

# Roman Empresses' Coins from a Private Collection: A Descriptive Archaeological Study

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## Abstract

This is the first study of a unique private collection of coins belonging to Roman empresses. The collection includes silver and bronze/copper coins bearing inscriptions, pictures, symbols, and monograms. These coins have significant artistic implications as they represent unique Roman styles and types, and some of them are rare. The time frame of the existence and usage of the study sample extends from the beginning of the first century A.D. to the beginning of the fourth century A.D., concurrent with the emergence of the Roman Empire and the height of its expansion and prosperity. The study also seeks to discuss the reasons these coins depicting the empresses were produced; for example, the marriage of Marcus Aurelius with the emperor's daughter, Faustina the Younger—the coins attesting the desire for the continuation of the dynasty and celebrating the beginning of a new Saeculum Aureum. The coinage also reflects the joint rule of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus until 169 A.D., when Faustina II and Lucilla were depicted. Homonoia and the victory over Armenia were also depicted, and the decades are celebrated. We also discuss the possible reasons for the deterioration of bronze coinage in the second half of 2nd century A.D. and the reasons that led to a substantial increase in coinage in the name of Augusta at the end of Hadrian's reign.

## Keywords

Roman Empire Period, Roman Empresses, Numismatics, Roman Coins

## 1. Introduction

The coins were chosen to represent the currency of the Roman Empire over a five-hundred-year period when the coinage system underwent significant development and anticipated all coin types that have since been created. At the

same time, in terms of artistic merit, it achieved such an excellence that will almost never be surpassed. There is a consensus among scholars that various currency reforms occurred at the same time; we continue to wonder why the Roman state minted coins in the first place. What was the purpose? To answer this question, the coinage was based on various metals, and the supply of these metals was important for minting coins. In essence, according to Howgego, the “supply of money was dictated by the availability of metals that could in principle be used as money, by the extent to which such metals were used as money, and by how hard that money was made to work”. Howgego (1992: p. 4).

Many reforms occurred after the shift to the Empire, including the establishment of a new currency. Gold was introduced to suit the demands of the world’s metropolises, and two new coins, the Aureus and its half, were made in this metal. They were based on silver coins. The standard silver currency remained the denarius, with distinct types. The emperor’s head replaced those of deities, with a superscription that foreshadowed current currency legends. It was made of the emperor’s name and titles, frequently with the date of strike placed in a circle around the edge of the coin (Metcalf, 2012: pp. 338-343). Nero (45-68 A.D. was the first emperor to diminish the weight of the denarius, starting a process of degeneration, but Nero was a man of tremendous creative aptitude, despite his weaknesses. His interest in the imperial currency led him to establish an *as* (*aes*) and quadrants in orichalcum, in addition to the ones struck in copper (Sear, 1988: p. 11; Metcalf, 2012: pp. 346-348).

## 2. Sabina 83-137 A.D.

Vibia Sabina was the granddaughter of Emperor Trajan and the daughter of L. Vibius, Sabinus, and Matidia; she was Hadrian’s wife from 117 to 138 A.D., thanks to Plotina’s favor (Seaby, 1979: p. 210; Sear, 1988: p. 13; Gagarin, 2010: p. 60). Sabina’s marriage to the 24-year-old Hadrian thus seemed to indicate that the young man had been marked out for the Imperial succession. Their 36-year union was destined to be childless, and there was much gossip surrounding the unhappiness of their relationship, most of it probably groundless. She followed her husband on the majority of his excursions, but their marriage was strained (Sear, 1988: p. 83). Despite her husband’s accession to the imperial throne in A.D. 117, Sabina did not receive the title of Augusta (and thus the right to coinage in her name) until A.D. 128. The reason for the long delay is unknown, but it appears to have coincided with Hadrian’s postponement of accepting the title *Pater Patriae* (Father of His Country) (Sear, 2002: p. 191). Although not extensive by later standards, Sabina’s coinage was much larger than any previous consort, which would seem to contradict the rumors of their unhappy relationship. Sabina died late in the year 136, thus predeceasing her husband by about a year and a half, and was accorded a special coinage to commemorate her consecration. Hadrian consecrated her and issued a special coinage (Sear, 1988: p. 151; Sear, 2002: p. 192; Gagarin, 2010: p. 63; Metcalf, 2012: p. 569). Also, under Ha-

drian's reign, coins bearing the image of Sabina were produced in the eastern and western provinces, **Figure 1**.

According to Richard A. Abdy (*Abdy, 2014: pp. 73-91*), the main series of Sabina coinage throughout her lifetime falls into two main groups of obverse legends. The first is formed when SABINA AVGVSTA IMP HADRIANI AVG P P quickly drops the IMP (which had also been present in the pre-P P group). SABINA AVGVSTA HADRIANI AVG P P is seen with a large amount of coinage, which was most likely created over time; however, it is possible that it remained within sestertii throughout her life. The second legend format is shortened (at first just to gold and silver) to SABINA AVGVSTA. This shortening trend is perfectly in keeping with the simplification of the legends on the coinage in the name of Hadrian himself. This is the case with our coin.



**Figure 1.** AR Denarius. Rome, 128-136/7 A.D. th. 1.72 mm.; dim.18.58 mm.; 3.25 gr.; dir. 6 h. Obv. SABINA. AVGVSTA. diad. and dr. bust r., hair in a queue down back. Rev. IVNONI. REGINAE. Juno, veiled, stg. hd. l., holding patera and scepter. l. hand. (Under Hadrian) R.I.C 395a; B.M.C. 895; R.I.C 401a; St. 370 and \*80. R.S.C II 37. R.C.V 1187.

### 3. Faustina I Senior 100-141 A.D. (The Elder/Maior)

Annia Galeria Faustina Senior is the illustrious daughter of M. Annius Verus (three times consul) and Rupilia Faustina. She was probably born in the last decade of the first century; she married Antoninus Pius 138-161 A.D. before his accession and bore him two sons and two daughters, one of whom was Faustina II and the mother of Faustina Junior (*Seaby, 1979: p. 124; Sear, 1988: p. 161*), but only one (the younger Faustina) lived long enough to see her father achieve imperial status after Hadrian's death in A.D 138 (*Sear, 2002: p. 278; Varner, 2004: p. 153; Gagarin, 2010: p. 124; Callatay, 2013: p. 310*).

Faustina died in A.D. 141 "and was consecrated by Antoninus, who also issued a very extensive commemorative coinage in her honor", **Figure 2, Figure 3**. (*Sear, 2002: p. 277*), only two years after she had received the title of Augusta. Her deification was followed by a commemorative coinage in her honor issued on an unprecedented scale in the full range of denominations. The year 147 marked a major turning point when the elevation of the younger Faustina to the rank of Augusta resulted in the disappearance of this title from the obverses of her mother's posthumous coinage. Her lifetime coinage is thus relatively sparse in comparison to the massive postmortem releases created several times by her bereaved husband during the next two decades (*Sear, 2002: p. 278*). The exten-

sive later “Diva Faustina” issues may have been concentrated around the 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the empress’s death in 141 and the dedication of her temple the following year (i.e., AD 151-2 and 156-7) (Sear, 2002: p. 265; Gagarin, 2010: p. 124; Callatay, 2013: p. 311).



**Figure 2.** AR Denarius. Rome, 147-149 A.D. th. 2.32 mm.; dim. 17.39 mm.; 3.45 gr.; dir. 6 h. Obv. DIVA. FAVSTINA, diad. dr. bust r., hair, looped up Rev. AVG. VSTA, Vesta, veiled, stg. l., hd. l., (rare) holding the long supporting fold of drapery in r. hand. l., hand to the side. (Antoninus Pius) R.I.C 362; B.M.C. 421; R.I.C II, 104; Sear 4584.



**Figure 3.** AR Denarius. Rome, 147-161 A.D. th. 2.39 mm.; dim. 17.40 mm.; 3.43 gr.; dir. 12 h. Obv. (rare) [DIVA] FAVSTINA, diad. dr. bust r., wearing pearls bound on top of her head. Rev. AETER NITAS Aeternitas stg. l., holding globe and billowing veil in r. hand. (Antoninus Pius), R.I.C II 351; B.M.C.R.E 373; R.S.C 32. Sear, 4578.

#### 4. Faustina II Junior 130-175 A.D. (The Younger/Minor)

“Annia Galeria Faustina” was the daughter of Antoninus Pius and Faustina Senior; she was born about A.D. 127, and was the wife of her maternal cousin, the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Six years later the couple was married; she subsequently bore many children, one of whom was the future emperor Commodus. In 147, the younger Faustina received the title of Augusta in celebration of the birth of her first child (Seaby, 1979: p. 221; Sear, 1988: p. 170; Gagarin, 2010: pp. 123-124). Faustina’s coinage began with her elevation to imperial status in AD 147 and was issued under her father’s authority under Emperor Antoninus Pius for the first fourteen years. Thereafter, until she died in AD 175, her coinage was struck under her husband, Emperor Marcus Aurelius. A lengthy posthumous coinage was also produced in 176 (Sear, 2002: p. 281). Unfortunately, to our knowledge, it is not possible to assign precise dates to virtually all individual Roman issues of Faustina within the period AD 161-175 (Sear, 2002: p. 341; Varner, 2004: p. 154; Callatay, 2013: p. 311).

She died late in AD 175 in the remote mountain village of Halala (later Faustinopolis) in Cappadocia. She had been accompanying her husband on his journey to the east in the aftermath of the abortive rebellion of Avidius Cassius, in

which she may have been implicated. Despite this, and a reputation for marital infidelity, her memory was revered by the compassionate emperor, who ordered her immediate deification. Although the commemorative coinage issued in her memory was not produced on the same vast scale as that of her mother three decades before, it is nonetheless surprisingly extensive and includes an interesting array of unusual types and legends, **Figure 4**, **Figure 5** (Seaby, 1979: p. 221; Sear, 1988: p. 170; Sear, 2002: p. 337; Gagarin, 2010: p. 124; Callatay, 2013: p. 312).



**Figure 4.** AR Denarius. Rome, 161-175 A.D. th. 2.15 mm.; dim. 18.55 mm.; 3.42 gr.; dir. 7 h. Obv. FAVSTINA. AVGVSTA, diad. dr. bust r., with a double circlet of pearls around the head, hair looped up or in a knot neck. Rev. FECVN. DITAS, Fecunditas stg. hd. r., holding a scepter and a small child. (Aurelius), B.M.C. 91; R.I.C. 677; R. S.C II 99. Sear 5252.



**Figure 5.** AR Denarius. Rome, 161-175 A.D. th. 2.55 mm.; dim. 17.65 mm.; 3.47 gr.; dir. 12 h. Obv. FAVSTINA AVGVSTA, diad. dr. bust r., with a double circlet of pearls around the head, hair looped up or in a knot neck. Rev. FECVN. DITAS, Fecunditas stg. hd. l., holding two infants/children in her arms, between two young girls. (Paris unusual style) (Aurelius) B.M.C. 398; R.I.C. 676; R.S.C II 95; Sear 5251.

## 5. Crispina 164-187/192 A.D.

Bruttia Crispina, the daughter of L. Fulvius Bruttius Praesens, accompanied Marcus Aurelius on his expedition against the Sarmatians. After this triumph, Commodus was associated with Marcus Aurelius as co-emperor, and he was married to Commodus in A.D. 177, when she received the title “Augusta”, Nevertheless, she was banished to Caprese (Capri) and later pit to death during the beginning of her husband reign (Seaby, 1979: p. 255; Sear, 1988: p. 183; Varner, 2004: p. 153; Gagarin, 2010: p. 51). Crispina was converted in Augusta. Her coins were typical for such imperial ladies, depicting all of the classic Roman deities and qualities for which Augusta was ideal; in this example, Venus, the goddess of love and beauty, held an apple in her right hand, **Figure 6** (Brennan, 2004: p. 35).



**Figure 6.** AR Denarius. Rome, 180-183 A.D. th. 1.95 mm.; dim. 18.85 mm.; 3.51 gr.; dir. 6 h. Obv. CRISPINA. AVGVSTA, diad. dr. bust r., with one circlet of pearls around the head, hair looped up or in a knot neck Rev. V E N V S, Venus stg. front, hd. l., holding an apple in r. hand and drawing up a drapery fold on l., shoulder. (Commodus) B.M.C. 44; R.I.C III 286a; R.S.C II 35; R.S.C 35.

### 6. Julia Domna 170-217 A.D.

Julia Domna was a Roman empress of Arab origin, she was born in Emesa (Homs) in the Roman province of Syria about AD 170, she was the younger daughter of the wealthy and influential Julius Bassianus, attracted the attention of the ambitious 42-year-old widower Septimius Severus, after the death of his first wife, married her about A.D. 173 as his second wife. It was not until A.D. 188 that she bore him his first son, named Bassianus, later changed to Antonius and nicknamed Caracalla. A year later, another son, Geta, was born in 189 and was also destined to become emperor (Gagarin, 2010: p. 141). Later in life, she gathered a coterie of men of culture and learning, greatly adding to the brilliance of the Imperial court in Rome. There can be little doubt that she exercised considerable political influence over her husband, between AD 200 and 205. After the downfall of Plautianus Julia resumed her former prominent place in public life. Julia Domna's coinage began with her elevation to imperial status in AD 194 and was issued under her husband's authority, Emperor Septimius Severus, for the first seventeen years. Thereafter, until the temporary downfall of the dynasty in AD 217, it was struck under her sons, the emperors Caracalla and (briefly) Geta. There was also a small amount of posthumous coinage produced under Elagabalus following the restoration of the dynasty in 218, **Figures 7-9** (Seaby, 1982b: p. 51; Sear, 1988: p. 194; Sear, 2002: pp. 489-490; Gagarin, 2010: p. 141).



**Figure 7.** AR Denarius. Rome, 196-211 A.D. th. 2.58 mm.; dim. 17.98 mm.; 2.92 gr.; dir. 1 h. Obv. IVLIA. AVGVSTA, diad. dr. bust r., hair looped up or in knot neck. Rev. CERERI. FRVGIF., Ceres set. l., holding grain ears R. hand and long torch l. hand. (Severus) B.M.C 10-13 and 592; R.I.C 546 and 636; R.S.C III 14; Sear 6576.



**Figure 8.** AR Denarius. Rome, 197-211 A.D. th. 2.15 mm.; dim. 17.41 mm.; 3.21 gr.; dir. 6 h. Obv. IVLIA. AVGVSTA, diad. dr. bust r., hair looped up or in knot neck. Rev. VENVS. FELX, Venus Felix stg. Half-left holding the apple and drawing (drapery) a veil from the shoulder. irregular flan. (Severus) B.M.C. S85 note; R.I.C. 580 notes. 286a; R.S.C 198. Sear, 1851.



**Figure 9.** AR Denarius. Rome, 211-217 A.D. th. 1.98 mm.; dim. 20.05 mm.; 3.64 gr.; dir. 6 h. Obv. IVLIA. AVGVSTA, diad. dr. bust r., hair looped up or in knot neck. Rev. VENVS. VICTRIX, Venus Victrix, set. l., on the throne, holding palladium (rare) and a scepter. (Severus) B.M.C. 95, 168; R.I.C. 583; R. S. C III, 245; Sear 6612.

After the death of Septimius in 211, she was still treated with some degree of deference by Caracalla, but she was forced to witness the murder of Geta in her arms in A.D. 217. Afterward, she succeeded in disguising her grief to secure the goodwill of her surviving son, who bestowed on her many honors. After Caracalla's murder, she stayed on at Antioch until she was ordered to leave, at which point she committed suicide by refusing all nourishment (Seaby, 1982b: p. 51; Sear, 1988: p. 194; Sear, 2002: p. 491; Varner, 2004: p. 177, 180, 187; Gagarin, 2010: p. 142; Callatay, 2013: p. 316).

## 7. Plautilla 185/188-212 A.D.

Publia Fulvia Plautilla, the daughter of the enormously rich and powerful praetorian prefect C. Fulvius Plautianus, was a native of the north African city of Lepcis (Leptis) Magna. Appointed to the Pretorian prefecture in AD 197, Plautianus became one of the wealthiest and most influential individuals ever to occupy this important office, his career inviting comparison with the better-known Sejanus during the reign of Tiberius. Like Sejanus, Plautianus may have had designs on the throne itself (Seaby, 1982b: p. 89; Sear, 2002: p. 546; Gagarin, 2010: p. 51, 285). Fulvia married Caracalla in A.D. 202, bringing a large dowry with her. However, the couple had never had any affection for one another, and it is doubtful if the marriage was ever consummated, especially as Caracalla was only fourteen at the time of the wedding (his bride was probably older). Coin types

hinting at Imperial offspring are better interpreted as expressions of hope than statements of accomplished fact. Plautilla's coinage commenced with her elevation to the rank of Augusta following her marriage to Caracalla in 202 and continued until her political downfall in 205. It comprises principally gold and silver denominations, such as those classified as being very scarce (*dupondii* and *asses*) or very rare (*sestertii*), **Figure 10** (Metcalf, 2012: p. 512). Her aurei and denarii include a few types from the Syrian mint of Laodicea, though this sole survivor from the time of the eastern wars was closed not long after Plautilla's marriage. She was incredibly snobbish, and her abusive husband quickly despised her. Septimius exiled her to Lipari at his request, following her father's death in A.D. 205. She remained in misery until after Septimius' death, when she was slain on her husband's orders (Seaby, 1982b: p. 89; Sear, 2002: p. 747; Varner, 2004: p. 164; Gagarin, 2010: p. 51, 285; Metcalf, 2012: p. 512).



**Figure 10.** AR Denarius. Eastern mint (Laodicea), 202-205 A.D. th. 2.44 mm.; dim. 17.94 mm.; 2.64 gr.; dir. 12 h. Obv. PLAVTILLAE AVG VSTAE, dr. bust r., with hair in nearly vertical waves and drawn into a large bun at the neck. Rev. CONCORDIAE, Concordia set. l., holding patera in r. hand and double cornucopia in l. hand. (Caracalla) B.M.C. 300, 734; R.I.C 360 and 370; R.S.C II 7. Sear 7067.

## 8. Julia Soaemias 180-222 A.D.

Julia Soaemias Bassiana, born probably before AD 180, was the mother of Elagabalus (218-222 A.D.), was the daughter of Julius Avitus and Tulia Maesa, the elder daughter of Julia Domna's sister Julia Maesa and the consular Julius Avitus. She married Varius Marcellus, a senator, who enjoyed a distinguished career under Severus and Caracalla, and gave birth to their son, the future emperor Elagabalus, in AD 204. Elagabalus, Julia Soaemias' son, became Emperor in 218 and gave her the title of Augusta (though apparently not the right of coinage at the time). Becoming a widow, she retired after the death of Caracalla to Emesa, where she and her mother persuaded the troops to declare Elagabalus emperor. She returned to Rome and became a senator (Gagarin, 2010: p. 34). The young emperor's shameless behavior seems to have been inherited from his mother. To Julia Maesa's dismay, Soaemias seemed to encourage rather than attempt to curb his moral depravity and religious fanaticism. As a result, she shared his fate when the prurient mutinied on March 11, AD 222, and murdered both mother and son; their mutilated bodies were dragged through the streets of the city and thrown into the Tiber. The coinage in the name of Julia Soaemias is noticeably scarcer than that of her mother, clearly suggesting a shorter period of issue. Her

dated Alexandrian tetradrachms are limited to Elagabalus' regnal years 4 and 5 indicating that no Egyptian coinage was produced for her before late August AD 220. It seems likely that the same is true of her Roman issues. No Antoniniani (*Antoninianus*) (the denomination discontinued in the summer of 219) were struck in her name or denarii of Syrian style, a series that ceased sometime in 220, **Figure 11**, **Figure 12** (Seaby, 1982b: p. 125; Sear, 1988: p. 216; Sear, 2002: p. 626; Gagarin, 2010: p. 34; Metcalf, 2012: p. 572).



**Figure 11.** AR Denarius. Rome, 218-222 A.D. th.1.96 mm.; dim. 19.46 mm.; 2.92 gr.; dir. 1 h. Obv. IVIA SOAEMIAS AVG, dr. bust r. Rev. VENVS CAELESTIS, Venus set. l., on the throne, holding an apple in r. hand and a scepter in l. hand; in front, a child stg. r., raising both hands. (Elagabalus). B.M.C.R.E 55-60 (describes some as holding patera instead of apple); R.I.C. 243; R.S.C III 14. Sear 7720.



**Figure 12.** AR Denarius. Rome, 218-222 A.D. th. 1.91 mm.; dim. 19.20 mm.; 2.96 gr.; dir. 12 h. Similar **Figure 11**. (rare) the child shows only the left hand, without raising/ lifting it.

### 9. Julia Maesa 159-224 A.D.

Julia Maesa, a daughter of Julius Bassianus (160-224 A.D.), priest of the Sun, was born at Emesa (Homs) in Syria; she was the sister of the empress Julia. In 187, she married Julius Avitus. She was a woman of great sagacity and courage and possessed great wealth. She retired to Emesa on Caracalla's death and succeeded in persuading the troops to proclaim Elagabalus emperor. She fought at the head of his troops against Macrinus, and "she was largely responsible for the rebellion that resulted in the overthrow of Macrinus and the restoration of the Severan Dynasty" (Seaby, 1982b: p. 127; Gagarin, 2010: p. 34, 142; Metcalf, 2012: p. 509). Young Antoninus (Elagabalus) ascended the imperial throne, and the entire family slowly made their way back to Rome. Julia Maesa soon realized that she was going to have a difficult task controlling the boy who had been catapulted into such an exalted position, especially as she received little help from the emperor's mother, her daughter Julia Soemias. All attempts failed, and Maesa had

to make the difficult decision to sacrifice her daughter and grandson to ensure the survival of the dynasty. Maesa was by now quiet and gradually faded into the background, her political role being assumed by the astute Mamaca. Alexander issued a small posthumous coinage in her honor. Julia Maesa's coinage was more extensive than that of any other empress during Elagabalus' reign. It commenced almost as early as that of the emperor himself and includes silver Antoniniani (*Antoninianus*), a denomination discontinued in 219, as well as denarii of Syrian mintage, a series that ended in 220. Some scholars believe that Roman coinage in the name of Julia Maesa continued into the reign of Severus Alexander. If so, it is difficult to determine which of her issues belong to the post-Elagabalus phase, and for this reason, we have placed her entire coinage within the period AD 218-222. Against the notion of a continuation of Alexander's reign is the absence of any Alexandrian issues of Maesa after 222. However, the Balkan mint of Marcianopolis (*Parthenopolis*) did produce a significant series of bronze coins combining the portraits of Alexander and his grandmother, who died in 223 A.D. and was greatly missed for her wise counsels, **Figure 13** (Seaby, 1982b: p. 127; Sear, 1988: p. 217; Sear, 2002: p. 630; Varner, 2004: p. 157, 188; Metcalf, 2012: p. 572).



**Figure 13.** AR Denarius. Rome, 220-222 A.D. th. 2.49 mm.; dim. 18.48 mm.; 2.97 gr.; dir. 12 h. Obv. IVIA MAESA AVG, dr. bust r., occasionally with a diadem (Stéphane). Rev. SAECVLI FELICITAS, Felicitas stg. l. front, hd., holding long caduceus and sacrificing over lighted altar; star in r. field., (Severus Alexander) B.M.C.R.E 79; R.I.C 271; R.S.C III 45; Sear 7757.

## 10. Otacilia Severa 244-249 A.D.

Marcia Otacilia Severa, the daughter of Severus, Governor of Pannonia, married Philip I (the Arab) 234-249 A.D., about A.D. 234, by whom she had Philip II in A.D. 237 (Seaby, 1982a: p. 17; Metcalf, 2012: p. 575). Though very little is known about the biographical details of her life, she may have been of noble Roman birth, as suggested by her name; if so, one can only speculate on how she came to marry the son of an Arab chieftain. She gave birth to their only son, the younger Philip, about seven years before her husband's accession to the throne and was appointed Augusta's title early in the reign; Otacilia Severa had been Augusta since Philip's ascension. The currency depicts her as symbolizing the regime's conventional values, in the frequent form of its Concord (Brennan, 2004: p. 46). She enjoyed a generous share of the imperial coinage, with one of the six officials

of the Rome mint being assigned to the production of issues in her name. Antioch also struck Antoniniani (*Antoninianus*) for her, although these are by no means common. Otacilia's fate is shrouded in mystery. She was in Rome at the time of her husband's defeat by Decius in AD 249. It is unclear, however, whether she was murdered by the praetorians at this time or merely permitted to retire into private life, **Figure 14** (Varner, 2004: p. 151; Sear, 2005: p. 324; Callatay, 2013: p. 312; Metcalf, 2012: p. 172; Metcalf, 2012: p. 480).



**Figure 14.** AR Antoninianus. Rome, 245-247 A.D. th. 1.77 mm.; dim. 22.96 mm.; 4.21 gr.; dir. 6 h. Obv. M. OTACIL SEVERA AVG. dr. diad. bust r., resting on a crescent (denarii and quinarii). Rev. CONCORDIA AVGG., Concordia set. l., holding patera in r. hand and double cornucopia in l. hand. R.I.C125; R.S.C IV 4; Sear 9147.

## 11. Salonina 253-268 A.D.

Cornelia Salonina, also known as Chrysogone (“begotten of gold”), was of Greek origin and had been married to Gallienus 253-268 A.D. (Seaby, 1982b: p. 111; Sear, 1988: p. 265). “Salonina was the equal of Agrippina Senior or Faustina Junior for her intrepid spirit and her support of the army; indeed, she was hailed Mater Castrorum”, Many additional attributes are credited to her. Salonina and Gallienus were both benefactors of the arts and strong followers of Plotinus, the Neoplatonist philosopher who lived in the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century. We have no reason to doubt that she participated in her husband's flamboyant lifestyle, for she is honored with the rare epithet Cryso gone, which means “Golden Born” or “Begotten of Gold” on several provincial coins, mainly from Ionia and Lydia. Salonina married Gallienus around 240, and the couple had three children, all of whom are portrayed on the reverse of the aureus. We may presume that Salonina's adoration is focused on her family rather than the gods because the principal figure, symbolizing her is not veiled. Valerian II and Saloninus, two of these offspring, gained imperial positions under their father, but both died tragically before their parents (Seaby, 1982b: p. 111; Sear, 1988: p. 265; Varner, 2004: p. 211). Salonina's Alexandrian coinage commences only during the third regnal year (AD 255-6), and this may be the date of her elevation to the rank of Augusta. A woman of sophistication and learning, she and her husband were both members of the philosopher Plotinus' circle of intellectuals in Rome, and it is possible that she also had Christian sympathies. In AD 268, the empress was probably a witness to her husband's murder during the siege of Milan; her subsequent fate is unknown. An extensive coinage

was issued in Salonina's name, both during the joint reign of Valerian and Gallienus and throughout the period of her husband's sole rule. It was on a larger scale than for any empress since the time of Julia Domna, wife of Septimius Severus, **Figures 15-20** (Sear, 2005: p. 324; Callatay, 2013: p. 312; Metcalf, 2012: p. 575).



**Figure 15.** AR Antoninianus. Rome, 257-260 A.D. th. 1.57 mm.; dim. 23.59 mm.; 2.78 gr.; dir. 12 h. Obv. SALONINA AVG, diad. dr. bust r., resting on a crescent. Rev. PIETAS AVGG., Pietas set. l., holding a scepter. In l. hand and extending r. hand, two children stg. r. at her feet and resting on a scepter held in l., and a third child stg. beside her on l. side. R.I.C 35, 59; R.S.C IV 84, 84a; Sear 10647. Extremely rare and in exceptional condition for the issue, undoubtedly among the finest specimens known.



**Figure 16.** AR Billon Antoninianus. Asia Mint (Uncertain Syrian mint), 258-260 A.D. th. 1.73 mm.; dim. 20.33 mm., 3.88 gr.; dir. 6 h. Obv. SALONINA AVG, diad. dr. bust r., resting on a crescent. Rev. ROMA E AETERNAE, Roma set. l., shield on the side, holding a spear, and presenting Victory to Emperor Gallienus stg. r. before her star in the field above. R.I.C 67, R. S.C IV 103; Sear 10651.



**Figure 17.** AE Billon Antoninianus. Asian mint (Uncertain Syrian mint), 258-260 A.D. th. 1.88 mm.; dim. 20.68 mm.; 4.18 gr.; dir. 12 h. Obv. CORN SALONINA AVG, diad. dr. bust r., resting on a crescent. Rev. CONCORDIA AVGG, Gallienus, togate, stg. r., clasping hands to empress Salonina. stg. l., facing each other, wreaths in the field above. R.I.C 63; R.S.C 31, 31a; Sear 10630.



**Figure 18.** AR Billon Antoninianus. Antioch, 260-264 A.D. th. 1.74 mm.; dim. 22.18 mm.; 2.91 gr.; dir. 12 h. Obv. SALONINA AVGV, dia., dr. bust r., wearing Stephane, on the crescent. Rev. IVNO REGINA, Juno stg. l., holding patera and scepter; peacock at Juno's feet in l. R.I.C 92; R.S.C IV 67; Sear 10641.



**Figure 19.** AR Billon Antoninianus. Antioch, 265-267 A.D. th. 1.92 mm.; dim. 19.87 mm.; 4.73 gr.; dir. 6 h. Obv. SALONINA AVGV, diad. dr. bust r., resting on a crescent. Rev. VENVS AVGV, Venus stg. l., holding a helmet and transverse spear and resting on a shield at her side; Mintmark: PXV in exergue = (TR P XV). R.I.C 86; R.S.C IV 113; Sear 10654.



**Figure 20.** AE Billon Antoninianus. Antioch, 265-267 A.D. th. 2.01 mm.; dim. 21.51 mm.; 4.22 gr.; dir. 6 h. Obv. SALONINA AVGV, diad. dr. bust r., resting on a crescent. Rev. VENVS AVGV, Venus stg. l., holding the apple and the transverse spear and resting on the shield on her side; Mintmark: PXV in exergue = (TR P XV). R.I.C 31; R.S.C V 3047.

## 12. Severina 270-275 A.D.

Lile is known for the history or ancestry of Ulpia Severina, the wife of Aurelian, although her name would indicate Spanish origin (Sear, 1988: p. 283). Aurelian was a career soldier from an Illyrian background. According to Brennan (Brennan, 2004: p. 46), he was to be the one who reunited the shattered Roman world under one emperor and was to be honored with the title *Restitutor Orbis* (World Restorer). As she did not become Augusta until late in her husband's reign, Severina's coi-

nage extends only over a short period (AD 274-275) but is nevertheless of considerable interest. The numismatic evidence makes it clear that issues in her name continued for some time after Aurelian's death, though the precise length of this "interregnum" period is much disputed by scholars. It was formerly believed that the accession of Tacitus was delayed by six months, but it now seems likely that the new emperor's proclamation took place less than two months after his predecessor's murder. The fate of Severina is unknown, but it may be presumed that she retired into private life and was honored by her husband's successors (Sear, 1988: p. 438). The coin below was minted under Augusta Severina, in the Antioch mint. It can be emitted after the east has recovered. The reverse CONCORDIAE MILITVM legend may indicate that the Severina is associated with the Soldiers' Concord, **Figure 21**, **Figure 22** (Brennan, 2004: pp. 46-47).



**Figure 21.** AE Billon Antoninianus. Siscia mint, 274-275 A.D. th. 1.85 mm.; dim. 23.84 mm.; 3.63 gr.; dir. 12 h. Obv. SEVERINAE AVG, diad. dr. bust r., wearing Stephane resting on a crescent. Rev. CONCORDIAE MILITVM. Concordia Militum stg. facing l., holding standards/ensigns in each hand, IV in r. field (=); Mintmark: XXI in exergue. R.I.C V-1, 13; R.C.V 3282; Cohen 8; Sear 11706.



**Figure 22.** AE Antoninianus. Siscia mint, 274-275 A.D. th. 1.85 mm.; dim. 23.82 mm.; 3.59 gr.; dir. 12 h. Similar **Figure 21**. without IV in r. field.

### 13. Galeria Valeria 293/305-311 A.D.

Galeria Valeria, the daughter of Diocletian and Prisca, was born between 284 and 305 A.D. In 293 he married Galerius' second wife. Valeria was promoted to the titles of Augusta and Mater Castrorum in 308. Valeria adopted Candidianus, her husband's illegitimate son, as her own because Galerius had no children with her. Despite being a Christian or liking Christianity, she was compelled to sacrifice to the gods during the Great Persecution of 303 and was venerated alongside

her mother as a Christian saint (Varner, 2004: p. 215, 221).

Valeria and her mother Prisca were handed to Licinius after Galerius died in 311. However, the two ladies escaped from Licinius to Maximinus II, whose daughter was engaged to Candidianus. Valeria denied Maximinus' marriage proposal after a short time, and he captured and imprisoned her in Syria, confiscating her property. Licinius ordered the execution of both ladies when Maximinus died. Valeria went into hiding for a year before being discovered in Thessaloniki. In 315 A.D., she was kidnapped by a crowd, killed in the city's great plaza, and her body dumped into the sea, **Figure 23** (Varner, 2004: p. 215, 221; Gagarin, 2010: p. 421; Metcalf, 2012: p. 598).



**Figure 23.** AE Follis. Cyzicus mint, 308-311 A.D. th. 2.43 mm.; dim. 24.36 mm.; 5.34 gr.; dir. 12 h. Obv. GAL VAL., ERIA AVG diad. and dr. bust r. Rev. VENTERI V. ICTRICI. Venus sgt. l., holding up an apple in r. hand and raising drapery over the shoulder with l., A Δ (Delta) in l. field, with Mintmark: MKV? in exergue. R.I.C. IV 46; Sear 14597.

## 14. Conclusion

This study sheds some light on twenty-three Roman coins, dating back to twelve Roman empresses. It was found that eighteen coins were made of silver, and eighteen coins were made of bronze/copper. This study sample extends from the beginning of the second century A.D. to the beginning of the fifth century A.D. Some 50 types are minted in Trajan's time in year 11 (126/127) (Al-Rawahneh, 2002: p. 32), probably for his tenth birthday. In contrast to Trajan, Hadrian continues a dynastic scheme, beginning with pictures of members of his wife Sabina's imperial house in year 13 (128/129) and his chosen heir, L. Aelius Caesar (with a Roman date) (137). In year 15 (130/131), Sabina even gets her tetradrachm series (Metcalf, 2012: p. 569), probably for his tenth birthday. In contrast to Trajan, Hadrian continues a dynastic scheme, beginning with pictures of members of his wife Sabina's imperial house in year 13 (128/129) and his chosen heir, L. Aelius Caesar (with a Roman date) (137). In year 15 (130/131), Sabina even gets her tetradrachm series. The currency reflects Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus' combined administration until 169. Faustina II and Lucilla, as well as Commodus in the role of Caesar, make appearances. The decennalia (Decennia), as well as Homonoia and the victory over Armenia, are depicted. Marcus Aurelius' tetradrachm coinage begins to drop visibly in year 10 (169/170) but deteriorates significantly in year 17 (176/177); copper coinage is also reduced (Howgego,

1992: p. 4).

It is just speculation if the general decrease in currency output at this period is connected to the visible drop in population. The population loss might be linked to the plague of 165/166, but it could also be linked to the events leading up to the so-called Bucoli insurrection (Metcalf, 2012: p. 571). The Roman mint began striking significant coinage in the name of Augusta in the later part of Hadrian's reign, possibly from his decennalia forward. The Antonines continued and intensified this practice. Duncan-Jones (1994: pp. 72-75) used hoard evidence to assess the extent of manufacturing. To summarize, during Hadrian and Commodus, around one out of every seven coins was made for the Augusta, but under Pius and Marcus, this increased to about two out of every seven. Duncan-Jones (1994: p. 75) speculates that this trend may be due to their use as coinage for two imperial ladies under Pius (Faustina I and II) and Marcus (Faustina II and Lucilla), whereas there was only one Augusta during Hadrian and Commodus (Sabina and Crispina, respectively). There is no comparable documented hoard evidence to provide a direct comparison, which demonstrates that over half of provincial mints working during the reigns of Pius and Marcus issued coins depicting Augusta, while fewer than a quarter of those operating during the reign of Commodus did. However, far fewer types were produced than might appear. Under Pius and Marcus, around one in every seven provincial coin types had a girl on the obverse, but this dropped to one in every fourteen under Commodus. The most noticeable feature is the continuous halving of the output of a "female" coin during Commodus at imperial and provincial mints. Furthermore, the dramatic decrease in the number of provincial mints that select the Augusta mint at all shows that the cause of the fall may have less to do with the number of Augustae (Metcalf, 2012: p. 433).

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### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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## Abbreviations

<i>l.</i>	= Left
<i>r.</i>	= Right
<i>AR</i>	= Silver
<i>AE</i>	= Copper/Bronze
<i>Obv.</i>	= Obverse
<i>Rev.</i>	= Reverse
<i>th.</i>	= Thickness
<i>dim.</i>	= Diameter
<i>dir.</i>	= Direction
<i>mm</i>	= Millimeters
<i>gr.</i>	= Grams
<i>set.</i>	= Seated
<i>stg.</i>	= Standing
<i>dr.</i>	= Draped
<i>diad.</i>	= Diademed
<i>ex.</i>	= Exergue
<i>hd.</i>	= Head
<i>p.</i>	= Page
<i>pl.</i>	= Plate
<i>R.I.C</i>	= The Roman Imperial Coinage
<i>C.R. B</i>	= The Coinage of Roman Britain
<i>R.S.C</i>	= Roman Silver Coins
<i>R.C. V</i>	= Roman Coins and Their Values
<i>B.M.C</i>	= British Museum Catalogue
<i>B.C.E.</i>	= Before the Common Era
<i>A.D.</i>	= Anno Domini (“in the Year of the Lord” the Year Jesus Was Born)