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## **ADVENTVS SERIES - NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE OF VISITS OF EMPEROR PROBUS TO SISCIA**

*The authors discuss numismatic evidence of emperor Probus' travels and visits to city of Siscia. Coinage of Siscia mint associated with imperial adventus is described and analyzed.*

Scarce evidence could be found in historical sources on the visits of emperor Probus to Siscia.<sup>1,2</sup> It is known that Probus made his progress from Asia minor at the beginning of AD 277 towards Pannonia and arrived with his army on the European continent. He stays in the Danubian provinces throughout the spring of that year and also stayed in Siscia.<sup>3</sup> In AD 278 Probus entered Germany, and after his military campaign in that country in the same year Probus advanced to Illyricum.

The imperial arrival (*adventvs*) at Rome, or advent in some city or province of the empire was the major event which was celebrated and commemorated. It was a city's tradition of receiving of their rulers with great pomp and these arrivals were a combination of military, imperial and religious significance.<sup>4</sup>

The ancient Romans considered their emperors to be divine. Therefore, the adventus was perceived as an obligatory, civic responsibility, as well as a spiritual affair.<sup>5</sup> The adventus was fused with imperial, religious and military aspects. Military component was taken from the practice of the triumph<sup>6</sup>, the ceremony bestowed to army commander at the time of coming in Rome after successful military campaign. From the time of Octavian onward, this ultimate recognition was allowed by the Senate solely to the emperor and its visible features were incorporated into the adventus celebration.

The organization of the adventus was well outlined as the most important dignitary of the Roman empire does not enter the city *incognito*. On the contrary, when an advance notification was given to the city, streets and temples would be adorned with banners and flower wreaths. The advancing ruler would be greeted, commonly in a pre-arranged place away from the city boundary by deputation directed by the most important people from the city and large swath of citizens. These scenes are visualized on some surviving monuments

<sup>1</sup> *Marina Hoti*, Sisak u antičkim izvorima / Siscia in ancient sources, *Opvsc. Archeol.* 1992, 16, 133-163.

<sup>2</sup> *András Mócsy*, Pannonia and Upper Moesia, A History of the Middle Danube Provinces of the Roman Empire, Routledge, New York, 1974.

<sup>3</sup> *James H. E. Crees*, The reign of the emperor Probus, London university press, London, 1911, pg. 153-154.

<sup>4</sup> *Sabine G. MacCormack*, Art and ceremony in late antiquity, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1981, pg. 17-89.

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from <https://coins.www.collectors-society.com/wcm/CoinView.aspx?sc=355813>, owner: Kohaku, Retrieved 2023/1/12.

<sup>6</sup> *Mary Beard*, The Roman Triumph, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2007.

and reliefs.<sup>7</sup> Customarily the emperor was accompanied by the entourage of a large group of soldiers and military commanders, as well as the members of imperial household and officials, since at no time he moved unattended. Hence, the greeting representatives of the city will come with provisions for everyone, bringing torches, garlands of flowers, incense and religious statuary. Following the initial celebrations, the deputation escorts the emperor into the city, at which point more serious proceedings takes place. Here, the welcoming program including public address of the assembled crowds and offerings in temple would be carried out.<sup>8</sup> A ruler of the Empire coming into a town was recognized as a sovereign, protector and patron and would customarily convene an audience where he would listen and approve or decline diverse appeals of the citizens. Program would be further transformed to major pageantry with entertainment such as theatrical plays, music and acclamatory orations (panegyrics) and feasts. Often, these proceedings contain *donativa* of wine, grain, money<sup>9</sup> or other things to the attending local population. Thorough preparation, and a painstaking adjustment of details was necessary to accomplish most favorable realization of the adventus. If the praises are too much flattery the emperor could be contemplated as being a dictator and tyrant, whereas an inadequate admiration could be very awkward for everyone.

Customary was also to produce special series of coins in the local mint advertising such as affair.<sup>10</sup> This coinage brings magnificent distinction for the incoming emperor, and additional recognition for the commissioners of coins. These special issues also serve to indicate capability of the city to organize such event. The reverse inscription ADVENTVS AVG(VSTI) provides a historical context of aforementioned coinage. It gives an important information on Probus' military efforts throughout the Roman Empire, which is an additional indication of the great value of coinage for ancient studies.

During the second half of the third century adventus legends and types become very frequent on the coinage and several cities across the Empire were minted adventus issues for Probus, such as Rome, Lugdunum, Serdica, Cyzicus, and town of Siscia was not an exception. The types consist generally of the adventvs scene where Emperor on horseback, with right hand elevated.<sup>11,12</sup> These types are listed in the classical corpus of roman imperial coins (RIC volume 5, part II).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Maria Kneafsey*, Adventus: Conceptualising Boundary Space in the Art and Text of Early Imperial to Late Antique Rome, *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal* 2015, 153-163. in *Proceedings of the 25th annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference*, Matthew Mandich, Sergio Gonzalez Sanchez, Giacomo Savini, Eleonora Zampieri (eds.), Oxbow books, Oxford, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> *Jacob A. Latham*, Adventus, Occursus, and the Christianization of Rome in Late Antiquity. Papers presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2015, *Studia Patristica*, Peeters, London, 2017, XCII, 397-409.

<sup>9</sup> *Pierre Bastien*, *Monnaie et Donativa au Bas-Empire*, Éditions Numismatique Romaine, Wetteren, 1988.

<sup>10</sup> *Gerhard Koeppel*, *Profectio und Adventus*, *Bonner Jahrbücher* 1969, 169, 130-193.

<sup>11</sup> *Seth William Stevenson*, *A Dictionary of Roman Coins, Republican and Imperial*, G. Bell and Sons, London, 1889, pg. 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Cristoph Klose*, A Farewell To Methods?: Imperial Adventus-Scenes' and Interpretations of Roman Historical Reliefs in Christoph Klose, Lukas C. Bossert, William Leveritt (eds.) in *Fresh Perspectives on Graeco-Roman Visual Culture. Proceedings of an International Conference at Humboldt-Universität, Berlin, 2nd–3rd September 2013, Berlin| 2015*.

<sup>13</sup> *Percy, H. Webb*, *The Roman imperial coinage Volume 5. Part II, Probus-Amandus 276-286*, Spink & Son, London, 1933.

According to Pink in *Der Aufbau*<sup>14</sup>, the mint of Siscia issued adventus antoniniani coinage for Probus in four emissions: 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> emissions in AD 277 and the 5<sup>th</sup> emission (AD 278). Only the last emission besides antoniniani includes adventvs bronze medallions and an AE quinar. The richness in variety of bust types and legends on adventus antoniniani in mint of Siscia is comprehensively attested by Alföldi.<sup>15</sup> Some new varieties have appeared since the book publication, which further add to already large Siscian corpus of antoniniani. Some other special coinage obviously associated with adventvs was produced at the same time, which include "NOSTRI" titlature, ORIGINI AVG, SISCIA PROBI AVG<sup>16</sup> and CALLIOPE AVG<sup>17</sup> reverses.

Alföldi classifies the antoniniani in alphabetical order, having similar arrangements to RIC, and lists three adventus reverse legends: ADVENTVS AVG, ADVENTVS AVGVSTI and ADVENTVS PROBI AVG. Antoniniani series with obverse legend ADVENTVS AVG is quite extensive with many obverse variants (RIC 624-629). The common design on the reverse<sup>18</sup> is Emperor on horseback, holding a long scepter in left hand, and raising his other hand in greeting posture as on the antoninianus 1 (Alf 5/90-108) and with Emperor riding left, captive wearing a Phrygian hat at foot (Alf 6/3-8, coin 2). Here, a bound captive demonstrates the emperor's military prowess. On rare specimens, Emperor is riding to the right as illustrated on specimen 3 (RIC 624, Alf 4/1). Antoniniani with longer legend ADVENTVS AVGVSTI are rare and all of them have the same obverse depiction, emperor on horse right, with captive at foot (RIC 631, Alf 7/1, coin 4). There is also the unique and unpublished ADVENTVS AVGVSTI specimen 5 where emperor on horse is replaced by entirely different scene (Roma or Virtus standing right, holding reverted spear and clasping hands with Probus in *toga praetexta*, standing left, and holding roll (it could be listed after RIC 631). Interestingly, on this coin, there is a die engraver's error with one letter omitted AVGSTI(sic). The third advents reverse legend specifies Probus arrival - ADVENTVS PROBI AVG (RIC 632 and 634). RIC types 633, 635 and 636 are not attested by Alföldi and are an erroneous attribution to Siscia. This series is large and has two variants of depictions of Probus on horse, the common one with the emperor riding left, captive at foot such as antoninianus 6 (RIC 632, Alf 9/13) and rare specimens depicting emperor riding right.

The elements of festivity on the coinage bring the obverse portrait of Probus in imperial robes (radiate bust left in imperial mantle, holding sceptre surmounted by an eagle).<sup>19</sup> There are some very rare and exceptional bust types on adventus antoniniani

<sup>14</sup> Karl Pink, *Der Aufbau der römischen Münzprägung in der Kaiserzeit VI/1 Probus*, Num. Zeitschr. 1949, 73, 13-74.

<sup>15</sup> Andreas Alföldi, *Siscia V, Probus sisciai antoninianusai*, Numizmatikai Közöny, XXXVI-XXXVII, 1937-1938, Budapest, 1939, pp. 3-88.

<sup>16</sup> Davor Margetić, Dalibor Margetić, *Antoninijani cara Proba s reversnim natpisom SISCIA PROBI AVG / Antoniniani of emperor Probus with the inscription SISCIA PROBI AVG on the reverse*, Num. Vijesti 2008, 61, 9-38.

<sup>17</sup> Davor Margetić, Dalibor Margetić, *CALLIOPE AVG - Iznimno rijetki reversni tip cara Proba / Excessively rare reverse type of roman emperor Probus*, Num. Vijesti 2020, 73, 34-55.

<sup>18</sup> Agata A. Kluczek, *Numismatic evidence for the dynastic policy of roman emperors, 235-284*, Polish Numismatic News 2022, X, 21-50.

<sup>19</sup> Sylviane Estiot, Philippe Gysen, *Probus Invictus Augustus: bustes inédits ou rares de l'empereur Probus* BSNF, 2004, 5, p. 73-84.

such as specimen **7** from famous Mazzini collection<sup>20</sup> (radiate, helmeted, cuirassed bust left, holding spear and shield which is decorated with rider right, soldiers bearing shields in foreground, RIC 632, Alf 9/27). This rare bust type was made even more special on specimens **8** and **9** with addition of head of horse<sup>21</sup> (RIC 626 and RIC 634). The corpus of special adventus coinage is further enriched by a unique and unpublished specimen **10** from Gysen collection with *invictvs* obverse titulature, IMP PROBVS INV AVG. It could be classified after RIC 634 or Alf 9/6var. and belongs to the 2<sup>nd</sup> emission.

According to Pink, the festive 5<sup>th</sup> emission (278) was supplemented by two adventus medallions and AE quinar. However, recent numismatic research<sup>22</sup> has shown that two ADVENTVS AVG bronze medallions were erroneously attributed to Siscia by Pink (Gn.<sup>23</sup> II, p. 116,7 pl. 119,4, Pink p. 52,4, Pink Medaillonprägung<sup>24</sup>, p. 18,4 and Gn. II, p. 116,9 pl. 119,6, Pink p. 52,3, Pink Medaillonprägung, p. 18,5). Instead, these two medallions belong to the 2<sup>nd</sup> special emission of mint of Rome (Spring AD 277) which announces, or rather anticipates Probus' adventus in Rome. On the other hands, AE quinar ADVENTVS AVG is obviously not of style of Siscia mint, but it was attributed to Ticinum (King 1,2<sup>25</sup>). It commemorates the imperial arrival in Northern Italy after the end of the military campaign (the emperor on horseback with his right hand raised, preceded by Victory and followed by Mars carrying trophy).<sup>26</sup>

Interestingly, although Webb in RIC lists three types of ADVENTVS AVG aurei in Siscia mint (RIC 582-584), none of them was listed by Pink in *Der Aufbau*. Calicó's book on roman aurei<sup>27</sup> is not useful in adding some further information, since the section on adventus aurei was taken from RIC without the addition of new numismatic material and presents only two poor line drawings. That implies that none adventus aurei was minted within festive 2<sup>nd</sup> emission (AD 277, mintmarks --//SIS, or --//--) or 5<sup>th</sup> emission (AD 278, without mintmark). This classification now has to be revised, in the light of the exceptional and unique aurei **11** which recently appeared on the numismatic market. Unpublished aurei ADVENTVS AVG on the reverse has adventus scene unique for siscian coinage: Emperor riding horse left, right hand raised. Victory pacing in front with wreath and palm branch and soldier following with spear and shield. Central reverse area is worn-out, and the scepter is not clearly visible (maybe worked-out), but its existence could not be dismissed. This adventus scene has many design similarities to grand gold medallion

<sup>20</sup> *Giuseppe Mazzini*, *Monete imperiali romane* Volume quarto, da Pacaziano a Valeria, M. Ratto, Milano 1957.

<sup>21</sup> *Davor Margetić, Dalibor Margetić*, Rijetki i neobjavljeni siscijski antoninijani cara Proba s konjem na aversu, *Num. Vijesti* 2012, 65, 21-46.

<sup>22</sup> *Sylviane Estiot*, Les émissions festives de l'atelier de Rome sous le règne de l'empereur Probus (276-282 AD), *Numismat. Zeitschr.* 2019, 125, 89-198.

<sup>23</sup> *Francesco Gnechi*, *I Medaglioni Romani*, Milan 1912, volume 2

<sup>24</sup> *Karl Pink*, Die Medaillonprägung unter Kaiser Probus, *Numismat. Zeitschr.* 1955, 76, 16-25.

<sup>25</sup> *Cathy E. King*, *Roman Quinarii from the Republic to Diocletian and the Tetrarchy*, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 2007.

<sup>26</sup> *Sylviane Estiot*, Or et donativa: L'atelier de Ticinum sous Probus (276-282 p.C.), in *Rome et les provinces monnayage et historie*, *Numismatica Antiqua* 7 2017,

<sup>27</sup> *Xavier E. Calicó*, *The roman aurei catalogue*, Vol. 2, from Didius Julianus to Constantinus I 193 AD-335 AD, Barcelona, 2003.

FELIX ADVENTVS AVGG NN (12), a 9-solidi multiple of emperor Constantine I from the Beistegui collection now in Département des monnaies, Bibliothèque nationale de France. Emperor is shown riding left, right hand raised, in left holding transverse scepter, Victory walking in front with wreath and palm branch and soldier (or Roma?) is following with vexillum and spear.<sup>28,29,30</sup> The attribution of aureus 11 to the Siscia is self-obvious by the SIS mintmark in the exergue, and should be classified in the 2<sup>nd</sup> emission, together with the other --//SIS aurei. The siscian origin is also evidenced by great stylistic similarity to the obverses of some other aurei with --//SIS mintmark and undoubtedly die-linked with several ORIENS AVGVSTI aurei (Figure 1, aurei 13-15).



Figure 1. Die-links of aureus 11 with ORIENS AVGVSTI aurei

In addition to new aureus, another unique ADVENTVS AVG aureus which was attributed to Siscia in RIC (No. 583) should be added to the Pink's corpus for Siscia mint. The specimen 16 from the British Museum collection depicts adventvs scene which is very similar to new aureus 11: emperor on the horse left, right hand elevated, holding long sceptre in left hand and Victory with wreath walking in the front. On this coin, soldier is not depicted behind. Although this aureus does not have mintmark in the exergue, it could be attributed to mint of Siscia with great certainty. The portrait of Probus is executed in typical siscian style and this special bust type could be found on some scarce antoniniani in Siscia (such as 17 and 18). Radiate, helmeted, draped and cuirassed bust of Probus left, holding spear and shield, seen from back (or helmeted bust

<sup>28</sup> *Antony Hostein*, Constantin et Sol sur le multiple d'or de Ticinum (313): bustes géminés et légitimation en temps de crise. *Cahiers des études anciennes*, XLIX 2012, 281-308.

<sup>29</sup> *Dominique Hollard*, Pourquoi fête-t-on Noël le 25 décembre? Ce qu'en disent Constantin et Sol, in *L'Antiquité à la BnF*, 01/01/2023, <https://antiquitebnf.hypotheses.org/17890>, [consulted 07/01/2023]

<sup>30</sup> *Jean Babelon*, La collection de monnaies et médailles de M. Carlos de Beistegui 1933, p.27, no.233.



of Probus facing left, seen half from behind, draped, cuirassed, holding spear, sloped to left, in right hand and shield up in left) could be found in several emissions II-IV (AD 277) and VII (AD 280), which are contemporary to the --//SIS aurei. It could be postulated that this special bust was later transferred from aurei to antoniniani.

Similarity in iconography of new aureus **II** could be also found on the quinarii from Rome which are the part of a donativum distributed in 282<sup>31</sup> at the end of Germanic campaign.<sup>32</sup> Adventus quinarii donativa have in the front and after the horse figures. Imperial arrival in Northern Italy after the end of the campaign is depicted as follows: the emperor on horseback, right hand raised, holding sceptre, preceded by Victory and followed by Mars carrying trophy.

Besides the festivities associated with Probus arrival in Siscia, Tonybee proposes another reason for the production of adventus coinage.<sup>33</sup> In her opinion adventus series are the part of the festive emission which includes bronze medallions and aurei which may have been issued in Siscia for Probus' triumphal entry into Rome in the winter of AD 281 to 282. Some of them bears the mint-mark of Siscia, where Probus must have had it struck when passing through Illyricum on his way westward, bringing them with him for distribution in the capital on his arrival. As said earlier, adventus medallions and most of the adventus aurei are by modern scholars ascribed to mint of Rome.

### Key to plates

- 1 Münz Zentrum Rheinland 88 (1997), No. 935, 4.55 g, RIC 629, Alf 5/66, V em
- 2 CNG 350 (2015), No. 569, 3.43 g, 22 mm, 6h, RIC 624var, Alf 6/3var, II em
- 3 Ancient coin forum 2016/5/16 topic 111444, 3.44 g, 22 mm, 5h, RIC 624, Alf 4/1, II em
- 4 Jacquier 45 (2018), No. 1541, *coll.* Gysen, 3.12 g, RIC 631, Alf 7/1, II em
- 5 Jacquier 45 (2018), No. 1555, *coll.* Gysen, 4.18 g, after RIC 631-, Alf-, IV em
- 6 d'Antan 21 (2017), No. 494, 4.46 g, 22 mm, RIC 632, Alf 9/13, II em
- 7 *coll.* Mazzini No. 56, 3.51 g, RIC 632, Alf 9/27, II em
- 8 Jacquier 39 (2014), No. 624 = Roma 3 (2012), No. 535, 4.12 g, 22 mm, 11h, RIC 626, Alf 5/46, V em
- 9 BM R.2425, 4.01 g, 22 mm, RIC 634, Alf 9/34, III em
- 10 Jacquier 45 (2018) No. 1538, *coll.* Gysen, 3.38 g, after RIC 634-, Alf 9/6var, II em
- 11 NAC 135 (2022), No. 363, 5.93 g - NAC 46 (2008), No. 688 - NAC 106 (2018), 1030
- 12 BnF, MMA, *coll.* Beistegui No. 233
- 13 BM 1861,1105.4, 6.43 g, 6h, RIC 590
- 14 NAC 84 (2015), No. 1146. 6.79 g, RIC 590d - Bourgey (1957), No. 359 *coll.* Castro Maya - LHS 97 (2006), No. 76
- 15 Künker 168 (2010), No. 7848, 5.98 g, RIC 590d
- 16 BM 1867,0101.854. 4.92 g, 11h, RIC 583, *coll.* de Blacas
- 17 Savoca 22 (2018), No. 535, 3.84 g, 22 mm, RIC 643, Alf 17/21var, VII em
- 18 eBay 2010 6 17 280520037846, 3.7 g, RIC 810, Alf 96/247var, IV em

<sup>31</sup> *Sylviane Estiot*, Probus et l'or du triomphe à Rome (282 de n. è.): geste impériale, gestes impériaux, Bull. Soc. Fr. Num. 2018, 73(07), 297-304.

<sup>32</sup> *Sylviane Estiot*, De l'or pour quels braves? Le type monétaire de la "Traversée de l'empereur" et la logistique fluviale et maritime des campagnes militaires impériales. in De l'or pour les braves! Soldes, armées et circulation monétaire dans le monde romain, Scripta Antiqua 2014, 69, 243-280.

<sup>33</sup> *Jocelyn M. C. Toynbee*, Roman Medallions, ANS Numismatic Studies, No. 5, American Numismatic Society, New York, 1944.

Tabla 1.



Tabla 2.



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Tabla 3.



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