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Georges Depeyrot, Le Bas-Empire romain: Économie et numismatique (284-491), Collection des Hesperides (Paris:ditions Errance 1987)

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The material has been gathered and presented in orderly fashion and, one might say, with more sympathy for the non-numismatic evidence than one has come to expect from the *MIR* series. It is refreshing to see a treatment of the coinage which absorbs so much of the art historical literature—some of it new since Carson's discussion in 1962—and, on a substantive level, to see the evidence convincingly arrayed in favor of a six-officina system for the reign of Maximinus. This volume can now stand as the definitive treatment of Maximinus's coinage.

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Georges Depeyrot. *Le Bas-Empire Romain. Économie et Numismatique (284–491)*. Paris: Éditions Errance (Collection des Hesperides), 1987. 139 pp., illus.

In a brief introduction, Depeyrot surveys twentieth-century scholarship on the coinage of the later Roman Empire. It has progressed beyond essentially typological studies: new concerns include bronze coinage, the relationship of hoard deposits with the Germanic invasions, third-century monetary policy, the stratigraphic context of coins in archaeological finds, and thus the evolving patterns of local circulation, series of issues, alloys, and volume of coinage. In the body of the book Depeyrot attempts to survey what is known about later Roman numismatics. He divides his subject into eight areas.

"Le Bas-Empire: crises et continuité" (pp. 7–9) defines his period. Diocletian began a new world, numismatically as well as politically, that endured in the West until Romulus Augustulus was deposed in 476, and in the East until Anastasius took the throne in 491.

"L'Évolution économique" (pp. 10–33) integrates archaeological and literary evidence. Depeyrot traces changes from the urban culture of the high empire to the decentralized rural villa culture of the later empire. This shift was most marked in the West; it is worth remarking that although Depeyrot defines his subject so as to include both the western and eastern parts of the empire, he concentrates on the West.

In "La Monnaie au Bas-Empire" (pp. 34–54) Depeyrot first explains how the late empire's system of regional mints evolved and sketches the physical process of striking coins. Then he explains the separate and related purposes of coinage in gold, silver, and bronze. Finally he considers the role of imitations and medallions, and estimates volumes of production.

"La Propagande sur les monnaies" (pp. 55–84) surveys the later Roman government's exploitation of coinage to deliver political messages to various sections of the populace. The discussion of legends is brief, since they could be read by only a few. Depeyrot devotes more attention to iconographic themes. There are discussions of Vota coinage in the names of empresses and how the proportional volume of issues for a particular emperor at a particular mint might relate to propagandistic aims. This chapter is especially rich in illustrations.

"Les Émissions barbares" (pp. 85–94) concerns issues by the "barbarian" peoples in Gaul, of coins modeled on Roman varieties but bearing distinctive issuers' marks. Visigothic, Burgundian, Suevian, and Frankish issues are discussed and, more briefly, imitations from outside the empire and European issues modeled on those of eastern Augusti. Depeyrot also describes issues of a Roman emergency mint in Gaul, which are to be distinguished from the barbarian coinages.

In "Les Émissions monétaires" (pp. 95–112) Depeyrot traces the history of monetary reform in the later Roman Empire. He begins with the nadir of Roman coinage under Gallienus and Claudius II, then details the reforms made by Aurelian. The vicious cycle of inflation soon reasserted itself. Depeyrot next reviews the successive reforms of tariff, weight and fineness carried out by Diocletian and by many of his successors including some usurpers; after Theodosius I, the West and the East diverge.

"La Banalisation de l'or dans l'économie" (pp. 113–24) shows how during the course of the fourth century gold became the standard medium of exchange. Depeyrot argues that this change was supported by the exploitation of fresh supplies of ore between ca. 345 and the 390s, with the greatest influx having come between 375 and 393. He also discusses how emperors tried to combat imbalances between the metallic and the face values of gold coinage. Observations about imperial taxation round out the chapter.

Finally, in "L'Évolution économique et monétaire du Bas-Empire" (pp. 125–28) Depeyrot recapitulates and synthesizes conclusions from previous chapters and explores the relationship between economic

changes and the evolving monetary systems of the later empire. Climatic change and the breakdown of urban organization stimulated the development of a new social and economic unit, the self-sufficient farming villa. Once a steady supply of gold became available, the state was able to achieve fiscal stability by basing its monetary system on gold, ratios of value between different metals having proved impossible to fix. Bronze coinage ceased in the West as commerce declined, though commerce continued to support monetary diversity in the East. Gold continued to form the basis of later barbarian coinages. Reliance upon gold, however, forced small taxpayers to ally themselves with larger economic units that could make gold payments. They became tied to specific territory in dependence on larger proprietors. The development of medieval feudalism began.

Appended to the main presentation are a chronological table (pp. 129–32), an exiguous bibliography (pp. 133–4; the reader is referred elsewhere for more comprehensive listings), and indices (pp. 136–39). Copious illustrations ornament the book throughout. There are maps, plans, charts, a drawing of a fragment of Diocletian's Edict of Maximum Prices (p. 101), and especially photographs of coins and related objects. The photographs are generally excellent and well reproduced; but note reversed images at pp. 57, 77 (also interchanged captions), 92 (three of four images!), and 97.

Depeyrot's summary is masterful and concise. A reader already familiar with the political, military, and numismatic history of the later empire will find it a convenient, helpful survey, the more valuable in that it spans several volumes of more detailed reference works such as *RIC*. Moreover, the coverage extends beyond *RIC* and incorporates recent information, thereby providing a coherent overview of a larger period which has recently attracted increased scholarly attention. Finally, it benefits in breadth and depth from Depeyrot's social perspective and use of archaeological material.

Nevertheless, one who is not expert in the period will sometimes be puzzled by the way information is presented. To begin with minor matters: it would be helpful, for example, if Depeyrot gave dates for Gallienus and Claudius II when he discusses the state of Roman coinage during their reigns (253–68, 268–70: pp. 95–96). His history of "Les Émissions monétaires" thus begins without a clear chronological

context. The caption of a photograph in the margin of p. 96 dates Aurelian's reign (270–75), but one looks in vain for a date for the reform under discussion. Clarity of argument is not lost, but the salient details are missing. (Dates for subsequent emperors and monetary reforms are given both in "Chronologie," pp. 129–32, and in the text of the chapter.)

Prior numismatic knowledge is required, too, at the penalty of mild but unnecessary perplexity. For example, at p. 68 Depeyrot explains the iconographic ancestry of the divinizing imagery in "la buste barbare dit 'à la couronnelle' de Valentinien III." This exotic-sounding image is not illustrated nearby, nor is any indication given that it will be identified and discussed in the next chapter (p. 89, with illustration on p. 90; these pages contain no back-reference). If the reader does not already know the issue to which Depeyrot refers, the value of his observations is obscured.

More serious obscurity sometimes arises from Depeyrot's citation of ancient literary and documentary sources. He incorporates quotations in a disjunctive fashion that challenges the reader accustomed to more integrated exposition. Following some paragraphs of his text, a horizontal line divides the page from edge to edge. A brief paragraph identifies and gives the context for each quotation. The translated passage follows. Another horizontal rule divides the page, and the reader is returned to the main text. This method avoids pedantic transitions and explanations. At its best in later chapters, when it has become more familiar and when the connections between main text and interposed material are apparent, it varies the book's tone and enlivens its pace.

Yet at the first appearance of this device (pp. 8–9) the text and quotations fit together obliquely. First Depeyrot declares that Julian, A.D. 360–63, typified the contradictions of the period. He was raised as a Christian but he became a zealous pagan. He stripped the defenses of the western empire so that he might lead an ill-conceived expedition against Persia, seeking to repeat the conquests of the second-century emperor Trajan. In financial matters he both realistically remitted taxes and nostalgically attempted to reinvent a monetary system. Then a horizontal rule is followed by this comment:

> Les "intellectuels" étaient eux-mêmes conscients des nombreuses mutations de cette période. La "vision" de Valens, en 378, peu avant sa mort, est un bon temoignage de cette lucidité (extrait de Zosime, *Histoire nouvelle* IV, 21, éd. F. Paschoud, Paris, 1979).

The quotation describes the apparition of a badly beaten man to Valens's army as it marched from Contantinople into Thrace, soon to be butchered by Goths at the great battle of Adrianople. The prodigy refused to speak, then suddenly vanished. Interpreters declared that it represented the condition of the empire, which would continue to suffer until the corruption of its leaders utterly destroyed it. In a concluding sentence which Depeyrot omits, Zosimus announces that his subsequent narrative will show "that the prophecy spoke the truth." Thus he makes the apparition foreshadow the disaster at Adrianople, when Valens attacked prematurely on the bad advice of subordinates who, Zosimus says, were jealous of another general's success. The Roman army was so badly depleted by the battle that later emperors were forced to recruit barbarians on an unprecedented scale, in turn creating problems of accommodation that changed the course of subsequent Roman history. But these changes do not relate to the contradictions embraced by Julian, nor does the passage manifest intellectual awareness of change, except by Zosimus's authorial hindsight. Even in this context, it retains its primary significance, vaguely, direly, and conventionally warning about official corruption; the phenomenon is one of which contemporary historians complained continually.

A second quotation (p. 9) illustrates the fact that Christian writers thought that the barbarian invasions of the later fourth and fifth centuries presaged the end of the world. A second horizontal rule divides the page. Without transition Depeyrot remarks that western Romans felt cut off from the continuity of Roman history that survived in the East, but that nevertheless they transmitted Roman institutions to a posterity that claimed descent from the Roman Empire. All the observations juxtaposed on these two pages in different ways characterize Depeyrot's period as one of transition. It is left to the reader to integrate them. To do so, he must know that Zosimus's story presages the battle of Adrianople; otherwise it is reduced to a fantastic allegory

of corruption and doom which fails to illustrate the real changes in the Roman Empire which Depeyrot otherwise seems to wish to underline.

Such an omission probably reflects only the desire to avoid tiresome explanation and an optimistic assumption about the reader's familiarity with Zosimus. Depeyrot more seriously distorts the significance of a quotation when he neglects to point out that Claudius Mamertinus's "Discours de remerciement à Julien, 1er juin 362" [*sic*, p. 22] belongs to the ancient literary genre of panegyric, in which the speaker is bound to glorify his subject's achievements as much as possible. Thus it is to be expected that in the passage quoted Mamertinus exaggerates the misery of the Gauls before Julian was sent to protect them, just as in the sentence following Depeyrot's quotation Mamertinus exaggerates Julian's salutary accomplishments ("with one battle all of Germany was destroyed," *Pan. Lat.* 3[11].4.3). The text does not simply attest desolation, as Depeyrot implies. (Small points: the passage refers to the state of the Gauls before Julian's arrival, not "sous Julien"; the panegyric was spoken when Mamertinus, not Julian, assumed the consulship, on 1 January 362, not 1 June.)

At least these passage are identified so they can be consulted at greater length: matters are more difficult when quotations are identified only by work, as at pp. 19, 24, 63, 68, 70, 115, 116, 118, and 123. Depeyrot addresses a scholarly audience in his introduction and assumes throughout a high degree of scholarly interest; so his failure to append references to his sources, both of data and of arguments, is most unfortunate. For example, he discusses in some detail the financial records of the late fifth-century African couple Processanus and Siddina, but does not identify a publication of the relevant documents. (Processanus and Siddina are not listed in *PLRE*, Pauly-Wissowa, or—although it is asserted that the wooden tablets containing the records were found "au début du siècle"—in any of the indices of *L'Année épigraphique*.)

Sometimes Depeyrot fails to notify the reader that a controversy exists, and in one instance compounds this problem with a translation that tacitly interprets the content of an ancient passage. At p. 56 he raises the question of whether Roman citizens could read the titulature in the obverse legends, and juxtaposes a quotation from Julian's *Misopogon*, 355D = VII, 27, ed. Ch. Lacombrade (Paris, 1964).

Depeyrot follows Lacombrade in rendering "ce sont vos princes eux-mêmes que vous brocardez, riant des poils de leur menton ou *des titres gravés sur leurs monnaies.*" The Greek, however, reads *ta en tois nomismasi charagmata. Charagma* etymologically can refer to anything engraved or written, thus to either types or legends; but as J. Szidat points out ("Zur Wirkung und Aufnahme des Münzpropaganda (Iul. Misop. 355d)," *Mus. Helv.* 38 (1981), p. 23, n. 7), when used of coins *charagma* always refers to types. Indeed other ancient sources (Ephraim Syr., *Hymn. contr. Iul.* 16–19; Socrates, *HE* 3.17; Soz. *HE* 5.19; Cassiod. *Hist.* 6.40.2–4, quoted by Szidat, pp. 32–33) state explicity that the Antiochenes ridiculed the image of the bull on the reverse of Julian's new large bronze.

Depeyrot does not acknowledge these objections, but instead asserts, "Ammien Marcellin nous a donné des précisions sur les moqueries qui portèrent sur les titres de la titulature de Julien" (p. 56). At 23.1.5 Ammianus reports that the populace interpreted the deaths of Julian's *comes sacrum largitionum* Felix, and then of his uncle Julian, as portending Julian's own death: they recited Julian's titles in the significant order Felix, Julianus, Augustus. For proper oracular force this formula ought to have been a conventional one, in which the crowd now found new significance. But Julian's coins entitle him FLavius CLaudius IVLIANVS Pius Felix AVGustus (on some coins prefixed Dominus Noster), or FLavius CLaudius IVLIANVS PerPetuus AVGustus, without Felix. The coins do not provide the right formula; the crowd must have used a different source, and Ammianus's anecdote does not refer to the coins at all. Neither passage cited in fact correlates the subjects of mass literacy and coin legends, as he implies. The relationship is a fascinating question, however; evidence suggests that even though many people derived meaning on coinage principally from the types, considerable numbers were aware of what the legends said (see now W. V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* [Cambridge, Mass., 1989], p. 213 *et passim*).

The metallurgical analyses of C. Morrisson et al., *L'Or monnayé*, Cahiers E. Babelon 2 (Paris, 1985) are properly cited. Depeyrot's interpretation of the available figures regarding the platinum content of fourth and fifth-century gold is plausible, but with a sample as small as two coins from a single mint (Constantinople) over a period of eighteen years (375–93) the data are simply too sparse to carry final conviction.

In sum, the greatest weakness of the book is that Depeyrot is sometimes too casual in his use of references and of ancient texts; archaeological, social, and technical material is more soundly incorporated. It is a pity that Depeyrot did not provide more scholarly guidance to readers who are less than expert, for the book is an important one, providing a comprehensive overview of the numismatics of a fascinating period.

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John Casey and Richard Reece, eds. *Coins and the Archaeologist.* London: B. A. Seaby, Ltd., 1988. 306 pp., 8 pls. ISBN 1–85264–011–1. £17.50.

This is a republication, with revisions and addenda, of a volume of papers presented at a 1973 conference at the University of London on archaeological numismatics. Initially published in 1974 (as British Archaeological Reports 4), the papers are now made more accessible and in three cases have been extensively rewritten; one of the 14 papers is new. As is the case in most conference proceedings, the contributions are united less by a common purpose than by a common theme, which is the interpretation of coins in archaeological and hoard contexts of Roman and medieval Britain.

Several of the shorter papers are by archaeologists who have come to coins via their work in the field. In the one pre-Roman paper (pp. 1–12) John Hollis proposes to identify different monetary functions for different types of early British coins on the basis of find distribution. His second paper (pp. 189–200) deals on a theoretical level with the fundamental question raised when any coin is used as dating evidence: how to estimate the time lag between time of issue and time of loss or deposition. This concern understandably resurfaces in one form or another in several other papers and, in a study entitled "Numerical Aspects of Roman Coin Hoards in Britain" (pp. 86–101), Richard Reece develops a few useful principles, showing, for example, that coins of a given emperor reach peak circulation "after that emperor's death —perhaps some twenty or thirty years later," and that worn sestertii of Hadrian are more likely to be lost in the mid-third century than earlier.