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AN ANTONINIANUS OF POSTUMUS AND THE GALLIC MINTS RE-CONSIDERED

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The Sydney Mint Museum's collection of Roman Imperial coins contains a number of fine examples of the antoniniani of Postumus, who established in AD 260 a separate Gallic empire which he maintained until his assassination in AD 268. The series contains a particularly fine and something less than common reverse. The details of the coin are:

Obv. IMP C POSTUMVS PF AVG

Bust, radiate, draped, r.

Rev. FIDES EXERCITVS

Four standards, one surmounted by legionary eagle, another by a hand.

Wt. 4.05 g.; Die axis ↑ ↑.

The emperors of the mid and later third century have been designated 'military' emperors, emperors who relied on the army to maintain their position. This reverse records, or appeals for, the loyalty of the army.

The coin is recorded in the standard works dealing with the imperial coinage of the third century AD. It is listed in *RIC*¹ where it is ascribed to a mint at Cologne, but no precise date for its issue is given. Elmer², the first to attempt a full, analytical account of the coinage of the Gallic emperors, cited and illustrated an example of this coin in the Vienna collection, and ascribed it also to Cologne in an issue of AD 265 towards the end of the reign of Postumus. Elmer's work does not concern itself with the degree of rarity of individual coins, but *RIC* lists it simply as common. There are, however, only five examples of this in the British Museum collection, and Besley and Bland in their publication of the *Cunetio* hoard³ record only five examples of this reverse, a low figure, for the antoniniani of Postumus in this hoard totalled just under 13,000. The author agrees with Elmer in including this reverse in an issue dated to AD 265-6.

The identification of the mint or mints which produced the coinage of Postumus and his successors in the separate Gallic empire continues to be a matter of dispute. The mint which struck one distinct series of aurei and antoniniani for Postumus is universally accepted as Milan, which in AD 268 was held by the general, Aureolus, who revolted against Gallienus and declared for Postumus. He struck coinage there in the name of Postumus.

The main coinage of Postumus in Gaul, however, was attributed by *RIC* to two mints, one identified as Lugdunum, the other as Cologne. There certainly was a mint for Postumus at Cologne in AD 268, for two antoniniani reverses have inscriptions variously abbreviated, giving the Roman name of Cologne – Colonia Claudia Augusta Agrip-pensis⁴. On the strength of this evidence Elmer attributed all Gallic coinage of Postumus to the mint at Cologne.

Since these reverses, however, from the very end of the reign of Postumus draw attention to Cologne as their mint, it seems more likely that it was only then, in AD 268, that a mint was set up in Cologne by the transfer of one of the three officinae which can be identified as producing the coinage of earlier issues. There is no certain evidence for the identification of the main mint of Postumus, but it is not disputed that the first issues of Postumus were produced by the same mint which had coined in Gaul from about AD 257 for Valerian and Gallienus and his family. The principal mint for Roman coinage in Gaul had been Lugdunum which coined for the earlier Julio-Claudian emperors and for a time for the Flavians. It was Lugdunum, too, which was reactivated to strike for Clodius Albinus in AD 195 when he assumed the title of Augustus before his defeat by Septimius

Notes

1. *Roman Imperial Coinage* Vol. V. Part II, Postumus p. 361 No. 303.

2. G. Elmer, "Die Munzprägung der Gallischen Kaiser in Köln, Trier and Mailand". *Bonner Jahrbucher* 146, Postumus No. 147.

3. E. Besley and R. Bland, *The Cunetio Treasure. The Roman Coinage in the Third Century AD*, London 1983, Postumus No. 2432.

4. *RIC* V2, Postumus Nos. 285-6.

Severus. Again, when Aurelian recaptured Gaul in AD 274 it was from Lugdunum that he issued his reformed antoninianus coinage which is signed with the letter L, the initial of Lugdunum⁵.

There is as yet no means of proving this identification of Lugdunum as the principal mint of the Gallic empire, but it seems reasonable that when Gallienus established a mint in Gaul he should have chosen the traditional mint at Lugdunum, situated well away from the dangerous frontier area which was the circumstance of Cologne. Presumably some military need, perhaps the revolt of Laelian, actuated the establishment of one officina mint in AD 268 by Postumus at Cologne on the frontier of the province; but its activity was short-lived.

Laelian revolted against Postumus in March 268 and was besieged in Mainz, where, after its capture, Postumus himself was murdered by mutinous soldiery. Since there is no abrupt break in the coinage of Postumus, either in his main mint or in the recently established mint at Cologne, it is clear that Laelian did not control either and established his own mint. It seems that it was at this time that a mint was established at Trier. Certainly, pre-Tetrarchic inscriptions provide evidence for a late third century mint there⁶. This mint was taken over by Marius, as is clear from die-links between the antoninianus coinage of Laelian and

Marius, and from a number of reverse dies of antoniniani of Laelian used again for Marius⁷.

What had been the main mint of the coinage of Postumus also struck for Marius, and this appears to be the mint pattern also for the subsequent Gallic emperors, Victorinus and the Tetrici, namely a coinage produced by two officinae at the main mint, now suggested to be Lugdunum, and a coinage in one officina at a subsidiary mint, probably Trier.

If indeed the Gallic mint of Gallienus and family and subsequently of Postumus was located at Lugdunum, the problem relating to the coinage of Saloninus Augustus and the first issue of Postumus disappears⁸. After the revolt of Postumus, Saloninus was besieged in Cologne until it was captured and Saloninus put to death. If, as Elmer maintains, Cologne was the only Gallic mint of Gallienus, the coinage of Saloninus Augustus would have been struck there, and Cologne, therefore, could not have been the mint for the first coinage of Postumus; and there has consequently been much speculation as to where Postumus first coined. If however, it is accepted that Lugdunum was the mint of Gallienus in Gaul, it could have produced coinage for Saloninus Augustus, even though he himself was besieged in Cologne. As soon as his death was known, Lugdunum could have begun to coin for Postumus; and indeed Postumus' first coins carry on stylistically from the last issues of Gallienus.

5. *RIC* VI, Aurelian Nos. 6-7.

6. *CIL* VI, 1641 and XIII, 1131.

7. H.H. Gilljam, *Antoniniani und aurei des Ulpius Cornelius Laelianus, Gegenkaiser des Postumus*, Cologne 1982. Supplement, *Laelianus. Ergänzungen zur Materialsammlung. Verwendung seiner Reversstemple unter Marius*, Cologne 1986.

8. H.H. Gilljam, "Antoniniani des Saloninus Augustus" *MONG* XXVII/6, 77-83.