

# Numismatics in antiquity : the preservation and display of coins in ancient Greece and Rome

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CORNELIUS C. VERMEULE

## NUMISMATICS IN ANTIQUITY

### The Preservation and Display of Coins in Ancient Greece and Rome

#### INTRODUCTION

The ancients have left very few traces of what they thought about their coins, as works of art or objects to be collected. South Italian potters in the late fourth and early third centuries B.C. placed stamped copies of Syracusean dekadrachms of 400 B.C. in the centers of their black-glazed cups. Roman lamps show designs based on imperial coins, and jars, mirrors, or rings made throughout the Empire reproduce coin-types in a fashion similar to those circulated in northern Europe during the Renaissance and in the United States from 1800 to 1890.

Coins and their rarer, multiple medallions were set in linked groups for necklaces or in the rims and on the surfaces of plates and vessels in the precious and lesser metals. These ensembles present a good indication of what the ancients valued among their coins and how or when they arranged them for display. Such coins and their settings are collected and surveyed here<sup>1</sup>. The evidence and its conclusions provide about all modern critics can examine, and deduce, concerning what has survived from Antiquity.

The catalogue which follows is not exhaustive, but it represents the coins preserved in special settings in Antiquity, from the successors of Alexander the Great to the dominant rule of Constantine the Great. The final three centuries of the ancient world (from 325 to 625) offer special problems and situations, the manufacture of mounted medallions and coins for imperial political purposes, which take the surviving evidence beyond the scope of this study. The Late Antique monuments, well catalogued and surveyed in books, exhibition catalogues, and articles, tell a story different from the illustrations of interest in numismatics on a semi-official and private level assembled here. The coins mounted in girdles, necklaces, bracelets, brooches, or metal

<sup>1</sup> The books and articles cited in the catalogue around which this study is based provide a comprehensive bibliography of coins and medallions in settings designed to emphasize their numismatic worth. Herbert Cahn, Mary Comstock, Andrew Oliver Jr., and Ross Taggart have helped with this investigation. The institutions possessing such coins «collected» in Antiquity have provided photographs when requested and, often, information about items in their care. I am very aware that ensembles of mounted coins suspended from chains are most susceptible to alteration and rearrangement in modern times. Wherever possible, such post-Antique creations have been omitted or, at least, valued strictly according to their merits as documents of «collecting» in Antiquity. Also, when necklaces containing a number of Aurei mounted as pendants have been found in tombs, the temptation has doubtless been strong on the part of peasants and others to separate the pendants and distribute them among the finders.

vessels in the late Hellenistic and imperial periods, before Constantine the Great, give every indication of having been assembled privately, from the mints or from circulation, by jewelers with a special clientele or collectors desiring to match numismatic interests with decorative taste <sup>2</sup>.

This study is not intended to be one on Greek and Roman jewelry or decorative arts. Other than the medallions which were set over family vaults in the walls of catacombs, we know little or nothing of ancient coin cabinets, coin clubs, numismatic societies, or numismatic literature, all the aspects of numismatics as a science which are an accepted part of our present-day civilization. We can presume much from the study of coin-types, die-designs in the Roman Empire recurring in patterns indicating recourse to cabinets of older coins. But the evidence about which we can be most sure is the body of «numismatic» objects which have survived. These fall almost without exception into the categories of jewelry or decorative arts <sup>3</sup>.

### Abbreviations in the Catalogue

A.N.S.	The American Numismatic Society
BMC	Catalogue of Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum
BMFA	Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
BMMA	Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art
CAH	The Cambridge Ancient History
JdI	Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts
JEA	Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
PAPS	Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society
RevNum	Revue numismatique
RIC	Roman Imperial Coinage

<sup>2</sup> On collecting in Antiquity, see E. E. Clain-Stefanelli, «Beginnings of Coin Collecting», in *Numismatics – An Ancient Science*, Bulletin 229: Contributions from the Museum of History and Technology, Paper 32, Smithsonian Institution, Washington (D.C.) 1965, pp. 8–11. J. M. C. Toynbee, *Roman Medallions*, Numismatic Studies 5, The American Numismatic Society, New York 1944, «II. The Uses of Roman Medallions», pp. 118–121, with further references ancient and modern. The subject of designs taken from coins into other products is covered by A. C. Levi, «Roman Minor Arts and their Relations to Coinage», in *Numismatic Review* 1, no. 1, June 1943, pp. 25–28, pls. VII–X.

<sup>3</sup> Relationship with post-Renaissance art in Europe can be illustrated, *inter alia*, by a gilded silver mug (tankard) set around its body with rows of three Talers, dated 1662 to 1669, the latest being those of Duke Christian Ludwig of Braunschweig-Lüneburg, 1697. – The place of manufacture is given as Osnabrück: I. Woldering, *Meisterwerke des Kestner-Museums zu Hannover, Honnef/Rhein* 1961, pl. 91, caption on p. 33. The modern American counterpart in the lower brackets of the jewelry trade is the «Swank» advertisement on p. 3 of *The New York Times Magazine*, 3 March 1974, showing money clips, key rings, neck chains, and cuff links set with United States base-metal coins of the twentieth century, some partly gilded.

The evidence that the mintmasters and die-designers of the Roman Empire related their reverse types to history, to archaeology, and therefore to numismatics is set forth by J. M. C. Toynbee, in «An Imperial Institute of Archaeology as Revealed by Roman Medallions», *The Archaeological Journal* XCIX, 1943, pp. 33–47, pls. I–IX. On the dependence of later coins on older types, see C. C. Vermeule, «Copying in Imperial Roman Die Design», in *Numismatic Circular* LX, no. 7, 1952, p. 3.

CATALOGUE  
OF COINS MOUNTED OR IMITATED IN SPECIAL SETTINGS

A

*Medallions, Coins and Imitations*  
Hellenistic Greek through Antonine Imperial

- 1 Gold double stater of Philip II (359 to 336 B.C.), with contemporary, simple, circular frame, pierced. The obverse of the frame has ovolo-bead moulding outside a slender fillet, pearl-beads within.  
Münzen und Medaillen AG, Basel, Auktion 52, 19–20 June 1975, p. 18, no. 116, pl. 7.
- 2 Ptolemaic golden girdle, set with an octadrachm of Ptolemy IV Philopator, with bust of the deified Ptolemy III (c. 221 to 204 B.C.). Cairo Museum, from the Royal collection (JE. 89612).  
A. el-Mohsen el-Khachab, JEA 50, 1964, p. 144, pl. XIII.  
The circular frame has a zig-zag fillet on an overall pattern of granulation.
- 3 Ptolemaic golden girdle. The frame for the «medallion» is the same as the previous, but the chains and secondary mountings differ. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, probably found in the Faiyum. The coins were minted in Alexandria.  
C. R. Clark, BMMA 30, 1935, pp. 162–164, fig. 2. Accession number 31.9.1. Gift of Edward S. Harkness.  
This is such a spectacular gold coin, with its radiate, draped bust, that it is easy to see why these appearances of the Macedonian ruler as Helios became a central setting.
- 4 Bracelet, found in Epiros, with Graeco-Roman imitations of coins of Mytilene (Lesbos), linked by pairs of little «grenats».  
E. Saglio, in Daremberg-Saglio, Dictionnaire des antiquités, I, p. 438, note 27, which cites De Witte, Antiq. apportées de Grèce par M. Lenormant, 1886, p. 20.
- 5 Mounted tetradrachm of Agathokles of Bactria (c. 180 to 165 B.C.). Head of Alexander the Great as Herakles. Zeus Aetophoros on the reverse. The coin is BMC, Greek and Scythic Kings of Bactria and India, no. 1.  
Monnaies et Médailles SA, Basel, Vente publique 37, 5 Dec. 1968, p. 35, no. 282, pl. 18.  
The coin's rarity and the obvious reference to «Alexander son of Philip» would have led this large, flat silver tetradrachm to have been preserved in a per-



manent setting, two small loops or straps affixed to the side or edge of the coin by studs in the form of rosettes.

- 6 Aureus of Brutus, with the «Ides of March» reverse. Autumn, 42 B.C. The coin was perforated for mounting and preservation, after circulation.  
H. A. Cahn, *Congrès international de numismatique*, Paris, 6–11 July 1953, II, Actes, Paris 1957, pp. 213–217.  
The «Ides of March» Aureus was preserved as a collector's item because of its political-historical type; the hole is outside the border on the obverse and in the empty area within the reverse.
- 7 Denarius of Augustus, made into a rather simple, round pendant with plain, tubular edges. Colchester and Essex Museum. L. R. Laing, *Coins and Archaeology*, New York 1969, pp. 129, 291, pl. 13: «Found in the chieftain's burial at Lexden, Colchester, along with continental imports. It has sometimes been suggested that the burial was that of Cunobelin himself.»  
The famous British ruler died about A.D. 41, the first year of the reign of Claudius (41 to 54). It has also been suggested that the Denarius (already mounted or not) was a rare, isolated import into the British Isles.
- 8 Aureus of Titus, a worn specimen mounted in an ancient gold, circular frame, with ovolo or acanthus-leaf ornament on the obverse and with a loop for suspension. The coin's reverse has a trophy with bound captives beneath. This Aureus was struck between 1 January and 1 July A.D. 80. RIC, p. 118, no. 21. *Catalogue Sammlung Franz Trau*, Vienna-Lucerne, 22 May 1935, p. 19, no. 685, pl. 9.  
The importance of the coin's reverse design, a reference to the Jewish Wars and Titus' conquest of Jerusalem, in Roman art and/or Jewish history may have determined the coin's use here.
- 9 Necklace from Egypt, terminals with uraeus, plaited-wire chain, open-work discs between hook and loops. There is a movable ring of gold ribbon, with twisted wire. London, British Museum. The Aureus is Domitianus Augustus, A.D. 91. The reverse shows the Armed Minerva standing.  
F. H. Marshall, *Catalogue of the Jewellery in the British Museum*, London 1911, pp. 317–318, no. 2735, pl. LIX. – R. A. Higgins, *Greek and Roman Jewellery*, London 1961, p. 186, pl. 56. – B. Pfeiler, *Römischer Goldschmuck*, Mainz 1970, p. 61, pl. 12: dated A.D. 100 to 150.  
R. A. Higgins has written (p. 186): «These necklaces can be dated by the coins; they are commonest in the second and third centuries.»

Objects Relating to Coins or Medallions Mounted as Jewelry  
or Affixed to Metal Vessels  
Hellenistic through Antonine Periods

- a Iron short-sword (with gilt-bronze scabbard) of a Roman military official, found at Mainz. London, British Museum. The middle of the highly ornamented scabbard is embossed with a «medallion charged with a portrait of Tiberius», the features made to resemble Augustus as would befit a numismatic product of the former's early sole imperium.  
CAH, Plates, IV, p. 140, a. – Museo dell'Impero Romano, Catalogo a Cura di Giulio Quirino Giglioli, Rome 1929, p. 35, no. 274, pl. XVII. – British Museum, Greek and Roman Life, London 1929, pp. 98–101.  
The medallion in relief on this ceremonial scabbard of relatively inferior metal suggests that imperial prototypes in gold or silver could have been set with real multiple Aurei or Denarii. The scabbard from Mainz dates after A.D. 16, probably not long thereafter.
- b Mirror and cover, with repoussé relief medallions, making the ensemble resemble a mounted or framed sestertius of Nero. A somewhat-rustic version of the emperor's head appears in profile on the cover, and a standard scene of imperial *adlocutio* in an architectural setting adorns the underside of the mirror. From Coddanham in Suffolk. London, British Museum.  
J. M. C. Toynbee, Art in Britain Under the Romans, Oxford 1964, p. 334, pl. LXXVIII, a, b. The types of sestertii copied are illustrated on pl. X of RIC, p. 149, nos. 61 ff., fig. 166. M. F. A., Boston, Roman Medallions, 1962, pl. I, no. 8, shows an *aes* of Augustus, struck on a large flan with four concentric circles, of a type which could be copied or adapted as a mirror or cover or as part of a box or jar.
- c Lamps with coin-portraits in their *tondi*. Most of these so-called Graeco-Roman lamps of relatively standard types are fabrications in the Roman style, of the eighteenth or early nineteenth century. The ancient examples appear to belong to the Trajanic period (A.D. 98 to 117) or later, when coins of older rulers were revived (notably the restitution of the Aurei or Denarii of Julius Caesar under Trajan).  
H.-G. Buchholz, Kaiserporträts auf Tonlampen, JdI 76, 1961, pp. 173–187.  
A whole class of Roman terracotta lamps exhibit designs derived directly from the coinage, including those large examples with flying Victoriae in the centers, flanked by imitations of coins, all created to suggest presents given at the New Year. See Römische Tonlampen, Sonderliste J, Münzen und Medaillen AG, Basel, March 1968, pp. 32–36, nos. 102–116, and further references. – A. Alföldi, Die Kontorniaten, Budapest-Leipzig 1943, pp. 37–48: Die Kontorniaten und das Neujahrsfest.
- d Cooking vessel («casserole»), the top of the handle and the outside surface of the body set with Greek imperial large *aes* of cities in Western Asia Minor from Hadrian through Commodus, that is about A.D. 120 through 192. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, accession no. 63.2644.  
M. B. Comstock, C. C. Vermeule, Greek, Etruscan and Roman Bronzes, Boston 1972, pp. 340–342, no. 479.  
The cities selected must have had personal associations for the owner of the bronze casserole, through business or travel or family connections. Since there are two Antinous medallions of Smyrna, of the type with a standing bull «dedicated by Polemon» (BMC, Ionia, no. 339) on the reverse, that great Ionian seaport may have been the place where the «collection» was assembled and mounted for display.

- e Rings in gold, silver, bronze, iron, and lead with chased (carved) or cast portraits of Roman emperors or members of their families, related to coins. The practice extended back into the Hellenistic age and the Roman Republic.

The literature is extensive. See E. Coche de la Ferté, *Les bijoux antiques*, Paris 1956, p. 121, pl. XLII: Julius Caesar, Sulla (?), Lucius Verus (?), and the child Caracalla. Whether representations of emperors based on dies or hubs for coins, or of private citizens assimilated to the imperial family, many of these rings must have been the after-hours work of die-cutters in the main and branch mints of the Greek and Roman worlds. A gold ring with intaglio portrait, in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, from Syria, may be a Levantine likeness of the young Emperor Commodus, about A.D. 180. Such portrait rings, gems, medallions and special coins were a regular feature of the bestowal of honors from the emperor. See *The Classical Journal* 60, 1965, pp. 300–301, fig. 15.

As early as 400 B.C., as a pair of gold ear-studs from tombs at Ialysos on Rhodes demonstrate, motifs from coins were copied directly, verbatim, in jewelry: see R. A. Higgins, *Greek and Roman Jewellery*, pp. xxiii, 125, pl. 31, A, in the British Museum (Marshall, *Catalogue of the Jewellery*, p. 232, no. 2067–2069). A gold ring of the first century B.C., from Capua and in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, has an inset oval bezel with portrait of a man (like one of Caesar's or Brutus' followers) signed by Herakleidas as artist, evidence enough that such art was in the hands of Greeks: F. Coarelli, *Greek and Roman Jewellery*, London 1970, pp. 124–125, pl. 56.

## B

### *Medallions, Coins and Imitations* Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines

- 10 Aureus of Traianus (A.D. 98 to 117), of unusual type, with radiate, draped bust of Sol-Helios to the right. This slightly worn specimen is mounted in a frame which *looks* later and is rather crude but does not seem to be barbaric. There is a loop for suspension, held to the frame by a rivet.

Sammlung Franz Trau, Vienna 1935, p. 25, no. 895, pl. 12.

The type and (late Trajanic) legend PARTHICO (the emperor's last lifetime title from the Senate) were timely for a third-century A.D. mounting, when the Empire was battling Parthians and Persians, and the cult of Sol was paramount.

- 11 Aureus of Hadrianus, with IOVI VICTORI (Zeus Nikephoros seated) reverse, mounted in a hexagonal, filigreed frame with four-ridged loop (pelta attachment at the base) for suspension. The filigree work is a less-elegant version of the mounting for the Aureus of Gordianus III on the Aboukir necklace in Kansas City (see below). See also Auktion Leu 10, Zürich, 29 May 1974, p. 28, no. 242, pl. XIV (Caracalla, A.D. 215).

Collection R. Jameson, IV, Paris 1913–, no. 495; Auktion Hess-Leu, Lucerne, 12–13 April 1962, p. 65, no. 466, pl. XIX; Hess-Leu, 14 April 1954, p. 48, no. 275, pl. 11.

The Aureus is dated A. D. 132 to 135. BMC, no. 658; RIC, no. 251.

- 12 Aureus of Hadrianus, with Mars Ultor standing on the reverse. Only the inner, concave band and the encircling row of beads or granulations are ancient. The outer part of the frame appears to have been copied from Jameson Collection, no. 495 (see the previous).  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, no. 35.225.  
The coin dates after A.D. 119: BMC, no. 109.  
A similar frame, also seemingly work of the nineteenth century, is set around an Aureus of Antoninus Pius at the American Numismatic Society (no. 64.79; gift of H. W. and H. H. Havemeyer). The coin dates A.D. 159 to 160 (BMC IV, p. 146, no. 983).
- 13 Pair of small gold brooches (?), with half-Aurei of Lucilla wife of Lucius Verus (died 183) and her brother Commodus (dated A.D. 185) in framed *tondo* settings. London, British Museum.  
F. H. Marshall, Catalogue of the Jewellery, p. 340, nos. 2868, 2869, pl. LXIII.  
The form of a serrated ribbon around the circular inner frame is a simple, less suave version of the setting for the rare Aureus of Postumus, with jugate busts, in the British Museum. Marshall, Catalogue, no. 2871, pl. LXIII (see below).
- 14 Senatorial bronze medallion or medallic double (?) sestertius of Antoninus Pius, A.D. 139, with a thin iron rod soldered to the top of the reverse (which is the same die axis as the obverse), evidently for suspension on a moulding or in a household or funerary niche, or even in a case. Vatican Library, the precise provenance being unknown.  
L. M. Tocci, Medagliere della Biblioteca Vaticana, II, I Medaglioni romani e i contornati del Medagliere Vaticano, Vatican City 1965, p. 33, no. 4, pls. II, III (enlarged in color), XLII.  
This medallion or quasi-medallion of larger than sestertius size has been executed in a sensitive style characteristic of the best die design in the mint of Rome at the outset of the reign of Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138 to 161). On the reverse, Victoria floats to the left, a Palladium on her outstretched right hand. The mounting was a standard, albeit barbarous, way of preserving and displaying prized Roman medallions. Use on other, later Antonine bronze medallions suggests this practice began under the Severans or later in the third century A.D., perhaps in the underground funerary chambers of Rome. A medallion of Commodus, with the Four Seasons as reverse, from the Earl Fitzwilliam collection and before that from eighteenth-century Rome (Christie's Sale, 30–31 May 1949, p. 34, lot 358, fig.; since 1958 on deposit in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) has been split apart at the edge under the bust by an iron wedge, evidently for a generally similar type of mounting, larger, wider, flatter, and a lot less tasteful. This medallion could also, however, have been set and thus supported as the decorative finial of a semi-utilitarian object such as a

sword-hilt or the handle of a large mirror. A second Fitzwilliam collection medallion of Commodus (Christie's Sale, lot 355, also on deposit in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) has had the obverse hollowed out and replaced by a convex silver boss in Antiquity. Since the reverse features the popular urban symbol of Dea Roma seated holding a Victoriola and a scepter-staff, this bronze medallion was no doubt adapted as the top of a vessel perhaps in precious metals or rare stone or glass. The object by itself could have served as a tiny, «pocket» mirror.

C

*Medallions, Coins and Imitations*

The Severan Dynasty (Septimius Severus through Severus Alexander)

- 15 Gold patera (phiale) found in a treasure at Rennes in 1774. The central subject, the triumph of Dionysos and the drinking-contest with Herakles, reflects deities venerated by Septimius Severus. The sixteen Aurei enframed around the central scenes date from Hadrian through Julia Domna, the most recent being datable to the year A.D. 210. The treasure was hidden under a rich Roman's palace, during the period of Aurelian (A.D. 270 to 275) or thereabouts.



Ill. 1. Cat. 15



E. Babelon, *Le Cabinet des Antiques à la Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris 1887, pp. 25–28, pl. VII.

The Aurei were placed according to a system indicated by abbreviations; the arrangement was partly dynastic, mostly artistic: bearded heads alternating with the youthful portraits or the imperial ladies.

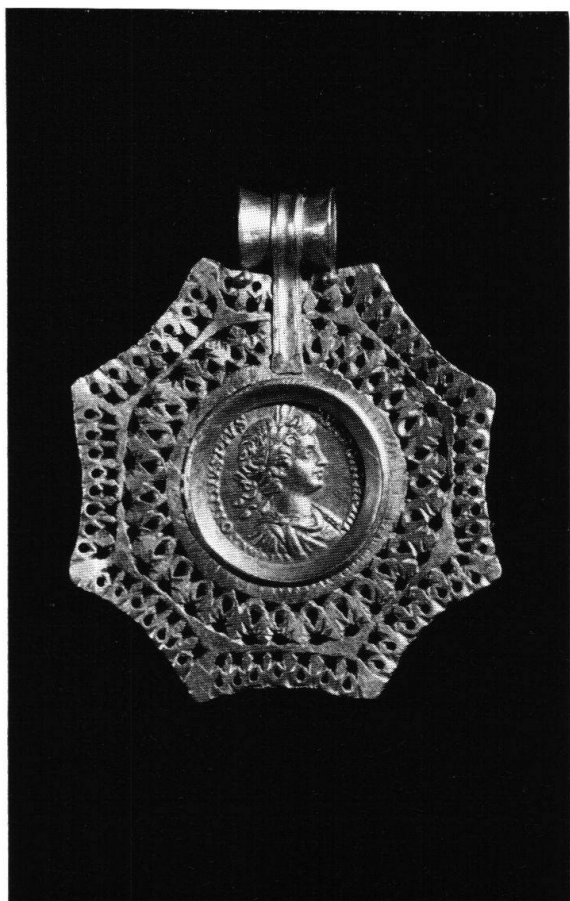
- 16 Aureus of the young Caracalla as Augustus, the frame (with loop) a cruder version of the acanthus crowns which surround the youthful, beardless portraits and the women on the Rennes patera, where laurel crowns frame the Emperors. *Catalogue Sammlung Consul Eduard Friedrich Weber* †, Hamburg, II, Auction Jacob Hirsch XXI, Munich 1909, p. 125, no. 1875.  
The coin dates A.D. 198 and may be possibly from an Eastern mint only: BMC V, p. 171, no. 105.
- 17 Collar or necklace found at Naix (Nasium) in 1809 and now in the Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Two framed cameos show Minerva and Julia Domna; they are of rather crude workmanship, while the Aurei are superb, selected specimens. These Aurei comprise Hadrian (with Trajan and Plotina on the reverse), Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta, the latter three all being complex dynastic specimens. The first coin has busts of Caracalla and Geta on the reverse, the second has Geta Caesar as reverse, and the third features Sol-Caracalla's radiate, cuirassed half-figure bust. The latest date of the coins is A.D. 202.  
W. Dennison, *A Gold Treasure of the Late Roman Period*, University of Michigan Studies, Humanistic Series, Vol. XII, Studies in East Christian and Roman Art, Part II, New York 1918, p. 142, pl. XXVIII. – E. Babelon, *Catalogue des Camées Antiques et Modernes de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris 1897, pp. 199–201, no. 367, pl. XLI.
- 18 Denarius of Geta Caesar (198 to 208), struck A.D. 200 to 202, with busts of Septimius Severus and Caracalla on the reverse.  
BMC V, p. 196, no. 214. – *Münzen und Medaillen AG*, Basel, Auction Sale 43, 12–13 November 1970, p. 47, no. 400, pl. 26.  
The combination of silver coin and gold mounting is rare, explained by the handsomeness and dynastic implications of the coin. The loop is simple, and the rope-shaped mounting, imitating a stylized wreath, is almost crude. This coin is in good condition.
- 19 Aureus of Caracalla, A.D. 215, in the ancient frame which has been somewhat damaged on the edges and which has lost its loop. The Aureus itself is in perfect condition. The reverse shows the Capitoline Jupiter enthroned with Victoriola, scepter-staff, and the eagle at his feet (BMC, no. 116).

Bank Leu AG, Zürich, Auktion 10, 29 May 1974, p. 28, no. 242, pl. XIV.

As indicated in connection with mounted Aurei of Hadrian, this type of enframement composed of linked Amazonian shields (*peltae*) seems to have been popular in the first forty years of the third century A.D. The condition of this Aureus suggests the frames of this class belonged to the reigns of Elagabalus, Severus Alexander, and Gordianus III. As elsewhere, the coin was mounted so as to be seen primarily from the obverse, part of the reverse inscription being concealed and the reverse being encased in the raised, crimped edges of the inner, *tondo* frame.

- 20 Pair of Double Aurei or Antoniniani in gold, of Caracalla (one dated A.D. 215). They are set in matching octagonal frames with overall, low-relief designs of *peltae* and floral motifs on the obverse, the same very stylized on the reverse. The second (with a Venus Victrix reverse) preserves the loop for suspension. The two form an unusual pair, and whoever preserved them by mounting did so with a numismatist's eye for rarity. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale.  
Fr. Gnechi, *I Medaglioni Romani*, Milan 1912, I, Oro e Argento, p. 4, nos. 1 and 4, pl. I, nos. 3 and 6. – Dennison, *A Gold Treasure*, pp. 103–104, fig. 1. – BMC V, p. 445, note to no. 79 (Venus, Rome mint, A.D. 213 to 217). – BMC V, p. 454, note to no. 120 (Luna driving a biga of bulls).
- 21 Gold pendant set with an Aureus of Caracalla, A.D. 213 to 217. The reverse shows a complex Liberalitas scene. The circular frame with loop is elaborate, with two rows of radiating «arches».  
Washington (D.C.), Harvard University, Dumbarton Oaks Collection. – Collection R. Jameson, II, Paris 1913, p. 40, no. 189 (dated A.D. 214: LIBERAL. AVG. VIII), pl. X. – BMC V, p. 444, no. \*. – M.C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*, II, p. 25, no. 22, pl. XXV.
- 22 Roman silver bracelet with circular central plate, a sheet gold medallion with impression of a double Aureus or Denarius (Antoninianus) of Caracalla as Emperor (about A.D. 215) in the center.  
Sotheby Sale, 10 July 1972, p. 15, no. 51, pl. XI.  
Whether of gold or silver, the coin used to make this impression was similar in die-design to the medallion Double Aurei mounted as pendants, in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (see above).
- 23 Loop and plate of the late third, early fourth century A.D., a more elegant version of that used for the Aureus of Victorinus from the Netherlands and less elaborate than the settings of similar shape for the double Solidi of A.D. 321 and 324 discovered in North Africa.





Ill. 8. Cat. 23 Obv.



Ill. 8. Cat. 23 Rev.

Collection of Mrs. Hayford Peirce, Bangor, Maine. Said to come from the Arras Hoard. — *Ancient Art in American Private Collections*, The Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge (Mass.), 28 December 1954 to 15 February 1955, p. 39, no. 331.

The loop at the top has been designed for a necklace and extends to the rim in the center. The octagonal plate with concave edges has been punched into an openwork pattern of palmettes and lotus-buds. In the center, enclosed in a raised rim, is an Aureus of Caracalla, A.D. 201. The coin belongs in the complex, dynastic series typified by the examples set in the pendants of the necklace in Paris from Naix (ancient Nasium). Bust of Caracalla to right, laureate, draped, and cuirassed. On the reverse, jugate busts of Septimius Severus and Julia Domna, the former radiate, a crescent below the latter, both to right. BMC V, p. 204, no. 260, pl. 33, no. 8.

The type of setting suits the date of the Arras Hoard, found in September, 1922, in a brickfield at Beaurains near Arras in northern France, and dating from the age of the Tetrarchs and the early Constantinian period. The hoard contained about fifty gold medallions, at least four hundred Aurei, silver plate, and

jewelry; the date of deposit has been set at not later than A.D. 306 or just before 314: see J. M. C. Toynbee, *Roman Medallions*, pp. 66–68.

- 24 Gold pendant (loop missing) set with an Aureus of Elagabalus, A.D. 218 to 222. The rather crude frame has an enrichment of serrated triangular motifs on the obverse only. The reverse shows the parade of the sacred stone of Elagabal, god of Emesa, in Rome.

Washington (D.C.), Harvard University, Dumbarton Oaks Collection. – BMC V, p. 572, no. 273: Eastern mint (Antioch?), A.D. 218–219. – Collection R. Jameson, II, p. 45, no. 211, pl. XI: dated A.D. 221. – Dumbarton Oaks Collection, II, pp. 25–26, no. 23, pl. XXV.

See the Kansas City-Aboukir necklace for a similar coin, with bust facing left (set to the left center of the Aureus of Gordianus III on the necklace).

- 25 Gold pendant with Aureus of Elagabalus, reverse showing the Emperor in a processional quadriga to the left, star (comet) in the field. The vegetation (ivy or vine pattern) of the frame is like that of a pendant on the Naix (Nasium) necklace in Paris.

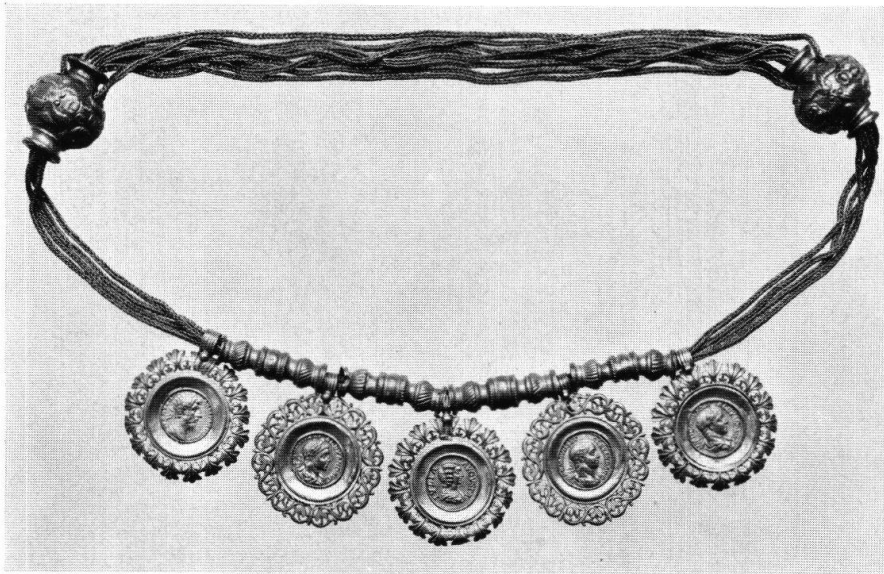
Catalogue de la collection de feu Monsieur L. Vierordt, J. Schulman, Amsterdam, 4 June 1930, p. 32, no. 520, pl. VIII. See BMC V, p. 557, no. 182: Rome mint, dated late A.D. 220.

- 26 Necklace with pendant mountings containing Aurei of Lucius Verus (left, slightly worn), Severus Alexander (left center, right center, and right), and Julia Domna (center), the last four in perfect condition. Found at Memphis in Egypt. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 36.9.1. Gift of Edward S. Harkness. Dated by the Museum «About A.D. 225».

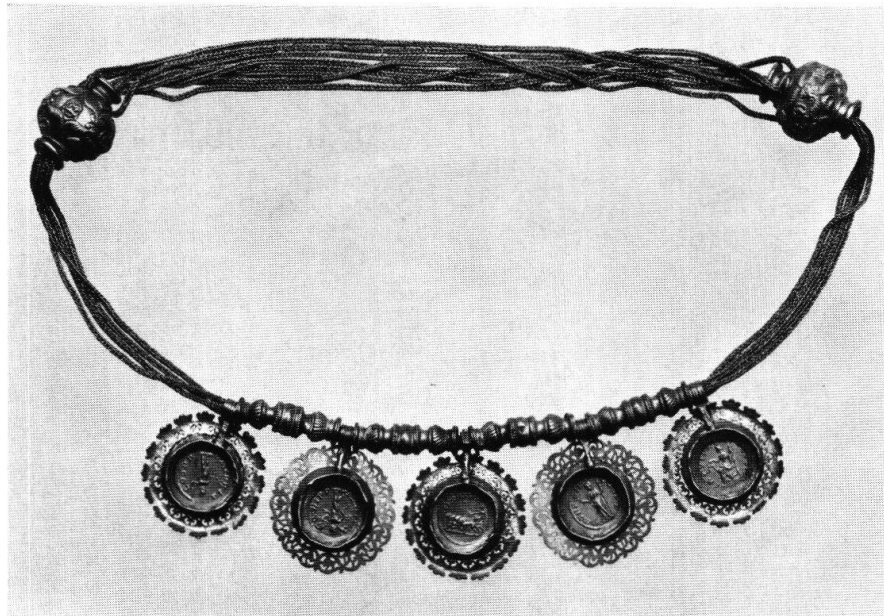
A. Lansing, *Egyptian Jewelry*, M.M.A., New York 1937, no. 20.

The clasps in the form of large amphorae and the alternating frames are elaborate, and very carefully made. The two different types of frames give a good clue to the positioning of the Aurei; if the pieces have been remounted, perhaps the order was chronological, with all three of the Severus Alexanders together at the right. The Aurei in the necklace found at Memphis in Egypt yield little information other than their obvious decorative value.

Of the five reverses plainly visible in their openwork mountings, the four for the two Emperors feature common, single-figure divinities (Aequitas seated, for Lucius Verus, mint of Rome, A.D. 168: RIC, no. 593; standing Pax, walking Mars Pater, and standing Jupiter for Severus Alexander). Only the reverse of the Aureus of Julia Domna in the center of the necklace is unusual, showing Julia Domna as Cybele moving to the left in her cart drawn by four lions, with the inscription MATER AVGG. This legend, of course, refers to the Empress both as the Great Mother herself and as the actual mother of the Augusti



Ill. 2.  
Cat. 26 Obv.



Ill. 3.  
Cat. 26 Rev.

Caracalla and Geta. The Aureus, struck in Rome, would thus seem to date between A.D. 209 and 212 (RIC, p. 168, no. 562, gives the span as 196 to 211, or when Septimius Severus and Caracalla were Augusti and Geta was, until 209, the Caesar).

The jeweler designing the necklace, or the anonymous patron commissioning it, had five random Aurei at hand midway in the reign of Severus Alexander at the earliest and set the most unusual, the only Empress on the obverse and the most complex reverse, in the center of this example of imaginative craftsmanship among the Roman imperial necklaces employing Aurei. The latest Aureus of Severus Alexander, the Mars Pater reverse (see above), is dated A.D. 227 (RIC, no. 60), while the Jupiter and the Pax reverses (RIC, nos. 18 and 26) both

were struck in the year 223. These three Aurei, as the coins of Lucius Verus and Julia Domna, were evidently struck at the mint of Rome. The presumption is that the five (and probably other) coins found their way to Egypt, to be set in a necklace by a «provincial» jeweler catering to a well-known local taste, but the stylistic differences in the surroundings of these Aurei (chains and amphorae) may indicate that the necklace was made in Italy and carried or exported commercially to Egypt.

- 27 Gold Quinarius (half-Aureus) of Severus Alexander in an ancient mounting designed for a pin or a brooch. The reverse shows Mars standing to left, branch in right hand and spear in left (A.D. 223: RIC, no. 22, this coin; see BMC, no. 99 \*, after H. Cohen, *Médailles impériales*, no. 232, in silver).  
Brüder Egger, Vienna, Auction Catalogue XXXIX, January 1912, p. 62, no. 1171, pl. XXVII.  
The *tondo* frame is a waterleaf pattern; two loops, like the handles of a Greek footbath, are joined to the undersides of this frame, on opposite sides. The mounting ought to be contemporary. Compare the similarly-framed half-Aurei (Quinarii) of Lucilla and Commodus in the British Museum (see above).
- 28 Necklace with medallion pendants, set with Aurei of Severus Alexander. The coin with Mars Pater as the reverse design, in the larger frame, is dated A.D. 226. The smaller frame is similar to, more refined than that for Gallienus in the British Museum (no. 2939, see below). The larger frame has a general parallel, on a much higher level, in the frames of the Constantinian double Solidi from North Africa (see also below). Said to have been found «at Alexandria» in Egypt.  
J. P. Morgan Collection. – Dennison, *A Gold Treasure*, pp. 141–142, pls. XXVI, XXVII.

## D

### *Medallions, Coins and Imitations* Gordianus III through Maximianus Herculeus

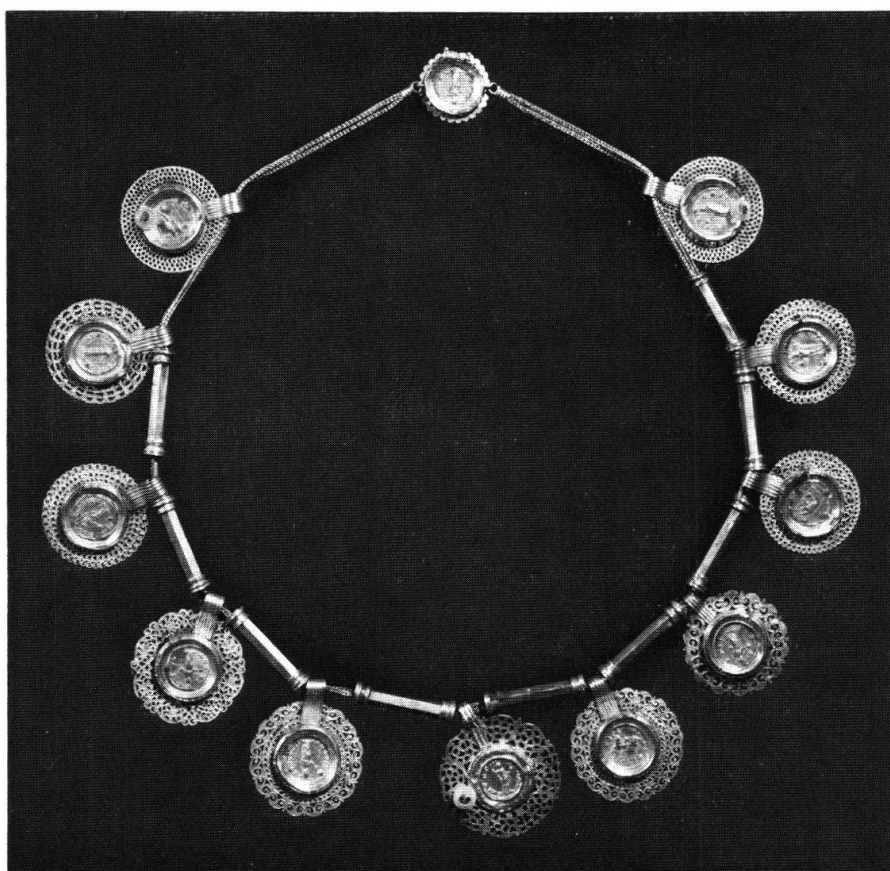
The transition from the Severan period to the decades following is provided by perhaps the most important single necklace which has survived from Antiquity:

- 29 Necklace with eleven pendants and a central clasp, each consisting of a filigree mounting for a gold Aureus. The latest Aureus belongs to the reign of Gordianus III (A.D. 238 to 244). The coin as the clasp is Severus Alexander. Hadrian





Ill. 4.  
Cat. 29 Obv.



Ill. 5.  
Cat. 29 Rev.

(twice), Antoninus Pius, Faustina Senior and Junior, Pertinax, Caracalla, Marcrinus, and Elagabalus are also represented.

Kansas City, William Rockhill Nelson Gallery, 56–76 or 77, from Aboukir near Alexandria in Egypt. – Handbook of the Collections 1959, p. 40; 1974, p. 50.

- 29a The necklace no. 29 with eleven pendants, twelve Aurei, from Aboukir, in Kansas City, represents the later *terminus* of the period, begun with the Rennes patera, of collecting and mounting choice Aurei for display on ceremonial and other special occasions. Besides the Aureus of Gordianus III (reverse the Emperor standing in military costume), dated A.D. 241 to 243, the date of the necklace is strongly suggested by the second chain and pendant from the Aboukir find, which shows a *tondo* bust of a high Romano-Egyptian official in imperatorial cloak, an Egyptian Osiris flanked by two royal hawks on the reverse (no. 56–78; Handbook 1974, p. 50; C. Vermeule, BMFA 60, 1962, p. 17, fig. 9).

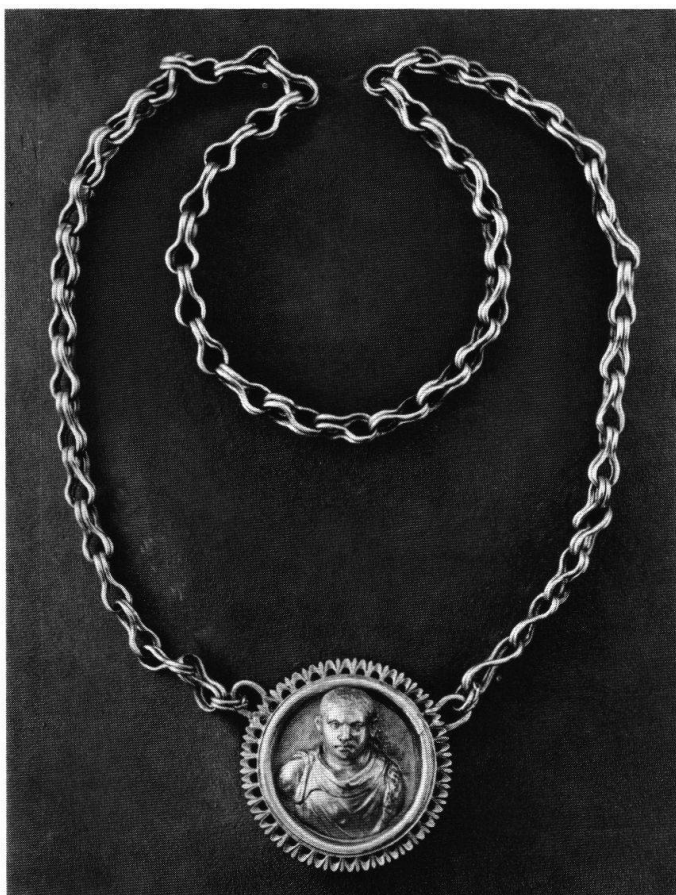
Although of medallion size, the frame of this *tondo* bust is of the type used to enclose Aurei; it parallels the smaller frame of the Alexander Severus necklace in the Morgan collection from Alexandria (see above).

### Object relating to Coins

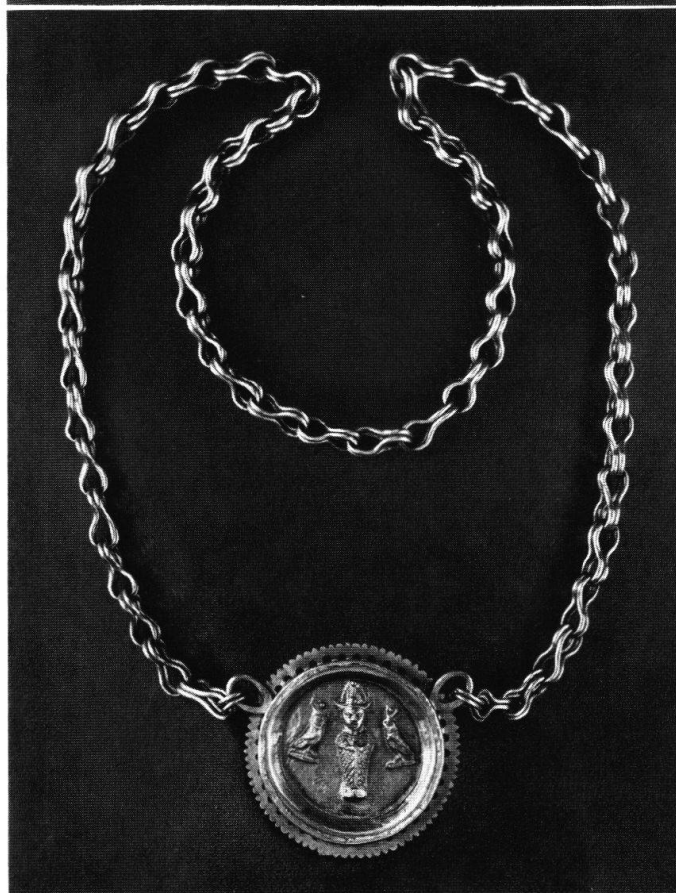
- f Necklace with pendant set with a sardonyx intaglio of octagonal shape. Dedham (Mass.), Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Freddy Homburger. Once on loan at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (no. 238.65).

The filigree setting matches at least one of the coins (the worn Hadrian) on the Kansas City necklace from Aboukir, and the seated Dea Roma – Athena Polias of the intaglio has numerous parallels on the coinage of the late Julio-Claudian through Severan periods of the Roman Empire. The contrast, or comparison, is with the other first-class Alexandrian numismatic necklaces incorporating Aurei from the Antonines to Gordian, as the ensemble in the old collection of jewelry in the Berlin Museums: A. Greifenhagen, Schmuckarbeiten in Edelmetall, Band I, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin 1970.

- 30 Aureus of Gordianus III, set as a modest, looped pendant with a rough frame and a ropework border. The coin is well preserved, but the type (FIDES MILITVM, Standing Fides with scepter: RIC, no. 7) is not exceptional. Antike Münzen, Bank Leu, Auktion 2, Zurich, 25 April 1972, p. 48, no. 435, pl. XXIII.
- 31 Aureus, as previous (A.D. 240). Reverse: AEQVITAS AVG (RIC, no. 57). The obverse of the frame, a chain of semicircular petals around a *tondo* band,



Ill. 6. Cat. 29 a Obv.



Ill. 6. Cat. 29 a Rev.





Ill. 7. Cat. p. 20 f

is more finished than the reverse, which has been hammered to accommodate the pendant-coin.

Münzen und Medaillen AG, Basel, Auktion 44, 15–17 June 1971, p. 17, no. 100, pl. 5.

- 32 Aureus, as previous (A.D. 241 to 243). Reverse: LAETITIA AVG N (RIC, no. 101). The simple frame, with its crude, crimped-over, serrated-edge fastenings gives a very plebeian version of one of the Kansas city mountings.  
Antike Münzen, Leu-Hess, Auction no. 49, Lucerne, 27–28 April 1971, p. 49, no. 421.
- 33 Gold brooch, composed of an Aureus of Philippus I (A.D. 244 to 249), in a wide gold rim, wire, and openwork setting. London, British Museum.  
Marshall, *Catalogue of the Jewellery*, p. 340, no. 2870, pl. LXIII.  
The reverse shows Liberalitas standing. The setting is more complex but no more refined than the Metropolitan Museum Aureus (see following). The two show that the transition from pendant to brooch was an easy one.
- 34 Pendant, with an Aureus of Philippus I. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art. 99.35.70.

A. Oliver Jr., *BMMA* 24, 1966, pp. 282–283, fig. 29.

The circular frame has incised and relief lines running between an outer ring of openwork semicircles and an inner row of honeysuckle or ivy-leaf shaped triangles. Frames of this general type could also be set with imitation medallions, with cameos (as the Naix necklace), or with plain stones: see E. Coche de la Ferté, *Les bijoux antiques*, Paris 1956, pls. XLIII, XLV.

- 35 Pendant, with an Aureus of Traianus Decius (A.D. 249 to 251), in a setting similar to that of the Valerianus in Hamburg (see below), though slightly less elegant. Naville Sale VIII, Collection Clarence S. Bement, Lucerne 1924, p. 78, no. 1361, pl. 52. Reverse: ADVENTVS AVG. Traianus Decius to left, on horseback, hand raised in greeting.

The coin type is sufficiently rare and the message general enough to have encouraged preservation and display of such an Aureus in a special setting.

- 36 Pendant with an openwork border (loop broken away) containing an Aureus of Volusianus (A.D. 251 to 254). The reverse shows Libertas standing. London, British Museum.

Marshall, *Catalogue of the Jewellery*, p. 349, no. 2938, pl. LXVIII.

This setting is like those of the two cameos on the Nasium necklace (although slightly simpler) and other such jewelry going back into the second century A.D., for example the Jameson Collection Aureus of Hadrian (see above).

Marshall cites, for setting, *Sammlung Bachofen von Echt*, pl. XLVI (enclosing coins of Faustina the Elder, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Gordianus III).

- 37 Pendant, with an Aureus of Valerianus (A.D. 253 to 260). The coin, with FIDES MILITVM reverse, was struck in Rome about A.D. 255. The mounting is of the simplest, acanthus-leaf («architectural») contemporary type. The back is even rougher than the front. Hamburg Museum, from Cetatea Alba (Tyras) on the Black Sea. Inv. no. 1927, 146b.

H. Hoffmann, V. von Claer, *Antiker Gold- und Silberschmuck*, Mainz am Rhein 1968, pp. 85–86, no. 56, with bibliography. The Aureus (RIC, p. 41, no. 35) is undated, mint of Rome.

In the imperial period the taste for necklaces with such pendants spread from the Delta in Egypt (the temple treasure of the lion-god Mahes at Leontopolis) southeast to India: see *Handbook of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 1969, pp. 24, 228.

- 38 Aureus of Quietus, A.D. 260 to 261, evidently struck at Samosata (Commagene) mint, with VICTORIA AVGG reverse, set neatly in a ring with band cut out into a floral shape; this setting provided a careful effort to preserve a very rare

coin of a short-lived young Emperor: Münzen und Medaillen AG, Basel, Sale 43, 1970, p. 51, no. 431.

- 39 Gold pendant in the form of an Aureus of Gallienus (A.D. 253 to 268). The reverse shows Jupiter standing with *fulmen*, cloak over the left arm. IOVI VLTORI. The mounting is of a pedestrian type, with an openwork lotus-leaf border. It is, however, good work, presumably «of the period». London, British Museum.  
Marshall, Catalogue of Jewellery, pp. 349–350, no. 2939, pl. LXVIII.  
The coin (see RIC, p. 135, no. 53) belongs to the Emperor's sole reign, mint of Rome.
- 40 Medallion gold double Denarius (RIC, p. 131, note 1, says «Aureus») of Gallienus Augustus with the famous DEO AVGVSTO bust of Augustus Caesar as the reverse type. Parma Museum, found with other Aurei in 1821.  
Gnecchi, I Medaglioni Romani, I, p. 6, no. 4, pl. 2, no. 9.  
The frame with its lotus-palm obverse and serrated incuse reverse is not very fine work, clearly «of the period». As with the multiple Aurei of Caracalla, it is the size of the gold coin which has occasioned the special setting. The coin is in excellent condition; for its historical import, see also CAH, Plates, V, p. 236, fig. 1, and Text, vol. XII, 1939, pp. 194, 365.
- 41 Gold medallion of Gallienus, with a loop attached. The reverse shows Hercules standing: VIRT GALLIENI AVG.  
Ars Classica, Sale XVIII, Lucerne, 10 October 1938, no. 432, pl. 17; Weber Collection, J. Hirsch, Sale 24, no. 2301, pl. XXXVIII.  
In perfect condition, the medallion was unusual enough to be preserved as a collector's item almost immediately after it was struck.
- 42 Medallion of Gallienus with conventional pendant frame and loop. The reverse has Fides standing with military standards. The outer frame has a crude egg and dart design on the obverse and a plain reverse. The medallion is in excellent condition.  
Collection de M. le Vicomte de Ponton d'Amécourt, Monnaies d'or romaines et byzantines, Paris 1887, p. 78, no. 522. Several, varying, specimens of the medallion are known: see RIC, p. 131, no. 11, and note 2.
- 43 Gold brooch composed of an Aureus of Postumus (A.D. 258 to 267), in an openwork setting. The coin is of the rare, artistic type with jugate busts of Postumus and Hercules on one side, Postumus as Mars Ultor on the other. London, British Museum.

Marshall, Catalogue of Jewellery, no. 2871, pl. LXIII. – Higgins, Greek and Roman Jewellery, p. 192, pl. 61, A.

An example in the American Numismatic Society, New York, has a filigreed frame (c. 0.036 m in diameter); the Aureus (RIC, no. 274) has jugate Postumus and Hercules on the obverse, the Nemean Hercules on the reverse. This beautiful Aureus from the Newell collection is set in an exquisite octagonal openwork mounting with loop above. The *tondo* frame has a flat area with serrations around the raised inner circle on the obverse, all these elements being hammered over the lettering on the reverse. This indicates the Aureus was mounted to be worn with the jugate busts outwards.

- 44 Octagonal openwork, looped pendant with Aureus of Victorinus (A.D. 268 to 270). The reverse: INDVLGENTIA AVG. shows the Emperor raising Gallia or the Res Publica.

The Hague, Royal Coin Cabinet, no. 8692. – Römer am Rhein, Kunsthalle Köln, 15 April to 30 June 1967, p. 313, no. F 15. – A. N. Zadoks-Josephus Jitta, Bulletin ... Antieke Beschaving 29, 1964, pp. 64–66. – Fasti Archaeologici 17, 1962, p. 314, no. 4532, fig. 94.

The openwork frame, suggesting a vine-pattern, is skillfully executed; the goldsmith (using an imported mounting?) struggled with the technical problem of inserting the Aureus. The ensemble was found in 1831 in the dunes between Ter Heide and Monster; the coin dates in the second half of A.D. 269.

- 45 Aureus of Claudius II Gothicus (A.D. 268 to 270), mint of Rome, with a loop attached. IOVI VICTORI reverse. Paris, «Le Cabinet de France».

RIC, p. 211, no. 6. – J. Lafaurie, RevNum 1958, p. 101, under no. 3, pl. X, C. The coin is somewhat worn, and the loop appears to be heavy, with triple ridges, and slightly crude.

- 46 Bracelet for the upper arm, set with Aurei of Marcus Aurelius, Caracalla, Gordianus III, and Claudius Gothicus. Vienna.

E. Saglio, «Armilla», in Daremberg-Saglio, I, cols. 437–438, fig. 534. Cites Arneth, Gold und Silber-Monumente in Wien, Vienna 1850, pl. G, XI.

The four Aurei are set, portraits outwards, at four points of the compass on the openwork armlet, that of Marcus Aurelius opposite Claudius II and the two later pieces between.

- 47 Bracelets and mounted pendants in the treasure found at Petrianec near Warasdin in Croatia.

The undated book «An Illustrated Guide to the Collections in the Museum of Fine Arts (Kunsthistorisches Museum) at Vienna» lists the following under Room XIV (pp. 23–24):

No. 258. Bracelet, with four gold coins of the Emperors Antoninus Pius, Gordianus III, Lucius Verus, and Julia Domna.

No. 259. Bracelet, with coins of the Emperors Caracalla, Commodus, Gordianus III, and Claudius II. (This is presumably identical with the example described in the previous entry, where Marcus Aurelius is given instead of Commodus.)

Nos. 266–272. Gold pendants: Coins of the Roman Emperors Hadrianus, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Caracalla, with mounts.

- 48 The following item described in the same Guide to the Collections in the Kunsthistorisches Museum at Vienna belongs with the apogee of such creations around Alexandria in Egypt about A.D. 245.

No. 273. Necklace composed of four gold chains, with four gold coins of the Roman Emperors Antoninus Pius, Faustina, Marcus Aurelius, and Gordianus III, mounted as medals. From Egypt.

- 49 Framed «medallion» of Maximianus Herculeus (A.D. 286 to 311), a very worn specimen with zig-zag, serrated border on the obverse and, more crudely so, on the reverse, and a heavy loop. RIC, p. 163, suggests the medallion is an 8 Aurei piece (struck A.D. 294 to 305). On p. 142 the mint is given as Trier.

Vienna, from the Szilágy-Sómlýó treasure. – Gnechi, *I Medaglioni Romani*, I, p. 12, no. 2, pl. 5, no. 4. – Dennison, *A Gold Treasure*, p. 104.

The wear befits a heirloom preserved with later material. The treasure includes medallions in mountings as late as Gratianus (about A.D. 375), and all the big, star pieces are worn.

- 50 Aureus of Maximianus with a simple loop terminating above the portrait head in what looks like an imitation animal's paw from a Roman bronze or clay vessel-handle. The reverse has VOT XX AVGG in an oakwreath, eagle below. Consul Weber Collection: Jacob Hirsch Sale, Munich, no. XXIV, 10 May 1909, p. 170, no. 2487, pl. XLII.

The ensemble is evenly worn, both on the obverse and the reverse. The eagle stands for the mint of Aquileia: RIC, pp. 300, 311 (dated A.D. 294 to 303).

- 51 Similar Aureus of Maximianus. The reverse: COS III, shows the Emperor, in military garb, riding to the right in Adventus salutation.

J. Hirsch Sale, no. XXIX, 9–10 November 1910, p. 99, no. 1340, pl. XXIX. – K. Pink, *Goldprägung*, NZ 1931, p. 42: Cyzicus 290–292.

The coin is battered and, seemingly, somewhat worn.

*Conclusion*  
Objects of the Fourth Century

- 52 The transition in the Constantinian period to the mounted coins and medallions of Late Antiquity is provided by the three double Solidi of New Year's day A.D. 321 and one of the year 324. Each coin has a radiate, draped, and cuirassed bust of Constantinus Magnus on the obverse and busts of Crispus and Constantinus II in consular garb, holding orbs and scepters, on the reverse. Constantinus Magnus holds an enriched orb in his left hand and raises his right in a gesture of salutation.

Christie's Sale, London, 19 October 1970, pp. 62–65, nos. 197–200. – N. Duval, *Revue du Louvre* 23, 1973, p. 367.

Two of the looped, pendant settings are round and two are hexagonal with concave edges. Each mounting, beyond the central, *tondo* frame, has six small, high-relief busts of ideal, Greek personages (Muses and philosophers?) in smaller, beaded *tondi*. The flat areas of circles and hexagonals are fashioned into complex openwork patterns of ivy-leaves, vine-scrolls, and interlaced floral



Ill. 9. Cat. 52



motifs. They resemble Late Antique carpeting, stucco-work, or mosaics in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. The craftsmanship is superb, the small heads having the dematerialized, deep-pupilled, frozen-faced appearance of figures on Late Antique consular diptychs. The heads are strangely like their counterparts on Lorenzo Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise, the Baptistery in Florence, about 1450: compare C. Vermeule, A Greek Theme and its Survivals: The Ruler's Shield (Tondo Image) in Tomb and Temple, PAPS 109, 1965, pp. 393–395, especially fig. 51. The style begins in the East, in the fourth century or earlier, the marble *tondi* from Aphrodisias in Caria (destroyed in the Evangelical School at Smyrna in 1922) providing a good illustration: PAPS, pp. 373–375, figs. 24 to 27, dating between A.D. 320 and 363. Three of the Constantinian double Solidi were minted at Sirmium.

- 53 Fragment of Gold Girdle, in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, published as «Byzantine 4th and 5th cent.». This splendid combination of numismatics and craftsmanship provides an indication of how late the setting for a gold Aureus could be. An Aureus of DIVA FAVSTINA (Reverse: AVGVSTA, Ceres standing with two torches. BMC IV, p. 59, nos. 403–407, pl. 9, no. 10), struck in the middle or late 140's of the Christian era, is mounted in an ornamental disc and connected by a five-fold chain with a much larger, filigreed circle in which has been set a gold multiple-Solidus («medallion») of Constantius (A.D. 337 to 361).

Early Christian and Byzantine Art, The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore 1947, p. 92, no. 421, pl. LIX. — See also, for the Constantinian medallion alone, J. M. C. Toynbee, Roman Medallions, A.N.S., Numismatic Studies, no. 5, New York 1944, pp. 119, note 49, 173, note 57, pl. XXI.

The ensemble is incomplete at the left of the small, beaded *tondo* with the Antonine Aureus and at the right of the large triumphal medallion of the longest-lived son of Constantine the Great. There is no discernable relationship between Aureus and medallion, and a number of other, older Aurei may have completed the «belt or breast ornament» on the left and right. The Aureus is in excellent condition. The taste for girdles or chest ornaments reached its height in the fifth to seventh centuries in the Eastern Mediterranean, when a number of examples were both set with medallions and Solidi, and created with cast imitations of such late Roman numismatic items: see Early Christian and Byzantine Art, p. 92, no. 422, pl. LIX. Very few of these creations utilized much older Aurei, like the example discussed here, indicating such coins were out of fashion, too scarce, or were collected in other ways in the period from Theodosius II (408 to 450) through Mauricius Tiberius (582 to 602), the outside limits of the medallions and coins on the girdle from Karavas-Lambousa, Cyprus (in the Metropolitan Museum), just cited.



- 54 Gold medallion, with ancient loop (held on with a rivet), struck to the weight of a  $\frac{3}{4}$  Solidus, of Constantinus Magnus (306 to 337) and dated 324 to 326, mint of Trier. The obverse shows a bust of Constantine in enriched, crested helmet, chain-mail cuirass, and cloak on the right shoulder; the Emperor holds a shield, partly visible against the near (left) shoulder, and a short spear over the far (right) shoulder, in the right hand. The reverse is bare, save for the beaded border and a centering dot or bead in the middle of the flat surface.

Adolph Hess AG, Lucerne, Bank Leu AG, Zürich, Auction 49, 27 and 28 April 1971, p. 52, no. 457, pl. XXIII, with older references to one-sided medallions of the Constantinian period.

These one-sided medallions, clearly designed as pendants to be preserved and displayed for their intrinsic and decorative values, mark the transition of the gold medallion or coin of the Late Antique period from monetary unit to item of jewelry. These medallions look ahead to the cast imitations of numismatic or quasi-numismatic items popular from the early fifth to the early seventh centuries A.D. Clearly, just as mints do nowadays in an inflationary but very prosperous and commercial economy, the mints of the Roman Empire had entered unabashedly into the production of «numismatic» or quasi-monetary pieces designed as jewelry rather than coins or objects of medallic commemoration.

#### THE EVIDENCE

In the centuries from the Ptolemies to the disruptions of the classical world under Valerian and Gallienus, the five hundred years from 250 B.C. to 250 of the Christian era, Egypt was a center of the creation of splendid jewelry set with gold coins. The inflation under the Severans brought the collecting of gold Aurei and their preservation in imaginative fashions, in plate and jewelry, to a high level of activity. While Egypt has yielded many examples, doubtless from tombs, Gaul has produced its share of such «collected» and mounted coins, probably as a result of the civil wars and invasions in the third century A.D. Examples have been recorded from the Balkans and Asia Minor, but the bulk of the mounted medallions and coins from the Danube region belongs to the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. when such items were created to reward barbarian leaders.

From the times of Valerian and Gallienus (that is about 260) to the supremacy of Constantinus Magnus (in the 320's), the setting of Aurei and medallions in mountings, necklaces, pendants, brooches, or bracelets, was more of a random, almost-accidental commerce than it had ever been in the past. The purpose was similar to what has been observed again and again in the twentieth century, preservation of

isolated examples of a vanished coinage in times of extreme inflation and crisis. A noteworthy exception might be the bracelets in the treasure found at Petrianec near Warasdin in Croatia. There an Aureus of Claudius II Gothicus (268 to 270) provides the latest date in a setting that embraces the late Antonines (Marcus Aurelius or Commodus), the Severans (Caracalla), and Gordianus III. A companion bracelet spans the period from Antoninus Pius through Lucius Verus and Julia Domna to Gordianus III. While these Aurei may have been random acquisitions from the market for scarce coins of rising bullion value, their settings speak of efforts to arrange them according to the major dynasties or ages of a crucial century in the Roman Empire's history, presumably the hundred years just before the «treasure» was placed in the ground.

With the recovery under Constantinus Magnus and his sons, a policy of striking multiple Solidi for presentation and display by foreign potentates and influential barbarians, like the British and American peace medals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, turned the art from one of private collecting, ancient numismatics in a modern sense, to an instrument of state policy and imperial propaganda. In the last centuries of the ancient world, chiefly in Egypt before the advent of Islam, ceremonial jewelry was created (notably pectorals and girdles) in which cast imitations of contemporary medallions and Solidi were substituted for the official, struck pieces. This custom linked the ancient world with the Middle Ages and modern times in the Eastern Mediterranean, for such jewelry has been a feature of the Ottoman Empire and its successors among modern states down to the 1950's and 1960's.

The Hellenistic girdles from Ptolemaic Egypt illustrate the desire on the part of the ancients to preserve rare and artistic coins or medallions in exceptional settings. The gold patera from Rennes brings the custom of setting imperial Aurei in jewelry or plate to a highly sophisticated level. The surviving Aurei of the Nasium (Naix) necklace are the rarest and most complex Severan dynastic Aurei, at least two and sometimes three portraits on each coin, in a superb state of preservation. The necklace from Aboukir near Alexandria, like the Rennes patera, again provides a «collection» of emperors and their consorts, the imperial polity from Hadrian through Gordianus III. Otherwise, medallic coins of Caracalla and Gallienus give evidence, alas only in pairs or singly, that they were both minted and certainly mounted in pendant settings because of the fascination they provided as numismatic items.

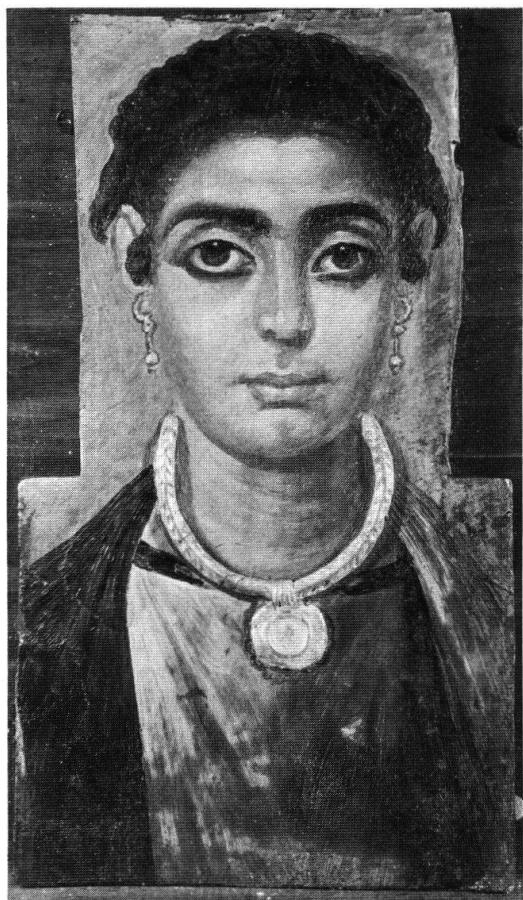
In the absence of recorded «collections», as opposed to hoards, of medallions and coins, the surviving examples of numismatic significance, coins and their special numismatic counterparts in interrelated settings, show how the minds of the ancients reacted to an urge surely as old as coinage itself, the collection and preservation of numismatic objects for their historical importance or artistic beauty. As with Roman imperial coins and medallions from Renaissance times to the present day, the paramount desire seems to have been to collect and display sets of the emperors and their consorts or offspring. The gold dish found at Rennes, with its sixteen Aurei from Hadrian to Julia Domna, with its contrasting frames for emperors and for princes or

imperial ladies, and with its interior markings for placement of each coin, provides the most impressive remaining evidence that choice coins were collected in Antiquity. Although the Dionysiac and Heraklean themes sculptured in relief on the interior of this dish were an expression of the mythological programs of Septimius Severus (A.D. 193 to 211), the evidences of overall design and provenance suggest the Rennes patera was a private creation for a family of taste and means in the Latin West.

### *Additional Note*

#### Mounted Coins in Painting and Relief

Mounted pendants appear on Palmyrene reliefs and in so-called Fayoum or mummy-portraits, good corroborative evidence as to by whom and on what occasions such jewelry was worn. The two most spectacular examples from Roman Egypt, both seemingly from Antinoopolis, are portraits of young to middle-aged ladies of the second century A.D. in the Detroit Institute of Arts (inv. no. 25.2) and in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore (inv. no. 32.4): K. Parlasca, *Mumienporträts und verwandte Denkmäler*, Wiesbaden 1966, pp. 126, nos. 3 and 1, 127, 131, and 259. In each case,



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the mounted Aureus or gold medallion is attached by an enriched, circular loop to a heavy gold collar, which appears to be flexible or to be a chain encased in sections. Since only one framed coin is shown on each necklace and since the subjects were presumably middle-class Egyptians (Greeks or persons of mixed ancestry), of some means, the necklaces with many Aurei, like the example from Aboukir in Kansas City, were reserved for the families of governors or for the very wealthy. The Kansas City necklace has tubular gold casings over the chain, between each pendant, and this may be what the artist has tried to represent in the painted mummy-portraits.

A third mummy-portrait shows a lady wearing a necklace of more Late Antique character, gemstone or coin mounted in a frame of heavy gold beads and a more flexible necklace: Sotheby & Co., Sale, 12 July 1971, lot 42. The coin or coin-setting jewelry in Palmyrene reliefs is similarly of Late Antique type, as befits the Byzantinism in style of these reliefs: H. Ingholt, *Studier over Palmyrensk Skulptur*, Copenhagen 1928, p. 38, The Nûrbel Group, A.D. 181, a good illustration being on New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 02.29.4. What Palmyra was to contribute to the concepts of art throughout the Empire after Diocletian and Maximian, she was also to give to tastes and forms of jewelry on a pan-Mediterranean scale.

The ladies of the mummy-portraits and Palmyrene tombstones may have worn such jewelry in their graves, or its naturalistic, chromatic representation may have been suitable surrogate.