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## THE MINTS OF THE EMPIRE: VESPASIAN TO DIOCLETIAN.

By H. MATTINGLY.

In a paper published in the 1917 volume of this Journal, pp. 59 ff., I attempted to make available for the general student the results of some recent research on coins. The present paper is designed to continue the task thus begun.<sup>1</sup> It follows the same plan and is subject to the same restrictions. General principles are stressed, while for details reference is made to the special publications noted on pp. 263, 264. Only the imperial issues, not the purely local or provincial, are considered. The lengthy period included in our present survey may be conveniently divided into three parts :

- (A) from Vespasian to the death of Commodus.
- (B) from Septimius Severus to the accession of Valerian.
- (C) from Valerian and Gallienus to Diocletian.

(A) At the death of Vespasian the mints of Rome were bearing the main burden of coinage. The imperial mint for gold and silver was working quite alone, while the Senatorial for *aes*<sup>2</sup> was assisted only by a branch mint at Lugdunum. The activity of this Gallic mint apparently hardly extended into the reign of Domitian, and Rome was then left in possession of an unchallenged supremacy in coinage. No substantial change of system can be traced during the whole of the first period. Occasions for local coinage were by no means lacking—the German and Dacian wars of Domitian, the Dacian and Parthian wars of Trajan, the provincial journeys of Hadrian, the Parthian war of Verus and the Danube campaigns of Marcus Aurelius, the revolt of Avidius Cassius in the East at once come to the mind ; but, in the main, with the exception of quite a few issues to be discussed immediately, the coinage preserves a uniformity of style and fabric which incline us to attribute it to one centre only. The longer one studies coins the less is one anxious to assert that the last word has been said about any branch of them. Intensive study may reveal differences undetected as yet by the eye or perhaps even unguessed by the mind. But, apart from the strong impression of uniformity made by the coins themselves, there are one or two considerations which bear strongly in the same direction :

- (a) There is good reason for thinking that series of coins were

<sup>1</sup> My best thanks are due to Mr. Percy H. Webb, an authority on mints of the third century, who has very kindly given me the benefit of his advice and criticism.

<sup>2</sup> *Aes* is used as a convenient if inexact term for base metal coinage, whether copper, brass or bronze.

struck at Rome, but ear-marked for the use of special provinces. For example, the 'Province' series of Hadrian is as uniform in style as it well could be, but it can hardly be doubted that the various types were circulated particularly within their respective provinces. The as of Antoninus Pius with rev. BRITANNIA has been observed to occur very frequently in British finds.<sup>1</sup> This practice of providing special provincial issues from Rome would largely remove any necessity for local striking.

(b) Rome, the capital, remained in the possession of the legitimate Emperor throughout the period. The one pretender, Avidius Cassius, held only Syria and Egypt. We might indeed have expected coins of him and can only attribute their absence to his precarious hopes and his brief usurpation.

(c) When provincial striking became common again, as it did after A.D. 192, we have no difficulty in detecting the provincial issues (see also below p. 257).

The exceptions to the general rule just stated may be briefly summarized. Hadrian, during his world-wide travels, struck denarii in Asia Minor (Ephesus?) and Syria (Antioch?). These coins, however, are comparatively rare and hardly suggest anything more than occasional issues. Trajan certainly struck in the East, perhaps in Cyprus, asses and semisses of orichalcum, with S.C., but slightly unusual in style and form of reverse. He may also have struck some series of denarii in the East: up to the present, only a few isolated coins have been noted as possibly of non-Roman mintage. There may also have been Eastern issues of L. Verus and his consort Lucilla, whom he wedded at Ephesus in A.D. 164. The star on some late coins of Commodus might be suspected of being a mint-mark, but that the coins on which it occurs appear in all other respects to follow the main series.

It is a serious handicap that we are unable to form any adequate idea of the organization of the mints of Rome at the zenith of their fame. That the two mints, imperial and senatorial, were from the time of Domitian housed in the same building is possible<sup>2</sup>; that they worked in very close harmony and to some extent under one management is certain, although the formal distinction between them was not abolished.<sup>3</sup> A division into 'officinae' or shops is extremely probable, but cannot be proved before the middle of the third century.

The period just reviewed, then, is certainly distinguished by uniformity of style and excellence of workmanship. The mints of Rome were probably more active and flourishing now than at any earlier or later date. And for this centralization of administration

<sup>1</sup> Cp. *Num. Cbr.* 1907, pp. 356 ff., F. A. Walters on a find of Roman bronze at Croydon.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Mowat in *Num. Zeitschrift*, 1909, pp. 88 ff;

the type MONETA AVG. S.C. appears for the first time on *aes* of Domitian.

<sup>3</sup> *B.M.C. Empire* i, pp. lviii ff.

parallels in other branches of public life can readily be found. But there is one further possibility, which may to some extent discount these facts. Coinage may have been centralized at Rome, as far as the general management, policy and even the finer grades of work went; the actual striking of coins, from dies produced in Rome, may possibly have taken place at a number of mints in the provinces. Such issues, if they existed, may be detected in days to come by a finer sense of differences of fabric or by the discovery of secret marks used to differentiate the different mints. But it is extremely unlikely that we shall ever find reason to question the existence of a genuine supremacy of the capital in coinage throughout the period.

(B) The second period shows great changes in mint policy, which were perhaps inevitable in course of time, but which actually were only brought in through the violence of civil war. After the murder of Commodus and his worthier successor Pertinax, three generals rose against the incompetent Didius Julianus. Septimius Severus marched straight on Rome and became master of the capital without any serious struggle. Clodius Albinus, with little or no delay, accepted the favourable terms of friendship offered by Severus. Pescennius Niger in Syria was resolved to press his claim to the uttermost. In the resulting Civil War, A.D. 192 to 193, not only Niger, but Septimius Severus also, struck considerable series of coins in the East—Niger because his head-quarters lay there, Severus for the campaign against Niger.

The mint of Niger was presumably at Antioch. Septimius's earlier Eastern issues cannot have been of that mint, but may be, in part at least, of Alexandria. After the defeat of Niger he struck either at Antioch or at a neighbouring Syrian town.<sup>1</sup> After A.D. 196 these issues became far more considerable than before and, as in style and types they now ape the Roman mint, may be considered as the products of a branch, rather than of an independent mint. Albinus, who saw himself threatened by Severus's complete triumph in the East and more particularly by his dynastic plans, broke with him in A.D. 195 and fell in battle near Lugdunum, after a brief but fierce campaign, in A.D. 196. This last episode of his career, in which, as challenger for the Empire, he claimed the title of Augustus, is commemorated by an issue of coins from Lugdunum. It does not appear that Severus struck coins either in Pannonia at the beginning of his reign,<sup>2</sup> or towards its close in Britain; imitations of his coins which occasionally appear on British sites are presumably of native workmanship.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Possibly not at Antioch, as that city had incurred his severe displeasure. The attribution of some denarii to Alexandria is due, I believe, originally to Signor Laffranchi of Milan.

<sup>2</sup> As Kubitschek in *Num. Zeitschrift*, 1914, pp. 191 ff., appears to suggest.

<sup>3</sup> There is an aureus of this class in the B.M. with rev. AEQVITATI AVGG., Aequitas I, with scales and cornucopiae.

The numismatic evidence here is very satisfactory and deserves a careful examination. There is no doubt at all of the provincial mintage of the issues of Niger and Albinus<sup>1</sup>; all that we need borrow from history is the situation of their mints, and even here, Albinus's reverse type 'GEN · LVG · (duni) COS · II' leaves little doubt. Clearly the main condition required for a provincial mint is the absence of the Emperor from Rome, or, better, his non-possession of the capital. Niger and Albinus followed a normal course in striking at their head-quarters; what was abnormal was the fixing of the head-quarters elsewhere than at Rome. Whether Severus would have opened an Eastern mint in more peaceful times is hard to say. As it was, it was clearly the exigencies of the war with Niger that led him to begin, and the ensuing wars with the Arabs and the Parthians that led him to continue. For his main Parthian war he evidently used Antioch as a branch of Rome in the East; there is a clear attempt to secure uniformity with the capital and a consequent subjugation, but not obliteration, of the local style. From the fact that local style is prominent in provincial issues we can draw an interesting conclusion. Had either Antioch or Lugdunum, prior to these times, been coining as a branch of the Roman mint, with similar style and types—in fact, with no distinctive features obvious to us—then the earliest issues of these mints, when separated by the usurpers from Rome, would be certain to show strong traces of Roman style. Local workmanship could only gradually emerge. This is definitely not the case, and the conclusion is that neither Antioch nor Lugdunum, in this period, was coining as a branch of Rome. But these are two of the great cities of the Empire and, if they were not active, it is a question whether any other cities are likely to have been. And, further, in the years A.D. 198 to 202, when Antioch was certainly striking in close connexion with Rome, we have no difficulty in distinguishing the branch from the main mint. The Antioch dies were made locally, not supplied from Rome. At the time of Severus, then, imperial coinage was either struck at Rome or else provincially in styles recognizably different. We can almost rule out the possibility of issues distinguished only by secret marks.

The mint of Antioch from Severus onwards was never closed for many years at a time. It was used by Elagabalus and Severus Alexander, then again, after a short break, by Gordian III and probably by all succeeding emperors down to Valerian. The civil wars and, later, the new Persian problem on the Eastern frontier were the main determining causes. The pretender Jotapian (A.D. 248) struck for a moment in Syria—perhaps not at Antioch;

<sup>1</sup> That is, of his coins as Augustus: as Caesar, he struck with Severus at Rome.

while at Emesa Uranius Antoninus (A.D. 248 to 254) struck his remarkable series of aurei—if he did in fact strike them at all.<sup>1</sup>

The pressure on the Danube frontier, which culminated in the great Gothic invasions, led to the opening of another provincial mint under Gordian III. It remained active down to the time of Valerian: its site may have been Viminacium on the Danube, but the evidence is perhaps not quite convincing yet. Trajan Decius appears to have used a different mint to his immediate predecessors and successors, and Count de Salis, in his arrangement of the British Museum coins, assigned it to Mediolanum (Milan). It appears as if Decius, recognizing the imminence of the Gothic peril, transferred his mint to safer quarters. The mint of Viminacium, if we may so term it, was probably striking again under Valerian: exactly when it resumed operations after Trajan Decius is not yet known.<sup>2</sup> The rare coins of the pretender Pacatian (A.D. 248) are unique in style; they must have been struck in the province of Moesia, but the exact mint is quite uncertain.

This second period sees the beginning of the end of the supremacy of Rome in coinage. The change is initiated originally by the civil wars and developed under the stress of new foreign menaces. But, if we look back for a moment and compare the convulsions of A.D. 193 to 197 with those of A.D. 68 to 70, one important difference soon becomes manifest. Vespasian, with a will towards the creation of a strong central government, soon outlived the consequences of the civil wars and modelled his plans for the future on entirely different lines. Severus, in not very different circumstances, acted with far less decision, and his successors opened wide the door which he had left ajar. After A.D. 193 we are on a track which leads direct to the multiple provincial mints of Diocletian. Severus was accused by his enemies of being an enemy of Rome and Italy, a favourer of the provinces at her expense. In this charge there seems to reside just this element of truth, that Severus saw decentralization of government as a thing in itself not so disastrous, and on occasion convenient, and to that extent was liable to offend against the sovereignty of the capital.

(C) The third period completes the transition from the early imperial system to that of Diocletian. It is impossible in a short paper to give more than an outline of the complicated history of the mints, but fortunately, that outline can be fairly clear. The treatment here followed is mainly geographical: the tables of reigns and mints appended will define the picture more clearly.

The mint of Antioch was active with few interruptions. Valerian

<sup>1</sup> These aurei have been frequently doubted. The question is still 'sub judice.'

<sup>2</sup> A large hoard of Antoniniani, buried in the reign of Trajan Decius and recently found at

Plevna in Bulgaria, is at present being studied and seems likely to extend and correct our knowledge of the mints of this period.

naturally made great use of it during his Persian campaigns. After his capture, in an age of Persian invasion and Palmyrene usurpation, the city was for a time lost to Rome; from about A.D. 258 to 270 its history is difficult to trace. After that it became again one of the main provincial mints.<sup>1</sup> Macrian II and Quietus (A.D. 261–262) struck at an Eastern mint, which should perhaps be looked for rather in Southern Asia Minor (Cilicia?) than in Syria. Aurelian strikes at Tripolis in Syria as well as at Antioch. Alexandria still retained its distinctive coinage of debased billon tetradrachms.

The mint of Cyzicus commenced its operations under Claudius II or even Gallienus. A new factor was now coming into play, which also led towards decentralization of coinage. The complete debasement of the imperial silver led to a decline in the senatorial 'aes' coinage, which soon extended to the local Eastern issues. These issues fell off under Valerian and Gallienus and died out completely under Aurelian and Tacitus. The result was that entirely new demands were presented to the mint of the capital, just at a time when it was losing its power to meet them. The alternative course, which was actually adopted, was to replace the local coinages by provincial mints of imperial coins. The mint of Cyzicus owed its origin, no doubt, largely to this cause and struck plentifully till the time of Carus: under Diocletian its place was taken by Heraclea Thraciae.

The Balkans were, during this period, the centre of military interest and the coinage honestly reflects this fact. The mint of Viminacium cannot be traced after the early years of Valerian and Gallienus. But towards the end of the reign of Gallienus we find the first evidence of the mint of Siscia in Pannonia, which was for half a century afterwards to rank among the first of Roman mints. Serdica in Thrace was certainly active from Aurelian onwards—perhaps not earlier; but it never enjoyed the importance of Siscia. The uncouth portraits of Regalian (A.D. 261–263) are in a class by themselves and may come from a mint in Moesia, the scene of his revolt.

We have seen above that Trajan Decius may have struck at Mediolanum. This mint was undoubtedly active under Gallienus, but probably not earlier than about A.D. 258, when Postumus revolted and took possession of his Gallic mint. From this time onwards Mediolanum, or rather its successor Ticinum, the neighbouring town to which Aurelian transferred the mint, ranked with Rome and Siscia as one of the three great mints of the Empire. The coins of Postumus of this mintage were probably struck in his name by Aureolus, the rebel general of Gallienus in A.D. 267 to 268.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To it should belong the very rare aurei of Saturninus (A.D. 280).

<sup>2</sup> The mint is beyond all question shared by

Gallienus and Postumus—the lion's share falling to Gallienus. The explanation given in the text is probably near the truth.

The mint of Lugdunum was reopened early in the reign of Gallienus, no doubt in view of his campaigns on the German frontiers. In A.D. 258 it fell into the hands of Postumus, who struck coins there for some years. But in A.D. 266, if not earlier, he transferred his mint to Cologne; and there the remainder of his coins and many of the subsequent issues of the other Gallic Emperors were struck.<sup>1</sup>

Lugdunum was reinstated as a mint by Aurelian in A.D. 273 and from that time on was kept steadily at work. It is possible, but not certain, that under Tacitus Arelate struck by the side of or in place of Lugdunum.<sup>2</sup> Treviri was only opened shortly before A.D. 296.

The interesting episode of the revolt of Britain under Carausius and Allectus demands a word of notice. Carausius<sup>3</sup> strikes at one mint on the continent, in all probability Rotomagus (Rouen), and at Londinium (London) and Camulodunum (Colchester) in Britain, Allectus at the latter two only. These are the first certain Roman issues in our island.

Neither Spain nor Africa possessed a mint throughout the whole of our period—a fact undoubtedly to be explained by their peaceful and unexposed position. Africa will have been supplied mainly from Italy, Spain mainly from Gaul. Numismatists have attempted to repair the omission of the Roman Emperors and have supplied Spain with a mint of Tarraco, by transferring thither the issues of Ticinum in N. Italy. The evidence against this view is absolutely overwhelming; it is high time that it disappeared from serious discussion. The 'T' or 'M' mint was in the hands of Gallienus during the usurpation of Postumus, in the hands of Maxentius, later, during his tenure of power at Rome. To attribute the possession of Spain in either of these cases to the holder of Rome, not to the holder of Gaul, is to do violence to history. Its issues are acknowledged to be exceptionally common in N. Italian finds. Its affinities in style are with Rome and Siscia, not with Lugdunum. The 'T' mint is the undisputed heir of the 'M' mint, for which no convenient Spanish equivalent can be found. Further, an intelligent study of the mint history makes it abundantly clear that Spain could well dispense with a mint, while North Italy could not. The great movements of troops to and from the Danube and Rhine frontiers required it.

The *aes* coinage in this period almost stopped. The issues of S.C. coins cease under Gallienus, to be revived for a moment under the constitutional Emperor Tacitus. Rare issues of *aes*, without S.C., are found down to the reign of Diocletian, but they have clearly ceased to form an important part of the currency.

<sup>1</sup> Victorinus and Tetricus also strike at another mint, the site of which has not yet been determined.

<sup>2</sup> We find on coins of Tacitus of Gallic mintage a mark A, which seems to stand for a mint.

<sup>3</sup> The coins of Carausius, which have RSR in exergue, are probably among his earliest issues; their mint is uncertain.



On the billon, the chief metal now used in currency, an elaborate system of mint-marking became common. Still rare under Valerian I and the early reign of Gallienus, these marks became more and more the rule, until by the time of Diocletian the imperial coin normally bore signs to denote the mint, the section of the mint and the particular issue to which it belonged. The mint-mark is usually a single letter—e.g. R=Rome, L=Lugdunum, C=Cyzicus, T=Ticinum less commonly a combination of letters—e.g. SISC=Siscia, SERD=Serdica. The marks of the officinae, or shops of the mints, are usually either Roman numbers, P.S.T., Q, V, VI, etc. (Prima secunda, etc.) or Greek numbers A, B, Γ, etc. Marks such as a star, crescent, or thunderbolt probably denote special issues. The marks XX and XXI are commonly accepted as denoting value.

These few concluding notes cannot be considered as even a sketch of a complicated subject. They have been added here simply to show that we have already reached the full mint-system of Diocletian, with its regular mint-signatures. And herein lies the main interest of our present study. In a general way it is recognized that Diocletian invented little in the way of statecraft or administration, but rather rounded off the development of a century of experiment and progress. The coins enable us to test this view in one important detail. We see that, before Diocletian, the decision had been taken to supply the provinces with imperial currency from provincial mints. We see that an elaborate system of control—unnecessary perhaps while coinage was centralized at Rome—had already been introduced. Diocletian's personal contribution is confined within very modest limits: he added some new mints to those already striking and he made permanent some practices which were already in common use. And this contribution was not made until A.D. 296. We see further that the growth of these new policies can be traced back with some certainty to the civil troubles of the years A.D. 193 to 197, in which the position of the capital was seriously shaken and after which no Vespasian was found to make the foundations again secure. We may apply this principle to other things than the coinage. When we find Severus already beginning that subdivision of provinces, which became general under Diocletian, we conclude that the two facts are definitely connected—are, indeed, the beginning and the end of one and the same process; and we should be further tempted to guess with some assurance that the process of subdivision had proceeded much further by the time of Aurelian than our very imperfect sources allow us to see. The coins enable us, as it were, to climb at a single point above the mists that overhang the third century and see in something of its true greatness that great line of Emperors from Claudius II to Diocletian, true 'Restitutores Orbis,' of whom Diocletian was only one and perhaps not even the greatest.

## TABLES OF MINTS.

## PERIOD A.

(All *Aes* is of Rome unless otherwise indicated.)

VESPASIAN	Rome, Tarraco, Lugdunum, Illyricum, Ephesus, Byzantium, Antioch, Tyre, Alexandria.				
	<i>Aes</i>	Rome			Lugdunum
TITUS	Rome	<i>Aes</i>	Rome		Lugdunum
DOMITIAN	Rome	<i>Aes</i>	Rome		Lugdunum
NERVA	Rome				
TRAJAN	Rome	East (?)	<i>Aes</i>	Rome	Cyprus (?)
HADRIAN	Rome	Asia Minor		Syria	
ANTONINVS PIVS	Rome				
MARCVS AVRELIVS	Rome	East (?)			
L. VERVS	Rome	East (?)			
COMMODOVS	Rome				

## PERIOD B.

	ROME	LUGDVNVM	MEDIOLANVM	VIMINACIVM	ANTIOCH
PESCENNIUS NIGER	—	—	—	—	X
CLODIVS ALBINVS	X	X	—	—	—
SEPTIMIUS SEVERVS	X	—	—	—	X
CARACALLA	X	—	—	—	—
MACRINVS	X	—	—	—	—
ELAGABALUS	X	—	—	—	X
SEVERVS ALEXANDER	X	—	—	—	X
MAXIMIN I	X	—	—	—	—
GORDIAN I & II	X	—	—	—	—
BALBINVS & PVPIENVS	X	—	—	—	—
GORDIAN III	X	—	—	X	X
PHILIP I	X	—	—	X	X
TRAJAN DECIVS	X	—	X	—	X
TREBONIANVS GALLVS	X	—	—	X	X
AEMILIAN	X	—	—	X (?)	X

Severus struck at other Eastern mints, perhaps at Alexandria. Uranius Antoninus struck at Emesa, Pacatian in Moesia, Jotapian in Syria.

## PERIOD C.

	ROME.	LUGDUNUM	MEDIOLANUM	TICINUM	VIMINACIUM	SISCIA	SERDICA	CYZICUS	ANTIOCH
VALERIAN	X	X	X	—	X	—	—	—	X
GALLIENVS	X	X	X	—	X	X	—	—	X
CLAVDIVS II	X	—	X	—	—	X	—	X	X
QUINTILLVS	X	—	X	—	—	X	—	X	—
AVRELIAN	X	X	X	X	—	X	X	X	X
TACITVS	X	X	—	X	—	X	X	X	X
FLORIAN	X	X	—	X	—	X	X	X	X
PROBVS	X	X	—	X	—	X	X	X	X
CARVS	X	X	—	X	—	X	X	X	X
CARINVS	X	X	—	X	—	X	X	X	X
NVMERIAN	X	X	—	X	—	X	X	X	X
DIOCLETIAN & Colleagues	X	X	—	X	—	X	—	—	X

Aurelian also struck at Tripolis in Syria and at an uncertain mint, with mint-mark dolphin; Tacitus perhaps struck at Arelate; Diocletian struck at Treviri and Heraclea Thraciae; Macrian II and Quietus in the South of Asia Minor(?); Regalian struck in Moesia, Saturninus at Antioch, Julian II at Siscia. Postumus struck at Lugdunum and Cologne, Marius and Laelian at Cologne, Victorinus and Tetricus I and II at Cologne and an uncertain mint. Carausius struck at Rotomagus, Londinium and Camulodunum, Allectus at the last two only.

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For the period from Gallienus on, a good general sketch by Webb will be found in *Num. Chron.* 1921, pp. 226 ff.