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# Studies

## NUMISMATICS

### REGALIANUS ‘STRIKES’ AGAIN! AN OLD FIND PUBLISHED FOR THE FIRST TIME

**Abstract:** The present paper is presenting to the scholar environment new coin of the famous imperial usurper couple of Regalianus and Dryantilla (AD 260).

Based on a photograph from 1971, the coin of Regalianus was made available for study. At the same time the information on the back side of the photograph, indicate the findspot as the area of the former Roman forum of *colonia Carnuntum*.

**Keywords:** *antoninianus, Regalianus, Carnuntum*.

Once mysterious figures in Roman history with few only few data to acknowledge their existence, the usurper couple of Regalianus and Dryantilla has strongly increase their ‘presence’ on both academic and antiquities market environments following the impact of only one single artefact: the coinage.

Besides being the only source on portraiture (although, a very schematic one!) of the two characters, the coinages of Regalianus and Dryantilla have known, in the last three decades, a boost of knowledge on both academic and marketing sides. After monographic and scholarly studies have thrown a new light on the numismatic impact of the usurper couple coinage on the history of Pannonia<sup>1</sup>, especially on Carnuntum, where the mint to produce this coinage was, most likely, located<sup>2</sup>, owing to their rarity, these coins have made their way among ones of the most highly auctioned Roman artefacts of the last decades.<sup>3</sup>

Back in 2019, we stated that: “The scarcity of ancient literary records for this usurper, the rarity of these coins and their specific low-quality aesthetic design produced by applying a poor-quality new obverse and reverse on old issues of denarii and antoniniani make that every new information on such pieces must be brought to the public - both scholarly and curiosity environments.”<sup>4</sup>

At the beginning of the 1970’s, a frenzy has engulfed locals in Carnuntum and surroundings in their search for artifacts using improvised metal detectors. One of the locals found the coin presented here, and soon after he sold it to an unknown destination. The years have passed and, so, the finder passed away. However, before he has sold the coin he took a picture, which has helped us to catalogue the coin.

<sup>1</sup> DEMBSKI/WINTER/WOYTEK 2007, 523-596.; GĂZDAC 2015, 37-42; GĂZDAC/MELCHART 2018, 37-40; GĂZDAC/POLLHAMMER 2021.

<sup>2</sup> GĂZDAC 2015, 39; GĂZDAC/POLLHAMMER 2021, 29-30

<sup>3</sup> GĂZDAC/MELCHART/POLLHAMMER 2021, 41-109.

<sup>4</sup> GĂZDAC/MELCHART 2018, 37.

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Therefore, we are presenting here the information on a new coin of Regalianus, known only from a photo (Fig. 1).

*Issuer:* Regalianus

*Denomination:* antoninianus

*Mint:* Carnuntum

*Dating:* AD 260

*Obverse:* IMP C P C REGALIA[nus aug]

*Poor-quality design of the bust of Regalianus wearing radiate crown, right.*

*Reverse:* [p]ROVIDE[ntia augg]

*Providentia standing left, holding corn ears and cornucopiae; at foot, modius.*

*Reference:* RIC V.2, 8; MIR 43, 1714

The coins of Regalianus and Dryantilla reveal that although the coins were minted in AD 260 as antoniniani (radiated crown on Regalianus' head, bust of Dryantilla on crescent) they used older denarii. Not an accidental choice, as around AD 260, the antoninianus was facing a strong debasement in silver content.

Regalianus had to pay the troops as soon as they proclaimed him emperor to ensure their loyalty (short as it was!) and make certain they knew who the new emperor was by placing his portrait on the coins. As there were no silver mines in the area of Carnuntum, Regalianus relied on withdrawing as many older silver coins as possible from circulation and

overstruck them with his and his wife portraits. The absence of proper technology and high-skilled coin engravers<sup>5</sup> led to the minting of poor-quality designed coins, on which one can still observe, in many cases, the previous monetary type.<sup>6</sup>

Almost all of the known pieces reveal the fact that the Regalianus' and Dryantilla's coins were overstruck on earlier coins, usually denarii of previous emperors such as Septimius Severus, Severus Alexander and Maximinus I Thrax.

In the case of the present coin, the remains of the original type allow us to identify the previous coin, as a denarius of Septimius Severus (Fig. 2).

*Issuer:* Septimius Severus

*Denomination:* denarius

*Mint:* Laodicea ad Mare

*Dating:* AD 198-202

*Obverse:* L [sept sev aug imp xi p]ART MA-X.

*Part of the Septimius Severus head. The neck, the beard and the mouth are still visible.*

*Reverse:* [cos] I P - P

*One wing of the standing Victory to left.*

*Reference:* RIC IV, 503a

When the findspot is known for the coins of Regalianus and Dryantilla, in the large majority of cases, its pointing to the Roman metropolis of Carnuntum. The coins come have



**Fig. 1.** The Regalianus coin.



**Fig. 2.** The Regalianus coin. The non-blurred area is pointing out the original coin type of Septimius Severus.

<sup>5</sup> GÄZDAC/POLLHAMMER 2021, 29.

<sup>6</sup> GÄZDAC/POLLHAMMER 2021, 29.



**Fig. 3.** Aerial view of Carnuntum with the area where the coin was found in 1971. (Google Maps).

been found on various areas of this site: the legionary fortress, the canabae legionis, the forum, amphitheatre I, amphitheatre II, the 'Zivilstadt' and the gladiators' school.<sup>7</sup> (Pl. 1)

In the case of the coin presented in this study, the only information we possess on the findspot comes from the back side of the photograph it is mentioned: "1971, Tiergarten, Petronell [Carnuntum]. The findspot it is located in the vicinity of the Amphitheater II, north of the county road L167 (Fig. 3).

On the map of the Roman *colonia* of Carnuntum, the findspot will be within the area of the Forum (Pl. 1), where other coins of this ruling usurper couple were found.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> GÄZDAC/POLLHAMMER 2021, 31.

<sup>8</sup> GÄZDAC/POLLHAMMER 2021, 47-103.

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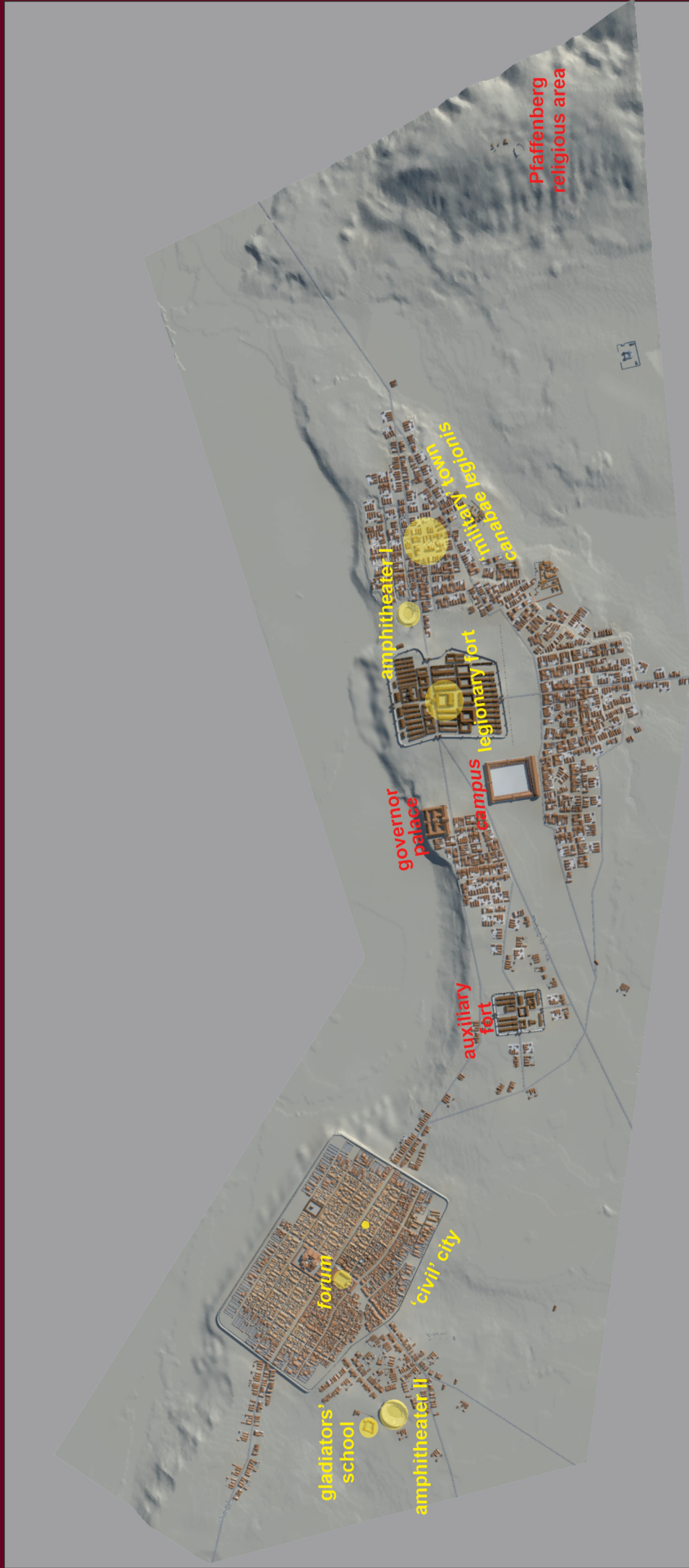


Plate 1. Virtual Carnuntum pointing out areas where coins of Regalianus and Dryantilla were found (map based on GÄZDAC/POLLHAMMER 2021, map 2).