGVSTORVM / VOT X (Diocletian, crowned by Victory, handing a globe to Maximian, whom another Victory also crowns) exists, which was attributed by Horvat and Toynbee to Siscian mint and found at Siscia in the river Kupa (**Fig. 15**) is an additional example of Siscia mint featuring the confronted busts of Diocletian and Maximian.

Portraiture

A survey of the coinage of the tetrarchy suggests that the facing busts of Diocletian and Maximian are solely reserved to the special issues in gold or large medallions. Here, a variation of portraiture could be distinguished. On the IOVIO ET HERCVLIO specimens **12-14** as well as on the MONETA AVGG bronze medallion (**Fig. 16**) both juxtaposed busts are laureate, cuirassed and draped. The largest number of medallions presents two rulers by laureate half-figure busts facing each other, wearing consular robes and holding eagle-tipped scepters (**Figs. 15, 17-19**). Similarly, on the Arras gold

⁸ Abschlag = off-strike, restrike from an original die. The later impression frequently occurs in an entirely different metal. Albert R. Frey, *A dictionary of numismatic names, their official and popular designations*, American numismatic society, New York, 1917. The exact role of bronze abschlags is dubious, they are either special issues for ceremonial occasions or trial strikes. *Cathy E. King*, *Denarii and quinarii, AD 253-295*, in *Robert A. G. Carson, Colin M. Kraay*, *Scripta Nummaria Romana, Essays Presented to Humphrey Sutherland*, Spink, London 1978, 75-104.

⁹ *Pierre Zanchi*, CNRS-Université Lyon 2, HISOMA, private information 2014

¹⁰ *Jocelyn M. C. Toynbee*, *Roman Medallions*, Numismatic studies No. 5, The American Numismatic Society, New York, 1944.

¹¹ *Gricourt*, *Ripostiglio della Venèra* pg. 95

¹² *Davor Margetić*, *DEO ET DOMINO PROBO AVG - jedinstvena titulatura na probovu novcu / DEO ET DOMINO PROBO AVG - an unique obverse inscription on coin of Probus*, *Obol* 2012, 64, pg. 4-6.

medallion depicting all members of the tetrarchy confronted busts are laureate wearing imperial mantle (**Fig. 20**). To the third group belong specimen **10** from Trau collection and new antoniniani **1-3** on which Diocletian is draped and cuirassed and Maximian is cuirassed, both wearing radiate crowns.

In imperial roman coins iconography, emperor is usually depicted on the left side, while the co-regent, or member of the imperial family is positioned on the right. This is also the case on the new antoniniani issued for Diocletian (senior augusti) and Maximian. Their juxtaposition is appropriate since Diocletian appointed Maximian co-augustus with himself in 286. The depiction of two rulers on antoniniani **1-3** is nicely described by Richter for the related coins and could be used here: "The characterization of the two men bears what we know about them - Diocletian an able, serious, distinguished personality, and Maximian an efficient, rather coarse soldier".¹³ Furthermore, it was noted that on the Arras medallion, an effort has been made to distinguish the features of two rulers: Maximian is identifiable by his long, straight nose and position in the rule: Diocletian is depicted draped, while Maximian cuirassed.¹⁴ However, this differentiation of facial features seems to be less prominent on coins **1-3**.

Titulature

Lettering used on the antoniniani **1-3** seems to be the work of the same die letter-engraver (signatores). The unusually long legend for an antoniniani issue IMPP DIO-CLETIANO ET MAXIMIANO AVGG AVGG [Imperatoribus Diocletiano et Maximiano Augustis, given in the dative] is typically used on the roman medallions of this period, where more space is available to die-engraver on the coin flan. For instance, it is found on the gold Abukir medallion **17** and bronze medallion **15** VICTORIAE AVGVSTORVM kept in the Archaeological museum in Zagreb. The shorter legend in the dative DIO-CLETIANO ET MAXIMIANO AVGG is on the Trau specimen **10**, while the shorter legend in the nominative DIOCLETIANVS ET MAXIMIANVS AVGG is given on the medallions **12-14**, **16**, **18** and **19**.

Datation¹⁵

All these special issues were dated in the literature to be either 1st January 287 (joint consulate, although some portraits are without consular trabea and ornaments) or to be at latest 1st March or 1st April 287 (1st year of Jovian/Herculian epiphany^{16, 17}).

¹³ *Gisela Marie Augusta Richter*, Catalogue of Greek and Roman Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collections. Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1956, p. 16.

¹⁴ *William E. Metcalf*, Portraiture, Imperial medallions, in Kurt Weitzmann (ed.), Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century. Catalogue of the exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, November 19, 1977 through February 12, 1978, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Princeton University Press, New York, 1979, p. 38.

¹⁵ We are grateful for this comment to Mr. Pierre Zanchi, private communication 2014

¹⁶ Reference to divine origin of the emperors, also an occasion when emperor showed himself to his people or addressed his soldiers, in a form of festival in which the god-king conveyed grace by his very appearance to them. *Stephen Williams*, Diocletian and the Roman Recovery, Routledge, New York 2000, p. 112.

¹⁷ Epiphany of Jovius and Herculius was dated to February 287 by Chastagnol. *André Chastagnol*, Les Quinquennalia des trois Césars (Crispus, Licinius II, Constantin II) en 321, in *Romanitas-Christianitas*, ed. G. Wirth, Berlin, 1982, p. 367-374.

The reverse VIRTVS AVGVSTORVM of these special antoniniani **1-3** might be placed slightly before, since the normal issue with this reverse legend in Siscia takes place in 286 before the large CONSERVATOR AVGG series in 287. A slightly different Jovian/Herculian presentation is on the antoniniani **1-3**, the Jupiter is presenting a Victory to Hercules, whereas on the “medallions” Conservatores **10**, the two deities are standing side by side. The end of the issue of antoniniani VIRTVS AVGVSTORVM and the start of CONSERVATOR AVGG issue are overlapping at the end of 286/ beginning of 287. This is shown by the identity of some obverse consular dies. We might therefore consider that pieces **1-3** have been issued at the same time around the 1st January 287.

Reverse iconography

The emperors Diocletian and Maximian each chose a god as their patron. Diocletian, as senior emperor, selected the supreme deity Jupiter (Jove) and Maximian, as junior emperor, chose Hercules, the semi-divine son of Jupiter. Kolb has noticed that the Jovian/Herculian ideology is presented on the coinage from the beginning of the Maximian's career as augustus.¹⁸ Hence, the unpublished VIRTVS AVGVSTORVM antoniniani **1-3** belong to the early Jovian/Herculian iconography issues depicting figures of both gods on the obverse. The related depiction could be seen on the medallions FELICITAS PERPETVA AVGG (**Fig. 18**) and MONETA IOVI ET HERCVLI AVGG (**Fig. 19**) (Juno Moneta standing between Jupiter at left and Hercules at right, holding balance and cornucopiae, a pile of coins at her feet; Jupiter holds scepter in right hand; Hercules holds club in right hand, lion's skin over left shoulder), and IOVIO ET HERCVLIO (**Figs. 12-14**) (two emperors sacrificing over a tripod, above which, in the background are small figures of Jupiter and Hercules, standing side by side upon a platform).

List of illustrations

- 1 Jacquier 38, 13/IX/2013, 516, antoninianus 2.76 g, RIC-, Siscia
- 2 NAC 79, 26-27/V/2014, 1118, antoninianus 4.25 g, RIC-, Siscia
- 3 CNG Triton 17, 7-8/I/2014, 784, antoninianus 4.40 g, 22 mm, 6h, RIC-, Siscia
- 4 ebay 27/II/2012, 370588942108 Lanz, antoninianus 3.82 g, cf. RIC 591, Ven 7673, Siscia
- 5 Nudelman 10, 13/VI/2011, 394, antoninianus 3.56 g, RIC 591, Ven 7623, Siscia
- 6 Venera 7672, antoninianus 4.18 g, cf. RIC 590, Siscia
- 7 Hess Divo 328, 22/V/2015, 277, aureus 4.63 g = Trau 1935 3450, Depeyrot¹⁹ 1/11 RIC 573, AD 286 Siscia
- 8 Gorny 211, 4/III/2013, 668, aureus 5.50 g, RIC 574corr., Depeyrot 1/13 AD 286 Siscia
- 9 LHS Numismatik 97, 10/V/2006, 87 = Leu 18, 5/V/1977, 386, aureus, 5.31 g, RIC-, AD 286 Siscia
- 10 Collection Trau, Gilhofer & Ranschburg/A. Hess, 22/V/1935, 3371 = vicomte de Quellen collection, Rollin & Feuarent, Paris 14-26/V/1888, bronze abschlag, no weight given, RIC-, Siscia

¹⁸ Frank Kolb, *Diocletian und die Erste Tetrarchie. Improvisation oder Experiment in der Organisation monarchischer Herrschaft?*, de Gruyter, Berlin 1987.

¹⁹ Georges Depeyrot, *Les monnaies d'or de Diocletien à Constantin I (284-337)*, Moneta 1, Wetteren 1995.

- 11 NAC 78, 26-27/V/2014, 1112 = NAC 52, 7/X/2009, 575, double antoninianus 4.27 g, RIC 99, Siscia
- 12 Toynbee pl. III,16 = Pink 1931²⁰ pl. 1, No. 2, Lukanc²¹ 4/1, 2 1/2 aurei, 14.60 g, RIC-, AD 287 Rome
- 13 Toynbee pl. IV,1 Lukanc 5, 2 1/2 aurei, 14.58 g, RIC-, AD 287 Ticinum, formerly in Paris (cast in Berlin)
- 14 Toynbee pl. IV,2 collection E. S. Rogers, bronze abschlag, RIC-, AD 287 Siscia?
- 15 AMZ no. 37468, Horvat²² pl I, No. 3 = Toynbee pl IV,4 = Dukat²³ 1989, No. 5, bronze medallion 39.09 g, Dukat 2004²⁴, AD 293 Siscia
- 16 Gneccchi II²⁵ pl. 126,1, bronze medallion
- 17 Staatliche Museen zu Berlin no. 18200802 Abukir hoard, Gneccchi I 12 No. 2, pl. 5,2, Pink 17, Dressel 181, Lukanc 3, gold medallion of 5 aurei, 26.58 g, RIC-, AD 287 Rome
- 18 Boston museum of fine arts = Mazzini IV, 1957, pl LXXVII,1, bronze medallion 36.53 g = Münzen & Medaillen AG Basel XIX, 5-6/VI/1959, 257 = Toynbee pl. 9, no. 4, Vermeule²⁶ pl. VIII, no. 82, Rome
- 19 Gneccchi II pl. 126,2 bronze medallion
- 20 Toynbee pl. 8.2 = American numismatic society no. 1967.153.38 collection A. M. Newell, Beaurains (Arras) hoard 1922, 54.45 g, gold medallion of 10 aurei, RIC 2, AD 294 Treveri

Translated by the author

²⁰ *Karl Pink*, Die Goldprägung des Diocletianus und seiner Mitregenten, Num. Zeitschr. 1931, 64, 1-60, plate 1, No. 2.

²¹ *Ivo Lukanic*, Diocletianus. Der römische Kaiser aus Dalmatien, Edit Cultura, Wetteren 1991.

²² *Benko Horvat*, Dosad nepoznat brončan medaljon cara Dioklecijana i Maksimijana Herkulija/ Until now unknown bronze medallion of emperor Diocletian and Maximian Herculus, Numizmatika I 1933, 19-22.

²³ *Zdenka Dukat, Ivan Mirnik*, Nekoliko značajnih kovova prve tetarhije u Arheološkome muzeju u Zagrebu/ Several important strikes of the first tetarchy in Archaeological museum in Zagreb, VAMZ XXII 1989, 77-90.

²⁴ *Zdenka Dukat, Hermine Göricke Lukić, Tomislav Šeparović*, Rimski medaljoni u hrvatskim muzejima / Roman medallions in Croatian museums. MHAS, Split, 2004.

²⁵ *Francesco Gneccchi*, I medaglioni romani, Volume II, Bronzo gran modulo, Hoepli, Milano 1912.

²⁶ *Cornelius C. Vermeule*, Roman medallions, Museum of fine arts, Boston, 1962.



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