

Zeitschrift: Schweizer Münzblätter = Gazette numismatique suisse = Gazzetta numismatica svizzera

Herausgeber: Schweizerische Numismatische Gesellschaft

Band: 23-27 (1973-1977)

Heft: 104

Artikel: An unpublished denarius of Marcus Aurelius

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-171088>

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AN UNPUBLISHED DENARIUS OF MARCUS AURELIUS

Leslaw Morawiecki

In 171 A.D. Marcus Aurelius had the so-called VOTA SVSCEPTA DECENNALIA II series of coins issued, in commemoration of the undertaking of vows for the second decennium and the games given in honour of the occasion. According to Cassius Dio – LIII 16 – it was the Roman custom from Augustus' time onwards.

The denarii of Marcus Aurelius – second issues – show on the obverse the laureate head of the Emperor to the right and the inscription IMP M ANTONINVS AVG TR P XXV. On the reverse Marcus Aurelius as «pontifex maximus» stands to the left sacrificing with patera in the right hand over lighted altar on the left and holding roll in the left hand; the legend: VOTA SVSCEP DECENN. II in exergue, COS III¹.

Moreover, the National Museum of Cracow is in possession of a similar type of denarius but with a different obverse legend. There is only M ANTONINVS AVG TR P XXV.



Obverse



Reverse

It may be added that this legend appears also on the obverses of sestertii and dupondii struck on the occasion of PRIMI DECENNALES which were held in the same year². The asses issued in 166–167 A.D. with the sacrificing scene on the reverses have the obverse legends without the Imperator title³. The same obverse legend may also be seen on the denarii and aurei of 178–179 A.D. which show the reverse type similar to the one mentioned above⁴.

The denarius from Cracow has never been published before. It belonged in the past to the Collection of E. Schenfeld and was offered to the Collection of the National Museum in 1912 where it has been kept to the present day⁵.

¹ C. 1036; RIC 251; BMC 553.

² BMC p. 617 and 618.

³ BMC 1323.

⁴ BMC p. 504 and 505.

⁵ Inventory number: VII-A-1412; 3,341 g, 18,5 mm, ↑ .