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A NEW TYPE OF ANTONINIANUS OF GALLIENUS WITH REVERSE *SISCIA AVG*

The authors describe a new type of antoninianus of emperor Gallienus from Siscia mint, with the obverse SISCIA AVG.

Introduction

Occasionally, new and interesting coins from Siscia produced for Gallienus appear.¹ This paper is an addendum to our previous paper on the subject, published in Numizmatičke Vijesti.² Since the first publication fifteen years ago, we have found in the literature and auction catalogs additional specimens, which raises the number of coins known to us from this rare issue by an additional 25 exemplars to about 50. Here, we describe an entirely unknown variety of SISCIA AVG antoninianus (Figure 1), which has appeared recently on the numismatic market. The coin itself is remarkable, and merges very rare obverse type SISCIA AVG, with an even rarer helmeted emperor's bust. It is in an extremely fine state of preservation, with all details recognizable. The provenance is not given for the specimen by the auctioneer, besides the information that the coin was privately purchased in 1996.

Description of the coin

Obverse: GALLIENVVS AVG

Helmeted, radiate, and cuirassed bust right

Reverse: SISCIA AVG --//--

Siscia seated left, holding a fold of drapery with her right hand and raising her left; below, river god Savus swimming left, holding an urn from which water flows.

Weight: 4.05 g, Diameter: 21.00 mm

¹ *Vincent Geneviève, Dominique Hollard, BONVS ADVENTVS AVG: nouvelle lecture d'un rarissime antoninien d'adventus de Gallien frappé à Siscia en 267. Bulletin de la Société française de numismatique BSFN 2004, 59, 193-197.*

² *Davor Margetić, Dalibor Margetić, Antoninijani cara Galijena s reversnim natpisom SISCIA AVG, Num. Vijesti 2009, 62, 5-16.*

This variety is unlisted in all major sources, RIC³, by Alföldi⁴ and Göbl⁵, which immediately raises the question of its authenticity. Firstly, the rarity of the SISCIA AVG type gives the specimen great desirability among collectors and consequently high market value, which is further raised by the presence of an unknown bust variety. However, a closer inspection of the specimen reveals its unmistakably Siscian style given lettering, inscription break, portrait of Gallienus, and the presentation of personification of Siscia on the obverse. The final proof of its authenticity is the reverse die links with several specimens found in our photo database (for instance Figures 2-5). The frequency of die links among different varieties of SISCIA AVG (MIR 1416i, 1416u, and 1416ff) attests to very small production of this special issue. Reverse die links are identified for MIR 1416i: AMZ 28.722 Komin 1918 (Figure 2); MIR 1416u: Künker 243 (2013), lot 5112 (Figure 3), and Hess 41 (1969) lot 483, MIR 1416ff: CNG Triton VII (2004), lot 1021 (Figure 4), Lanz 66 (1993), lot 833 (Figure 5), Alföldi 96 Tf I,16; Rauch mail bid 3 (1999), lot 867 and Doyen GN 1985 10. There is no resemblance on the reverse of the MIR 1416ff variant, with the river god swimming to the right (Alföldi T I, 11-13).

The die links of the emperor's bust to the known specimens could not be established due to the rarity of the helmeted coins minted for Gallienus. Göbl does not give any coins of type ii bust (radiate helmeted) for the mint of Roma, and these specimens are known only for Siscia mint in very small numbers. As such this bust type is known only for PROVIDEN AVG type, MIR 1399ii (Figure 6), and the specimen features elaborate decorations on the helmet and different decorations on the cuirass, which differ from the new coin. The other specimens of MIR 1399ii known to us are similar to Figure 6 (ebay 2011/8/14 lot 300587683774 = Leu 19 web (2022), lot 2931, Mensch Bauer coll., Naumann 71 (2018), lot 547 = Naumann 76 (2019), lot 493, Overbeck 1989 M2⁶, and CNG Triton I (1997), lot 1626). The presence of the new die for the helmeted bust further attests to its authenticity, as the forger would tend to copy the design from the existing coins. More common than ii bust type are specimens with helmeted/naked bust type II, which are known to Göbl for the PROVIDEN AVG type MIR 1399II (Figure 7) and SPES PVBLICA type MIR 1401II (Figure 8), whereas FELICI AVG type MIR 1428II (Figure 9) is not recorded.

The dating of the new coin follows the established timeline. Göbl⁷ lists helmeted issues PROVIDEN AVG and SPES PVBLICA in the first period (end 262-beginning 264), which was followed by the production of SISCIA AVG in the second period. Unpublished FELICI AVG type could be attributed to the other coins with this obverse in the third period.

³ *Percy H. Webb*, The Roman imperial coinage, Volume 5. Part I, Valerian-Florian 253-276, Spink&Son, London, 1927.

⁴ *András Alföldi*, Siscia, Vorarbeiten zu einem Corpus der in Siscia geprägten Römermünzen, Numizmatikai Közlöny 1927-1928, XXVI-XXVII, Budapest 1951, pp. 14-48.

⁵ *Robert Göbl*, Die Münzprägung der Kaiser Valerianus I/Gallienus/Saloninus (253/268), Regalianus (260) und Macrianus/Quietus (260/262) (MIR 36,43,44=Denk 286), Wien 2000.

⁶ *Jochen Garbsch, Bernhard Overbeck*, Spätantike zwischen Heidentum und Christentum, Ausstellungskatalog, München, 1989.

⁷ *Robert Göbl*, Der Aufbau der römischen Münzprägung in der Kaiserzeit. V/2, Gallienus als Alleinherrscher, Numismatische Zeitschrift 1953, 75, 5-34.

The inspection of the numismatic literature reveals that the depictions of military busts are rare⁸ and mostly found in the earlier years of the sole reign of Gallienus (AD 260-263) in mints of Rome, Milan, and Siscia. These helmeted/military obverses depicted on the coins are likely associated with the military campaign of the emperor. There are just a very small number of antoniniani known from Siscia in 266 and from Rome 265-268 with military busts, such as cuirassed, holding spear and shield but without helmet. Holmes⁹ has postulated that the reason for being struck in small numbers and with specific reverse types could be to mark a particular occasion. For Siscia mint the number of known coins is too small to draw any conclusions. In Rome mint, few antoniniani of the emperor shown helmeted and cuirassed bust type, but with spear and shield. The helmet depicted on these coins is of the Attic type, whereas Gallienus is usually portrayed wearing a Corinthian-type helmet.¹⁰ The new Siscian specimen of ii bust type has the Attic type helmet, similar to MIR 149ii. The helmet on the MIR 1399ii bears extensive decoration, and the issue is not just intended to represent military headgear, being rather statements of imperial power and prestige.¹¹ On the other hand, the II bust type depicts a more common Corinthian-type helmet (MIR 1399II, 1401II, and 1428II). Likewise, a Corinthian-type helmet is overwhelmingly dominant on the Siscian antoniniani of emperor Probus.^{12,13,14}

The transfer of the mint personnel from Rome mint to the newly established mint of Siscia is well-attested by the stylistic similarities of the coinage of the two mints and could be assumed that the die-engravers brought along the dies/prototypes which were subsequently used in the production of helmeted antoniniani in Siscia. However, this assumption could not be verified by the comparison of helmeted types from Rome (MIR 358aa, 358q, 364q, 368q, and 366u2), with the bust facing to the left (with spear and shield). In addition, the style of the Rome issues depicting the Attic helmet with bust facing right (spear and shield, MIR 586q and 449p) is very different from the Siscian helmeted antoniniani. Therefore, the model images used for the production of helmeted types in Siscia must originate from other sources.

In conclusion, the described specimen further enriches the corpus of antoniniani minted in Siscia.

⁸ *Jean-Marc Doyen*, Die stilistische Entwicklung der Münzikonographie unter den Kaisern Valerian I. und Gallienus (252-258 n. Chr.). III. Die Münzstätte Siscia. Geldgeschichtliche Nachrichten, 1985, 108, 163-166.

⁹ *N. M. McQ. Holmes*, The Development of Imperial Portraiture on the Coinage of Gallienus (AD 253-268), The Numismatic Chronicle 2019, 179, 225-248.

¹⁰ *Pierre Bastien*, Le Buste Monétaire des Empereurs Romains, Volume I, Wetteren, Éditions Numismatique romaine, 1992, str. 205.

¹¹ *Erika Manders*, Coining Images of Power. Patterns in the Representation of Roman Emperors on Imperial Coinage, A.D. 193-284. Brill, Leiden, Boston 2012.

¹² *Dalibor Margetić, Davor Margetić*, Probovo poprsje sa parma štitom na sisačkim antoninijanima, Num. Vijesti 2009, 62, 17-30.

¹³ *Davor Margetić, Dalibor Margetić*, Rijetki i neobjavljeni siscijski antoninijani cara Proba s konjem na aversu, Num. Vijesti 2012, 65, 21-46.

¹⁴ *Davor Margetić*, Neobjavljeni i rijetki antoninijani cara Proba iz Siscije na kojima car na aversu drži bodež (pugio), Num. Vijesti 2014, 67, 18-35.

Table

1. **SISCIA AVG** Naville 83 (2023), No. 575, 4.05 g, 21.00 mm, MIR 1416ii not recorded
2. **SISCIA AVG** AMZ 28.722 Komin hoard 1918, 3.73 g, 12h, MIR 1416i
3. **SISCIA AVG** Künker 243 (2013), No. 5112, 5.00 g, MIR 1416u
4. **SISCIA AVG** CNG Triton VII (2004), No. 1021, 3.85 g, MIR 1416ff
5. **SISCIA AVG** Lanz 66 (1993), No. 833, 5.29 g, MIR 1416ff
6. **PROVIDEN AVG** Göbl MIR, private coll. 2.30 g 12h, MIR 1399ii
7. **PROVIDEN AVG** Göbl MIR, Vienna 75.531 1.86 g, 7h, MIR 1399ll
8. **SPES PVBLICA** Sternberg 15 (1985), No. 556, 2.59 g, MIR1401ll
9. **FELICIAVG** Pecunem 6 (2013), No. 574, 3.3 g, 15 mm, MIR 1428ll not recorded



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