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DAVID WOODS

GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE AGAIN

The emperor Gallienus (253–268) struck a series of aurei that has attracted particular attention in the modern era due to its unusual features. The common factor uniting this series is that the imperial bust on the obverse displays a highly unusual crown, a crown of wheat stalks *(corona spicea)*.[1] This series can be subdivided into three main groups according to the legend surrounding this bust. One group depicts the legend GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE about the bust, and pairs this with reverses depicting either the legend VBIQVE PAX about the goddess Pax driving a biga *(Fig. 1)* or VICTORIA AVG about the goddess Victoria crowning the emperor.[2] A second group depicts the legend GALLIENVS P F AVG about the bust in association with the same two reverse types and a third depicting the legend VICTORIA AVG about the goddess Victoria standing on a globe.[3] Finally, a third group depicts the legend GALLIENVS AVG about the bust instead in association with three new reverse types, one depicting the legend P M T P VII COS PP about the emperor standing between two river gods, another depicting the legend FIDES MIL about the goddess Fides standing between two military

[1] Emperors had rarely been depicted with the *corona spicea* on the coinage beforehand. Hadrian wears one on a very rare sestertius with reverse depicting the goddess Diana standing with bow and arrow first published by D. Kienast, Hadrian, Augustus und die eleusinischen Mysterien, JNG 10, 1959/60, pp. 61–69, at 67. Antoninus Pius also wears one on a very rare denarius with reverse depicting Aequitas with scales and sceptre (see CNG, Triton XVIII, 7 January 2015, lot 1099) and on a similarly rare sestertius with reverse depicting Salus feeding a serpent (see Heritage New York Signature Sale 3004, 4 January 2009, lot 20080). Older works sometimes describe the crown worn by Gallienus as one of reeds rather than of wheat stalks. For example, J.P.C. Kent, Gallienae Augustae, NC 13, 1973, pp. 64–68, describes it so and argues that it alludes to some military victory at a river. Certainly, there are some minor differences between dies in the depiction of the wheat stalk, so that some clearly display an ear of grain, while others do not, but this does not provide sufficient reason to doubt that a crown of wheat stalks was intended in all cases, not least because there does not seem to be any parallel to or precedent for the depiction of an emperor with a crown of reeds, whatever its precise explanation. On the sudden explosion in the variety of imperial portraits depicted on the coinage under Gallienus, see N. M. Mc.Q. Holmes, The Developement of Imperial Portraiture on the Coinage of Gallienus (AD 253–268), NC 179, 2019, pp. 225–248.

[2] MIR 689–690 (Rome). All coins of the Valerianic dynasty are identified by their reference in R. Göbl, Die Münzprägung der Kaiser Valerianus I./ Gallienus/ Saloninus (253/268), Regalianus (260) und Macrianus/ Quietus (260/62), Moneta Imperii Romani 36, 43, 44 (Vienna 2000).

[3] MIR 691–693 (Rome).

standards, and a third depicting the legend MARTI PROPVNATORI about the god Mars advancing.[4] There is no agreement as to where these coins were struck: Göbl attributes the first two groups just noted to Rome, and the third to Siscia, while Kent attributes all three groups to Rome.[5] However, it is generally agreed that the whole series should be dated to in or about 266, the year of the seventh consulship of Gallienus, because the legend P M T P VII COS PP appears to refer to his seventh consulship.



Fig. 1 Aureus of Gallienus (d. 20 mm; w. 5.84 g). MIR 689b. Münzkabinett, Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, Inv. 18200667.

On the basis of the weight of the coins, it is also agreed that the group with the legend GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE about the bust was probably struck first and succeeded by the group with the legend GALLIENVS P F AVG about the bust, while the group with the legend GALLIENVS AVG about the bust was probably struck last.[6] The two words of the initial legend GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE are feminine in form and appear to be in either the genitive case singular or the dative case singular. The latter is more probable since the dative was sometimes used for obverse legends as, for example, when Valerian I struck coins with obverse legend DIVAE MARINIANAE in honour of his deceased wife Mariniana.[7] In practice, however, the dative case was far more frequently used for reverse legends, as in the case of the type with legend MARTI PROPVNATORI already noted above. The obverse legend normally occurred in the nominative case singular, as in the case of the legends either GALLIENVS P F AVG or GALLIENVS AVG, and served simply to identify the accompanying bust. In the case of the legend GALLIENAE

4 MIR 1420h, 1435h, 1440 (Siscia).

5 Kent (note 1), pp. 67–68. Göbl (note 1), p. 121, identifies the two river gods depicted on the reverse of the type with legend P M T P VII COS PP as personifications of the rivers Sava and Kupa that met at Siscia. In contrast, Kent interprets them in reference to some confluence of rivers near which Gallienus had happened to win a battle.

6 Kent (note 1), pp. 67–68.

7 MIR 212–226 (Rome).

AVGVSTAE, therefore, one naturally expects it to identify the accompanying bust, and if the bust was obviously feminine, one would not hesitate to interpret this legend in reference to an empress Galliena. Yet there was no empress Galliena and, apart from the *corona spicea,* the accompanying bust represents the standard bearded portrayal of Gallienus.[8]

The fact that this legend could easily be interpreted in reference to an empress Galliena may explain why it was replaced by the legends GALLIENVS P F AVG and GALLIENVS AVG. Since there was no real empress Galliena, those so inclined may have interpreted this legend in mocking reference to Gallienus instead, the implication being that he was effeminate in some way, and this may have prompted Gallienus, or the relevant officials, to order the replacement of this legend with something less ambiguous. But what was the original intention behind this legend? Since it occurs in association with a bust displaying a highly unusual feature, a *corona spicea*, it is hard to deny that the legend and the *corona* were probably connected in some way. But what exactly was this connection? The answer to this presumably lies in the significance of the *corona spicea* and whatever concepts or associations it was expected to prompt in the mind of those viewing this coin.

Alföldi reviewed the various uses of the *corona spicea,* such as by members of the Arval Brethren at Rome or by initiates into the mysteries celebrated at Eleusis, near Athens, in honour of the goddesses Demeter and Persephone to conclude that its depiction on the coinage of Gallienus alludes to his initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries during his recent visit to Athens.[9] However, the evidence that Gallienus was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries during this visit is weaker than Alföldi would allow, although it remains a possibility.[10] He then concluded that the use of what he interpreted as a feminine form of the name of Gallienus Augustus in association with his bust wearing the *corona spicea* must refer to the

[8] The *Historia Augusta* reports that Gallienus had a cousin Galliena who proclaimed the usurper Celsus emperor (*Tyranni triginta* 29.2). However, this text was written in the late 4th century and its later lives are riddled with invention. In this case, see J. Schwartz, L'Histoire Auguste et la fable de l'usurpateur Celsus, L'Antiquité Classique 33, 1964, pp. 419–430.

[9] See A. Alföldi, Zur Kenntnis der Zeit der römischen Soldatenkaiser: II. Das Problem des verweiblichten Kaisers Gallienus, ZfN 38, 1928, pp. 156–203, reprinted in his Studien zur Geschichte der Weltkrise des dritten Jahrhunderts n. Chr. (Darmstadt 1967), pp. 16–56, esp. 31–52. For his final re-statement and defence of his argument, see A. Alföldi, Redeunt Saturnia regna, VII: Frugifer-Triptolemos im ptolemäisch-römischen Herrscherkult, Chiron 9, 1979, pp. 553–606. For an English translation, see A. Alföldi, Redeunt Saturnia Regna, trans. E. Alföldi-Rosenbaum (Bonn 1997), pp. 173–247, esp. 196–224. For a survey of the contents of and reaction to the whole series of papers translated therein, see F. Santangelo, Saturnia Regna Revisited, in J.H. Richardson – F. Santangelo (eds.), Andreas Alföldi in the Twenty-First Century (Stuttgart 2015), pp. 131–151. Gallienus probably visited Athens in September/October 264. See D. Armstrong, Gallienus in Athens, 264, Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigrafik 70, 1987, pp. 235–258.

[10] The key piece of evidence, a chapter from the *Historia Augusta* (*Gallieni duo* 11.3) refers to Gallienus' desire to participate in all the sacred rites at Athens, but does not mention the Eleusinian mysteries by name.

mystical union between Gallienus and Demeter resulting from his initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries. Many modern scholars continue to follow his basic assumptions and arguments, perhaps with a slight nuance here or there, to conclude similarly that the legend GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE refers to some sort of union between Gallienus and a goddess, if not Demeter, then some other similar goddess, perhaps Persephone instead, or even the Palmyrene goddess Allat.[11]

Kent raised a rare voice of objection to the approach championed by Alföldi when he attempted to revive an older interpretation by Hardouin that the legend GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE is a vocative acclamation of the emperor incorrectly spelled due to hypercorrection, that is, that it should properly read GALLIENE AVGVSTE instead.[12] However, there are two main objections to this interpretation. The first objection must be that, if this interpretation was correct, then the mint officials should surely have replaced the legend GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE with GALLIENE AVGVSTE rather than with either GALLIENVS P F AVG or GALLIENVS AVG. The second objection is that neither of the two other examples of the use of a vocative acclamation on a Roman imperial coin cited by Kent is directly comparable to the use of GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE on the coins under discussion. In the case of the coins struck by Commodus (180-92), OPTIME MAXIME was a reverse legend.[13] Similarly, in the case of the coins struck by Carausius (286-93), EXPECTATE VENI was a reverse legend also, and these reverse legends were paired with obverses depicting the imperial name in the standard nominative case in each instance.[14] Yet, however exactly one interprets it, GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE is an obverse legend.

The purpose of this note is to propose a new interpretation of the legend GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE and the accompanying bust with *corona spicea* as an alternative to the hyper-religious interpretation, in all its variants, championed by Alföldi and his various followers. One may start with the significance of the *corona*

[11] See e.g. L. De Blois, The Policy of the Emperor Gallienus (Leiden 1976), pp. 151–155; J.J. Bray, Gallienus: A Study in Reformist and Sexual Politics (Kent Town 1997), pp. 220–222, 241–243; L.S.B. Maccoull, Gallienus the Genderbender, Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies 40, 1999, pp. 233–239 in favour of a reference to Allat; R. Smith, Serious Fun in a Potted History at the Saturnalia? Some Imperial Portraits in Julian the Apostate's Caesars, a Medallion-Image of Julian and the «Gallienae Augustae» Aurei, Histos 7, 2013, pp. 215–268, at 250–257; F. Carlà-Uhink, «Between the Human and the Divine»: Cross-Dressing and Transgender Dynamics in the Graeco-Roman World, in D. Campanile – F. Carlà-Uhink – M. Facella (eds.), TransAntiquity: Cross-Dressing and Transgender Dynamics in the Ancient World (Abingdon 2017), pp. 3–37, at 23–24.

[12] Kent (note 1), pp. 67–68, following J. Hardouin, Chronologiae ex nummis antiquis restitutae specimen primum: numismata saeculi Constantiniani (Paris 1697), p. 119. Unusually, L.O. Lagerqvist, Gallienae Augustae. Once Again, in H. Nilsson (ed.) Florilegium Numismaticum: Studia in Honorem U. Westermark Edita (Stockholm 1992), pp. 219–231, believes the explanation by Kent «probably more credible» than that by Alföldi. For a recent discussion of acclamatory legends on Roman coins, with a catalogue of the same, see A. Burnett, «Zela, Acclamations, Caracalla – and Parthia», Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies 59, 2016, pp. 72–110.

[13] RIC III 3, Commodus 192 (denarius), 553 (as).

[14] RIC V.2 5, Carausius 216-19, 605, 771-75 (antoninianus), 554-58 (denarius).

spicea. There are two main objections to interpreting this as a symbol either of the goddess Demeter or of any other similar goddess. The first is the fact that this approach ignores the contemporary numismatic context. On the one hand, one notes that Gallienus pays no attention otherwise on his coinage to Demeter, Persephone, or to any other non-Roman goddess.[15] Neither does he ever explicitly refer to the Eleusinian or any other mysteries on his coinage. In combination with the absence of any explicit reference to Demeter or any similar non-Roman goddess on any of the group of coins under discussion, this makes it difficult to understand why he, or his officials, should have acted in such a restrained or allusive way as they are alleged to have done, or how they hoped that the ordinary viewer would recognise that these coins celebrated some sort of union between Gallienus and Demeter or a similar goddess, if they completely failed to signal any interest in this topic otherwise. On the other hand, various emperors had long depicted wheat ears or wheat stalks in association with the personifications Abundantia and Annona on coins celebrating the imperial concern for the grain supply, and Gallienus was no different.[16] In that context, therefore, the depiction of wheat stalks once more, even in the form of a crown, should have immediately recalled the grain supply to mind again.

The second objection to Alföldi's interpretation is that he ignores the simplest interpretation of all, that a crown of wheat stalks refers to the grain supply, no more and no less, not to Demeter or Persephone or any other goddess as patrons of agriculture and therefore of the grain supply also, but directly to the grain supply itself. The best proof of this lies in a story preserved by the Roman historian Tacitus which seems to have been overlooked in all modern discussions of this topic.[17] Tacitus has just described how the senator Publius Suillius Rufus had prosecuted his senatorial colleague Valerius Asiaticus before the emperor Claudius himself in AD 47, after which Suillius then turned to the prosecution of two Roman knights before the senate:

> The Fathers were then convened; and Suillius proceeded to add to the list of accused two Roman knights of the highest rank, surnamed Petra. The cause

[15] Some types in honour of traditional Roman goddesses of agriculture were struck during his reign. However, these were rare and, most importantly, were struck only in the name of his wife Salonina. See MIR 1637 (Antioch) in honour of Ceres and MIR 902 (Cologne) in honour of Segetia.

[16] In general, see C.F. Noreña, Imperial Ideals in the Roman West: Representation, Circulation, Power (Cambridge 2011), pp. 112–122. For Gallienus' coins with reverse types celebrating Annona, see MIR 486–488, 493–495 (Rome); 1426 (Siscia). These types depict Annona holding several heads of wheat in her outstretched hand. Alföldi, (note 9), p. 223, published an antoninianus of Gallienus with an obverse bust depicting him with a raised hand holding several heads of wheat, claiming that «the ears of corn present the emperor as the new Triptolemos». In fact, they simply evoke the standard portrayal of Annona to emphasize the emperor's ongoing concern for the grain supply.

[17] It is noteworthy that Alföldi does not mention it in his discussion of alleged Aion-Frugifer-Triptolemos symbolism under Claudius, although he lays great stress otherwise on the fact that the year to which this story relates, AD 47, was the eight-hundredth anniversary of the foundation of Rome. See Alföldi, (note 9), pp. 202–203.

> of death lay in the allegation that they had lent their house as a trysting-place for Mnester and Poppaea. It was, however, for a vision during his night's sleep that one of them was indicted, the charge being that he had seen Claudius crowned with a wheaten diadem, the ears inverted, and on the strength of his vision had predicted a shortage in the corn-supply. It has been stated by some that the thing seen was a vine-wreath with whitening leaves; which he read as an indication of the emperor's decease at the wane of autumn. The point not disputed was that it was a dream, whatever its character, which brought ruin to himself and to his brother.[18]

The key point of interest here lies in the nature of the dream experienced by one of the brothers, which dream Tacitus describes as the real reason for their prosecution and execution. The brother dreamed that he saw Claudius wearing a *corona spicea* with inverted wheat ears and interpreted this as an omen of a coming grain shortage under Claudius, or such was the tradition that Tacitus chose to emphasize. There is no suggestion here that there was any particular religious or cultic significance to the dream, that it indicated that Claudius had done something to upset Demeter or Persephone, or that he should perform some religious observance in their honour in order to avert this omen. There is no hint that this story suggested anything about the gender of Claudius either, that he was in some way effeminate perhaps, a potentially scandalous allegation that Tacitus might well have liked to repeat for this reason.[19] There is no mention of religion or gender at all, but the focus is solely on the grain supply. It is my argument, therefore, that the ordinary viewers of the coins depicting Gallienus with a *corona spicea* would have reacted to his depiction in this manner in the exact same way that the Petra brother did in response to his dream of Claudius wearing a *corona spicea* with inverted ears, and so would have interpreted it in reference to the emperor's care for the grain supply rather than to his religious policy. Certainly, a gap of a little over two centuries separates the coins under discussion from the deaths of the Petra brothers, but Roman culture had changed relatively little in the meantime.

If Gallienus is depicted wearing the *corona spicea* in symbolic reference to his concern for the grain supply, the obvious suggestion is that the original legend GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE refers to the same also. Two points need to be borne

[18] Tacitus, *Annals* 11.4: *Vocantur post haec patres, pergitque Suillius addere reos equites Romanos inlustres, quibus Petra cognomentum. At causa necis ex eo, quod domum suam Mnesteris et Poppaeae congressibus praebuissent. Verum nocturnae quietis species alteri obiecta, tamquam vidisset Claudium spicea corona evinctum, spicis retro conversis, eaque imagine gravitatem annonae praedixisset. Quidam pampineam coronam albentibus foliis visam atque ita interpretatum tradidere, vergente autumno mortem principis ostendi. Illud haud ambigitur, qualicumque insomnio ipsi fratrique perniciem adlatam.* Text and translation from J. Jackson, Tacitus IV, Loeb Classical Library 312 (Cambridge, MA 1937), 253–255.

[19] Claudius was unusual for the period in only showing a sexual interest in women. See Suetonius, *Claudius* 33.2. Furthermore, as a youth, his disabilities may have prevented him from attracting the sexual attention of older men and so have saved him from the charges of effeminacy thrown against various other emperors as they rose to power.

in mind next. The first is that Roman inscriptions often omitted key term(s) if they were considered to be obvious from the context, and coin-legends could sometimes do the same. For example, under Gallienus the mint at Rome struck a number of coins and medallions with obverse legend GALLIENVM AVG P R or GALLIENVM AVG SENATVS where one has to understand the main verb, whatever it is that the Roman people or the senate are doing to Gallienus, from the context.[20] Clearly, one has to understand a verb such as *honorat* «honours» or *venerat* «pays homage to». The second point to be kept in mind is that the feminine forms of imperial names and titles were routinely used in an adjectival sense to denote something that belonged to the emperor. For example, the papyrological evidence reveals that the full title of the *legio II Traiana Fortis* under Gallienus was the *legio II Traiana Fortis Germanica Galliena*.[21] It is my argument, therefore, that the terms GALLIENAE and AVGVSTAE should be interpreted as adjectives agreeing with a noun that needs to be understood from the context, where the immediate context, the association with a bust depicting a *corona spicea*, and the wider numismatic context, the frequent traditional striking of coins depicting the personification Annona holding wheat ears, combine to suggest that the full legend was intended to be understood as (ANNONAE) GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE «In honour of the grain supply of the emperor Gallienus».[22] Strictly speaking, the description of the grain supply symbolised by the *corona spicea* as belonging to the emperor Gallienus was redundant in that it ought to have been obvious from the position of the crown on Gallienus' head that the obverse type celebrated his concern in particular for the grain supply, but the inclusion of this adjective seems to have been determined by a need felt to include some specific reference to the imperial name in the obverse legend where it had traditionally been accustomed to appear. Nevertheless, it was precisely because it was redundant that mint officials were able to replace the whole legend GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE with a traditional obverse legend once it became clear that it could also be interpreted in mockery of the emperor.

In summary, the obverse bust depicting the emperor Gallienus wearing a *corona spicea* has nothing to do with the cult of Demeter or of any similar goddess and if, as has sometimes been argued, Gallienus was an initiate in the Eleusinian mysteries, this is irrelevant. The bust with *corona spicea* simply alludes to Gallienus' successful care, as he no doubt saw it, for the grain supply. This style of bust nicely complements the reverse types celebrating peace and victory with which it was initially paired, since it effectively celebrates the new prosperity resulting from this peace, so transforming these initial coins at least into celebration of the peace and prosperity wrought by the emperor, achievements of equal appeal to everyone surely, regardless of their feelings about the Eleusinian or any other mysteries.

[20] MIR 455, 563–568.

[21] For this evidence, and the evidence for all the other different imperial titles borne by this legion, see P. Sänger, Die Nomenklatur der legio II Traiana Fortis im 3. Jh. n. Chr., Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigrafik 169, 2009, pp. 277–286.

[22] M. Rosenbach, Galliena Augusta: Allgott und Einzelgötter im gallienischen Pantheon (Tübingen 1958), pp. 32–36, interprets the terms GALLIENAE and AVGVSTAE as adjectives also, but in reference to Demeter as belonging to Gallienus.

Abstract

It has traditionally been argued that, when the emperor Gallienus (253–268) struck aurei depicting his bust wearing a crown of wheat stalks, he intended to signal some sort of union with Demeter or a similar goddesss. A neglected passage from Tacitus (*Annals* 11.4) suggests that this bust type had no religious significance, but was intended solely to celebrate the emperor's care for the grain supply. Consequently, the legend GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE about the imperial bust on some of these coins was probably intended in reference to the grain supply *(annona)* symbolised by the crown of wheat stalks rather than to Gallienus himself.

Zusammenfassung

Üblicherweise wird die Meinung vertreten, dass der römische Kaiser Gallienus (253–268) mit einer Serie von aurei, die sein Portrait mit einer Krone aus Weizenstielen zeigt, eine wie auch immer geartete Verbindung mit der Göttin Demeter anzeigen wollte. Allerdings besagt eine kaum beachtete Stelle bei Tacitus (*Annalen* 11.4), dass dieser Büstentypus gar keine religiöse Bedeutung hatte, sondern vielmehr die Versorgung der Bevölkerung mit Getreide feiern sollte. Entsprechend wäre die auf einigen Stücken dieser Serie um das Portrait angebrachte Legende GALLIENAE AVGVSTAE als Referenz auf die durch die Weizenstielkrone symbolisierte Getreideversorgung *(annona)* zu verstehen, und nicht auf den Kaiser selbst.

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