

NOTAE NUMISMATICAE

ZAPISKI NUMIZMATYCZNE



Tom XIX

MUZEUM NARODOWE W KRAKOWIE
SEKCJA NUMIZMATYCZNA
KOMISJI ARCHEOLOGICZNEJ PAN
ODDZIAŁ W KRAKOWIE

Kraków 2024

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Lech Kokociński. Photo by Piotr Idem
Lech Kokociński. Fot. Piotr Idem

Szanowni Państwo,

oddajemy w Państwa ręce tom XIX *Notae Numismaticae – Zapisków Numizmatycznych*. Zgodnie z przyjętymi przez nas zasadami wszystkie teksty publikujemy w językach kongresowych, z angielskimi i polskimi abstraktami. Zawartość obecnego tomu oraz tomy archiwalne są zamieszczone w formie plików PDF na stronie internetowej Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie (<https://mnk.pl/notae-numismaticae-zapiski-numizmatyczne-1>). Na stronie dostępne są ponadto wszelkie informacje ogólne o czasopiśmie oraz instrukcje dla autorów i recenzentów.

Bieżący Tom naszego czasopisma chcielibyśmy zadedykować Panu Mecenasowi Lechowi Kokocińskiemu, obchodzącemu w 2024 roku swoje 80-te urodziny. Lech Kokociński (ur. 1944), prawnik, sędzia i wieloletni pracownik Ministerstwa Kultury i Sztuki, z numizmatyką związany jest w zasadzie od zawsze. Przede wszystkim należy do grona najwybitniejszych kolekcjonerów numizmatów drugiej połowy XX i pierwszych dziesięcioleci XXI wieku. Jego zainteresowania kolekcjonerskie nie ograniczały się przy tym do wąskiego zakresu, lecz obejmowały szerokie spektrum obiektów: od monet antycznych poczynawszy, poprzez pieniądź papierowy, medale, aż po fałszerstwa monet i banknotów. Ważną część jego zbiorów stanowią starodruki i rękopisy numizmatyczne oraz inne obiekty o charakterze bibliofilskim, szczególnie *Lwowiana*. Mecenas Kokociński przez całe życie aktywnie włączał się w animowanie ruchu numizmatycznego. Od 1962 roku był członkiem Polskiego Towarzystwa Archeologicznego, od 1984 roku przewodniczył Sekcji Numizmatycznej Polskiego Towarzystwa Archeologicznego i Numizmatycznego, a w 1987 roku został Prezesem tej organizacji. W 1991 roku należał do założycieli Polskiego Towarzystwa Numizmatycznego i był jego pierwszym Prezesem, a następnie Prezesem Honorowym. Bliskie związki mecenasa Kokocińskiego z Gabinetem Numizmatycznym Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie sięgają XX wieku. Jest członkiem Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Muzeum im. Emeryka Hutten-Czapskiego (od 1996 r.), a w latach 2011–2015 pełnił funkcję członka Rady Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie. Wszedł też w skład Komitetu Honorowego projektu *Europejskie Centrum Numizmatyki Polskiej*, w ramach realizacji którego udało się otworzyć Muzeum im. Emeryka Hutten-Czapskiego w obecnym kształcie. Przede wszystkim jednak jest jednym z najważniejszych i najbardziej hojnych darczyńców na rzecz Muzeum. Wzbogacił zbiory Gabinetu Numizmatycznego o niemal 11 000 obiektów, w tym monety antyczne, bezprecedensową kolekcję pieniądza fałszywego, pieniądź papierowy i medale. Dodatkowo ofiarował do biblioteki Muzeum ponad 1000 pozycji różnych publikacji, starodruków i znakomite archiwalia związane z życiem i działalnością wybitnych numizmatyków czy towarzystw numizmatycznych, jak np. Związku Numizmatyków Lwowskich czy Towarzystwa Numizmatycznego w Krakowie. Z okazji Jubileuszu życzymy Lechowi Kokocińskiemu, naszemu Drogiemu Przyjacielowi, co najmniej 100 lat!

Redakcja

Dear Readers,

We are delighted to present you with volume 19 of *Notae Numismaticae – Zapiski Numizmatyczne*. As is our policy, we publish all texts in the congress languages, with English and Polish abstracts. The contents of current volume and archive numbers are available as PDF files on the website of the National Museum in Krakow (<https://mnk.pl/notae-numismaticae-zapiski-numizmatyczne-1>). The website also provides all general information about the journal, along with guidelines for authors and reviewers.

We would like to dedicate the current volume of our journal to Mr Lech Kokociński, who celebrated his 80th birthday in 2024. Lech Kokociński (born in 1944), lawyer, judge and long-time employee of the Ministry of Culture and Art, has been involved in numismatics for practically all his life. Above all, he is one of the most outstanding numismatic collectors of the second half of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century. His collecting interests were not limited to a narrow range, but covered a wide spectrum of objects, starting with the ancient coins, through paper money and medals, to counterfeits of coins and banknotes. An important part of his collection consists of antique prints and numismatic manuscripts as well as other bibliophile objects, especially *Lvoviana*. Throughout his life, Kokociński has actively participated in promoting the numismatic movement. He was a member of the Polish Archaeological Society from 1962, chaired the Numismatic Section of the Polish Archaeological and Numismatic Society from 1984 and became its president in 1987. In 1991, he was one of the founders and first president of the Polish Numismatic Society, later becoming Honorary President. The close relationship between Mr Kokociński and the Numismatic Department of the National Museum in Krakow dates back to the 20th century. He is a member of the Emeryk Hutten-Czapski Museum Friends Society (since 1996), and in the years between 2011–2015 he was a member of the Council of the National Museum in Krakow. He also became a member of the Honorary *European Center of Polish Numismatics* project, which led to the opening of the Emeryk Hutten-Czapski Museum its present form. Above all, however, he is one of the most important and generous donors to the Museum. He enriched the collection of the Numismatic Cabinet with almost 11,000 objects, including ancient coins, an unprecedented collection of counterfeit money, paper money and medals. In addition, he donated more than 1,000 items to the museum library, including various publications, antique books, and valuable archive material related to the life and work of prominent numismatists or numismatic societies, such as the Union of Lviv Numismatists and the Numismatic Society in Krakow. On the occasion of this milestone birthday, we wish Lech Kokociński, our dear friend, at least 100 years!

The Editors

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How to Make a Rare Coin out of a Common One? Early Modern Forgeries Using Original Ancient Coins¹

ABSTRACT: The practice of forging ancient coins and medals was extensively discussed as early as the 16th century. The first author to devote an entire chapter of his published 1555 work to this problem was Enea Vico (1523–1567). In the first half of the 17th century, Louis Savot (ca. 1579–1640) postulated the need to collect both ancient coins and their forgeries for comparative purposes. In the second half of the 17th century, two very popular textbooks on numismatics were published: *Introduction à l'histoire, par la connoissance des médailles* by Charles Patin (1633–1693) and *La science des médailles* by Louis Jobert (1637–1719). The former distinguished three main types of forgeries, while the latter identified as many as nine types of forgeries and frauds related to ancient coins and medals. The main purpose of this article is to identify specific coins that Jobert described as examples of the “seventh fraud”, which involves the alteration of the head and obverse legend of a more common coin (usually sestertius) into a rarer one.

KEY WORDS: Ancient Roman coins, Early Modern forgeries, fake sestertii, Charles Patin, Louis Jobert

¹ Many thanks to François de Callatay for introducing me to Paul Tinchant's collection of Roman coin forgeries in the Coins and Medals Department of the Royal Library of Belgium, Johan van Heesch for helping me in finding the fascinating piece of Lucilla/Livia Drusilla, and Mikołaj Greń for supporting my research into various categories of ancient coin counterfeits.

ABSTRAKT: *Jak z monety popularnej zrobić rzadką? Wczesnonowożytnie fałszerstwa przy użyciu oryginalnych monet antycznych*

Praktyka fałszowania antycznych monet i medali była przedmiotem intensywnych dyskusji już w XVI wieku. Pierwszym autorem, który poświęcił temu problemowi cały rozdział swojej wydanej w 1555 r. pracy, był Enea Vico (1523–1567). W pierwszej połowie XVII wieku Louis Savot (ok. 1579–1640) postulował konieczność gromadzenia zarówno starożytnych monet, jak i ich fałszerstw w celach porównawczych. W drugiej połowie XVII wieku ukazały się dwa bardzo popularne podręczniki numizmatyczne: *Introduction à l'histoire, par la connoissance des médailles* autorstwa Charlesa Patina (1633–1693) oraz *La science des médailles* autorstwa Louisa Joberta (1637–1719). W pierwszym z nich wyróżniono trzy główne rodzaje fałszerstw, w drugim natomiast zidentyfikowano aż dziewięć rodzajów fałszerstw i oszustw związanych z antycznymi monetami i medalami. Głównym celem niniejszego artykułu jest wskazanie konkretnych monet, które Jobert opisał jako przykłady „siódmego oszustwa”, polegającego na zmianie głowy i legendy awersu bardziej popularnej monety (zwykle sesterca) na wyraźnie rzadszą.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: monety rzymskie, wczesnonowożytnie fałszerstwa monet, fałszywe sesterce, Charles Patin, Louis Jobert

Forgeries of ancient coins as collector's objects are well attested especially since the 16th century, when there was a noticeable increase in the number of collectors, first in Italy, then in almost all of Western Europe. The scope of interest in coins and medals at the beginning of the second half of the 16th century is evidenced by a list of 978 collectors and researchers of ancient coins, published in 1563 by Hubertus Goltz (1526–1583).² The growing demand among collectors for more numismatic objects was also quickly met by the community of sculptors specializing in engraving medals. Valerio Belli (ca. 1468–1546), Giovanni da Cavino (1500–1570), Gian Giacomo Bonzagni (or Bonzagna, ca. 1507–1565), Alessandro Cesati (active in Rome 1538–1561), and others created imitations of Roman medallions and sestertii, less frequently Greek and Roman provincial coins, but also fantasy medals *all'antica*.³ Some of these and many anonymous, often talented, artists also produced more or less obvious forgeries.⁴

Counterfeits of ancient coins were widespread in the mid-16th century and

² See GOLTZ 1563: aa jj recto – cc verso.

³ See MATZKE 2018 and HIRSCH 2024.

⁴ On the thin line separating copies and medals *all'antica* from forgeries produced to fool collectors during the Renaissance, see: BURNETT 1992; CUNNALLY 1999: 46–48; MISSERE FONTANA 2013; DE CALLATAÿ 2014a; and HIRSCH 2024: 38–40.

their first classification was published as early as 1555. Enea Vico (1523–1567) distinguished in the Chapter 22 of his *Discorsi... sopra le medaglie de gli antichi* “three main types of medal fraud, from which seven modes of deception are derived.”⁵ The first deception, according to the Italian author, involves objects that are entirely ancient (“la prima è tutta anticha”), in the second an ancient coin or medal is used as part (“la seconda è parte anticha”) of the process, and the third relates to a completely modern object (“la terza è tutta moderna”). Vico’s comments on forgeries involving tampering with the surface of original, albeit poorly preserved, ancient coins or medals seem particularly interesting:

The first is the artificial combination of two sides of medals, admittedly ancient, but of two different emperors. The second is to work out with a stylus or wheel the figures and other things that are (on the medal). There are two other types of partially antiquated type: on a partially antiquated medal, a new head is stamped or the reverse is counterfeited. And another one: an ancient medal struck on both sides with modern die; because of the old metal, and the new relief, the medal will be half ancient, half modern.⁶

The first category, in particular, may be surprising. Cutting through ancient coins to connect the obverse of one coin to the reverse of another now seems to us an interference that cannot be hidden. We should expect that the handmade process of producing ancient coins and, because of this, the usually slightly different shape and diameter of copies even from the same issue meant that such forgeries were easily identified. However, we must remember that bronze medallions, often in a circular frame, were particularly desirable in the early modern era. Such a frame, sometimes made of a different metal than the medallion inside (Fig. 1), made it possible to hide the unevenness of the two halves or the machining of the edge. Very careful counterfeiting using original coins could have been very profitable. Vico himself mentions several Italian collectors who were willing to give several tens for single bronze medallions or sestertii (“medaglie di rame”) from the 1st or 2nd century AD and up to several hundred gold scudi or ducats each for small sets of two to three pieces (but with rare Vitellius bronze).⁷ In the 16th century, the practice of forging by using an ancient coin or medallion to engrave new elements on it or strike an image with a new die seem technically easier and was undoubtedly much more common.

⁵ VICO 1555: 61: “Tre sorti adunque principali di fraude nelle medaglie, dalle quali nascono sette modi d’inganii.” I give all quotations from Italian and French in the original spelling of the old prints.

⁶ VICO 1555: 61: “l’uno è la falsa coniunzione di due parti di medaglie, però antiche, ma di due diversi imperadori; l’altro è il lavorare con il bullino, o con la ruota le figure, e l’altra cose che vi sono. Nelli sorte parte anticha, ne sono due antri: cio è sopra una medaglia anticha dall’un de’lati corrosa, stampata con nuovo cognio una imitata testa, o contrafatto verso. Et altrimenti, una anticha medaglia cogniata da amendue i lati con moderna stampa: per il metallo vecchio, e per la scoltura nuova, sara mezza anticha, mezza moderna essa medaglia.”

⁷ VICO 1555: 52–53.

Ancient coin collecting continued to grow in the 17th century, and the increase in demand also led to the emergence of new types of forgeries and other frauds. There was also a growing community of experts who often deliberately collected counterfeit coins to learn all the better to distinguish them from rare originals. This practice is evidenced by Louis Savot (ca. 1579–1640) in his *Discours sur les medalles antiques*, published in Paris 1627.⁸ He discusses four groups of coin forgeries in two chapters (III and IV) of the fourth part of the work (“du prix à present des medalles antiques” – “on the present price of ancient medals”): pieces struck a new on ancient coins, those struck on modern flans, specimens cast using the metal of melted-down ancient coins, and cast with modern metal.⁹ At the end of Chapter IV, Savot concludes that recognizing “all types of trickery used to counterfeit an ancient coin” (“toutes les espaces de fourbes qui se pratiquent pour contrefaire une medalle antique”) cannot be perfectly taught “based on intellectual discourse alone” (“par l’intelligence du discours seul”). It is necessary to “practice and possess all the aforementioned types” of forgeries (“la pratique, et la possessio des medalles de toutes les sortes susdites”). Therefore, it is essential for collectors to buy them “at the price they require” (“à quelque prix que ce soit”) to compare them directly.¹⁰

Savot’s work had only one edition. Of much greater interest was *Introduction à l’histoire, par la connoissance des médailles* by Charles Patin (1633–1693), first published in Paris in 1665.¹¹ This work (from 1695 with the new title *Histoire des médailles ou introduction à la connoissance de cette science*) had nine different editions by the end of the 17th century, including in Italian (1673) and Latin (1683).¹² Patin also devotes a separate chapter to ancient coin forgeries,¹³ where he distinguishes only three types of them:¹⁴

1. Cast “medals” made on the basis of a mold from antique originals, “on which a hollow is made and filled with gold, silver or molten copper” (“sur lesquelles on fait un creux qu’on emplit d’or, d’argent, ou de cuivre fondu”).
2. “Medals” struck using two new dies (“entre deux matrices faites exprés”). The French numismatist includes Paduans in this group, “which are sometimes so beautiful and surprisingly good that without long experience

⁸ On Savot, physician of the king Louis XIII of France, and his work, see RAMBACH 2005.

⁹ See SAVOT 1627: 308–314 and WILLIAMS 2023: 2.

¹⁰ SAVOT 1627: 314.

¹¹ Patin was also a physician trained in Paris, and then a professor of medicine in Padua. On the phenomenon of numismatic physicians in the 16th and 17th centuries, see RENAULDIN 1851 and DE CALLATAÿ 2014b, especially 192 and 196.

¹² See DEKESEL 2003: 2078–2111 and 2418–2419.

¹³ PATIN 1665: 208–220.

¹⁴ Excluding obvious modern medals *all’antica* such as those of Caesar with the reverse VENI VIDI VICI or Augustus with FESTINA LENTE or commemorating famous military leaders of antiquity see PATIN 1665: 209–211.

they can easily be mistaken (for originals)” (“elles sont quelquefois si belles et si surprenantes, que sans une longue experience, on s’y tromperoit aisément”).

3. “The third type of forgery is practiced by joining the face of an ancient medal to the reverse of another ancient medal, and by this means creating a new and false medal, even though both sides are ancient” (“La troisieme espece de la falsifications, se pratique en joignant la face d’une medaille antique au revers d’une autre medaille antique, et qui seront par ce moyen une medaille nouvelle et fausse, quoy que les deux costez soient antiques”). This category resembles the third type distinguished by Vico and, as the examples suggest,¹⁵ is primarily concerned with combined images of the emperor and empress.

Patin notes at the end of the chapter that he would like to familiarize the reader with illustrations of known fake ancient “medals” so that they are not mistaken for the original ones. This plan was never realized.¹⁶ However, as Daniela Williams notes, “some drawings were possibly part of Patin’s graphic archive, which by 1678 included already about 6,000 images of ancient coins. This collection of drawings was a priceless tool, kept in Patin’s study room in Padua and later bequeathed after his death in 1693 to the king of France.”¹⁷

The study of counterfeits undoubtedly required personal examination and comparison of counterfeit coins with originals more than theoretical knowledge. However, the theoretical basis was also pursued. The Parisian Jesuit and ancient coin collector, Louis Jobert (1637–1719), devoted a more extensive chapter (X) to ancient coin forgeries than his predecessors in his *La science des médailles*, first published in 1692. This work soon became a numismatic bestseller, published at least 16 times, including in translations into Latin, English, German, Italian, and Dutch.¹⁸ In a tenth chapter (*X. Instruction, des fausses médailles*) of *La science des médailles*, Jobert discusses as many as nine categories of “frauds” (*fourbes*) that coin and medal collectors should watch out for:¹⁹

1. Imaginary “medals that never were” (“médailles qui jamais n’ont esté”) of Priam, Aeneas, Cicero, Virgil, Caesar medal with the reverse VENI VIDI VICI, etc.
2. Making casts from ancient coins.

¹⁵ See *Ibidem*: 216–217.

¹⁶ See one of the latest edition: PATIN 1695: 195, where the chapter on forgeries is reprinted without changes.

¹⁷ WILLIAMS 2023: 3.

¹⁸ On Jobert’s work and collection, see AWIANOWICZ 2025; FORABOSCHI 1990: 120; DEKESEL 2003: 1456–1462; RAMBACH and LUPA 2024.

¹⁹ See JOBERT 1692: 246–263.

3. Repairing broken and severely damaged ancient coins so that they look beautiful and legible.
4. Producing the rarest ancient coins from new dies (Jobert includes Paduans in this category, the dies of which were in the coin cabinet of Saint Geneviève Abbey).
5. The use of new (well-preserved) coins to apply images from the new ones after working the old ones of the same type (“sur l’antique mesme”) with a hammer (“vieilles medailles que l’on reforme avec le marteau”).
6. Razing the common reverse and engraving another – much rarer – in its place.
7. Reworking the head and legend of the obverse of a common coin to make it look rare.
8. Counterfeiting the ancient patina (“verniss”), which serves to prevent cast coin or medals from being identified.
9. Deliberate imitation of cracks on the edge (“le bords ont éclaté”) to suggest that the coin was minted in antiquity.

The chapter perfectly demonstrates how Jobert combined the perspective of the researcher and the collector, making his *La science des médailles* a very popular reading among professional numismatists and amateur collectors alike in the late 17th and throughout the 18th century.

The first category – Renaissance and later *all’antica* medals that did not have ancient models – was present in earlier numismatic works, even if authors like Patin²⁰ did not treat them as a separate type of forgery, since they were obviously different from ancient coins and medallions. Groups 2 and 4 were also present earlier in Patin’s work. It is not surprising that both Parisian numismatists were eager to recall the works of Giovanni da Cavino (1500–1570) and other Paduan medalists imitating ancient Roman sestertii and medallions, since the collection of the Abbey of Saint Geneviève in Paris not only included the Paduan medals themselves, but also the dies for minting them.²¹ The frauds described by Jobert as the 8th and 9th are not so much separate types of forgeries as they are actions aimed to make a counterfeit coin or medal more credible. By contrast, types 3, 6 and 7 are three types of tampering with the original coin to increase its value. Of all these categories, the seventh type of fraud or forgery appears to be the most difficult to identify, as altering the emperor’s head alone seems to be less invasive than re-engraving of the entire reverse. It is worth quoting here a longer passage from *La science des médailles*, in which the Paris-based Jesuit mentions two forgeries from his collection:

²⁰ See PATIN 1665: 209–212.

²¹ See DU MOLINET 1692: 93–118.

(...) the seventh fraud involves legends, it is made either around the head or on the reverse. It is, however, more common to attempt it on the side of the head, because of the interest in finding rare heads, which are commonly missing in suites. This is done by skillfully replacing one name with another whenever there are a few letters to change or add. I have Lucilla thus changed into Domitia on a big bronze, and a young Gordian disguised as Gordian (I) Africanus, by giving him a slight beard and changing the P. F. into AFR.²²

Of the two examples given here, it may be somewhat surprising to note Jobert's possession of a Lucilla coin converted to Domitia. I set aside the significant differences in features and hairstyles between the two empresses, whose reigns are separated by more than 60 years.²³ To make Lucilla into Domitia, however, it was necessary to change six of the seven letters of the name (LVCILLA – DOMITIA) in even the shortest variant of the legend LVCILLA AVGVSTA. Such significant interference with the legend of the original coins is not impossible, of course. The example of Gordian III's coin converted to the much rarer coin of Gordian I, who reigned for only about 20 days in January 238, seems much easier.

Since the fraudulent tampering of the coin's surface usually resulted in unique specimens (though naturally one can imagine several sestertii of Gordian III being similarly altered, for example), it is much more difficult to find such products than early modern forgeries cast from a single original or *all'antica* medals. However, I have found at least two coins in public collections that seem very close to the examples Jobert described in 1692. In the Royal Library of Belgium (KBR) collection, among the various categories of forgeries is a sestertius of Lucilla RIC III M. Aurelius 1756 with a legend suggesting that it is a coin of Livia (Tinchant Inv. II.30196 – Fig. 2):

Obv.: draped bust of Lucilla r.; LIVIA DRVSIILLA AVGVSTI DIVI

Rev.: Pietas standing l., raising her r. hand, in which she holds a globe (?), over a jug, and holding a perfume-box in her l. hand; PIETAS, S – C

The legend of the obverse must seem ridiculous to a modern numismatist. Traces of the original legend: LVCILLAE AVG ANTONINI AVG F (Fig. 3) forced

²² JOBERT 1692: 257: "La septième fourbe se fait dans les legendes, soit du costé de la teste, soit du costé du revers. Il est neanmoins plus ordinaire de le tenter du costé de la teste, par l'interest que l'on a de trouver des testes rares, et qui manquent communément dans les suites. Or cela se fait en substituant avec adresse un nom pour l'autre, sur tout quand il y a peu de lettres à changer, ou à ajouter. J'ay une Lucille ainsi changée en Domitia de grand bronze, et un jeune Gordien travesti en Gordien d'Afrique, en luy faisant un peu de barbe, et ayant changé le P. F. en AFR."

²³ Domitia, the wife of Domitianus, was *augusta* from AD 81–96. Lucilla, daughter of Marcus Aurelius and wife of Lucius Verus, bore the title of *augusta* from AD 163–169 (Verus' death), possibly until her death in 181.

an anonymous modern engraver to create a legend that does not exist on any original coin of Livia. The final genitive DIVI without any abbreviation occurs after it indicates the spouse of the already deified emperor. A coin with such a legend could therefore have been struck between the years 14 and 29 (the death of Livia herself). The problem, however, is that the empress' original name "Livia Drusilla", never appeared on ancient coins.²⁴ The engraver additionally gave the altarpiece on the reverse the shape of a jug or vase, which is an additional departure from the ancient iconographic scheme.

A second example close to the coin described in *La science des médailles* is a variant of the Gordian I sestertius RIC IV 9 held in the collection of the British Museum (BMCRE VI 6 – Fig. 4):

Obv.: bust of Gordian I, laureate, draped and cuirassed r.; IMP CAES MANT GORDIANVS AFR AVG

Rev.: Providentia, draped, standing front, head to l., holding wand over globe, and cornucopiae; PROVIDENT AVGG, S – C

Seemingly, everything agrees. However, if you look at the reverse, you can see the absence of the column on which Providence is leaning her left arm on RIC IV 9 type (Fig. 5). Additionally, the legend is abbreviated – PROVIDENT AVGG instead of PROVIDENTIA AVGG. On the British Museum specimen, there is a clear difference between the PROVIDENT lettering and the final AVGG on the reverse. Furthermore, the letters are noticeably larger than on other sestertii of this type. If we add to this the fact that the portrait of Gordian I resembles one of the variants of the image of his predecessor, Maximinus I, his sestertius RIC IV 61 (Fig. 6) turns out to be a much closer analogy for the British Museum specimen. The obverse legend has been completely changed here except for the initial abbreviation IMP and the final AVG.²⁵ The similarities in the portrait, as well as in the layout of the reverse legend, are clear.

In addition, both sestertii – the Lucilla altered to Livia Drusilla and, as it turns out, the Maximinus I altered to Gordian I – have a noticeably lower weight (Lucilla/Livia – 18.04 g, Maximinus/Gordian I – 16.78 g) than the average for both

²⁴ The only names that appear on coins are AVGVSTA, DIVA AVGVSTA (after her death in AD 29) or IVLIA AVGVSTA (RIC I Claudius 101; RIC I Galba 13–14, 36, 52, 55, 65–67, 142, 143, 150–153, 184–189, 223, 224, 331–338, 432, 433; RPC I 39, 40, 66, 67, 73, 233, 341, 849 and 988).

²⁵ Far-reaching alternations to the obverse surface of the original coin in order to remake it into the more valuable coin of the shorter reigning emperor is attested in 17th-century sources. For example, Claude Chifflet, in his work *Dissertatio de Othonibus æreis*, described alleged sestertii of Otho transformed from Galba and Antonine coins. See CHIFFLET 1656: 19–25 and VAN HEESCH 2023: 53–54.

types, which is 31.23 g for the sestertius RIC III M. Aurelius 1756²⁶ and 21.02 g for the RIC IV Gordian I 9 (excluding the specimen described above).²⁷ The differences in weight are due to deep interference with the surface of both coins. It is clear that the obverse field has been heavily smoothed, while the bust and edge of the coin have an above-standard high relief.

Both Charles Patin's announcement of the presentation of numerous known forgeries of ancient coins and medals, and Louis Jobert's description of as many as nine categories of forgeries and frauds to the detriment of collectors, are testament to the great scale of this phenomenon in the 17th century. Nowadays, thanks to the *Fontes Inediti Numismaticae Antiquae* (FINA) project,²⁸ we can more easily follow the numismatists' discussion on forgeries before 1800. However, identifying the forgeries discussed at the time with specimens known today remains a problem. The sestertii discussed above from the collection of the Royal Library of Belgium and the British Museum, although they are not exactly the coins mentioned by Jobert, illustrates the practice he described more than 300 years ago. Awareness of the mastery of the forgers of the past and a search among currently known objects for illustrations to the forgery methods used in the 16th and 17th centuries should make it possible, as in the case of the BMCRE VI 6 sestertius, to verify the authenticity of certain types and variants of ancient coins.

ABBREVIATIONS

BMCRE VI = R.A.G. CARSON, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*, vol. VI: *Severus Alexander to Balbinus and Pupienus*, London 1962, (reprint) 2005.

Gnecchi = F. GNECCHI, *I medaglioni romani*, vol. 2: *Bronzo. Prima parte: gran moduli*, Milano 1912.

RIC I = C.H.V. SUTHERLAND, *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. I: *From 31 BC to AD 69*, London 1984.

RIC III = H. MATTINGLY and E.A. SYDENHAM, *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. III: *Antoninus Pius to Commodus*, London 1930.

RIC IV = H. MATTINGLY and E.A. SYDENHAM, *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. IV, part I: *Pertinax to Geta*, London 1936; H. MATTINGLY, E.A. SYDENHAM and C.H.V. SUTHERLAND, vol. IV, part II: *Macrinus to Pupienus*, London 1938; H. MATTINGLY, E.A. SYDENHAM and C.H.V. SUTHERLAND, vol. IV, part III: *Gordian III–Urbanus Antoninus*, London 1949.

²⁶ See http://numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.3.m_aur.1756 (accessed on 28 September 2024). The weight of even the most poorly preserved coins of this type sold in auction houses available on [acsearch.info](https://www.acsearch.info) exceeds 20 g.

²⁷ See http://numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.4.gor_i.9 (accessed on 28 September 2024). The lightest specimen offered in the last 25 years at auction houses (Nomos, auction 5, lot 249 of October 25, 2011: <https://www.acsearch.info/search.html?id=1115930> (accessed on 28 September 2024)) weighs 17.40 g. The average weight of copies from the antiquarian market also exceeds 20 g.

²⁸ See <https://fina.knowledge.wiki/FINA#!> (accessed on 28 September 2024).

RPC I = A. BURNETT, M. AMANDRY and P.P. RIPOLLÈS, *Roman Provincial Coinage*, vol. I: *From the Death of Caesar to the Death of Vitellius (44 BC–AD 69)*, London–Paris 1992, available online <https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/> (accessed on 28 September 2024).

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PLATE 1

Fig. 1. Marcus Aurelius, bimetallic medallion (core copper, rim orichalcum), AD 163/164, mint: Rome. *Obv.*: cuirassed bust of the emperor l.; M AVREL ANTONINVS AVG P M IMP II TR P XVIII COS III. *Rev.*: female figure standing r. under a tree, feeding a snake coiled around the cult image of Salus-Hygieia. Gneecchi 81, Tav. 66.3. Weight: 92.21 g
Photo: Künker, auction 288, 13.03.2017, lot 617

Fig. 2. [Lucilla], sestertius, tooled and transformed into Livia Drusilla's coin, ca. AD 163/164, mint: Rome. *Obv.*: draped bust of Lucilla r.; LIVIA DRVSIILLA AVGVSTI DIVI. *Rev.*: Pietas standing l., her r. hand, in which she holds a globe, over a jug, and holding a perfume-box in her l. hand; PIETAS, S – C. RIC III M. Aurelius 1756 (for the coin with the original legend). KBR, Tinchant Inv. II.30196. Weight: 18.04 g
Photo: B. Awianowicz

Fig. 3. Lucilla, sestertius, ca. AD 163/164, mint: Rome. *Obv.*: draped bust of Lucilla r.; LVCILLAE AVG ANTONINI AVG F. *Rev.*: Pietas standing l., raising her r. hand over jug, and holding a perfume-box; PIETAS, S – C. RIC III M. Aurelius 1756. Weight: 23.95 g
Photo: Jean Elsen & ses Fils, auction 109, 18.06.2011, lot 381

PLATE 2

Fig. 4. Gordian III (?), sestertius, AD 238, mint: Rome. *Obv.*: bust of Gordian I, laureate, draped and cuirassed r.; IMP CAES M ANT GORDIANVS AFR AVG. *Rev.*: Providentia, draped, standing front, head to l., holding wand over globe, and cornucopiae; PROVIDENT AVGG, S – C. RIC IV 9; BMCRE VI 6 (this coin). Weight: 16.78 g
Photo: The British Museum: http://numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.4.gor_i.9

Fig. 5. Gordian III, sestertius, AD 238, mint: Rome. *Obv.*: bust of Gordian I, laureate, draped and cuirassed r.; IMP CAES M ANT GORDIANVS AFR AVG. *Rev.*: Providentia, draped, legs crossed, standing front, holding wand in r. hand over globe at feet to l., and cornucopia in l., resting l. arm on column; PROVIDENT AVGG, S – C. RIC IV 9; BMCRE VI 5
Photo: Classical Numismatic Group, auction 96, 14.05.2014, lot 830

Fig. 6. Maximinus I, sestertius, AD 236, mint: Rome. *Obv.*: bust of Maximinus I, laureate, draped and cuirassed r., seen from behind; IMP MAXIMINVS PIVS AVG. *Rev.*: Providentia, draped, standing front, head to l., holding wand over globe, and cornucopiae; PROVIDENTIA AVG, S – C. RIC IV 61. Weight: 18.36 g
Photo: Leu Numismatik, web auction 21, 19.07.2022, lot 4609



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