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A UNKNOWN GOLD MEDALLION OF VALENTINIAN I

A so far unknown medallion of Valentinian I¹ found its way to the National Museum in Warsaw in May 2001. Information on a large gold *multiplum* had reached the Museum earlier, at the beginning of 2000². It allegedly appeared on the antiquarian market in 1999, first in Gdańsk, then in Warsaw. It was supposedly found in Poland in the 1930s by the family of the owner of the object alongside other archaeological relics which were later dispersed. Another version maintains that it was allegedly purchased by a student in the 1960s in Gdańsk (the seller is a retired teacher)³.

None of the foregoing versions has been confirmed by the owner of the object, neither has he presented any plausible information on its origin, all he said was just the medallion had been owned by the family for long, it was given to him by the eldest brother just before his death twenty eight years ago, who had received it from his father. He mentioned that in the past (about 25 years before) he had consulted on it with a few numismatists from the Gdańsk branch of the Polish Numismatic Society, unfortunately all of them have already died. He also presented correspondence from 1992 on the medallion from Leu-Numismatic in Zurich⁴. The origin of the *multiplum* will be referred to herein later, now it is time to present the object itself⁵.

¹ It was then that the National Museum was offered it for purchase. On that very day (May 15, 2001) it was temporarily deposited in the Museum in order to carry out all necessary analyses to confirm on its authenticity.

² The information reached the National Museum on January 25, 2000 by proxy of M. D. Kossowski, head of the Relic Saving Centre. On that day we were also given a copy of a hand-made drawing of the medallion.

³ The foregoing information on the origin of the object comes from the text by M. D. Kossowski, *Zagadkowe złote multiplum cesarza Walentyniana z oznaczeniem mennicy w Trewirze*, Warszawa, December 2000, a copy of which I received from the author in May 2001.

⁴ Information confirmed by Ms Silvia Hurter from Leu-Numismatic, whom I would like to cordially thank one more time for help and valuable assistance.

⁵ A final and complete publication of the object is by no means the purpose of this article, as work on it has not been finished yet; my goal is to provide information on the so far unknown medallion of Valentinian I and present the results of its preliminary analysis.



Fig. 1a. The medallion of Valentinian I — the obverse. Scale 1:1 and 2:1.

It is a unique gold medallion, 47.0 mm in diameter, weight 40.18 g. Once its weight has been compared with that of the basic gold unit — solidus from the Valentinians' time (4.54 g), one might claim that the specimen presented herein is a 9-solidus *multiplum*. It was issued during the reign of Valentinian I by the mint in Trier. The obverse bears Valentinian I's bust turned to the left, a rosette diadem on his head, wearing armour, a *paludamentum* fastened on the shoulder with an ornamental fibula. The accompanying legend reads: DNVALENTINI ANVSPEAVG. The reverse presents the emperor in a standing position, a diadem on his head, wearing a military attire, long cloak and boots, *labarum* in his left hand; he is helping up a kneeling woman in a long robe, a *corona muralis* upon her head, a horn of plenty in her hand — personification of the *Respublica*, accompanied by a legend characteristic of that kind of images: RESTITVTORREI



Fig. 1b. The medallion of Valentinian I — the reverse. Scale 1:1 and 2:1.

PUBLICAE, and the mint-mark — TROBS (Fig. 1a, b). Among medallions issued between 361 and the reign of Justinian I, the following mutual die-positions prevail $\uparrow\downarrow$ and $\uparrow\uparrow$, the former one being considerably more frequent⁶, which also characterizes the medallion of Valentinian I under discussion.

The condition⁷ of the *multiplum*, despite a number of tiny defects, may be regarded as very good. The surface is slightly folded, just like in case of many other *multipla* of the same diameter and considerably small thickness of the disc, here mere 2.5–3.0 mm. Abrasion traces of the relief are hardly visible, there are,

⁶ J. M. C. Toynbee, *Roman medallions*, Numismatic Studies 5, New York 1986, p. 170.

⁷ The surface of the medallion has been thoroughly studied by means of Leica and Kodak stereoscope microscopes.

however, numerous tiny defects in the form of piercings, dishes and shallow incisions upon the obverse and reverse. Most of them are patinated, which points out their ancient origin. The edge of the medallion, almost over the entire circumference, bears traces of modification: hammering, cutting and filing⁸. They might show that originally the *multiplum* had perhaps been a framed one, the frame having been removed in modern times. Most of the *multipla* from the area of Barbaricum had been framed ones, or at least provided with loops⁹.

Other traces on the medallion's surface, revealed due to microscope studies, are connected with its production process. In a few places upon the obverse, between the final letters of the legend, as well as on the surface between the emperor's neck and robe, traces of die grinding are plain to see. The shift of the die is quite distinct on either side of the *multiplum*, in the beaded rim, letters of the legend, head of the standing emperor and *labarum*. Also the layering of metal to be seen in a few places on the edge, two-sided split of the disc, alongside another one through the reverse along the rim, under the name of the mint TROBS (around 10 mm in length), all those traces are connected with the striking of the *multiplum*, or — which is more probable — the *multiplum* having been struck in a press¹⁰.

The object has also undergone metallurgic and metal composition analyses with the use of different methods. First they were analysed by means of non-invasive X-ray fluorescence method, carried out in two different laboratories. For comparative purposes also solidi of Valentinian I and Valens, issued by the said mint in Trier, from the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw (NPO 29996, 216585), have been analyzed. The contaminations occurring upon the surface of the *multiplum* have been analyzed too; this proved calcium carbonate (chalk) to be the main component of the deposit. By the owner's permission also invasive analysis of the medallion and Valens' solidus (since 1955 in the collection of the National Museum) has been carried out. The analysis has been done by means of the arch excitation emitting spectrometry method. It proved the object of a weight of 40177.35 mg, density 19.05 g/cm³, to have been made from gold of a purity of 99.8 and composition analogous to that of the coin of Valens¹¹.

⁸ As the owner of the object maintains the sawing of the edge to be seen on the obverse close to the emperor's eye was made in the Test Office about 25 years ago, to specify the gold fineness.

⁹ See A. B u r s c h e, *Złote medaliony rzymskie w Barbaricum. Symbolika prestiżu i władzy społeczeństw barbarzyńskich u schyłku starożytności*, Światowit Supplement Series A: Antiquity, vol. II, Warszawa 1998.

¹⁰ According to A. Bursche *multipla* of higher nominals were not made by means of the striking technique, both by use of a press — cf. A. B u r s c h e, *Złote medaliony...*, p. 193. Right here I would like to thank A. Bursche for much valuable information and assistance while working on Valentinian I's medallion.

¹¹ Analyses have been made at the District Test Office in Warsaw, Central Criminological Laboratory of the Police Command, Laboratory of the National Museum in Warsaw and Analytical Laboratory of the State Mint. Right here I would like one more time to give my thanks to the foregoing institutions.

In respect of iconography and style the medallion belongs to the Valentinian epoch. The bust turned to the right in a rosette diadem, armour and *paludamentum* is a quite frequent type of Valentinian I's bust, known from many monetary issues and *multipla* of that emperor, albeit much more often the ruler's head is adorned with a beaded diadem. Portraits of Valentinian I occurring upon coins bear remarkably different features according to the issuing mint and individual authors of the dies. Portraits of the co-rulers in turn were presented with the same features, and would be practically indistinguishable if it were not for the accompanying legend with the name of the emperor. As J. W. E. Pearce suggests this was probably intentional, an expression of harmony between co-regents¹². Unlike coins, more individualized portraits of emperors are to be found on special issues, upon large *multipla* in particular.

In respect of the similarity of the portrait and the style of the making of the bust the medallion in question seems to be close to certain Trier issues, especially those from later times (367–375). Among the solidi issues of this period there are specimens analogous to the medallion of Valentinian I; for example the solidus of the *Victoria Augg* type from the issue dated by Pearce to the years 367–375¹³. The specimen presented here (Fig. 2), kept in the collection of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw, comes from the hoard of Zagórzyn. There is a considerable similarity between the portraits on the medallion and the coin, although the one upon the medallion has been made more thoroughly and painstakingly. Medallions, as a rule, are characterized by an art of workmanship, not to be found upon coins, and the accuracy of the detail, which undoubtedly results from a larger engraving area, and the special occasion of the issue. Valentinian I's portraits under discussion are characterized by a broad face, straight nose, similar drawing of the eye, eye-brow, mouth and chin. Upon both the portraits the emperor wears the same attire, armour and *paludamentum*, the rosette diadem of an analogous type, although slightly different in detail.



Fig. 2. The solidus of Valentinian I from Zagórzyn hoard.
The collection of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw, inv. no. 5088/1.
Scale 1,5:1.

¹² J. W. E. Pearce, *The Roman Imperial Coinage (RIC)*, vol. IX *Valentinian I–Theodosius I*, London 1951, p. XXXIV.

¹³ RIC IX, Trier no. 17b.

The image is accompanied by a legend with imperial titulature DNVALENTINI ANVSPFAVG. From among Valentinian I's issues there are two more types of obverse legends: DNVALENTINI ANVSAVG and VALENTINI ANVSAVG. The former legend is the one most frequently occurring on coins and always appearing on *multipla*. The similarity of the medallion and the foregoing solidus is also to be seen in the characteristic structure of the legend, its division, type of letters, yet — chiefly in the specific differences of the size of letters, smaller in the final part of the first part of the legend IN, bigger in the middle part of its second segment SPF. The same style of the bust and the legend, though the portrait slightly different, occurs also on another solidus of the type the same as the foregoing one, coming from the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw¹⁴ (Fig. 3). One should admit that some of the traits presented above appear also on issues of other mints. The other side of the *multiplum* is adorned with the already described image of Valentinian I on the *labarum*: the emperor helping up the personification of the Republic or the Empire in general, presented in the form of a woman in a long robe, *corona muralis* and with a horn of plenty. The foregoing artistic workmanship of the making of the medallions is to be seen to a larger extent in the decoration of the reverse of the specimen in question. This is especially to be observed in the details of the emperor's robe and the personification, their footwear, albeit — as Toynbee puts it — starting from Valentinian I they are more awkward and heavier in the making¹⁵.



Fig. 3 The solidus of Valentinian I. The collection of the National Museum in Warsaw
Inv. no. NPO 29996. Scale 1,5:1.

The image type to be seen here alongside the accompanying legend RESTITVTORREI PVBLICAE is known merely from the reverses of gold *multipla*. In all the recorded cases, including the specimen in question, these are *multipla* of a weight of 9 solidi. They come from issues by Valens, Gratianus, Valentinian II and Theodosius I. In all seven medallions of that type are known, each of them having been issued by western mints. Most of them, as many as four,

¹⁴ RIC IX, Trier, as above.

¹⁵ Toynbee, *o.c.*, p. 173.

come from the Trier mint — those by Valens, Gratianus (known from the silver copy of a lost gold original), and two specimens of Valentinian II. The other three were struck in Aquileia (one specimen of Valentinian II) and Aquileia/Milan (two by Theodosius I). All bear the same legend and the same iconographic pattern.

The *Restitutor reipublicae* type appears earliest on monetary issues, right after Valentinian I had been acclaimed emperor. Solidi with the legend RESTITVTOR REIPVBLICAE, although with the image differing from that upon medallions, had been struck by all mints operating at that time in the Empire. The legend is accompanied by an image of the standing emperor with a *labarum* and Victoria on a sphere. The same type of the image and legend occurs also upon silver and bronze coins, time and again the *labarum* is replaced by a banner. An iconographic pattern similar to that on the medallions under discussion occurred also on bronze coins, yet — starting from as late as the co-reign of Gratianus, Valentinian II and Theodosius I. Instead of the *labarum*, the emperor helping up a kneeling woman would hold Victoria on a sphere, the image being accompanied by the legend REPARATIO REIPVB.

As it has been mentioned before, reverses of all the medallions have been made according to the same pattern, there are, however, certain differences of the detail. Upon those from Aquileia and Milan the emperor is presented with a halo, the details of his attire also differ. Both the Aquileian specimens, dated to 381, of Valentinian II¹⁶ and Theodosius¹⁷ (provided with a handle), stylistically resemble each other, yet, they remarkably differ in that respect from the *multiplum* in question. The same pertains to the medallion of Theodosius I¹⁸ from Milan, the chronologically latest one, dated to 394. Upon the Trier specimens, i.e. those of Valens¹⁹, Gratianus²⁰ and Valentinian II²¹, the ruler is wearing a diadem, particular pieces just slightly differing from one another. This pertains chiefly to the personification figure, the degree to which they kneel varies, the head being higher or lower. According to the emperor's gesture, who once upholds the elbow or the hand of the *Respublica*, the distance between them slightly differs. The attires of both the figures upon all specimens are the same (providing that the available illustrating material is sufficient). The *multipla* have been issued by different officinae, which is proved by mint-marks placed in the sector: TROBS (Valens' medallion), TROBC (Gratianus'), TROBS and TROBT (Valentinian II').

¹⁶ RIC IX, Aquileia 20a; F. Gneccchi, *I Medaglioni Romani*, Milano 1912, tav. 19,8.

¹⁷ RIC IX, Aquileia 20b; H. Dressel, *Die Römischen Madaille des Münzkabinetts der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin*, Berlin-Zürich 1973, p. 409–410, pl. XXXI, 277; Gneccchi, *o.c.*, tav. 19,12; Bursche, *o.c.*, p. 260, pl. O, IV.

¹⁸ RIC IX, Milan 34; Toynbee, *o.c.*, pl. XXXVI.

¹⁹ RIC IX, Trier 48a; Dressel, *o.c.*, p. 402–3, pl. XXX, 266; Gneccchi, *o.c.*, tav. 15,2; Bursche, *o.c.*, p. 259, table O, II.

²⁰ RIC IX, Trier 48b; Toynbee, *o.c.*, pl. 29,9; Bursche, *o.c.*, p. 268–9, table Q, XXVII.

²¹ RIC IX, Trier 48c (1, 2), pl. I, 11; Toynbee, *o.c.*, pl. XXXV, 1,2; P. Bastien, *La buste monétaire des empereurs romains III*, Wetteren 1994, p. 210,3.

Multipla of Valens and Gratianus seem to be stylistically closest to the specimen in question. Both have frames the style of which — as A. Bursche maintains²² — explicitly points to their barbarian origin. The finding place is unknown, at present they are kept in the collection of Münzkabinett in Berlin (Valens' medallion), a copy of Gratianus' medallion in Cabinet des Médailles Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Both the medallions are dated to 379²³, i.e. after Valens' death. They found their way to the Germanic elite presumably after the battle of Adrianopolis²⁴.

The issue date of the two foregoing medallions, 379, despite stylistic similarity which might prove their simultaneous issue, is too late for the specimen in question; in that year Valentinian I had been already dead for a few years — he died in 375.

At that time *multipla* were being issued by mints in Trier, Constantinople, Rome, Thessalonike, Antioch, Aquileia, Milan and Siscia. Medallions of Valentinian I were being issued by all the foregoing mints save for Rome. In all we know 17 gold *multipla* of that emperor, starting from 1.5–solidus specimens, through 2, 3, 4.5, 6 and highest 18–solidus ones. Till the middle of the 1960s a 6–solidus specimen was the highest recorded one issued by that ruler. A specimen, 18 solidi in weight²⁵, now in the collection of the National Museum in Belgrade, was discovered in 1965 on the Danube, in the vicinity of Veliko Gradište, ancient Pincum in Upper Moesia. Lighter pieces were most often issued: 1.5, 2 and 3. No 9–solidus specimen of Valentinian I has been found so far. The *multipla* by this emperor mentioned herein might be classified in two systems²⁶: one covers weights of 1.5, 3 and 6 solidi, the other — 4.5, 9 and 18, it is only the 2–solidus specimen that can be comprised by neither. The 9–solidus medallion of Valentinian I completes the latter system with a so far unknown unit from the time of that emperor.

The mint in Trier, after a period of slump at the time of Jovian, was brought back to life by Valentinian I. Just like the other mints of the Empire it started its activity with the issue of solidi of the *Restitutor Reipublicae* type, TR being the mint–mark at first. Towards the end of 367 Trier became an imperial residence. Soon afterwards entire western noble metal coinage was concentrated at the Trier mint. Apart from regular gold issues, the already mentioned *multipla* were struck here as well.

From the beginning of the reign of the Valentinian dynasty the Trier mint issued, so many at least are known, 26 noble metal medallions, including 5 gold

²² Bursche, *o.c.*, p. 120–121.

²³ P. Bastien, *Monnaie et dontiva au Bas-Empire*, Wetteren 1988, p. 98.

²⁴ Bursche, *o.c.*, p. 121.

²⁵ V. Kondić, *An unrecorded medallion of Valentinian I*, JRS LXIII (1973), p. 48–49, pl. VIII; same in Starinar XVII, Beograd (1966), p. 46; Bastien, *Le buste*, pl. 205,2.

²⁶ Bastien, *Monnaie*, p. 40.

specimens of Valentinian I²⁷, 6 gold and 1 silver of Valens, 7 gold of Gratianus, 5 gold of Valentinian II and 2 of Eugenius.

One should bear in mind that 4 from among 7 known multipla of the *Restitutor Reipublicae* type, i.e. 9–solidus ones, come from that mint. 9–Solidus issues occurred also in Aquileia, Milan, Thessalonike and Rome.

Most of the known medallions of Valentinian I are dated to 368. In that year both the emperors Valentinian I and Valens celebrated their second consulate and the fifth anniversary of their rule (*quinquennalia*)²⁸. All the Trier issues of the donatives of the time bore the characteristic mint–mark SMTR.

P. Bastien links the gold series with the mint–mark TROB, TROBC, TROBS, TROBT and probably TR.OB with the year 373²⁹, the fourth consulate and the tenth anniversary of the rule (*decennalia*). Due to the foregoing, the year 373 and the tenth anniversary of Valentinian I's rule should be regarded as the most probable issuing time of the medallion in question, which bears the mint–mark TROBS.

Multipla did not take part in regular circulation within the Empire's territory. A large majority of them, after having been issued, found their way to Barbaricum, most often as official imperial gifts for the Germanic elites or commanders. They were given on different occasions, coming to power, anniversaries of rule, successive consulates, or victories. Most of the medallions from Barbaricum fall to the years from the 330s till the end of the 370s, with an apogee in the years 364–376. This resulted from changes in relationships between the Empire and Barbaricum — long–lasting alliances (*foedus*) being concluded. The one signed in 332 by Constantine I with the Goths lasted till 367, to be re–signed several times in the years to come³⁰. This undoubtedly influenced the growth of the number of medallions finding their way to the barbarian elite in the form of gifts or yearly tributes. Certain nominals, 9 and more solidi in particular, are to be found chiefly in barbarian finds. The intensified issue of medallions at that time is connected with distribution of donativa to the army in Gaul, part of them might have found their way to the allied Germanic troops, and therefore deeper into Barbaricum.

Finds of gold medallions have been recorded also in the area of Poland. They chiefly concentrate in Eastern Pomerania, Mazovia, Little Poland, they occur also in the south of Great Poland and Silesia. We know of several such finds in all. Information, not confirmed, though, on the origin of the *multiplum* of Valentinian I discussed here, leads to one of them. There are premises that suggest that it may have come from the hoard of Zagórzyn.

²⁷ RIC IX, Trier 8a, 9, 10, 11a (1,2).

²⁸ Bastien, *Monnaie*, p. 95.

²⁹ Bastien, *o.c.*, p. 95–96.

³⁰ Bursche, *Later Roman–Barbarian Contacts in Central Europe*, Numismatic Evidence, SFMA 11, Berlin 1996, p. 118–19.

A hoard of antique coins was discovered at the beginning of 1927 at the village of Zagórzyn on the right bank of the Prosna River, a few kilometres north of Kalisz (Great Poland). There is no accurate information on how many and what kind of objects it included. Some of them have been irrevocably destroyed, most have been taken over by merchants and then found their way abroad. The circumstances of the discovery and reconstruction have been described by A. Bursche in his work³¹. The hoard was found in a large bronze kettle; apart from approx. 3 thousand or more denarii from the 1st–2nd centuries it comprised 4th or even perhaps 5th century solidi, 2 Germanic bracteates, at least 6 gold medallions, a buckle, a signet-ring, a ring-like pendent, a gold human-shaped figure and several dozen gold beads. Among the medallions there were: a 144-solidus one of Valens (damaged), a 42-solidus one of Valentinian I and Valens — both barbarian imitations, a 6-solidus *multiplum* of Valentinian I from Thessalonike from 368, 2 specimens of Constantius II, both 4.5-solidus ones from Rome and Antioch, and a 2-solidus one of Constantine II (unspecified). From among the solidii a series of 17 specimens of Valentinian I, Valens, Gratianus, Valentinian II and Theodosius I have been specified alongside an earlier one by Constantius I. Most of them came from later issues of Trier, also Constantinople, Thessalonike, Milan, Nicomedia and Antioch.

Due to a lack of funds the National Museum in Warsaw was unable to purchase the object.

Translated by Robert Skarżyński

³¹ Bursche, *Złote medaliony...*, p. 51–61; R. Jakimowicz, *Sprawozdanie z działalności Państwowego Muzeum Archeologicznego za 1927 r.*, *Wiadomości Archeologiczne* 13 (1935), p. 213–32.

NIEZNANY ŻŁOTY MEDALION WALENTYNIANA I

(Streszczenie)

W 2001 roku do Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie trafił nieznaną dotychczas złoty medalion Walentyniana I. Jest to unikalne 9–solidowe multiplum o średnicy 47,0 mm i wadze 40,18 g, wyemitowane w mennicy w Trewirze. Za najbardziej prawdopodobny czas jego emisji uznać należy rok 373 — czwarty konsulat i jubileusz dziesięciolecia panowania Walentyniana I. Występujący na rewersie typ wyobrażenia — cesarz podnoszący klęczącą postać kobietę, personifikację Cesarstwa, wraz z towarzyszącą legendą *RESTITVTORREI PVBLICAE*, znany jest jedynie ze złotych multipla. W sumie odnotowano siedem medalionów tego typu, we wszystkich przypadkach są to egzemplarze 9–solidowe wyemitowane w mennicach zachodnich. Cztery spośród nich (Walensa, Gracjana i dwa Walentyniana II) pochodzą z mennicy w Trewirze. Pozostałe wybite zostały: jeden Walentyniana II w Akwilei i dwa Teodozjusza I, w Akwilei i Mediolanie. Najbliższą analogię dla niego stanowią medaliony Walensa i Gracjana datowane na 379 rok, oba oprawione w ramki, o nieokreślonej barbarzyńskiej proveniencji. Jest bardzo prawdopodobne, że również opisywany tu egzemplarz Walentyniana I, sądząc po śladach występujących na rancie, mógł być pierwotnie oprawiony w ramkę. Nieznana jest jego proveniencja, choć istnieją przesłanki, nie potwierdzone jeszcze w pełni, a wskazujące, że może on pochodzić ze skarbu odkrytego w 1927 r. w Zagórzynie pod Kaliszem.

Ze względu na brak funduszy Muzeum Narodowe obiektu nie zakupiło.

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