

Zeitschrift: Schweizerische numismatische Rundschau = Revue suisse de numismatique = Rivista svizzera di numismatica
Herausgeber: Schweizerische Numismatische Gesellschaft
Band: 73 (1994)

Artikel: Mint forgeries of Siscia and some "dates" of Gallienus
Autor: Weder, Marcus R.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-175427>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 14.04.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

MARCUS R. WEDER

MINT FORGERIES* OF SISCIA
AND SOME 'DATES' OF GALLIENUS

Plates 1–2

As a result of additional research for a book review, the present writer became aware of a dispute among British scholars on the date of the opening of the mint of Siscia under Gallienus. The arguments put forward seem to be influenced by a misunderstanding of the character of a single Siscian coin type on the one hand and firm reliance on a questionable *communis opinio* regarding the absolute chronology of Gallienus' imperial offices on the other. R. F. Bland and A. Burnett (Normanby, p. 123) have no «...confidence in the reliability of the dated types at Siscia...» because of a «...Siscian radiate with a reverse that copies an eastern type of 264 (P M TR P XII C VI P P, lion walking left) yet with an obverse portrait that indubitably belongs to the end of the reign (267-8)». They seem not to have been aware that this exceptional coin (*Pl. 1, 2*) had already been discussed at length by A. Alföldi (Siscia, p. 32) in a chapter (d) entitled «Die Manipulationen der Münzarbeiter am Ende der Herrschaft des Gallienus». In fact it must be an irregular, illegally produced issue: the obverse die of this specimen had also been used, in its original state (i.e. before recutting), in combination with a reverse copied from the 'animal series' of the last issue struck at the mint of Rome (*Pl. 1, 1*).¹ Alföldi also

*By 'Mint Forgeries' I mean illegally produced coins made by official mint workers.

The following abbreviations are used

| | |
|----------|--|
| Cunetio | E. Besly / R. F. Bland, <i>The Cunetio Treasure</i> (London 1983) |
| Göbl | R. Göbl, <i>Die Münzprägung des Kaisers Aurelianus (270–275)</i> , MIR 47 (Wien 1993) |
| Normanby | R. F. Bland / A. Burnett, <i>The Normanby Hoard</i> (London 1988) |
| Siscia | A. Alföldi, <i>Siscia I</i> , <i>Numizmatikai Közlöny</i> 26/27, 1927–28 |
| Studien | A. Alföldi, <i>Studien zur Geschichte der Weltkrise des 3. Jahrhunderts nach Christus</i> (Darmstadt 1967) |

The present note was originally meant to form an appendix to the review of Göbl's Aurelianus in NC 154, 1994. I am most grateful to Roger Bland for helpful suggestions and discussions. In its present, somewhat extended version it owes much to Silvia Hurter who also provided the photographs. Alan Walker took on the arduous task of translating my English.

¹ For the reverses of Rome's 'animal series' see Cunetio p. 188 ff. (Appendix 5, separate contribution by I. Carradice), for a possible interpretation of the issue, see NC 150, 1990, p. 135 ff. (with n. 3 for references to earlier literature).

concluded that the few Siscian copies of that issue were illegally produced, since it would «...wundernehmen, dass aus einer inhaltlich schwer lösbaeren Serie von 12 R.-Bildern einige beliebig herausgegriffen werden...». It may certainly seem strange that the entire set of 'animal reverses' of Rome was not copied as one would expect for a regular coinage. However, two of the Siscian «animals» are accompanied by the mint mark SI (*Pl. 1, 3 and 4*) which was only introduced for the last issue of that Balkan mint; and it would be even stranger if the corrupt mint workers left their signature, as it were, on illegally produced coins.² We can probably assume that the first signed dies (with SI) were prepared for official use on the initiative of the die-cutters but failed to find favor with the administration. Some reverse types of the last issues of Siscia seem to be partially influenced by late coins of Milan (Pietas, Concordia). The difficult military situation in the Balkans, however, called for appropriate propaganda efforts which found their expression in many varieties of FIDES MIL/ITVM (Siscia, pl. 4, 23 f.; 27 ff.) and in reverses dedicated to Mars and Jupiter (MARTI or IOVI PROPVGNATORI, *ibid.*, 32 f.). Nevertheless, Alföldi's view on the mint forgeries of Siscia can not be doubted; in particular, the similarity between the eastern lion (P M TR P XII C VI P P) and the Roman tigress (LIBERO P CONS AVG) is fairly convincing. Recently the Normanby hoard revealed more specimens confirming other such illegal activities within the mint of Siscia:

- Normanby, pl. 12, 515A *rev.* AETERNITAS AVG (*Pl. 1, 6*). Copied after a coin of Rome (*Pl. 2, 31*). Obverse and reverse dies very carelessly executed.
- Normanby, pl. 30, 1634 reverse as above, but with officina mark Γ (*Pl. 1, 5*). Obverse struck at a later die-stage (with corner of paludamentum added to bust) of the die which links the eastern lion and the Roman tigress mentioned above (*Pl. 1, 1 and 2*).
- Normanby, pl. 30, 1639 *rev.* VBERITAS AVG with officina mark E (*Pl. 1, 7*). Copied after a reverse of Rome, cf. *ibid.* pl. 9, 212. Unlike the coin pl. 12, 527 (and 531) certainly struck in Siscia with an obverse die whose execution is not inferior to others (cf. pl. 13, 569, or Siscia, pl. 5, 11).

Voetter's attribution of coins with the reverses AETERNITATI AVG and VBERITAS AVG to Siscia³ was challenged by Alföldi; but especially Normanby 1634 with its characteristic obverse (*Pl. 1, 5*) now proves that Voetter was correct. It could of course be argued that other badly struck and fairly light specimens from Siscia (e.g. Normanby 1686–88) are possibly coins struck illegally by the mint workers, but this cannot be proven. However, Normanby 1634 and 1639 leave no space for a different interpretation. Not only do they have the reverse types of Rome, but also officina marks (off. 3 and 5) which are completely out of place in the two-officina

² By the fourth century disloyal staff of imperial mints had become so bold as to add marks of *other* mints to their fraudulent products. Rare mint forgeries of London were given marks of Trier, see SM 34/134, 1984, p. 39, 8–10, while later more common ones from Trier bore the mint signatures of Arles, Lyon and other mints.

³ NZ 33, 1901, p. 94 (and pl. 28, 65–68 in Voetter's «Atlas»). Regarding Alföldi's doubts, see Siscia, p. 18, nos. 3 and 15.

mint of Siscia. These reverses would never have been accepted by the mint's administration and therefore could not be intended for official use. Whether the 'false' officina marks were cut by error (through absent-mindedness) while copying the Roman reverse type or intentionally to obscure the coins' origin must remain a matter of conjecture. Nevertheless, compared with the large numbers of fraudulent coins struck at Rome the Siscian production was insignificant. It continued during Aurelian's reign and apparently beyond, but such false coins are great rarities (for a discussion of the mint forgeries under Aurelian see the *Excursus*, below p. 88).

Once the fraudulent nature of the Siscian coin with P M TR P XII C VI P P is exposed, Bland and Burnett can no longer have any reason to doubt the reliability of the dated coinage minted in Siscia. When C. E. King⁴ opts for '263' as the year when the mint of Siscia was founded she relies on the *communis opinio* regarding the dates of Gallienus' imperial offices for which the ground work was established by A. Alföldi (Studien, p. 210 f.). No negative criticism is intended if we call his findings hypothetical. In the first place the coins themselves give rather contradictory combinations of TR(ibunicia) P(otestas) and CO(n)s(ulate) of which some may be correct and others erroneous. But even a single coin can provide a confusing puzzle such as the sole reign gold medallion of Milan with P M TR P V COS III P P on the reverse and an obverse dated COS V (*Pl. 1, 9*). It has been seen as a hybrid with a «*altem Datum*» coming from an old reverse die left over from the joint reign. This explanation is not convincing from a stylistic point of view since the styles of the obverse and of the reverse are not only Milanese but are contemporary – both clearly later than that of other Milanese coins inscribed TR P VIII COS IIII (Studien, pl. 61, 1 and 6).

A most irritating problem with Alföldi's hypothesis is the fact that the combinations (TR P/COS) he thought were correct are often found only on very rare, rare, or, at least, scarce coins while the supposedly erroneous ones have survived in larger numbers. We can easily agree with Alföldi's condemnation of the incorrect numbering of consulships on coins of Cologne or the illusory accumulations of Tribunicia Potestas in Asia Minor,⁵ but why should the scarce Antiochene reverse with P M TR P XII C VI P P (*Pl. 1, 15*) be correct and the numerous specimens with P M TR P XII COS V P P (*Pl. 1, 13*) or P M TR P XIII C VI P P (*Pl. 1, 16*) be «*abnormale Abarten*»? The answer must lie in a unique reverse die of the mint of Rome – known only from two trial strikes – depicting Gallienus' *processus consularis* and bearing the legend P M TR P XII COS VI P P (*Pl. 1, 8*). This issue was discussed in detail by Alföldi⁶

⁴ NC 152, 1992, p. 213.

⁵ For TR P VIII COS IIII, and IMP VI COS V in Cologne, see Studien, p. 217, no. 48 f. and pl. 59, 10 and 8; for TR P XVII and XVIII in Cyzicus, *ibid.*, p. 216, no. 44 f. and pl. 48, 11. Most, if not all, were produced in the absence of the emperor.

⁶ Studien, p. 57 ff. Alföldi sees the «*Besiegung eines Gegenkaisers*» (victory over a usurper) as the theme of this festive issue. If so (and it is rather likely), Postumus can not be meant. With Siscia beginning production soon afterwards we have to think of a usurper who was proclaimed as the result of incursions in the Balkans. The reason for the cancellation of the victory celebrations in Rome were, of course, the events in the East (see here below).

and its particularity consists in it having been «...in allem Anfang eingestellt» (cancelled prior to its full issuance). Here we touch upon a weak point of Alföldi's construction. Although the other reverses of this planned issue (e.g. OB LIBERTATEM RECEPTAM, OB CONSERVATIONEM SALVTIS) were abandoned, he assumes that Gallienus – theoretically – still then became consul for the sixth time. An alternative, and equally probable explanation is that unexpected difficulties compelled the emperor to cancel both the festive issue *and* the planned consulship. As a result the Antiochene coins with P M TR P XII COS V P P would be the ones with the correct date. Since they represent the first eastern coinage referring to the imperial offices after an interval of over five years it can be assumed that the mint's administration took sufficient care to ensure that these were correctly rendered.

It could be argued that Antioch changed from the initial erroneous TR P XII COS V to a correct TR P XII C(os) VI except that soon afterwards the incorrect count again reappears as TR P XIII C(os) VI, which makes little sense. This interpretation is reinforced by a recently discovered Antiochene reverse type dated P M TR P XII C VI P P and showing the emperor on horseback with his arm raised in the *adventus* pose (*Pl. 1, 14*).⁷ If we take our numismatic sources seriously and do not abuse them merely as handy illustrations for embellishing the literary tradition, we must conclude that Gallienus was actually present in Syria at the time this coin was struck. This conclusion is even more tempting because at this time the mint of Antioch completely changed its repertoire of reverses, introducing – among others – a number of types bearing direct references to the emperor. GENIVS AVG is honored with two varieties, one showing a figure in a long oriental robe with a modius on its head (Cunetio 1907), the other a nude figure with laurel wreath (*Pl. 2, 25*); they both hold patera and cornucopiae. The emperor himself is depicted as a powerful military leader with spear and globe (VIRTVS AVG, *Pl. 2, 26*). MARS VICTOR (*Pl. 2, 28*) is another example testifying to the martial tenor of this issue which culminates in the representation of a trophy with two Sasanian captives (PAX FVNDATA, *Pl. 2, 24*). The SAECVLARHS AVG (*Pl. 2, 27*) must refer to the victory celebrations which took place at the same time, since the mark of the issue's second phase to which this reverse is restricted is Victory's palm branch.⁸ Obviously, Gallienus did

⁷ Münzzentrum Cologne, Auction 57, 1986, lot 2110. See also E. M. Besly (ed.), Dept. of Coins and Medals. New Acquisitions No.1 (1976–77), BM Occasional Papers 25, 1981, p. 28, 47 (and pl. 3).

⁸ Gallienus' secular games have spurred the imagination of numismatists since Eckhel. Henri Cohen came closest to what seems to be the correct explanation in 1885. He writes (vol. 5, p. 431, note) «Peut-être cet empereur a-t-il voulu s'illustrer par la fondation de nouveaux jeux séculaires, soit pour éterniser une de ses victoires, soit en souvenir de quelque grand évènement, comme seraient, par exemple, les victoires que Marc-Aurèle remporta sur les Parthes et les Arméniens une centaine d'années auparavant...». Since Gallienus' own victory over Shapor coincided with the one Lucius Verus had won over the Parthians a *saeculum* before he must have dedicated the following festivities to the centennial of the earlier event. Far from being the insane, egomaniac despot as he is portrayed by the literary sources Gallienus must have perceived (and propagated) his personal victory only as an additional expression – among earlier ones under his predecessors – of the power of eternal Imperial Rome (AETERNITAS AVG, *Pl. 2, 29*).

visit the East to lead a, possibly minor, campaign which both brought some success and ended in a peace treaty. In the context of an imperial visit to the East the dated coinage of Antioch deserves even more trust.

A somewhat different approach to the dates of Gallienus' offices was chosen by Göbl.⁹ He also relies heavily on the *presumed* dates of the consulships and tries to solve the puzzle by stating that Gallienus «...mit Beginn seiner Alleinregierung die Zählung der TR P vom Dez. ab verlassen und die Zählung *a die in diem* aufgegriffen hat». He consequently assumes that the emperor's tribunician power changed on his *dies imperii* some time in August. This seems an interesting theory but again taking the eastern coinage as a touchstone we are left more confused than convinced. As arranged by Göbl Gallienus' post-Macrianic sole reign coinage begins with the first phase. (Pl. 1, 12) of Göbl's '6th issue' in 'spring 262',¹⁰ and continues after 'ca. mid-263' with the addition of the dated reverse depicting Sarapis (P M TR P XII COS V P P, Pl. 1, 13). Göbl provides no date for his '7th issue' which repeats the same reverse types but now bears the mark of a star (or sun?), nor for the '8th issue' which, while still using the old reverses with the new mark, abandons the old obverse legend GALLIENVS P F AVG in favor of the shorter GALLIENVS AVG. Göbl lists the dated reverse for all three issues, though it is only recorded with the longer obverse legend and without the reverse mark. Furthermore, the duration of the proposed issues does not correspond with their relative frequency in the hoard material as compiled by Bland. This is very disturbingly so in the case of Göbl's '6th issue' where the coins show hardly any of the stylistic development one might expect if they had been struck over a whole year, and which are much rarer than those with the reverse mark star/sun. Göbl's '9th issue' which is presumed to have begun on 'probably 1.1.264' and to have lasted until 'end of 264' also raises more questions than it answers. The two varieties of 'dated lion' – a) 'solar' lion (head radiate with thunderbolt, TR P XII, Pl. 1, 15) and b) lion over bull's head (TR P XIII, Pl. 1, 16) – form a part of an almost contemporary sequence¹¹ and would therefore – following Göbl's construction – belong to the «Jahresmitte». But why then was Gallienus' sixth consulship not announced earlier, most fittingly at the beginning of '264'? The question remains even if the '8th issue' or (parts of it) is shifted into the year '264' and the '9th issue' is assumed to begin later, perhaps towards the middle of the same year.

It seems clear that Göbl's construction is a purely theoretical conception into which the coins, the actual surviving evidence, have to be squeezed, though still without achieving a satisfactory fit. There are also fundamental differences between the views of Alföldi and of Göbl although the latter tends to minimize them. Faced with contradictory combinations of imperial offices (TR P / COS) on the coins Alföldi

⁹ Der Aufbau der römischen Münzprägung in der Kaiserzeit V/2, NZ 1953, p. 5 ff. , see esp. p. 8 «Die Grobdatierung geben die Cos-Zahlen».

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 23 f.

¹¹ Cf. Studien, pl. 37, 7 and 8. This fact was certainly noted by Alföldi and made it even easier for him to decide on a return to an erroneous count of Tribunicia Potestas. In any case, he thought that C(os) VI must mean the regular consulate (*ordinarium*) in both cases (TR P XII and TR P XIII) and not the designated consulate in the earlier instance.

decides to brush away some iterations of the Tribunicia Potestas as errors since the «...jährliche Erneuerung republikanischer Magistratsfunktionen...» in his opinion had lost «...ihren Sinn» (Studien, p. 210 f.). Göbl on the contrary assumed that Gallienus went to the trouble of introducing the reckoning of *a die in diem (imperii)* in order to increase «...die Zahl seiner Herrscherjahre». ¹² If he had really done so he would have gained surprisingly little from such a radical break with a century of tradition as the indication of the tribunician power is rare, especially in the West. Clearly, both Alföldi's and Göbl's hypotheses have the same weakness: they either ignore or manipulate the emperor's tribunician power. A third possibility would be to trust the tribunician date for the simple reason that the tribunician power was conferred upon the emperor for life and was automatically renewed either towards the end of the old or the beginning of the new year. Unlike a consulship which could be cancelled for important reasons the tribunician power supplies us with a framework which was not affected by any unexpected events.

As far as our present problem is concerned we have to assume that not only was the festive issue celebrating Gallienus as AVG(ustus) SENATVS and AVG(ustus) P(opuli) R(omani), OB LIBERTATEM RECEPTAM (etc.) abandoned but also that his planned sixth consulship – as indicated on the same extremely rare trial strikes – was postponed. The reason for this is easily found. A reverse type of the first issue of the mint of Siscia, which was of course established to finance military activities in the Balkans, depicts Gallienus being crowned by Victory and marks the end of a campaign in the area (Siscia, pl. 2, 2). With its legend P M T P C V P P it is correctly dated to the year '264' just as is the Antiochene issue with P M TR P XII COS V P P which was struck earlier in that year. The reactivation of the mint of Antioch was postulated by both Alföldi and Göbl for '262'; their only evidence, however, is a reverse with the legend S P Q R / OPTIMO / PRINCIPI / P F arranged horizontally within a wreath (Pl. 1, 12). There is a typological affinity with the VOTIS DECENNALIBVS reverses in the West (Pl. 1, 10) which commemorate the decennial celebrations very early, but as the Antiochene reverse with wreath is firmly linked to the issue dated TR P XII, it may as well express the eastern mint's commemoration of ten *full* years of rule. The same is done with the identical wreath type on Milanese gold coins (VOT / X / ET / XX, *Decennalia soluta, Vicennalia suscepta*) which were struck shortly before Gallienus' departure for the East (Pl. 1, 11). Consequently coin production at Antioch is most likely to have resumed late in '263'. As Alföldi already noted (Studien, p. 156), the dated reverse with Sarapis (Pl. 1, 13) appeared shortly afterwards at the start of '264' (Alföldi's 263) which must also be the beginning of the issue's second phase when the star/sun mark on the reverses was introduced. The special position of this dated reverse is underlined by its lack of an added symbol but – as the advanced style of some obverses indicates – it possibly continued to be struck in this manner until the issue's third phase. This last introduced the change to the shorter obverse legend of GALLIENVS AVG which was kept for the fourth, during which the star as reverse mark appears in the exergue, and for the fifth phase which replaces the star by a crescent (in the field). Rare unmarked reverses of coins with the short obverse

¹² NZ 1953, p. 8.

legend may belong to the end of this issue and lead to the next which illustrates the presence of the emperor and the force of his counter-attack in pictorial language.

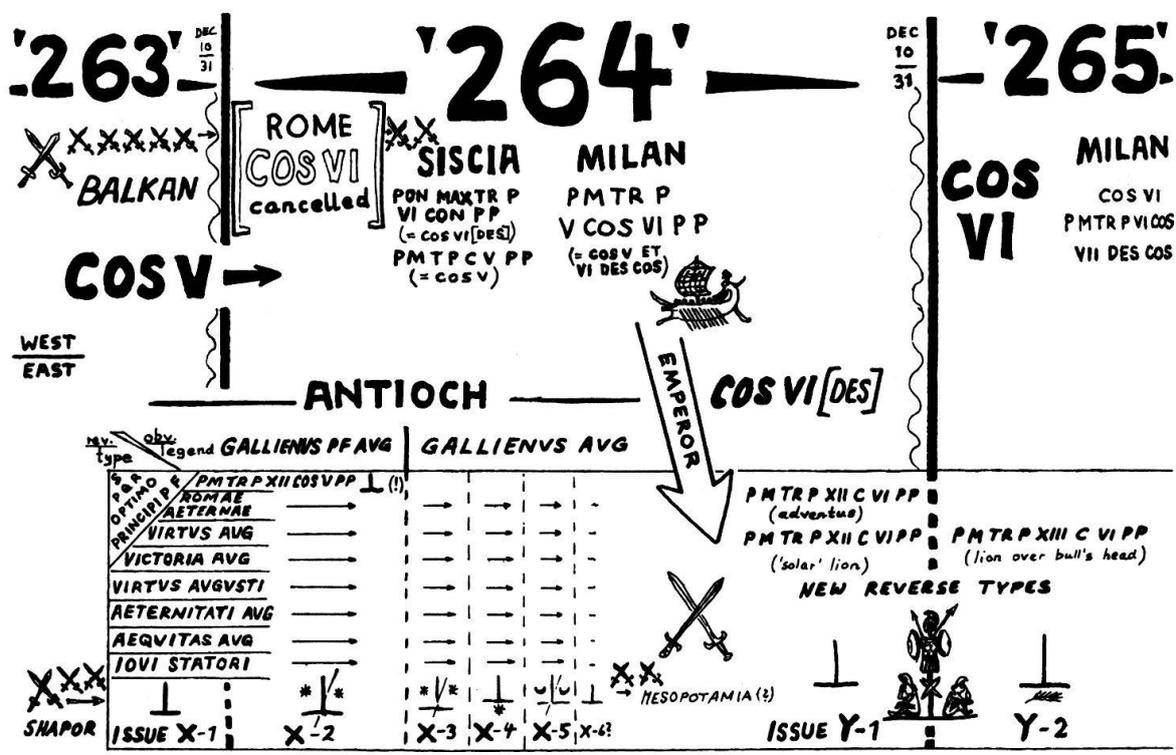
The resumption of coin production in Syria must have had a reason. For a long period the provincial government was able to meet public spending with the coinage already in circulation, and that raised by taxation. A certain warlike undertone of the new issue – *VIRTVS AVG* (*Pl. 2, 19*), *VIRTVTI AVGVSTI* (*Hercules, Pl. 2, 18*), *VICTORIA AVG* (*Pl. 2, 22*) and *IOVI STATORI* (*Pl. 2, 21*)¹³ – suggests that Shapor took advantage of the deterioration of Roman security in the Balkans by again attacking the eastern defences of the Empire. The coinage struck at Antioch was produced to finance the mobilization of the Roman army but the moral impetus necessary to ultimately ward off the Sasanian assault could only be given by the emperor's participation in the campaign in late '264'.

The year '264' is also the last possible date for Gallienus' sole reign gold medallion minted in Milan (*Pl. 1, 9*) with its reverse legend which apparently reads *P M TR P V COS / III P P*. As attested by numerous damages on the the reverse it must have once been held in a mount from which it was removed by force. Besides a deep scratch in the field and a heavy knock at the edge (at 3 o'clock) the letters are also affected, especially those closest to the edge, *V COS* above right and *III* in the exergue. Damage can be observed between the first and the second *I* of *III* and to the left of the first *P* of *P P*. The first *I* in the exergue demands the most intensive scrutiny. It does not have proper serifs and on the right its top has the shape of a triangle – all fairly unusual for the Latin numeral *I*. But once it is realized that this first numeral in the reverse exergue had been damaged, and later probably repaired, then our puzzle is solved. The numeral before *P P* is not *III* but *VI* of which the *v*, anyway loosely joined (cf. *COS V* on the obverse), was split in two. The reverse legend of the medallion is an early example of the custom, which was later to become common, of placing the number of the consulship before the abbreviation of that office; examples from the later coinage of Milan are *P M TR P VI COS* and *VII COS* (*Studien*, pl. 1, 5 f.). The *VI* in the exergue of the medallion, the second numeral after *V COS*, must stand for the designated sixth consulship (*V COS VI [=DES COS] P P*). The practice of referring to the designated consulship also appears on later coins of Milan which read *VII DES COS* (*Studien*, pl. 62, 7 f.).¹⁴ After Gallienus'

¹³ *Studien*, p. 157 «...ein Kriegsgott, der dem Heer Widerstandskraft verleiht» (sic!).

¹⁴ The important and hitherto misread gold medallion from Milan is also discussed by C. E. King, *Dated Issues of Valerian and Gallienus from the Mint of Rome*, in *Essays Carson-Jenkins* (London 1993), p. 213. Its illustration on pl. 39, A (a photo after the original instead of a cast as with Alföldi, *Studien*, pl. 62, 6) shows the upper half of the first «*I*» of «*III*» (= *VI*) is strangely thin and turned to the left which suggests repair. King repeats Göbl's explanation («*altes Datum*») and reads the reverse legend as *..TR P V COS III* (and not as *..V COS VI* as proposed above). She assumes that in '256' medallions were struck in Rome from this very die (but «...none... have survived») and that it «...travelled to Milan, presumably with one of the Roman die cutters who were sent there in the late 250s when the mint was opened and was subsequently reused at Milan in 262 (the date of Gallienus' fifth consulship)». But then it should display stylistic characteristics of the Roman workmanship of around '256' which it definitely does not. Note, among others, the marked difference in the style of the letters between the Milanese medallion (e.g. *M* and *v* with regular, extremely well executed but hardly joined *hastae*) and coins of Rome around '256' (e.g. King, pl. 38, 19–29 with carelessly cut, sketchy and, at times, rather clumsy lettering).

arrival in Syria – or more probably on his return to Antioch from the campaign against Shapor – c(os) VI (=DES) is also used with the reverses P M TR P XII C VI P P (*adventus* and solar lion). It could be a coincidence that the reverse legend of the more common of the two varieties continues with C VI P P (*Pl. 1, 15*) extending into the exergue in a similar way as on the gold medallion from Milan (*Pl. 1, 9*), which was struck immediately before the emperor departed to the East by ship.¹⁵ However, the division of a dated legend in this manner now appears on eastern coins for the first time and so does c as an abbreviation instead of COS. In Siscia this new short form had only been developed for the sole reign coinage of Gallienus with the legend P M T P C V P P which, in its turn, was created shortly before the Milan gold medallion was struck. Thus it is more likely that we face an impressive array of interdependencies caused by copying against the background of the emperor's hurried departure for Syria via Milan after his victories in the Balkans.



¹⁵ Cf. Cunetio, pl. 17, 1566: Laetitia's foot on *prova*. For the prototype of this reverse under Philip I see RIC IV/3, pl. 5, 2 f. A differing interpretation for the attribute of the prow is given there (p. 60), though this is rendered unlikely precisely by the repetition of the type under Gallienus in Milan. At Milan, Laetitia was depicted without prow before (Cunetio 1580 and 1502) and after Gallienus' voyage to Syria (Cunetio 1609 f.) while the exceptional type with prow was produced only once, shortly before his actual departure. Since the prototype of the year 244 was struck when Philip I was in the process of leaving Syria for Rome, an identical meaning for the attribute should be beyond doubt.

The sequence C(OS) V in Siscia – C(OS) VI (=DES) in Antioch for one year and C(OS) VI in Antioch for the next year recalls Gordian III's sequence TR P III COS – TR P III COS II (=DES) for 240 and TR P III COS II for 241 in Rome which also occurred as the result of a postponed consulship.¹⁶ The proposed alternative to Alföldi's and Göbl's construction therefore has a precedent and is further supported by the later billon coinage of Milan. Only after his return from the campaign against Shapur is Gallienus finally depicted with the *trabaea* as CO(N)S VI on Milanese obverses (Pl. 2, 30). After an extensive production of antoniniani, mainly with earlier reverse types but now regularly with officina marks, longer obverse legends are introduced (...P AVG, ...P F AVG, IMP G ...AVG, IMP G... P and P F AVG). The style of the obverses does not show sufficient development to identify these two phases as two separate issues.¹⁷ The consular bust as well as the reverse dated P·M TR P VI COS belong to the second phase (with officina marks in the exergue). This apparently continues without interruption into the next series which has the dated reverse P M TR P VII COS and the mint mark M(ediolanum) next to the officina mark. The coinage of Milan clearly disproves the view that Gallienus became consul for the sixth time in 264. First due to a postponement and later because of the emperor's campaign in the East, his sixth consulship is recorded in Milan as a fact towards the end of 265 only (in contrast to VI DES COS).

In his doctoral thesis,¹⁸ R. F. Bland briefly touches on the question of whether Gallienus really travelled to the East around 263-264. Despite having traced a surviving specimen of a contemporary Antiochene issue in gold (Pl. 2, 23) he found «... the evidence.... inconclusive», because «...there is no indication in the literary evidence that Gallienus ever visited Antioch during his sole reign...». The present writer cannot agree with this line of reasoning and sees it as a potential handicap for all future research on third century A. D. Roman coinage and history. It has been over a century since historians began to critically analyze the structure and content of the literary tradition for the history of this period. In order to do so more effectively historians now more than ever look to the science of numismatics for help as an independent source in its own right. Bland's point of view, which is shared by a great number of other scholars, instead raises the argument *ex silentio* into a decisive position – if the ancient writers remain silent about a possible or

¹⁶ NZ 1982, p. 62 with n. 32. *Ibid.*, p. 65, a discussion of the type of the emperor on horseback with his hand raised in greeting (cf. above, n.7: *adventus* type) on Roman provincial issues of Alexandria during the third century A. D. On the latter, the meaning is the opposite of that of the identical scene on Roman Imperial coins. In Alexandria, the *profectio* of the emperor is signalled in this manner not from Egypt or its capital but from his location at the time. On Egyptian coins this reverse type simply announces that the ruler is conducting an important military campaign.

¹⁷ As an example of argumentation based on stylistic aspects, see the clear difference (sc. stylistic break) between the Milanese antoniniani struck before Gallienus' departure for the East (Cunetio 1591–1607) and those issued after his return (Cunetio 1609 ff., also p. 125 «new bust styles» [sic!]) There is no corresponding break between the Milanese series dated COS VI and COS VII (Cunetio 1609–1767), but again another, less accentuated one between those and Milan's last coins which were struck after Gallienus' return from Greece but prior to his final departure for the Balkans (Cunetio 1768 ff.).

¹⁸ The Coinage of Gordian III from the Mints of Antioch and Caesarea (London 1991).

even highly probable event, it *ipso facto* can not have taken place.¹⁹ If we wished further confirmation of Gallienus' eastern expedition of '264-5'. we only need to look at the reverse types of the western mints of this period. The mint of Milan marks the beginning of hostilities against Shapor with the reverse ORIENS AVG depicting Sol holding a globe; the successful conclusion of Gallienus' campaign is indicated by Sol holding a whip.²⁰ After the emperor's return to Italy the mint of Rome – a mint which in the first years of Gallienus' sole reign did not devote even a single reverse die to the sun-god – allocates the full capacity of two officinae to the production of the reverses ORIENS AVG (*Pl. 2, 33*) and AETERNITAS (*Pl. 2, 31*) or AETERNITATI AVG, the latter also copying the legend of the earlier Antiochene type (*Pl. 2, 20*). With coins of Siscia's second issue also joining in to commemorate the restoration of the Roman East,²¹ the evidence is clearly there to see – though in order to see it we have to set aside the silence of the ancient literary sources.²²

¹⁹ However, it is not really fair to speak of this as being solely Bland's point of view, since it is an approach which is propagated by all authorities in the field, and which derives quite naturally from numismatic studies dealing with earlier periods documented by much more trustworthy literary sources. Bland's example only needs to be quoted because his very thorough and correct application of the method at the same time unveils its dangers. In his thesis (p. 99) he treats also other provincial gold coinages and occurrences of the *adventus* type in eastern mints during the early third century A. D. For Philip I he states that «...there is no suggestion that Philip was present in Antioch in 249» and for Claudius II «...no source tells us that Claudius visited the east»: with which he means that there is no mention of visits in the surviving *literary* sources. In fact for both reigns there exists numismatic evidence hinting at such visits but it was not taken seriously since the question was thought to be settled by examining the literary tradition. Furthermore, Bland goes as far as to conclude (p. 96) that the *adventus* type on a coin does not necessarily signal the emperor's arrival at the city which struck it. This assumption is based on a coin struck in Rome at the end of the reign of Septimius Severus which depicts his arrival in Rome (BMCRE p. 366, 50; Hill 1194) when, in fact, he was still in York. However, if other reverses of the same issue are investigated, such as FORT (una) RED(ux) (BMCRE p. 376, 109 and p. 414, 262) or those depicting Neptune (BMCRE p. 376, 110) it is clear that the mint authorities firmly believed that the emperor was already well on his way to Italy by ship. Thus, the mint had already begun striking coins to celebrate the anticipated safe arrival of the emperor when the news of his unexpected death in York reached Rome. This case under Severus is therefore no exception at all, but offers an additional example of how a careful interpretation of coin types can increase our knowledge of events in the past.

²⁰ See CUNETIO 1586 for a rather early specimen (dated '263'), CUNETIO 1602 for the later series ('264', before Gallienus' departure) and CUNETIO 1619, 1621 (variant with whip) and 1641, 1643 (exceptionally still with globe) – both variants struck after Gallienus' return in '265'.

²¹ Cf. CUNETIO 1797 (ORIES in error).

²² See M. Peachin, *Roman Imperial Titulature and Chronology* (Amsterdam 1990). The epigraphical evidence (see p. 81 on Parthicus Maximus and Persicus Maximus) is not necessarily conclusive since victory titles could also be assumed, or rather granted, for wars conducted by a general or a client king in absence of the emperor (p. 82). The cases Peachin refers to could even be discarded as unofficial, i.e. the result of local or regional initiative, in view of the lack of propagation of these titles on the coinage immediately under the ruler's control – cf. Peachin, p. 81, note 180 (these coins either unconfirmed or belonging to the joint reign).

To return to our starting point, the dispute over the mint of Siscia between Bland, Burnett and King, we see that the truth must lie precisely between their opposing views, and that Siscia started its production in '264'. Although some doubt may remain regarding the validity of Bland's and Burnett's argument «...based on the silver content of Siscia's coins...», King's sole reliance on the dated Siscian reverses P M T P C V P P is far from «most powerful» evidence.²³ She has overlooked a unique radiate from Siscia (Cunetio 1903) with the off-center reverse of PO[N MAX T]P VI CON P P (=VI CONS DES). While the obverse die is rather worn it is clear on stylistic grounds (cf. Siscia, obverses of pl. 1, 1–14), that it forms part of Siscia's first issue to which the reverse P M T P C V P P also belongs. It was therefore obvious right from the start that the confusion can only be unravelled by a re-examination of Gallienus' 'dates' of the period. The new arrangement proposed here does not explain similar contradictions earlier in the sole reign, but may demonstrate the method by which this goal can be achieved: by a critical reconstruction of the historical events with the help of the coins from all mints, *independantly* of literary sources.

In concluding it may be worthwhile to point out another example of the unfortunate mingling of literary tradition and numismatic sources. It concerns Gallienus' gold coins with the reverse VBIQVE PAX (*Pl. 2, 32*). It is important to note that these coins were never examined on their own or in comparison with other contemporary numismatic evidence. They were always viewed with a background of the nearly unanimous judgement of the ancient writers who denounced the reign of Gallienus as a time «...wo das Römerreich in allen Ecken und Enden vom Krieg und Mord brennt und zittert» (*Studien*, p. 40), a time, «...when the state was rent by dissensions, revolutions and misfortunes of every kind...»²⁴ Even Alföldi, who was well aware of the defamatory tendencies of the literary sources, could not free himself from their shackles and was unable to rely only on a chronology or events based on contemporary numismatic sources. He insisted on seeing an apparent paradox between reverses like VBIQVE PAX and the empire's «blutgetränkten Jahren» (years soaked in blood, *Studien*, p. 41) under Gallienus. Noticing the striking similarities between the terminology of the legends on the coins and that used by Vergil and in the Patristic literature of the time Alföldi tended to believe that also the *motif* of the coins «...so selten der Wirklichkeit entsprach» (rarely reflected reality). This may be true in some cases, but a general assessment to that effect

²³ NC 142, 1982, p. 213.

²⁴ S. W. Stevenson (C. R. Smith, F. W. Madden), *Dictionary of Roman Coins* (1889), p. 844 (*ibid.* on Gallienus: «...his cowardice and weakness ... his wickedness...» – all echoes of the literary sources). Stevenson quotes earlier scholars and maintains their view that the VBIQVE PAX coins were meant to be satirical. Today's numismatists have to separate two series of such coins. The first (here, *Pl. 2, 32*, or *Studien*, pl. 3, 16 f.) struck after his campaign in the East, the second after his visit to Athens of '266' (*Studien*, pl. 3, 4–7, 11, 14 f., contemporary with the 'animal series' in billon (*ibid.*, pl. 3, 9)). The coins of the second series whose obverses show Gallienus as an initiate of the cult of Eleusis with a corn wreath, at times combined with the legend GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE, lie at the origin of the idea that these coins were meant as mockery put out by the mint's personnel (!) or even by the usurper Postumus, at the expenses of an effeminate emperor.

deprives us of the necessary obligation to investigate further. Interestingly enough, a surprisingly large number of the examples quoted by Alföldi are, in fact, reverse types of billon coins struck contemporarily with the first aurei with VBIQVE PAX. These are PAX AETERNA / AVG, VICTORIA AET(erna), SECVRIT(as) PERPET(ua), ABVNDANTIA and VBERITAS AVG. Within the same issue are AETERNITAS (*Pl. 2, 31*) and ORIENS AVG (*Pl. 2, 33*) which serve as a geographical reference, and BONAE FORTVNAE and FORTVNA REDVX which announce Gallienus' return from the East.²⁵ Seen as a whole, combined with the events of the time, the message of these coins is far from being an empty promise or wishful thinking. After having restored peace in the Balkans and in the East, Gallienus was well entitled to proclaim VBIQVE PAX. The contemporary slogans «Pax» and «Victoria Aeterna» or «Securitas Perpetua» are, of course, not reflections of the mint authorities' sincere belief that peace and stability were established now and forever. They rather explain that the present successes stem from the power (*virtus*) of the emperor to achieve these goals again and again. As far as the emperor Gallienus is concerned there is little evidence – apart from literary sources – that his years were really much more troubled than those of his immediate predecessors or successors. Claudius II was equally unable to reintegrate the separatist empire of Gaul and Britain; it only fell into the hands of Aurelian because of its own inability to hold its borders against barbarian aggression. With a duration of reign widely surpassing that of any other ruler of the second half of the third century, Gallienus must be considered one of the most successful emperors of that period.

Excursus: Mint Forgeries under Aurelianus

Among the «zeitgenössische Fälschungen» on plate 149 of Göbl's *Aurelianus* we find a specimen listed as ZF 5 which combines an old regular obverse die of Göbl's «fourth issue» with an irregular reverse die bearing the value XXI but no officina mark. Another contemporary mint forgery must be the supposed hybrid pl. 107, 238a 3 from Çanakkale²⁶ which cannot possibly be a hybrid as neither of the two dies is obviously official (cf. Göbl pl. 107, 237a 1 to 237c 6 for obverses for Severina by Siscian engravers, and pl. 89, 185b 1 to 185 f 1 for the original dies for Aurelian's reverse type). Furthermore, despite its somewhat irregular engraving the obverse of Göbl 238a 3 appears to be the work of a die-cutter from Siscia which would confirm the attribution to that mint. Finally, it cannot be excluded that the mint

²⁵ For a list of all types see Cunetio ('fifth series') p. 115 ff., 1149–1329. IOVIS STATOR (Cunetio 1225) and IOVI PROPVG NAT (Cunetio 1290) are copied after coins of Antioch's issue X (here *Pl. 2, 21*) and Y (*Studien*, pl. 42, 14). Another case of interdependency between the coin types of different mints – a phenomenon extremely useful for the reconstruction of the emperor's itinerary – is the reverse VBIQVE PAX (*Pl. 2, 32*). It is certainly inspired by the Antiochene gold with VICTORIAE AVG (*Pl. 2, 23*) struck only shortly before.

²⁶ H. G. Pflaum / P. Bastien, *La trouvaille de Çanakkale* (Wetteren 1969), pl. 25, 2962.

forgery in the name of Claudius II, Göbl pl. 47, 100/4z 4 – identified elsewhere as a post-Aurelian copy from Rome²⁷ – is in fact a mint forgery struck at Siscia. Unlike the similar Göbl pl. 59, 102/67z 1 it also has an obverse inspired by an obverse die of the emperor Probus from Siscia,²⁸ and such a proper obverse/reverse combination is remarkable. A better preserved specimen may in the future answer the question whether this illegal type was struck in Siscia or in Rome.

Zusammenfassung

Im Zusammenhang mit römischen Münzen des 3. Jh. ist in den Schweizer Münzblättern schon mehrfach auf das Phänomen der sog. Münzstättenfälschungen («mint forgeries») hingewiesen worden. Es sind dies von staatlichen Münzarbeitern illegal und zu ihrem persönlichen Gewinn hergestellte Prägungen, deren inoffizieller Status zum Teil nur schwer zu beweisen ist, da ihre Stempel doch Arbeiten derselben Graveure sind, die auch die offiziellen Münzstempel schnitten. Neben schon früher erkannten Münzstättenfälschungen aus Siscia weist der Autor auf kürzlich publiziertes Material aus dem englischen Fund von Normanby hin, das aus den letzten Regierungsjahren des Gallienus stammt. Auch bei diesen Stücken offenbart sich eine gewisse Raffinesse der korrupten Beamten dadurch, dass Rückseitentypen anderer Münzstätten kopiert wurden. Damit konnte der Ursprung dieser illegalen Münzen verschleiert werden, ein Manöver, das nur noch durch die List ebenso unehrlicher Nachfolger im 4. Jh. übertroffen wurde (siehe oben, Anm. 2). Besonders deutlich wird die Notwendigkeit des Aussortierens von Münzstättenfälschungen vor dem Hintergrund eines Meinungsstreits zwischen englischen Gelehrten über das Datum der Eröffnung der Balkanmünzstätte Siscia. R. F. Bland und A. Burnett sind nicht gewillt, sich auf die datierten Münzen aus Siscia zu verlassen, weil eine solche mit der Legende P M TR P XII C VI P P nach stilistischen Kriterien im letzten Regierungsjahr des Gallienus (TR P XVI COS VII) geprägt worden sein muss (*Taf. 1, 2*). Nun ist dieser Antoninian aber eine Münzstättenfälschung – kopiert nach einer Rückseite aus Antiochia (*Taf. 1, 15*) – der nicht zur Beurteilung der offiziellen Prägungen herbeigezogen werden darf. Auf der andern Seite steht die Meinung C. E. Kings, wonach Siscia '263' zu prägen anfängt, eine Aussage, die in dieser Form auch nicht akzeptiert werden kann. Sie stützt sich auf einen Antoninian der ersten Emission mit P M T P C V P P (=COS V), übersieht aber einen andern Antoninian der gleichen Emission mit PON MAX TR P VI CON P P (=COS VI). Dies ist nur eine weitere scheinbare Ungereimtheit, die zu den vielen bekannten Problemen mit datierten Münzen des Gallienus beiträgt. Besonders verwirrend sind hier die widersprüchlichen Kombinationen von Tribunicia Potestas (TR P oder T P) und Konsulat (COS, CON oder C).

²⁷ See the review by the present writer in NC 154, 1994.

²⁸ Cf. RIC V/2, pl. 4, 11–13.

A. Alföldi hatte versucht, eine Ordnung zu schaffen, indem er gewisse dieser Kombinationen als «abnormale Abarten» verdammt. Irrtümer kamen sicher vor, so bei der Zählung der Konsulate in Köln oder der Tribunicia Potestas in Cyzicus (siehe oben, Anm. 5). Für die zweite Hälfte von Gallienus' Alleinregierung lassen sich aber keine weiteren plausiblen Erklärungen finden. Alföldis Theorie, wonach die Münzstätte Antiochia nach Bekanntwerden der richtigen Zählweise wieder eine falsche angewandt haben soll, ist nur schwer nachvollziehbar. Ebenso wenig mit Antiochias Münzprägung in Einklang zu bringen sind die Vorschläge R. Göbels, der Gallienus' Tribunicia Potestas an dessen *dies imperii* anstelle des Jahresendes wechseln lässt. Als dritte Möglichkeit schlägt der Autor eine Abkehr von den keineswegs verlässlichen Konsulatsdaten zugunsten der unverändert am Jahresende erneuerten Tribunicia Potestas vor. Alföldis wichtige Studien erlauben auch die Interpretation, dass Gallienus' sechstes Konsulat – dessen Antritt nur auf extrem seltenen Proben zusammen mit der zwölften Tribunicia Potestas vermerkt wurde (*Taf. 1, 8*) – wohl für '264' geplant war, aber wegen kriegerischer Ereignisse auf das nächste Jahr verschoben werden musste. Diese Konstellation erklärt, weshalb auf Münzen aus Antiochia zu Beginn des Jahres '264' COS V, bei Jahresende jedoch COS VI erscheinen konnte, ein nur vermeintlicher Widerspruch, der um die Jahresmitte auch auf verschiedenen Rückseitentypen in Siscia auftaucht. Es sind Hinweise auf das tatsächlich geltende fünfte, sowie auf das verschobene und nun designierte sechste Konsulat. Die Richtigkeit dieser Sichtweise ergibt sich aus der Neubeurteilung nach stilistischen Kriterien eines Goldmedaillons aus Mailand, dessen Ämterkombination bisher als TR P V COS III gelesen wurde, die aber tatsächlich als TR P (ohne Iteration) V COS VI (= DES COS) zu entziffern ist (*Taf. 1, 9*).

Eine konsequente Interpretation der Bildersprache der Münzen erlaubt ferner den Schluss, dass die Münzstätte Siscia '264' nach einem erfolgreichen Balkanfeldzug eröffnet wurde, wonach sich Gallienus (mit seiner mobilen Eingreiftruppe) nach Syrien einschiffen liess. Gegen Ende desselben Jahres muss er einen kurzen aber siegreichen Abwehrkampf gegen Shapur I. geführt haben, der in einem Friedensschluss endete. Dass dies in den schriftlichen Quellen mit keinem Wort erwähnt ist, mag einerseits deren teilweise diffamierende Tendenz zuzuschreiben sein, andererseits ist es ein Indiz für die potentielle Unzuverlässigkeit dieser Quellen. Für das (späte) 3. Jh. mit solch prekärer literarischer Quellenlage ist es deshalb unerlässlich, dass Numismatiker ihre eigenen Quellen, nämlich die Münzen, in grösstmöglicher Unabhängigkeit von den schriftlichen Überlieferungen auswerten.

Marcus R. Weder
Muttenerstrasse 19B
CH-4133 Pratteln

Key to Plates 1–2

a) *Denominations*

All coins illustrated are so-called antoniniani (1, 2, 5–7 certainly, 3 and 4 possibly produced illegally) *except* 8 (trial strike in bronze or base billon from medallion dies), 9 (gold medallion), 11 (heavy aureus), 23 and 32 (aurei).

b) *Mints*

1–7 Siscia; 8, 31–33 Rome; 9–11, 30 Milan; 12–29 Antioch (12, 13, 17–22 = issue X; 14–16, 23–29 = issue Y).

c) *Locations or earlier publications*

- 1 Siscia, pl. 4, 20
- 2 Siscia, pl. 4, 18
- 3 Siscia, pl. 4, 22
- 4 Siscia, pl. 4, 16
- 5 Normanby, pl. 30, 1634
- 6 Normanby, pl. 12, 515A
- 7 Normanby, pl. 30, 1639
- 8 Studien, pl. 6, 5
- 9 Studien, pl. 62, 6
- 10 Studien, pl. 16, 5
- 11 Private collection
- 12 Studien, pl. 32, 17
- 13 Private collection
- 14 Münzzentrum Köln, Auction 57, 1986, lot 2110
- 15 British Museum (photo from R. F. Bland)
- 16 Private collection
- 17 RN 1969, pl. 22, 19
- 18–19 Private collection
- 20 RN 1969, pl. 23, 25
- 21–22 Private collection
- 23 Münzen und Medaillen Basel, Auction 35, 1967, lot 115
- 24–29 Private collections
- 30 Studien, pl. 5, 14
- 31–32 Private collections
- 33 Cuneo, pl. 13, 1233



Marcus R. Weder, Mint Forgeries of Siscia

