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A New Solidus of Julian Caesar

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A NEW SOLIDUS OF JULIAN CAESAR

(PLATE 20)

JACQUELINE LONG

The American Numismatic Society acquired in 1979 from the bequest of Arthur J. Fecht a solidus (Plate 20, 1).

Obv. D N IVLIANVS NOB CAVS [sic], bareheaded bust r., draped and cuirassed

Rev. GLORIA-REI-PVBLICAE, exergue CONS; to l. Roma facing, enthroned, wearing helmet; to r., Constantinopolis l., enthroned, wearing mural crown with prow at feet; holding between them shield with star

ANS 1980.109.196, 4.27 g, ↑

This coin is the first known Constantinopolitan issue in a precious metal for Julian as Caesar. As such, it poses certain questions: first its authenticity, then its date and significance.

The obverse legend with CAES is found on no other coins of Constantinople; but it is the only legend used, with the same break, on parallel issues of Antioch (same legends and types, *RIC* 8: 163, 164, 166, 167, 169, 171). Certain obverse dies of these issues also exhibit the same error in the inscription.¹ Though CAVS for CAES is a gross error by the engraver, it could have occurred in an Eastern mint.

¹ All from the mint of Antioch: 1. G. Mazzini, *Monete Imperiali Romane*, vol. 5, p. 209, Cohen 23 v./a, pl. 56 = Sternberg, 24 Nov. 1977, 1108, 4.24 g = Münz. u. Med., 19–20 June 1975, 781 = Glendining, 3 Dec. 1929, 586 (R. Ratto, 9 Oct. 1934, 1186, is either a more worn die duplicate or a bad cast of the same coin); 2. San

Antioch and Constantinople also share two issues of Constantius with the same reverse type.

Obv. FL IVL CONSTAN-TIVS PERP AVG, facing bust, cuirassed, wearing crested and diademed helmet, carrying spear and shield

Rev. GLORIA-REI-PVBLICAE, same type, shield inscribed VOT/XXX/MVLT/XXXX

Antioch, *RIC* 8: 162, 165, 168, 170; Constantinople, *RIC* 8: 95, 96

Obv. D N CONSTAN-TIVS P F AVG, diademed head r.

Rev. GLORIA-REI-PVBLICAE, same type, shield inscribed VOT XXXX

Antioch, *RIC* 8: 172, 173; Constantinople, *RIC* 8: 129

The new solidus fills out the Antiochene triad at Constantinople. At Antioch, Julian's coins and Constantius's with facing bust share mint marks, and Constantius's coins with head right form a separate series; at Constantinople, the same mint mark is used on Julian's solidus, both of Constantius's varieties, and an issue of Gallus, Julian's elder brother and predecessor as Caesar.²

The coin's style is very fine. The portrait particularly suits Constantinople: a *VIRTVS EXERCITVS* miliarensis of Constantius, for example, even suggests the same hand (Plate 20, 2; *RIC* 8, 100). In both cases, the upturned eye is rendered in two nested arcs about the pupil and set into a fleshy cheek. The ear is relatively large, with internal detailing. The fluffy curls at the neck and line of curled locks along the brow are the same. The profiles are very similar: the slightly convex forehead is distinguished from a long, straight, slightly pendulous nose, the upper

Giorgi, 15–22 Apr. 1907 (Strozzi), 1969; 3. Stack's, 14–15 June 1971, 29, 4.37 g; 4. Münz. u. Med., 12–13 Nov. 1970, 485, 4.48 g = Hess, 22 May 1935 (Trau), 4346, obv. die of 3. Cohen, vol. 8, 24, lists from the "ancien catalogue" a *GLORIA REI PVBLICAE* solidus with star on shield, exergue *CONS*, obverse legend *D N IVLIANVS NOB C AVG* [sic]. I thank J. P. C. Kent for setting me on the trail of the Antiochene errors.

I am grateful to all the ANS staff, and particularly to Chief Curator William E. Metcalf, for their assistance with this article.

² Gallus's coin has the same types as the new solidus, except the shield is inscribed *VOT V MVLT X*, *RIC* 8: 97.

lip is relatively long, the mouth slightly compressed and curved downward, the chin rounded. The fleshy face and puffy hair that seems to curl about a nonexistent diadem are common for Constantinopolitan portraits of Gallus; bronzes of Julian often represent him with a leaner face and straighter hair.

The gold content falls within an acceptable range for solidi of the mint of Constantinople from the reigns of Constantius II and Julian.³ The new solidus is coin 11.

SPECIFIC GRAVITY TRIALS

<i>Emperor-RIC</i>	<i>ANS Coin</i>	<i>Trial 1</i>	<i>Trial 2</i>	<i>Trial 3</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Percent Gold</i>
1 C-55	1967.153.69	18.7	18.8	18.8	18.8	96.7
2 C-57	1956.184.15	18.9	19.0	19.1	19.0	97.9
3 ⁴ C-not	1977.158.936	17.3	17.6	17.5	17.5	87.5
4 C-96	1944.100.23736	18.8	18.8	18.8	18.8	96.7
5 C-96	1967.153.68	18.8	18.8	18.8	18.8	96.7
6 ⁵ C-96	1974.26.236	19.1	19.4	19.2	19.2	99.3
7 C-96	1980.109.190	18.8	19.0	19.0	18.9	97.3
8 C-96 var.	1977.158.937	18.2	18.2	18.2	18.2	92.6
9 C-96 var.	1977.158.938	18.5	18.5	18.6	18.5	94.6
10 ⁶ C-98	1977.158.935	18.5	18.6	18.5	18.6	95.3
11 J <i>CAVS</i> -not	1980.109.196	18.5	18.5	18.5	18.5	94.6
12 J <i>AVG</i> -156	1977.158.939	18.7	18.9	18.8	18.8	96.7

Coins 3 and 6 are exceptional. The remainder of the sample is distributed evenly about a mean specific gravity of 18.7 (96.0 percent gold if

³ The smallness of the sample makes this test suggestive rather than definitive. C. Morisson et al., *L'or monnayé* 1, CEB 2 (1985), analyzed three Constantinopolitan coins of Constantius (pp. 85 and 99, 113–15). One, 76.94 percent gold, is obviously irregular; the others are 96.69 and 97.08 percent gold, and silver is the major impurity. The authors' average figure for coins of the Constantinian dynasty after 346 (including Magnentius and Decentius, 17 coins in all, from various mints) is 95.18 percent gold (p. 88).

⁴ The coin is pierced with a small hole. Great care was taken to make sure that no air bubble adhered, but the specific gravity remained low.

⁵ An enamel number is painted on, presumably elevating the specific gravity; the coin itself probably falls within normal range.

⁶ The surface is pitted near the edges.

silver is the only significant impurity), median and mode 18.8 (96.7 percent).

The error in the legend of the new solidus is not a significant obstacle to its authenticity. On the other hand, the coin's fineness is unexceptionable and its style characteristically Constantinopolitan. It is best taken as genuine. It completes for Constantinople the group of **GLORIA REI PVBLICAE** issues more plentifully attested by the parallel group of Antioch.

A third parallel group is found at Rome and may be dated closely. The same reverse type as the **GLORIA REI PVBLICAE** solidi appears on solidi of Julian with the legend **FEL TEMP-RE-PARATIO** and star on shield⁷ and on solidi of Constantius with facing bust and reverse legends **GLORIA REI PVBLICAE VOT XXX MVLT XXXX** (*RIC* 8: 289–91, 293), **GLORIA REI PVBLICAE FELICITER V** (*RIC* 8: 294), and **FELICITAS ROMANORVM VOT XXXV MVLT XXXX** (*RIC* 8: 296–98). At least some solidi of all the varieties share the mint mark **RSM-[officina]-***, a close chronological connection (*RIC* 8: 293–98). It is the only mint mark used on the last two varieties. Constantius's **GLORIA REI PVBLICAE VOT XXX MVLT XXXX** were issued longest, through four mint marks; they share with Julian's solidi also ***-RSM-[officina]-*** (*RIC* 8: 291–92). The other two varieties in their unique legends⁸ combine with clear references to a quinquennial celebration, specifically the thirty-fifth anniversary, the same theme of "happiness" as Julian's reverse and a 1½ solidus multiple of Constantius, **FELIX ADVENTVS AVG N** (*RIC* 8: 287–88). The multiple obviously celebrates one of the most splendidly impressive occasions of late antique pageantry, Constantius's entry into Rome for a month's visit at the end of April 357.⁹ The *Consularia Constantinopolitana* and *Chronicon Paschale* report that

⁷ Obverse **D N CL IVL-IANVS N C**, bareheaded bust right wearing plain cuirass, *RIC* 8: 292, 295; like the reverse legend with this type, the obverse legend and portrait style are unique to Rome.

⁸ See Type/Legend index, *RIC* 8, p. 585.

⁹ Amm. Marc. 16.10; R. MacMullen, "Some Pictures in Ammianus Marcellus," *Art Bulletin* 46 (1964), 435–55. Ammianus 16.10.20 says Constantius left Rome on 29 May, the thirtieth day after his arrival, i.e. 30 April. The *Consularia Constantinopolitana* says he arrived on 28 April and does not say how long he stayed (*Chron. Min.* 1.239); the *Chron. Pasch.* does not give dates, but says the visit lasted 14 days.

during its course Constantius celebrated his vicennalia. The reckoning would be correct for the year if taken from Constantius's elevation to the rank of Augustus on 9 September 337; but imperial anniversaries are properly calculated from the emperor's *dies imperii*, even if he had been named merely Caesar. For example, although he himself now claimed the rank of Augustus, in 360 Julian celebrated his quinquennialia, five years from when Constantius had named him Caesar.¹⁰ April–May 357 falls a year early and in the wrong month for the theoretical reckoning of Constantius's thirty-fifth anniversary,¹¹ but by the fourth century Roman emperors seldom managed to visit Rome. The occasion was not to be missed. Constantius advanced his count to meet it. His coincidental vicennium as Augustus doubtless swelled the glory of his panegyrists' themes and explains the chroniclers' confusion. *Vicennalia* is an easier word and commoner anniversary than *septima quinquennialia*. The coins confirm that Constantius' thirty-fifth anniversary was celebrated amidst the happiness of his visit.¹² Though the longest issued **GLORIA REI PVBLICAE VOT XXX MVLT XXXX** seem to refer to Constantius's tricennialia, the *vota* apply to a seventh quinquennialia also: decennia always receive the main attention of late antique *vota* legends, and both thirtieth and thirty-fifth anniversaries look forward

¹⁰ Nomination as Caesar, 6 November 355: Amm. Marc. 15.8.17, Socr. *HE* 2.34, *Chron. Min.* 1.238, *CIL* 1, 1².277. Usurpation, probably February 360: see discussion of G. W. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* (London, 1978), pp. 46–52. Quinquennialia, winter (presumably 6 November) 360: Amm. Marc. 21.1.4, *quinquennialia Augustus iam edidit*. For other examples of imperial anniversaries being calculated from the initial elevation, see T. D. Barnes, "Synesius in Constantinople," *GRBS* 27 (1986), pp. 105–6, nn. 43–44, and *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, MA, 1982) pp. 3–8, particularly n. 14. Celebrations took place at the beginning or end of the anniversary year variably. Constantine I even celebrated his quinquennialia and vicennalia at both times: Barnes, *New Empire*, p. 70, n. 107, and pp. 226–37, establishes the date of *Pan. Lat.* 5[8].13.1–2 on grounds of the census to which it alludes; for the vicennalia, Hieron. *Chron.* 231¹; *Chron. Min.* 1.232.

¹¹ Constantine I named him Caesar on 8 November 324: *CIL* 1, 1².276; *Chron. Min.* 1.232; *L'Année épigraphique* 1937.119.24 (though *natale idibus Nob.*); Amm. Marc. 14.5.1 (though *diem sextum idus Octobres*).

¹² Asserted correctly but without explanation by J. P. C. Kent, "An Introduction to the Coinage of Julian the Apostate (A.D. 360–63)," *NC* 1959, p. 116, n. 2.

to the same fortieth.¹³ At least the solidi marked RSM-[officina]-* must have been issued with the FELIX ADVENTVS AVG N multiple immediately on the emperor's arrival. The others cannot have been long remote.

This precise date of April-May 357 suggests why a star might replace *vota* numbers. Such stars are found only for Caesars, before their first quinquennalia. Julian had been Caesar only one and a half years when the Rome solidi were issued; he did not celebrate his quinquennalia until 360. Admittedly, considerable laxity obtained in the reference of *vota* legends to actual celebrations. Four issues, distinguished by mint mark, of GLORIA REI PVBLICAE VOTIS V solidi for Julian Caesar at Arles (*RIC* 8: 233A, 235, 237, 239) antedate his quinquennalia by at least nine months. Since the issues are associated with GLORIA REI PVBLICAE VOT XXX MVLT XXXX solidi for Constantius, they probably began even earlier. Both Julian's and Constantius's varieties are continued into Julian's usurpation when Arles titled him Augustus and, as Kent suggests, the variant with VOT *V* MVLT X on the shield marks his quinquennalia specifically (*RIC* 8: 280-87; p. 201). By then Constantius's thirty-fifth anniversary celebration was three and a half years past. Julian's GLORIA REI PVBLICAE VOT V MVLT X as Caesar at Thessalonica (*RIC* 8: 194, 197) doubtless began during Constantius's residence at Sirmium from autumn 357 to autumn 359, like the Arles group anticipating Julian's quinquennial year.¹⁴ But in the case of the earlier Rome solidi, VOT V MVLT X three and a half years early apparently seemed premature. In the desire to associate the Caesar in the Augustus's anniversary issue, an alternative presentation was utilized.

The same argument urges an early date for Julian's GLORIA REI PVBLICAE solidi with star on shield at Antioch and Constantinople. Presumably, Thessalonica issued GLORIA REI PVBLICAE solidi for

¹³ The legends normally have their upper limit divisible by ten from both even-ten and odd-five *vota perfecta*; thus for example VOT XXX MVLT XXXX or VOT XXXV MVLT XXXX, but rarely VOT X MVLT XV and never VOT XXXV MVLT XXXXV (see indices of *RIC* 6, 7, and 8).

¹⁴ For the dates, see references in O. Seeck, *Regesten der Kaiser und Päpste* (Stuttgart, 1919; rpt., 1964), pp. 204-7, though the postconsulate of *Cod. Theod.* 8.5.10 refers to its receipt, the date and location to its giving; see R. S. Bagnall et al., *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* (Atlanta, 1987), pp. 80-81.

Julian with VOT V MVLT X rather than a star because the quinquennalia might now reasonably be anticipated. The latest date for inception of an issue with the star probably falls within 358. Constantius himself did not reside at Antioch until retiring to winter quarters there in 360/1 (Amm. Marc. 20.11.32), but his absence does not preclude an early date. As the easternmost Roman mint, Antioch was always the main supplier of coin for operations looking toward Persia. Constantius sent both ambassadors and generals there while he was in the West. Constantinople did not have the same consistently large output in the precious metals, but did periodically help supply the East. Kent places the bulk of its GLORIA REI PVBLICAE issues, in Constantius's name, during Constantius residence in the city in 359-60 (*RIC* 8, p. 444), but they could have started earlier. Julian's proclamation as Caesar may have occasioned a special issue.¹⁵ The smaller volume of the Constantinopolitan issue makes it appear less likely than the Antiochene to have been extended long beyond its immediate occasion. The resemblance of the new coin's portrait to Constantinopolitan portraits of Gallus also accords with a relatively early date: say, winter 355/6.

Julian had been only a student before his elevation, but as Constantius's cousin he could at least represent the Constantinian house at the

¹⁵ Nicomedia's unreduced siliqua of Julian Caesar, reverse VOTIS V in wreath, apparently had that occasion, as Kent suggests (*RIC* 8: 102A; p. 468). It certainly antedates the reduction in standard that took place during Constantius's Pannonian campaigns. Sirmium continued for Constantius the reverse VOTIS XXX MVLTIS XXXX in wreath from unreduced to reduced siliquae, coins of both groups being relatively common (*RIC* 8: 66, 68). The terminus post quem of the reform is provided by Aquileia's unreduced siliquae of Constantius with reverse VOTIS XXXV MVLTIS XXXX in wreath (*RIC* 8: 211; J.-P. Callu, *Imperial Revenue, Expenditure and Monetary Policy in the Fourth Century A.D.*, ed. C. E. King [Oxford, 1980], pp. 175-253, n. 103): in view of the mint's current inactivity in precious metals (its solidi GLORIA REI PVBLICAE VOT XXXV MVLT XXXX, *RIC* 8: 210, coincide with the siliquae), these coins can hardly have been issued after Constantius departed Italy, soon after his anniversary celebrations in Rome. Against Seeck's redated laws fixing Constantius longer in Italy (above, n. 14, p. 204), compare Amm. Marc. 16.10.20, *iter festinavit*; Julian's disparaging charge that in the season of his own victory at Strasbourg, Constantius "just travelled about and had friendly meetings with the Danubian tribes" (*ἐκεῖνον δὲ ὀδεύσαντος μόνον καὶ φιλῖος ἐντυχόντος τοῖς παροικοῦσι τὸν Ἰστρον ἔθνεσιν*, Ath. 279D), corroborates Ammianus and suggests that Constantius campaigned from the first.

site of the most recent rebellion.¹⁶ Julian interpreted his role as unfavorably as he could in trying to justify his usurpation of the prestige of Augustus. In the one of his propaganda letters that survives, he complains that Constantius treated him as a figurehead.¹⁷ But Constantius's issues for Julian, including the new solidus from the mint of the eastern capital, notified the whole empire of his dynastic plans. They were entirely regular in their conception and advertisement. Constantius might have expected better gratitude from his subordinate.

¹⁶ Silvanus's, ended by his assassination a month before Julian's elevation: Amm. Marc. 15.5-6.

¹⁷ He exclaims, "Indeed [Constantius] had even said and written that he was not giving the Gauls a ruler, but one who would bring his own image before them" (*καὶ γὰρ τοὶ καὶ τοῦτο εἶρητο καὶ ἐγγράψατο, ὅτι τοῖς Γάλλοις οὐ βασιλέα δίδωσιν, ἀλλὰ τὸν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ πρὸς ἐκείνους εἰκόνα κομιοῦντα*, Ath. 278A).