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UDK 737.1.041(398Siscia)*03*
Original scientific paper

TETRARCHIC QUINARII *ORIENS AVGG* FROM SISCIA MINT

The authors describe unpublished tetrarchic quinarii from Siscia mint (for Maximian, Galerius and Constantius) with ORIENS AVGG reverse. Specimens are described and the issue was put in the context of other ORIENS gold coinage produced in Siscia.

During the first tetrarchy (21 March 293 - 1 May 305), two augusti Maximian Herculus and Diocletian and two caesares Constantius I Chlorus and Galerius governed the Roman empire. Maximian and Constantius were assigned to the western provinces (Italia and Galliae), whereas Diocletian and Galerius co-ruled the eastern provinces (Illyricum and Oriens). During this period, rich and diverse coinage was produced in the mint of Siscia. The writing of this article was sparked by the recent occurrence of an unpublished quinarius from Siscia mint with ORIENS AVGG reverse for Constantius caesar on the numismatic market (Figure 5). Detailed search in auction catalogues has yielded another two unpublished ORIENS AVGG quinarii for Maximian and Galerius (Figures 4 and 6), which obviously belong to the same group. These three quinarii are not described in major work on roman imperial numismatics (RIC)¹, and in more recent publication devoted solely to quinarii by King.² As such, they augment already plentiful numismatic corpus of Siscia mint.

The reverse ORIENS is excessively rare for tetrarchic issues in Siscia. Carson and Sutherland describe issue of aurei and half-aurei with ORIENS AVGG and ORIENS AVGVSTOR reverses in Siscia which was dated in group I (AD 302 - May 305, i.e. in final years of the first tetrarchy). Maximian, Constantius and Galerius are represented, and there is no specimens for Diocletian. Later on, Siscia mint used ORIENS AVGG reverse for aurei, in group III (dated November 308 - Summer 311) for Licinius (RIC 191) and Maximinus (RIC 192 and 193), and finally for Licinius in group IV (Summer 311-313), this time with ORIENS AVGVSTORVM reverse (RIC 217). It appears that ORIENS aurei from group I are excessively rare and for most the types only one specimen is recorded. The only exception is aureus RIC 28b for Galerius, where 3 specimens are known. This gives us the difficulty in obtaining illustrations, and so far RIC 28a is known from the imperfect representation reproduced in Calico (Figure 1) whereas RIC 30 and 31b are not illustrated in literature. Comprehensive corpus of siscian gold coinage of the period given by Depeyrot (with changes in datation) also does not list any Oriens gold for Diocletian and the absence of ORIENS types for gold coinage of Diocletian was further attested by Lukanc³ and Alföldi.⁴

¹ Robert A. G. Carson, Carol H. V. Sutherland, *The Roman Imperial Coinage*. Volume VI. From Diocletian's Reform (A. D. 294) to the Death of Maximinus (A.D. 313), Spink and Son Ltd. London, 1967.

² Cathy E. King, *Roman Quinarii: From the Republic to Diocletian and the Tetrarchy*, Ashmolean Museum Publications, Oxford, 2007.

³ Ivo Lukanc, *Diocletianus Der Römische Kaiser aus Dalmatien*, Edit Cultura, Wetteren, 1991.

⁴ Andreas Alföldi, *Die erste Gold-Emission der Tetrarchie in Siscia*, *Studien zur Geschichte der Weltkrise des 3. Jahrhunderts nach Christus*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1967.

Description of quinarii 4-6:

4) *Obverse*: MAXIMI-ANVS AVG

laureate and cuirassed head of Maximian to right

Reverse: ORIENS AVGG --//SIS

Sol, radiate, standing front, head to left, raising his right hand in salute and holding whip and globe in his left hand.

5) *Obverse*: CONSTAN-TIVS NOB C

laureate and cuirassed head of Constantius to right.

Reverse: ORIENS AVGG --//SIS

Sol, radiate, standing front, head to left, raising his right hand in salute and holding whip and globe in his left hand.

6) *Obverse*: MAXIMIANVS NOB C







laureate and cuirassed head of Galerius to right.

Reverse: ORIENS AVGG --//SIS

Sol, radiate, standing front, head to left, raising his right hand in salute and holding whip and globe in his left hand.









Three specimens are unique and the detailed examination revealed that they share the same obverse dies. The depiction of rulers is given in a stylized, general way and this obverse die with cuirassed bust is iconographically new for the issues for the period in Siscia. The possibility of busts wearing trabea is raised by Stepniewski, but it could be in fact elaborate cuirass. All the obverse dies of Constantius used for quinarii VIRTUS AVGG, horseman with or without mint signature in Siscia are different. In order to put these specimens in the context of other ORIENS issues in Siscia, we modified the chronological table given by Pink⁵ (Table 1). In addition, earlier and later emissions of ORIENS coinage are also given.

Table 1. Overview of ORIENS AVGG coinage in Siscia

	Diocletian	Maximian Herculus	Constantius Chlorus	Maximian Galerius
	ORIENS AVGG --//SIS RIC AD 302-305 Dep 304			
Denom.		MAXIMIANVS AVG	CONSTANTIVS NOB C	MAXIMIANVS NOB C
		 laureate r A1*	 laureate r A1*	 laureate r A1*
Aureus			RIC 28a Coh 209 (1) Dep ⁶ 7/3	RIC 28b C 154 W 5.3 (2) Dep 7/4 3ex
Half aureus		RIC 30 W 3.1 = Vienna Dep 7/5		
		 cuirass B1*	 cuirass B1*	 cuirass B1*



⁵ Karl Pink, Die Goldprägung des Diocletianus und seiner Mitregenten: 284 bis 305, Num. Zeitschr. 1931, 64, 1-60.

⁶ Georges Depeyrot, Les monnaies d'or de Diocletien à Constantin I (294-337), Moneta, Wetteren, 1995.

AE quinar		RIC- K- after RIC 147 (4) Emporium 68 2012 553	RIC- K- after RIC 147 (5) Leu 7 2020 1715	RIC- K- after RIC 147 (6) Pecunem 32 2015 630
ORIENS AVGVSTOR				
			 A1*	 A1*
Half- aureus			RIC 31a (3) Baranowski 1929 1075 Dep 7/7	RIC 31b Coh 160 Dep 7/6 Oxford
Precedent issue				
ORIENS AVGG -/-/- RIC c. AD 295 Dep 286				
				 A1*
AE quinar				after RIC 94 (7) Leu 1 2017 373 (8) Gorny 165 2008 2264 (9) Berlin 18228410
				 A1
AE quinar				after RIC 94 (10) NAC 78 2014 1145
Later issues				
ORIENS AVGG -/-//SIS RIC AD 305-306 Group II				
			Maximinus c 305-310	
			MAXIMINVS NOB C	
			 A1*	
quinarii- fractions			after RIC 171b (11) CNG 243 2010 465	
ORIENS AVGG -/-//SIS RIC November 308-Summer 311 Group III Dep 308				
		Licinius 308-324	Maximinus c 305-310	
		IMP LICINIVS P F AVG	MAXIMINVS NOB C	
		 B1*	 A1*	
Aurei		RIC 191 (12) Gnechi Riv.It. 1910 p. 469 pl. ix, 12 ⁷ Dep 11/3	RIC 192 (NOB CAES) C.G. 284 ⁸ Coh 136 Dep 11/4 Lond RIC 193 (13) Schulman 1930 623 Vierodt Dep 11/5 2ex	
ORIENS AVGVSTORVM -/-//SISC RIC Summer AD 311-313 Group IV Dep 315				
			 A1*	
Aurei		RIC 217 Budap = RIC VII 14 Dep 15/3 2ex		

⁷ *Francesco Gnechi*, Contribuzioni al Corpus Numorum XCVIII, Controbuzioni al Corpus Numorum. O Collezione Francesco Gnechi, Riv. It. 1910, 23, 449-472, pl. ix, 12.

⁸ *Maria R. Alföldi*, Die constantinische Goldprägung, Mainz, 1963.

ORIENS AVGG -/-//SISC RIC VII ⁹ Summer AD 315			
		A1*	
Aurei	after RIC 14 (14) CNG 53 2000 1730		
ORIENS AVGVSTORVM -/-//SISC RIC VII Summer AD 315 Dep 315			
		A1*	
Aurei	(15) RIC 14 Budap Pl. 12 = RIC VI 217 Dep 15/3 2ex		

Bust types: A1= Head right, radiate; A1*= Head right, laureate; B1* = Bust right, laureate, cuirassed

The datation of new quinarii is not firmly established. Stępniewski¹⁰ proposed that new quinarii should be listed with other fractions after RIC^{VI} Siscia 94 (i.e. c. 295), which is opinion shared by Zanchi based on the style (larger heads), a bit later something like 295/6.¹¹ We propose the dating of the emission of new bronze quinarii (4-6) in the later period AD 302-305 (Depeyrot AD 304), and contemporaneous with ORIENS AVGG aurei and half-aurei (RIC 28a, 28b and 30) and half-aurei ORIENS AVGVSTOR (RIC 31a and 31b). This datation is attested by their similarity in style and nice fit into the gold emission, for two caesars and Maximian. The absence of Diocletian (both in gold and bronze) is coherent for this emission. For this minting period no corresponding bronze quinarii have yet been recorded.¹²

To the precedent issue of ORIENS coinage without the mintmarks (-/-/--, RIC c. AD 295, Depeyrot AD 286), belong ORIENS AVGG bronze quinarii (7-10) struck for Galerius, also unrecorded in RIC. Their style is distinguishable and quinarii 7-9 share same obverse and reverse dies, which indicates larger production of this issue. Laureate head right could point out to be the Abschlag of yet unknown aurei, in similar reasoning as we previously suggested for unknown emission of gold multiples for Diocletian and Maximian.¹³ Galerius radiate portrait on quinar 10 is quite different in depiction of the caesar. Contemporary gold with ORIENS reverse which could be associated is not recorded. Another unique and unpublished ORIENS quinarius 11 was likely minted after emission with three quinarii 4-6. Chlorus' unrecorded quinar 11 is the following issue with the ORIENS AVGG obverse and could be placed in somewhat later period after RIC 171b (RIC AD 305-306 Group II). Contemporaneous aurei with this reverse type are not known. Later ORIENS coinage in Siscia was issued for Licinius (aurei 12, 14 and 15, RIC^{VI} 191, after RIC^{VII} 14, and RIC^{VII} 14), with the aurei (RIC 192 and

⁹ Carol H. V. Sutherland, Robert A. G. Carson, Patrick M. Bruun, *The Roman Imperial Coinage. Volume VII. Constantine and Licinius A.D. 313-337*, Spink and Son Ltd. London, 1966.

¹⁰ Lech Stępniewski, Not in RIC 2004-2021 <http://www.notinric.lechstepniewski.info/index.html>

¹¹ Pierre Zanchi, private communication, 2019.

¹² <https://www.forumancientcoins.com/board/index.php?topic=67088.0>

¹³ Davor Margetić, A New Donative Issue of Gold Multiples of Diocletian and Maximian, *Numismatic Chronicle* 2018, 178, pp. 213-218.

193 (13)) produced for Maximinus caesar. Please note that RIC^{VI} 217 is the same coin as RIC^{VII} 14, listed in both volumes. After AD 308 the production of related ORIENS bronzes was not attested.

Historical, political and religious background of Siscian ORIENS coinage depicting Sol could be put in perspective by the comments given in RIC. In group I (294-1 May 305) //SIS aurei are mainly associated to the period 303-305 as a part of the vicennial celebrations. ORIENS AVGG (or AVGVSTOR), known for all except Diocletian, is new in conception. It was presumed that the other types were needed for some amplification, and that this was provided by the continuation of some former ideas and the introduction of some new ones. For group III (November 308 - Summer 311, //SIS) RIC states that the elevation of Licinius is reflected in ORIENS AVGG, SALVS AVGG NN, SECVRITAS AVGG and VIRTVS SVGG types. Although the AVGG is given in each case, none of these types is known to have been shared with Galerius, though ORIENS AVGG is shared with Maximinus, still caesar. Output was probably small (all the coins are rare or very rare), and this gold coinage as a whole presumably celebrated both Licinius' elevation as Augustus and the closely subsequent reopening of the Siscian mint (c. 308-3089), with Maximinus still in sole enjoyment of the title of caesar and Constantine apparently not represented at all. Later group IV (Summer 311-313, //SISC) was commented by Sutherland very briefly. Three extremely rare types, MARS AVGVSTORVM for Constantine and ORIENS AVGVSTORVM and PROTECTIO AVGG for Licinius, point to the moment when Licinius hurriedly left Italy in 313 to meet Maximinus' invasion of Europe. The gold of this group is likely to have been produced for Licinius as he passed eastwards through Siscia on his way to meet Maximinus. Final issue of ORIENS coinage was discussed in RIC VII: Between the war against Maximinus Daza and Constantine's capture of Siscia there are two, and possibly three mintmarks on gold, namely SIS (date uncertain), SISC and -X//SIS. Siscia was captured by Constantine during the early days of Civil War and coinage was apparently suspended until the armistice in March 317.

When the Oriens is given in relation to coin production of other mints, it is apparent that Oriens is a favourite type for Galerius (in several mints, also with gold) who was fighting with the Persians (295/299)¹⁴, not so much for the Herculan rulers. However, it could be also found currently in western mints like Lyons. Smith¹⁵ gives a very detailed account on the frequency of reverse depictions on religious coinage between 284 and 306. Four major deities are represented: Jupiter, Hercules, Mars and Sol. The relative frequency of Sol types is the following: Galerius (15 different coin types, 20% of his issues), Constantius (5 types, 9%), Diocletian (11 types, 4.5%) and Maximian (5 types, 2%). There is an obvious dominance on the coinage of both caesars, and Sol appears on coins of augusti only sporadically. By far the larger number of Sol coins was issued for Galerius. These numbers and relative distribution are well correlated to siscian coinage listed in Table 1.

¹⁴ Timothy D. Barnes, *Imperial Campaigns, A. D. 285-311*, (Summer 1976), 30(2), pp. 174-193 (20 pages) <https://doi.org/10.2307/1087091>

¹⁵ Mark D. Smith, *The religious coinage of Constantius I, Byzantium 2000*, 70(2), pp. 474-490.

Several authors studied symbolism of Sol in ancient Roman religion. The ORIENS coinage of Constantius and their religious background was commented by Smith. Aureus ORIENS AVGG and the half-aureus inscribed ORIENS AVGVSTOR with same reverse both also had parallel issues with the same reverse for Galerius. It is unclear what was intended message when the reverses of these coins refer to the Augusti although the obverse features the caesars. Despite the fact that coin types depicting Sol and inscribed with variations of ORIENS are quite common in the later third century, there are very few such coins minted by any ruler during the period of the first and second tetrarchy.

Writing about the cult of Sol in the late Roman Empire, Berrens¹⁶ stated that gold coins with Sol from Siscia could be placed in the context of the entire solar symbolism, which is recognizable for the tetrarchy. These aurei are issued in the context of the vicennalia of the augusti and the Decennalia of their caesars. Subject has been already addressed by the CLARITAS AVGG reverses of 293 (Treveri, RIC^{VII} 650-651, 694). However, the Oriens type also alludes to the renewed change of government that is already being prepared. The elevation of the co-rulers to Augusti is now addressed by the legend ORIENS, while the name CLARITAS had previously been chosen for their installation as caesars. Other gold coins that were issued throughout the Roman empire depict the bust of the sun god to accentuate the military successes of Galerius against Persia and thus suggest an assignment of this god to the eastern caesar.

The symbolism of Oriens coinage was also analyzed by Wienand.¹⁷ The east was referred to as *oriens augusti* and *oriens augustorum* with a reference to the conflicts with the Persian Empire on coinage of Numerianus and later under the tetrarchy and even under the British usurper Carausius and under Licinius. The the symbolism of the East with references to Sol invictus and the god of the sun, Oriens, is blurred in the case of ORIENS AVGVSTI and ORIENS AVGVSTORVM series. Despite Constantius was linked in a coin series from Siscia with the reverse legend ORIENS AVGG or ORIENS AVGVSTOR, and the title *oriens imperator* was used for Constantine, *oriens* does not appear in the Constantinian coins.

Tables

- 1) Calico 4858, Coh VII pg. 77, No. 209, Ancien catalogue of France¹⁸
- 2) Nomos 21 (2020), No. 358, 6.18 g, 20 mm, 6 h
- 3) Baranowski (1929), No. 1075, coll. Cuzzi
- 4) Emporium Hamburg 68 (2012), No. 553, 2.10 g, 1/2 Aureus (Abschlag in Bronze)
- 5) Leu 7 (2020), No. 1715, 2.56 g, 15 mm, 5 h bronze quinarius
- 6) Pecunem (Gitbud&Naumann) 32 (2015), No. 1715 quinarius = CNG 492 (2021), No. 434, 2.07 g, 15 mm, Æ fraction

¹⁶ *Stephan Berrens, Norbert Geske, Sonnenkult und Kaisertum von den Severern zu Constantin I (193-337 n. Chr.)*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2004, pg. 142.

¹⁷ *Johannes Wienand, Der Kaiser als Sieger: Metamorphosen triumphaler Herrschaft unter Constantin I*, Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 2012, pg. 101-102.

¹⁸ *Arthur Evans, Some notes of the Arras hoard: inception of solidus standard on British model in medallions of Constantius Chlorus*, The Numismatic Chronicle, 1930, Fifth Series, Vol. 10, No. 39, pp. 221-274.

- 7) Leu 1 (2017), No. 373, 1.29 g, 15 mm, 6 h, quinarius
- 8) Gorny 165 (2008), No. 2264 = NAC 72 (2013), No. 763 = NAC 114 (2019), No. 1684, 1.55 g, coll. George C. Hopkins, quinarius
- 9) Münzkabinett Staatliche Museen zu Berlin No. 18228410, 1.18 g, 15 mm
- 10) NAC 78 (2014), No. 1145, 1.32 g, quinarius
- 11) CNG 243 (2010), No. 465, 2.42 g, 16 mm, 6h, Æ quinarius, Failmezger¹⁹
- 12) Riv. It. 1910, p. 469, pl. ix, 12, coll. Gnechi
- 13) Schulman (1930), No. 623, coll. Vierodt
- 14) CNG 53 (2000), No. 1730, 5.37 g, coll. Marian A. Sintou
- 15) RIC VII,14 pl. 12,14, Budapest

Table



¹⁹ Victor Tory H. Failmezger, *Roman Bronze Coins: From Paganism to Christianity 294-364 A.D.*, Ross & Pery, Inc., Washington, 2002.



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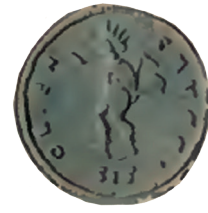
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