

A N AUREUS OF QUIETUS FROM THE GOTHIC TERRITORY IN UKRAINE¹

Abstract:

A very rare type of a pierced aureus of the eastern usurper Quietus recently came to light in western Ukraine, a region settled in the second half of the 3rd century by Gothic societies. Other Quietus and Macrianus II coins from finds are also discussed. Particular attention is paid to the pierced aurei of these usurpers almost certain to derive from barbarian contexts. A significant number of Quietus and Macrianus aurei with marks of reuse appear to represent elements of *donativa*, handed out in eastern provinces to higher ranking military and officials. Presumably, the Macriani on their march to the Danube provinces, preparatory to their confrontation with the armies of Gallienus, enlisted reinforcements of Germanic war bands, Gothic in particular. In exchange they paid the Germanic commanders with gold coins brought from the East, which were the barbarians pierced and took to their homeland in East-Central Europe. This would be the most likely origin of the Quietus aureus from Ukraine, and possibly, of at least a few of the unprovenanced pierced aurei of Macrianus II and Quietus.

Keywords:

Romans and Barbarians, 3rd century crisis, Roman usurpers, Goths, Quietus, Macrianus II, coin finds, pierced aurei

On 19 December 2015 an exceedingly rare pierced aureus of the usurper Fulvius Junius Quietus was put up for sale on the Ukrainian internet forum Violyty.² This metal detector find has only a broad provenance in the Vinnytsya Oblast,

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² Cf. <http://forum.violoty.com/viewtopic.php?t=1460795> (access date: 01.06.2021).

Ukraine. The aureus reappeared on the same forum on 3 January 2017 after which it turned up at an auction of Numismatica Ars Classica NAC AG in Zurich of 29 May 2017 where it was sold for 70,000 Swiss francs.³

Description:

Quietus, 260 – 261. Aureus, Samosata?,⁴ 260–261, wt. 4.38 g, die-axis 1 h (**Fig. 1**)

Obv.: IMPCFVLQ[VI]ETVSPEAVG

Laureate, draped and cuirassed bust r.

Rev.: VICTOR[IA]AVGG

Victory advancing r., holding wreath and palm branch.

Type: *RIC* 1962, 582, no 1 (Antioch). Göbl 2000: Anhang II No 1744 e Tab. 52, pl. 125 (Samostata), Calicó 2003 no 3705 (Antioch). Pierced from obverse side, over the head at 12 h.



Fig. 1. Vinnytsya district, scale 2:1, phot.: <https://www.biddr.com/auctions/nac/browse?a=131&l=114342> (access date: 01.06.2021).

Aurei of Quietus

According to our data six more aurei of Quietus have been recorded, three of them with a hole, one originally set in a ring still in Antiquity, one provided with a decorative frame and loop.⁵

Only this last coin has a reliable provenance: it was found in 1919 in Egypt, at Tell Timai (ancient Thmouis) in the Nile delta. Found in the same area are the

³ Cf. <https://www.acsearch.info/search.html?id=3886425>; cf also <http://www.arsclassicacoins.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Prizes-realized-without-unsolds.pdf> and M. Miller 109, Fig. 226 cf https://www.academia.edu/36336507/Die_M%C3%BCnzen_der_R%C3%B6mer_Band_3_Reichskrise_des_3._Jahrhunderts_und_Sp%C3%A4tantike_ab_285.

⁴ Percy H. Webb assumed that these aurei were minted in Antioch, cf. *RIC* 1962: 572, 580–583; however, A. Alföldi rightly excludes this possibility, since Antioch was occupied by the Parthians, and proposes to locate the mint in Samosata (Alföldi 1937: 51); likewise A. Krzyżanowska (Krzyżanowska 1968 [1969]: 293), and R. Göbl (Göbl 2000: 143–144).

⁵ Heartily thankful Mr Hadrien Rambach for making unpublished material available.



Fig. 2. Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, scale 2:1, phot. R. Saczewski.

ruins of a Greco-Roman town. Coin, complete with its gold pierced openwork (*opus interrasile*) framed, with a weight of 11.02 g, measurements of 38 x 45 mm (incl. loop), and a die-axis 6 h, is at present in the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities (Cairo).⁶

The Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin has in its keeping a pierced aureus, wt. 4.61 g, die-axis 12 h (Fig. 2).⁷ The hole made at 1h above the emperor's head is rectangular. Originally in the collection of Hugo Garthe, collector and antiquities dealer (d. in Cologne in 1876),⁸ this coin was put up for auction by J.M. Heberle (*H. Lempertz's Söhne*) in September 1884 in Cologne (lot 2885) and soled to the museum in Berlin in 1885 by Jean-Henri Hoffmann, Parisian antiquities dealer hailing from Hamburg.⁹ Information about its findspot is contradictory: one version is that the coin was discovered on the grounds of the Benedictine Abbey of Echternach in Luxembourg¹⁰ but Garthe himself gave its provenance in a letter which survives in the archives of the Parisian Cabinet des Médailles as Causaus, Russia.¹¹ However, neither of these locations is convincing. Aurei finds from the Caucasus (Georgia and Armenia) do not have a hole. It is not entirely out of the question that indeed the coin had been found in the Russian Empire which included parts of Poland and the territory of present-day Ukraine. Some aurei found in that region have a rectangular hole, e.g., a Gallienus from the Vinnytsya Oblast.¹²

⁶ Inv.no. 47515, cf. Grenier, Gautie 1982.

⁷ Inv.no. 18247147, cf. <https://ikmk.smb.museum/object?lang=en&id=18247147&view=rs> and personal comment from Dr. Karsten Dahmen.

⁸ Van Vleuten 1877: 117, pl. 4, no. 11; Friedländer 1885: 23; Cohen 1886: 8 no. 15; von Sallet 1887: 18, pl. I; Delbrück 1940, pl. 18, no. 2; Nuber 1984: 20; Grenier, Gautie 1982: 104, pl. II, 2; Callu, Lorient 1990: 387.

⁹ Cf. 'Nekrologe', *ZfN* 21 (1898): 195.

¹⁰ Weiler 1983: 217, no. 108,1.

¹¹ Weiler 1990: 173, no. 82.

¹² <https://forum.violity.com/viewtopic.php?t=2081653> (access date: 01.06.2021).

Another aureus of Quietus now in the British Museum has a weight of 5.07 g and a die-axis 6 h (Fig. 3). It has a round hole at 6h, below the emperor's bust, and over the head of Victory on the reverse. Originally in the collection of Victor Ada, this coin was sold in London at Christie's in 1984 and purchased by the British Museum from G. Malcolm R. Hay in 1987.¹³ Its closer provenance is unknown.



Fig. 3. The British Museum, scale 2:1, phot.: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/661773001> (© The Trustees of the British Museum) (access date: 01.06.2021).

The third pierced aureus of Quietus was sold in Basel at Auctiones S.A., auction 15, 18–19/09/1985, lot 732, appeared next at an auction held by Münzen und Medaillen A.G., Basel, List 506 (January 1988), lot 73, and is now in a private collection. This coin has a weight of 3.84 g, die-axis 12 h, and a hole at 5h, next to the emperor's bust (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Private collection, scale 2:1, phot. after Münzen und Medaillen A.G., Basel, List 506 (January 1988), lot 73.

¹³ Inv.no. 1987,0418.1; Christie's 9/10/1984, lot. 133, formerly *Ars Classica* XII, Lucerne, 18–23/10/1926 lot 3006; *RIC* 1962: 580, no. 1; cf. Grenier, Gautie 1982: 104, pl. II, 3; Gitler, Gambach 2017, no. 511. For additional information we are indebted to Dr. Richard Abdy.

Finally, two unprovenanced aurei of Quietus without a hole survive in private collections. One of these coins weighs 4.92 g and was discovered 'set neatly in a ring with a band cut out into a floral shape' weighing 12.01 g and was reported to have belonged to the collections of Charles Gillet.¹⁴ It was struck with a different die than the four aurei described so far. The second piece weighing 5.06 g was auctioned off in Zurich, Tkalec sale, 15/10/1996, lot 241.¹⁵

To summarize: no less than four out of seven known aurei of Quietus have a hole, one was provided with a decorative frame and loop, one was a setting of an ancient ring. Only two of them have a reliable provenance: the pierced metal detector find from Ukraine and the framed specimen from Egypt.

Aurei of Macrianus II

Besides the coins of Quietus described above, we are familiar with seventeen aurei of Fulvius Julius Macrianus, brother of Quietus, with three different reverses.¹⁶ Only three have a more or less reliable provenance: one, originally with a hole, and a loop threaded onto it, was reportedly discovered in 1880 in Corinth, passed to the collections of Franz Trau, was repeatedly put up for auction and is now in private hands.¹⁷ According to Trau's report the coin was found with a pierced aureus of Gallienus in a tomb in Corinth; F. Trau supposes that they were set as earrings.

The second aureus of Macrianus II, since 2015 in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem was reportedly found in 1881 at Ptuj, Slovenia, ancient Poetovio, but this is doubtful.¹⁸

Finally, the third specimen added in 1973 to the collections of the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris¹⁹ is most likely to be a find from Syria or Lebanon because it originated from the collections of Henri A. Seyrig, French archaeologist and numismatist, d. 1973, whose almost entire research career was associated with fieldwork in this part of the Levant.

¹⁴ Monnaies et Médailles A.G. Basel 43, 12–13/11/1970, lot 431; Vermeule 1975: 23–24, no. 38; cf. Grenier, Gautier 1982: 104, pl. II,4; Göbl 2000, pl. 125, no. 1744e; Facsády 1999/2000: 313; Calicó 2003: 647, no. 3705; Friedeberg, Friedeberg 2009: 52, no. 621; Chew, Drost 2015: 97, footnote 31.

¹⁵ Photograph of this aureus cf. https://www.armstrongeconomics.com/research/monetary-history-of-the-world/roman-empire/chronology_-by_-emperor/end-of-severan-dynasty/quietus-260-261-ad/ (access date: 01.06.2021).

¹⁶ Cohen 1886: 4–6, nos. 3, 10 (with fig.) and 14; *RIC* 1962: 580, nos. 1–3; for access to unpublished materials we are indebted to Hadrien Rambach.

¹⁷ Trau 1935: 82, lot 3023, pl. 37; plugged between 1991 and 1997; cf. most recently *Nvmmorvm Avctiones* (Italo Vecchi), auction 6, London 9–10/06/1997, lot 1245; cf. Mazzini 1957: 105; Göbl 2000, pl. 124, no. 1738a; Calicó 2003: 646, no. 3700.

¹⁸ From the collection of Franz Trau; Trau 1881: 186, pl. I-7; Trau 1935: 82, lot 3024, pl. 37; Kos 1988: 329, no. 569; Gitler, Gambach 2017, no. 510.

¹⁹ Inv.no. 1973/371; cf. Calicó 2003: 646, no. 3699.

Three pierced aurei of Macrianus II unfortunately lacking provenance survive in three European collections: Münzkabinett in Berlin (**Fig. 5**),²⁰ British Museum in London (**Fig. 6**)²¹ and Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris.²²



Fig. 5. Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, scale 2:1, phot.: L.-J. Lübke.



Fig. 6. The British Museum, scale 2:1, phot.: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/659442001> (© The Trustees of the British Museum) (access date: 01.06.2021).

Furthermore, a specimen originated from the collections of the German collector Friedrich Lothar Maier was fitted with a filigree frame and on its reverse,

²⁰ Inv.no. 18201392; wt. 4.62 g; die-axis 12 h; pierced in the border at 11h, now torn; from the collection of Karl Alexander von Brandenburg-Ansbach, second half of 18th c., sold to the Prussian State in 1791; cf. Friedländer 1866: 158, pl. 38,1 (drawing); Friedländer, von Sallet 1877: 255, no. 1045; *RIC* 1962: 580, no. 3; Göbl 2000, Tab. 52, pl. 125, no 1744.

²¹ Inv.no. 1923, 1015.7; wt. 5.10 g, die-axis 6 h; pierced over the emperor's head, hole plugged up in the modern age; from the collections of Viscount Elzear de Quelen; sold Rollin & Feuardent, Paris, 14–26/5/1888 (auctioneer Me Maurice Delestre), lot 1737; bought by the British Museum in 1923 from Spink & Son; cf. http://numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.5.mac_ii.1; for this information we are indebted to dr. Roger Bland.

²² Inv.no. FG 1390, wt. 4.68; die-axis 6 h; hole above the head of the emperor at 12 h; the provenance of this coin and the time it was added to the collection are unclear; cf. Cohen 1886: 5, no. 10 (with fig.); *RIC* 1962: 580, no. 2.

with four small loops which do not extend beyond the outer edge of the frame.²³ An almost identical frame appears on an aureus of Aurelian struck at Antioch in 273, put up for auction in Germany the same month and year as the Macrianus II aureus,²⁴ suggesting the two coins have the same provenance. The style (open-work) of the gold frames suggests a provincial workshop and an eastern provenance, similarly as the aureus of Quietus found in the Nile delta.

The provenance of the pierced aurei is apparently different. The already described specimens of Quietus and Macrianus II described above (**Fig. 1–6**), similarly as the metal detector find from Western Ukraine were probably found on Germanic territory within the Barbaricum. All of them are pierced.

Gold coins of third-century usurpers recovered in Western Ukraine, a territory settled in the second half of the 3rd century by the people of Chernyakhiv culture identified with Gothic communities include, next to the aureus of Quietus, four coins of Postumus, two of Tetricus I and two of Julian of Pannonia.²⁵ All these coins are pierced.

Pierced aurei

Over 90% aurei finds from Northern and East-Central Barbaricum are pierced, or more rarely, looped. According to the most recent statistics, out of 511 aurei dated to 1st–3rd centuries found on the territory of Chernyakhiv and Wielbark cultures identified with Goths no less than 83% have a hole, 9.4 % a loop, or both a loop and a hole.²⁶ The holes and the loops were mostly made from the obverse, above the emperor's head (at 12 h) or a little behind it (at 10 and 11 h).²⁷

The practice of making holes in gold coins spread within the Barbaricum in the second half of 3rd c. following the Gothic victory over the Roman army at Abritus in 251. In its aftermath the imperial treasury (*aerarium*) fell into barbarian, which is evidenced by a great number of aurei of Trajan Decius and his immediate successors found on barbarian territory, that of Gothic societies in particular.²⁸ Gold coins with the portrait of the defeated emperor were prestige objects used by elites, in the first place, by military leaders. Presumably they were used to reward

²³ Wt. incl. frame – 8.95 g; cf. Solidus Numismatik e.K. Premium Auction 20, 21/10/2017, lot 201; cf. <https://www.solidus-numismatik.de/en/archive/sept-okt-2017/>.

²⁴ Gorny & Mosch, auction 249, 11/10/2017, lot 907.

²⁵ Myzgin, Filatov 2018. The aurei of Postumus were found in Khmelnytsky, Chernivtsi, Volyn *Oblasts*, as well as in an unidentified region of Western Ukraine; both aurei of Tetricus I were found in the Khmelnytsky *Oblast*; the aurei of Julian of Pannonia were found in the Poltava and Cherkasy *Oblasts*.

²⁶ Bursche, Myzgin 2020: 215.

²⁷ Bursche, Myzgin 2020: 217, Fig. 10.2.

²⁸ Bursche 2013: 163–164; Bursche, Myzgin 2019; Bursche, Myzgin 2020: 212–215.

warriors for merit in battle. The use of aurei as symbols of prestige and elite status was continued using later gold coins which passed to the Barbaricum through various circumstances. In a new practice introduced during the last quarter of the 3rd century the gold coin would be provided with a loop, although the tradition of piercing them was not entirely discontinued.²⁹ In the 4th century and later contexts from Barbaricum we find also solidi and gold medallions with a hole or provided with a loop.³⁰

The presence of a hole in a gold coin indicates its secondary use outside the borders of the Empire, on territory of the Barbaricum settled by Germanic communities. In an extraordinary twist of events in recent years we have recognized several pierced aurei put up for auction with their holes plugged up by professional goldsmiths, a practice which is hard to detect without specialist equipment.³¹

Finds of antoniniani and bronzes of Quietus

Next to the aureus of Quietus from Ukraine we know of at least fifteen single finds of antoniniani of this usurper. They represent five types: *RIC* 1962 nos. 3, 6, 9, 10, 11, of which the most commonly encountered is type *RIC* 1962 no. 6 (**Fig. 7**). Unfortunately, we have no closer information about their find-spot, in nine cases the administrative region (*Oblast*) is known: Khmelnytskyi (3 pcs), Vinnytsya (3 pcs), Kyiv (2 pcs) and Cherkasy (1 pcs.). It is interesting that antoniniani of Macrianus make up a much smaller group of only four specimens recovered in central and western Ukraine (**Fig. 7**). It is also notable that many of the antoniniani of these two usurpers are pierced, something which is much more rarely encountered in antoniniani of legal emperors Valerian or Gallienus found in Ukraine.

Finds of antoniniani account for at least 7% of the pool of Roman coins recorded in the eastern Barbaricum.³² Most of them are issues of Gordian III, Philip I and Trajan Decius (54 %). The next, more modest peak (14 %) is shown by antoniniani of Gallienus.³³ In central and eastern Barbaricum late antoniniani, Gallienus to Diocletian, marked by a low silver content belong to a separate group.³⁴ Some of them are issues of none other but Macrianus and Quietus. Circumstances of their influx are not fully clear and could differ depending on the region. Those

²⁹ Bursche 1998: 145–155; Bursche, Więcek 2010; Myzgin 2015: 131–140; some coins have both a hole (earlier) and a loop.

³⁰ Bursche 1998: 145–155; Bursche, Więcek 2010.

³¹ Więcek, Myzgin 2022.

³² Myzgin 2018: 87.

³³ Myzgin 2017: 149.

³⁴ Bursche 1996: 97–98; Dymowski 2012: 94–100; Myzgin 2017: 152.



Fig. 7. Antoniniani of Quietus (1-9) and Macrianus (10-12) from Ukrainian finds: 1, 3, 11, 12 – West Ukraine; 2, 4, 6 – Khmelnicki Oblast; 5, 10 – Cherkassy Oblast; 7, 9 – Vinnytsya Oblast; 8 – Central Ukraine. Unscaled; phot. unknown.

found on Chernyakhiv culture territory could derive from payments, *e.g.*, for service in auxiliary units in the East.³⁵

The reason for the presence in central and western Ukraine of two provincial bronzes of Macrianus (**Fig. 8**) is presumably different. The extremely rare bronzes of Quietus and Macrianus were struck in the spring of 261 in Nicaea when these usurpers extended their power to Bithynia.³⁶ While coins of Nicaea were in a relatively wide circulation in the Balkan provinces³⁷ it seems the most likely that the bronzes of Macrianus passed to Barbaricum directly from Asia Minor, presumably as spoils of war.³⁸

Coin hoards discovered on the territory of the Empire show that antoniniani of Quietus and Macrianus were in circulation nearly everywhere, although interestingly enough, none were found in deposits from Britain where the level of

³⁵ Cf. Bursche 1996: 97, 127.

³⁶ Wieser 1983: 63, 89–90.

³⁷ Cf. Calomino 2019: 131–133.

³⁸ Cf. Myzgin, Sidarovich 2020: 201–204.



Fig. 8. Provincial bronzes of Macrianus from Nicea in Bithynia from Ukrainian finds: 1 – Central Ukraine; 2 – West Ukraine; unscaled; phot. unknown.

recording is very high.³⁹ An especially large number of hoards containing antoniniani of Quietus and Macrianus have been recorded in north-western France and Spain, and a smaller number also on the middle and lower Danube. They could have passed to the territory of western and central provinces of Rome in payments made to the Roman armies in the East, although other circumstances of their influx are also possible. This problem calls for more extensive studies taking into account all the recorded finds of coins of these two usurpers.

The reign of Macrianus II and Quietus

The most comprehensive reconstruction of the events of the early 260s in the Roman East proposed by A. Alföldi (Alföldi 1937: 62–65) took into account numismatic sources which are outlined below.

When Valerian was defeated and captured by the Sasanian king Shapur I in spring or summer of 260 the Roman East fell to pieces. Shapur invaded Syria,

³⁹ Information based on 76 hoards included in the database *Coin Hoards of Roman Empire* (access date: 01.03.2021).

laying siege and plundering Antioch. The legal emperor Gallienus was occupied with his own problems in the West and had to remain there. In September 260 the eastern legions rebelled in Antioch and turned for leadership to Callistus (better known as Balista), praetorian prefect and to Macrianus Major, quartermaster general. They proposed as imperial candidates two sons of the latter: Macrianus II and Quietus.

The rebellion was well received in the eastern provinces and Egypt because Callistus had led the Roman legions to victory over Persians, and Macrianus Major had control over the treasury of Valerian. This latter fact made it possible for the usurpers to issue their own coinage in gold, debased silver (antoniniani), and even copper.⁴⁰

Six months or so after the rebellion erupted in the East, Gallienus entrusted his commanders with the task of suppressing Macrianus and Quietus. The rebels decided to divide their forces: Callistus and Quietus remained in the East while Macrian I and II led the army west, obviously hoping to defeat Gallienus. In spring of 261 the Macriani were routed at Illyricum by one of Gallienus' commanders – Aureolus or Domitian.

In the East Callistus and Quietus held out for eight more months, spending their final days in Emesa. There they were murdered by the local people when the town was besieged by Odaenathus king of Palmyra, representative of Gallienus in Asia Minor.

Conclusions

Circumstances in which the aureus of Quietus discussed here passed to the Gothic elite are not easily determined. One possible explanation is that it was an element of the war booty seized by the Goths when they invaded the eastern provinces of the Empire in the reign of Gallienus, although this is rather far-fetched.⁴¹

What is significant, some of the aurei of the two usurpers were evidently put to a new use, set into a decorative frame, in a finger-ring or provided with a loop for suspension. The preservation of a few other of these coins suggests that they also had been made into jewellery in Antiquity lacking context in the modern age (which was the normal collectors' practice). Such a use of gold coins and medallions as women's ornaments and military insignia became common in the Roman provinces in the second half of 3rd century.⁴²

⁴⁰ *RIC* 1962: 572; 580–583; Alföldi 1937; Göbl 2000: 143–144, Tab. 52.

⁴¹ Recently on this subject cf. Bursche, Myzgin 2020.

⁴² Metzger 1980; Brenot, Metzger 1992; Bruhn 1993: 25–29; Bursche 1998: 171–176, Perassi 2004; Perassi 2007; Perassi 2011a; Perassi 2011b; Perassi 2017; Perassi 2021.

A significant number of aurei of the two usurpers showing marks of reuse would identify them as elements of *donativa*,⁴³ handed out in eastern provinces to higher ranking military and officials. Presumably, this is how some of them passed into the hands of Gothic elite. If so, then this would be a situation analogous to that of aurei of Gallic emperors, Postumus in particular, handed out to the leaders of Germanic war bands from the western Barbaricum fighting on the side of the usurpers in auxiliary units (*ingentia auxilia germanorum*) against the legal emperor.⁴⁴ It is quite probable that on their march to Danube provinces the Macriani enlisted reinforcements from Germanic war bands, Gothic in particular, preparatory to their confrontation with the armies of Gallienus. In exchange for their help, they paid the Germanic commanders with gold coins brought from the East, which were next pierced, in the tradition introduced after the Battle of Abritus, and were carried back to the homeland in East-Central Europe.

This is the most likely origin of the aureus of Quietus published here, found in Ukraine, and possibly of at least some of the unprovenanced, pierced aurei of Macrianus II and Quietus described above.

On the other hand, the relatively numerous antoniniani of the two usurpers, and individual provincial bronzes of Macrianus were introduced to the region in conjunction with the presence of Gothic units in the East, in circumstances that require further research.

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⁴³ Bastien 1988.

⁴⁴ Werner 1973; Bemmann 2014.

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