

## FIDES MILITVM: Medallions and Military Alliances during the Reign of Valerian and Gallienus

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**Abstract:** During the 3rd century, Roman emperors increasingly issued gold coins and medallions for high-ranking military officials, evolving from earlier bronze versions. Under Emperor Gallienus, these heavy gold medallions served as gifts and religious symbols of loyalty, aiming to counteract inflation's impact on the army's purchasing power. This paper examines medallions from Valerian and Gallienus's reign (253–268), focusing on materials, imagery, and reverse inscriptions. Obverses prominently feature figures like Gallienus, *Concordia*, or *Pietas*, while reverses emphasise *Moneta*, *Virtus*, and *Fides Militum*, underscoring monetary quality, martial valour, and military loyalty.

### Introduction

The focal family of this study is the *domus Licinia Augusta*, with its principal representatives being the emperors Valerian and Gallienus, father, and son. Their joint rule commenced in 253 AD and continued until 260 AD when Valerian was defeated at Edessa and subsequently captured by the Sassanid forces. Concurrently, the primary heirs to the dynasty, Valerian the Younger and Saloninus, either perished or were assassinated by usurpers to the imperial throne. Consequently, for the following eight years, Gallienus ruled independently, alongside his wife, the Augusta Salonina<sup>1</sup>.

We have preserved two contemporary busts of Gallienus and his father Valerian, which reveal key aspects of their imperial representation<sup>2</sup>. Both portraits,

<sup>1</sup> For the participation of Salonina and Valerian in the image of Gallienus see Serrano Ordozgoiti 2024a, 245–262; 2024d, 1411–1431.

<sup>2</sup> Specifically, the busts of Gallienus, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek 3388, and Valerian, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek 3387, which shared location, functionality, and even the artistic workshop (Johansen 1994, 124). For more details see Bergmann 1977, 24, 51 no 1, 66, 79–80; Grandvallet 2002, 32, 38; Johansen 1994, 124–

originating from Asia Minor<sup>3</sup>, depict the emperors wearing the *strophion*<sup>4</sup>, a radiate annular crown associated with political leaders and priests devoted to Ἥλιος/Sol<sup>5</sup>. From the beginning of their joint reign, contemporary sources such as the Sibylline Oracles describe them as “ἄνδρες ἀρήιθοοι δύο κοίρανοι”<sup>6</sup>. Even sources critical of Gallienus, such as the *Historia Augusta*, acknowledge him as a leader who is *fortis*, an adjective present on a couple of occasions<sup>7</sup>, *audax*<sup>8</sup>, *vehemens*<sup>9</sup> and *velox*<sup>10</sup> on the battlefield, *utilis* and *necessarius* for the Roman State, in addition to commander *efficax*<sup>11</sup> and *carus* or *carissimus*<sup>12</sup> according to its soldiers<sup>13</sup>. Furthermore, plastic sources related to Gallienus display details that connect him to the martial sphere<sup>14</sup>. These busts, housed in the Louvre in Paris and the Capitoline Museums in Rome<sup>15</sup>,

125; Poulsen 1974, no. 175; Vermeule 1968, 312, 404; Wegner / Bracker / Real 1979, 112–113; Wood 1986, 134 no 4.

<sup>3</sup> Both were acquired by the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (Copenhagen) in 1966 from a private owner in Paris (Johansen 1994, 124).

<sup>4</sup> Other 3<sup>rd</sup>-century emperors depicted with a *strophion* are Commodus (Museo delle Terme, Rome), Caracalla (Palazzo Medici Riccardi, Florence), Severus Alexander (Costanza) and Gordian III (Florence). There are also portraits of multiple priests with *strophion* related to the cults of *Helios*, *Apollo* or *Asclepius* during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, coming from the provinces of Achaia (Athens – National Archaeological Museum 349 and 448 and Athens – Acropolis Museum 1353) or Asia (Paris – Louvre MA4710, Selçuk – St. John’s Repository M. 60/17, Vienna – Kunsthistorisches Museum I 818 and Izmir – Museum 525), some of them carrying a multi-banded *strophion* and laurel wreath (Colugnati 2015, 402; 2015, 403; İnan / Alföldi-Rosenbaum 1966, nos. 174, 180 and 238; De Kersauson 1996, 400–401 no. 184 and 484–485 no 228; Pajno 2015, 410; Perrella 2015, 402–403). For the *strophion* in Roman empresses see Conesa Navarro 2020, 415–421.

<sup>5</sup> For the association of Gallienus with Ἥλιος (*Sol*) in different types of sources see in particular Serrano Ordozgoiti 2020d, 203–222; 2022a, 7–24.

<sup>6</sup> *Sib. Or.* 13.156: two rulers, men prepared for war. For the specific image of Gallienus in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century sources see Serrano Ordozgoiti 2021b, 239–251.

<sup>7</sup> *Hist. Aug. Gal.* 15.1 and *Tyr. Trig.* 9.3.2.

<sup>8</sup> *Hist. Aug. Gal.* 7.2.

<sup>9</sup> *Hist. Aug. Tyr. Trig.* 9.3.2.

<sup>10</sup> *Hist. Aug. Tyr. Trig.* 9.3.2.

<sup>11</sup> *Hist. Aug. Gal.* 15.1.

<sup>12</sup> *Hist. Aug. Prob.* 4.2.1.

<sup>13</sup> In general, for the portrait that the different Greek and Latin sources make of Emperor Gallienus throughout the centuries, see Serrano Ordozgoiti 2024c, 283–299.

<sup>14</sup> For a detailed analysis of Gallienus’s busts and statuary, see Serrano Ordozgoiti 2022a, 7–24.

<sup>15</sup> These are the cases of Paris – Louvre MA1041 and Rome – Musei Capitolini S487. *Hist. Aug. Gal.* 16.4–6 indicates the *chlamyde purpurea* as the emperor’s preferred garment. However, the ones we can see on these busts are more similar to a typical Roman *paludamentum* (DA IV, 295; Sette 2000, 36–37) and, in any case, they have lost their coat of paint, so we cannot confirm the *Historia Augusta* version for the busts of the emperor. The assertion, however, does not seem exaggerated in this regard. Purple, which had long been a recognizable symbol of power, as we see also in the case of Gallienus, became increasingly sacred and closely associated with imperial power in late antiquity. See Alföldi 1935, 1–171; 1970; Avery 1940, 66–80; Benoist 2013, 37–62; Emion 2017, 3–4; Leadbetter 2003, 127–136; Reinhold 1970; Steigerwald 1990, 209–239; Turcan 2006.



feature elements like the *pteryges*, *paludamentum*, anatomical *lorica*, and *gorgoneion*<sup>16</sup>, all visual reminders of their role as a Roman general.

Finally, Latin epigraphy also provides insight into the military context during the reign of Gallienus<sup>17</sup>. Some regions with a high concentration of inscriptions dedicated to the emperor correspond to key military outposts along the Roman *limites*, particularly in North Africa<sup>18</sup> and along the Danube<sup>19</sup>. A prime example is the frieze on the gate of the *principia* at the Lambaesis camp<sup>20</sup>, commissioned by Gallienus in 268 AD in honour of the *legio III Augusta*, a crucial military unit during the accession of Valerian and Gallienus to the imperial throne in 253 AD<sup>21</sup>. The monument, still visible today, formed part of the entrance to the *principia*, the central area of the camp<sup>22</sup>, which served as the headquarters of the most important legion and the main defence along the North African *limes*.

## Materials: Gold and Silver

The numismatic collections in which Emperor Gallienus appears show a total of 1,171 different types of coins (96%) and only 51 different types of medallions (4%). However, the latter are of capital importance in the self-representation of Gallienus. Almost half of the medallions (20 types, 39%) are made of top-quality gold, with dimensions and weights far superior to the *aurei* minted in the same period<sup>23</sup>. Among

<sup>16</sup> For the use of the gorgoneion on military standards see Kavanagh de Prado 2015, 433–438. For the rest of the military equipment see D’Amato / Sumner / Salimbeti 2009; Goldsworthy 2003; Sánchez Sanz 2017, 205–238.

<sup>17</sup> For the epigraphic image of the *domus Licinia Augusta* in the different provinces of the Empire see Serrano Ordozgoiti 2020e, 289–333; 2020c, 135–141; 2020b, 93–104; 2021a, 205–234; 2022b, 107–112; 2023, 299–322; 2024b, 282–291.

<sup>18</sup> For a complete analysis of the Latin epigraphy of the *domus Licinia Augusta* in North Africa see Serrano Ordozgoiti 2020b, 93–104; 2020e, 289–333.

<sup>19</sup> For the epigraphic and numismatic image of Gallienus and his family in the Danubian *limes* see Serrano Ordozgoiti 2022c, 291–318; 2024b, 282–291.

<sup>20</sup> CIL VIII, 2571 = CIL VIII, 18057 = AE 1974, 723a: [[[Im]p(erator) [C]aesar P(ublius) Licinius Egnatius Ga[llien]us Pius [Felix Invictus Aug(ustus) pont(ifex) max(imus) tri]b(unicia) pot(estate) XVI co(n)s(ul) VII]] / [pater] patriae proco(n)s(ul) gromam Te[r]tiis] Augustani[s 3 restituit] Ten[a]gino Prob[us] / pra[eses] prov(inciae) Nu[m]idiae dedicavit]. For a detailed analysis of the piece, see Serrano Ordozgoiti 2020a, 68–75.

<sup>21</sup> For the *legio III Augusta* see in general Le Bohec 1989; Mokhtar 1990, 466, 468, 470, 472, 475. For its centurions see in particular Christol 1994.

<sup>22</sup> For the *principia* see Campbell / Delf 2008, 37–41; Goldsworthy 2003, 83–84; Le Bohec / Brizzi 2015, 468–475.

<sup>23</sup> Special series, medallions, and most of the high-quality gold were struck at the various central mints of the Empire, especially when Gallienus was in the vicinity. It is even possible that the metal traveled in chests with the emperor’s personal effects during his travels around the Empire and was struck on-site as needed. Indeed, the mints of Lugdunum/Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium, Mediolanum, and Siscia continued to produce money in the years when Gallienus was away, but it seems that the presence of the emperor, his entourage, and the troops he brought with him led to an increase in the activity of



the Roman emperors, there was a growing tendency to mint gold coins and medallions during festivities: if in the time of Hadrian, these medallions were made of bronze or copper, only with a commemorative function, for the high officials of the Roman State, throughout the 3<sup>rd</sup> century they became heavy gold specimens destined for the high military commanders of the Empire, first-ranking officers, *protectores* and Illyrian officials, in the time of Gallienus. These medallions were not simply an act of bribery, but, through the various sacrifices and ceremonies, they constituted the traditional religious-emotional attestations of loyalty<sup>24</sup>. These payments in heavy, high-quality gold, together with supplies in kind, sought to repair the damage that the massive inflation of the time caused to the purchasing power of the different ranks of the army<sup>25</sup>. Of the remaining types of medallions (31 types, 61%), more than half, are made of silver, of a quality superior also to that of the other *denarii* and *antoniniani* minted in the different mints of the Empire, which also guaranteed access to important loyalty awards for the rest of the military ranks of the army. It is also interesting to see the evolution of the material throughout the two periods of Gallienus's government: if between 253 and 259 only 3 different types of gold medallions were minted (18%)<sup>26</sup>, between 260 and 268 this number rose to 17 different types (50%), which confirms the rampant inflation of the time and the increasingly pressing needs of the emperor to maintain the constant loyalty of his military commanders through increasingly large (and scarce) awards.

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the mint, greater production of gold coins and the minting of more special legends on the coins (De Blois 1976, 94).

<sup>24</sup> Let us recall the emperor's *decennalia* in 262, with the procession narrated in the *Historia Augusta* (*Hist. Aug. Gal.* 7.4.1–9.8.3) (De Blois 1976, 105, 107, 115, 120, 135–136, 139; Geiger 2013, 218–222; Goltz / Hartmann 2008, 223–295; Grunwald 1969, 209–210; Kienast 2004, 218; Merten 1968, 1–100; Syme 1968, 40–41).

<sup>25</sup> De Blois 1976, 94–99, 104, 111–112, 123, 127, 128–129, 134, 153; Geiger 2013, 67, 203–204, 209, 215, 218, 229–230, 237, 275; Goltz / Hartmann 2008, 223–295; Manders 2012, 114. From Septimius Severus until the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, soldiers received special bonuses and other expensive gifts for the state coffers. These gifts in heavy gold medallions and other perks gradually constituted such a large part of the pay that the finance minister became a kind of *comes sacrarum largitionum*. The soldiers knew that they should not sell their loyalty for the debased billon that came to them from the various central mints. Thus, they obtained legionary *aurei* and also *denarii* from Septimius Severus, and gold medallions from Gallienus. Licinius and the later emperors of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, on their accessions to the throne or during the *decennalia*, distributed to their troops different types of silver vessels and seals with gems (De Blois 1976, 96).

<sup>26</sup> Specifically, using a type that shows Gallienus *capite velato* sacrificing on an altar (*RIC V Gallienus* (joint reign) 65) and by the *CONCORDIA AVGVSTORVM* of Valerian, Gallienus and Saloninus, riding to the left, preceded by Victory and accompanied by soldiers (*RIC V Gallienus* and *Saloninus* 1), and that of the imperial couple: Gallienus and Salonina (*RIC V Gallienus* and *Salonina* 1).



## Portraits and legends on the obverse: the *Concordia* between the *Augusti*

Coming all of them from the Roman mint<sup>27</sup>, the medallions bear different portraits on their obverse: Gallienus is the most represented in 80% of the types (51 cases), while Valerian (6 types, 9%) and Salonina (4 types, 6%) follow at a much greater distance; the set is completed with the testimonial presence of Valerian the Younger (1 type, 2%)<sup>28</sup>, Saloninus (*idem*)<sup>29</sup> and Augustus (*idem*)<sup>30</sup>. In the two different periods in question, all the emperor's relatives appear from 253 to 259, to later disappear, with only Augustus appearing as a model to follow for Emperor Gallienus. The legends of the medallions in which Gallienus appears are also worth highlighting: thus, while the legend GALLIENVVS is the most repeated (40 types, 78%), CONCORDIA (3 types, 6%)<sup>31</sup> or PIETAS (2 types, 4%)<sup>32</sup> also have a place in the highest-level imperial propaganda. It is understandable that during their joint reign the CONCORDIA AVGVSTORVM between Valerian and Gallienus, between the imperial couple Gallienus and Salonina, and even between their children, Valerian the Younger and Saloninus<sup>33</sup>, were especially publicized, while the PIETAS AVGVSTORVM, devotion and piety, intended to benefit the imperial family here, were promoted<sup>34</sup>. The legends GALLIENVM AVG PR and GALLIENVM AVG SENATVS, represented respectively by 3 types (6%)<sup>35</sup> and one more type (2%) deserve special mention<sup>36</sup>: through the reverse legends OB CONSERVATIONEM SALVTIS, OB REDDITIONEM LIBERTATIS and OB LIBERTATEM RECEPTAM the People of Rome and the Senate wish to thank the Emperor for his personal and Imperial good health, as well as for his return and acceptance of freedom,

<sup>27</sup> According to *RIC* V 1. For Michael Geiger and Robert Göbl, on the other hand, there would be medallions minted in other mints, such as that of Milan (Geiger 2013, 209–210; Göbl 2000, no. 929).

<sup>28</sup> Through a type of silver medallion in which Valerian, Gallienus, Valerian the Younger and Salonina appear, with the legends PIETAS and CONCORDIA AVGVSTORVM (*RIC* V Valerian, Gallienus, Valerian II, and Salonina 1).

<sup>29</sup> Using a type of gold medallion with Saloninus, Gallienus and Valerian and the obverse legend CONCORDIA AVGVSTORVM, in which the three characters appear on the reverse riding to the left, preceded by Victory and accompanied by soldiers (*RIC* V Gallienus and Saloninus 1).

<sup>30</sup> The first Augustus appears on the reverse of a gold medallion with the legend DEO AVGVSTO (*RIC* V Gallienus 9).

<sup>31</sup> Present in two gold medallions (*RIC* V Gallienus and Salonina 1 and *RIC* V Gallienus and Saloninus 1) and one silver medallion (*RIC* V Gallienus and Salonina 2).

<sup>32</sup> Written on two silver medallions depicting Valerian, Gallienus (*RIC* V Valerian and Gallienus 1), Valerian the Younger, and Salonina (*RIC* V Valerian, Gallienus, Valerian II, and Salonina 1).

<sup>33</sup> For *Concordia* in Roman numismatics see Manders 2012, 80, 90, 92, 113, 133, 156, 180; Noreña 2001, 154–155; Sear 2005, 37.

<sup>34</sup> For *Pietas* on Roman coins see Manders 2012, 178–182; Noreña 2001, 152–159; Sear 2005, 40.

<sup>35</sup> Two of them show *Salus* (*RIC* V Gallienus 143 and 144) on the reverse, while the other one has the figure of *Libertas* (*RIC* V Gallienus 146).

<sup>36</sup> On the reverse appears the figure of *Libertas*, in a *toga*, standing on the left, holding a *pileus* in her right hand and a sceptre in her left (*RIC* V Gallienus 145).



by minting these honorary silver medallions. This last movement is a populist approach by Gallienus towards the two main estates of the city of Rome, the *Senatus* and the *Populus*, whose honours he “pretends” to receive. Chronologically, these obverse legends undergo various changes: thus, while in the period 253–259, the *Concordia*, *Pietas*, and *Felicitas* of the emperor and his family are promoted above all (36% between the three), in the second period, from 260 to 268, only the Senate, the People of Rome and his title of CONSERVATOR ORBIS are mentioned (15% in total).

### Reverse legends: MONETA, VIRTUS and FIDES

The reverses of the medallions on which Gallienus is present also offer interesting elements of analysis. The most frequently used legend is MONETA AVG (16 types, 31%), followed at a great distance by VIRTUS AVG/GAL (6 types, 12%) and FIDES MIL/EXERC (5 types, 10%) (Fig. 1). The reference to the deity *Moneta* on the medallions far exceeds on this type of support other legends much more popular in Gallienus’s numismatics such as VICTORIA, VIRTUS, PM TR P COS P P, PAX, FIDES or CONCORDIA. *Moneta*, the personification of the coin and, therefore, of money, appears here as the *Tres Monetae* (gold, silver, and bronze), togated, standing, with a scale in her right hand and a *cornucopia* in her left (Fig. 2). The appearance of *Moneta* reflects, in general, the importance of the Empire’s finances, the fair administration of them by the emperor and the integrity that must preside over the minting of the coinage<sup>37</sup>, but, here specifically, it also acquires a special meaning addressed to the recipients of the medallions, presumably martial, with this deity on their reverse: Gallienus guarantees them the good quality of the gift delivered through the special protection of *Moneta*, on whom he swears by the nobility of the minted metal. The development of the legends of the medallions over time also changes in the two periods of the reign of Emperor Gallienus. Thus, while from 253 to 259 PIETAS FALERI (2 types, 12%)<sup>38</sup> accompanies MONETA as the second most repeated legend, between 260 and 268 VIRTUS AVG/GAL (5 types, 15%), PAX AVG/VBIQVE (3 types, 9%)<sup>39</sup> and FIDES MILITVM (4 types, 12%)<sup>40</sup> (Fig. 3), with more than a third (36%) of the reverse

<sup>37</sup> De Blois 1976, 97–98; Doyen 1989, II, 261–262; Goltz / Hartmann 2008, 223–295; Manders 2012, 182–183; Noreña 2001, 158; Sear 2005, 39. Her attributions are very similar to those of *Aequitas*. So much so that the two divinities are, to a large extent, interchangeable with each other, both in terms of iconography and historical development. Indeed, the introduction of the *Aequitas* type under Galba seems to respond to the *Moneta* theme on the rebel coinage of 68 AD (Doyen 1989, II, 261–262; Manders 2012, 182–183; Noreña 2001, 158).

<sup>38</sup> Through 2 types of gold and silver medallions in which Gallienus and Salonina appear, with the legends CONCORDIA AVGG and PIETAS FALERI (*RIC V Gallienus and Salonina* 1 and 2).

<sup>39</sup> It appears in one gold type (*RIC V Gallienus* 14) and two silver types (*RIC V Gallienus* 15 and 147).

<sup>40</sup> They are all gold medallions very similar to each other and with a marked martial cut, with the representation of *Fides* (*RIC V Gallienus* 10–12) or the legend inscribed within a laurel wreath (*RIC V Gallienus* 13).



legends of the medallions of the period, account for a good number of types in Gallienus's sole reign, reminding us of the military function of all these high-quality commemorative coins, acting as rewards to the high officers of Gallienus's army for their commitment on the battlefield and for their loyalty to the emperor.

### Reverse Categories

Going deeper into the types of medallion reverses, we can see that the most commonly used type is by far that of divinities, with 37 different types (64%), followed at a great distance by those in which the emperor appears (11 types, 19%) or the members of his family (6 types, 10%), to conclude with those of animals and creatures (2 types, 3%)<sup>41</sup>, army and triumph (1 type, 2%)<sup>42</sup> and other types (1 type, 2%)<sup>43</sup> (Fig. 4). Thus, we can see how the divinities continue to better project the messages of the imperial family to the high military commands in the most important and prestigious donations, than the actual representations of the family itself. The chronological evolution of these categories in the two periods of Gallienus's government also provides very interesting data. During the joint reign with Valerian the categories of reverses with the figure of the emperor (6 types, 26%) and family (*idem*), in addition to animals and creatures (2 types, 9%), account for more than half of the representations on the reverse of the medallions, during Gallienus's sole reign only the category of reverses with his imperial figure survives (5 types, 14%), while those of divinities account for more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the total representations on medallions (28 types, 89%). In this way, divinities become the favourite vehicle of transmission during Gallienus's sole reign, contrary to what happens with his figure and the imperial family, which practically disappear between 260 and 268 in the medallions delivered during special festivities and commemorations.

### The Most Represented: Divinities and Images of the Emperor

There are therefore two categories that show interesting changes in the two periods: that of divinities and that of the reverses with the imperial figure<sup>44</sup>. As for the

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<sup>41</sup> Specifically, the two types of gold and silver medallions depicting Gallienus and Salonina, already mentioned, with the legends *CONCORDIA AVGG* and *PIETAS FALERI* (*RIC* V Gallienus and Salonina 1 and 2).

<sup>42</sup> It is a gold medallion with the legend *FIDES MILITVM* inscribed within a laurel wreath (*RIC* V Gallienus 13).

<sup>43</sup> Specifically, a type of silver medallion with the legends *FELICIBVS AVGG* and *QVATERNIO*, the latter inscribed in 4 lines (*RIC* V Valerian and Gallienus 2).

<sup>44</sup> The other categories, much more limited, are present in one or another period of Gallienus's government: between 253 and 259 those of animals and creatures and family, while between 260 and 268 those of army and triumph and other representations. In the animal ones, we only see a goat under a tree, breastfeeding a child, present in the two types of gold and silver medallions in which Gallienus



divinities, as we have already anticipated, *Moneta*, the personification of the coin, is the one that has the most types on its reverse, with a total of 17 different types (46%), a number much higher than that of other divinities more represented in the general numismatics of the emperor, such as *Victoria* (6 types, 16%) or *Pax* (2 types, 5%)<sup>45</sup>, and even than *Fides* (3 types, 8%)<sup>46</sup> or *Hercules (idem)*<sup>47</sup> (Fig. 4). Overall, however, the deities that have to do with the relationship between the emperor and the army (*Victoria, Pax, Fides, Hercules*) or with the payment of the same (*Moneta*), are the great majority<sup>48</sup>, which confirms, to a large extent, the well-founded theories about the ultimate recipients of these gold and silver numerals of great value and prestige. However, the divinities represented also changed over time: if between 253 and 259 the only two deities promoted were *Moneta* (6 types, 67%) and *Victoria* (3 types, 33%), between 260 and 268 the rest were added, to diversify and vary the message transmitted to the high officers of Gallienus's army. As for the types of reverses of medallions with the figure of Gallienus, there are 4 subcategories of different types: the one in which Gallienus appears with his father, Valerian (3 types, 25%)<sup>49</sup>, the ones

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and Salonina appear, already mentioned, with the legends *CONCORDIA AVGG* and *PIETAS FALERI* (*RIC V Gallienus and Salonina* 1 and 2). In the family one, on the other hand, Valerian brings together half of the mentions of the category (50%), through two types of silver medallions with the legend *ADLOCVTIO AVGVSTI* and together with his son Gallienus (*RIC V Gallienus* (joint reign) 106–107) and another gold one on horseback alongside Gallienus and Saloninus (*RIC V Gallienus and Saloninus* 1), while Salonina, with two types of medallions with her diademed bust (*RIC V Gallienus and Salonina* 3 and *RIC V Valerian, Gallienus, Valerian II, and Salonina* 1), and Saloninus, with the aforementioned type of medallion with Valerian and Gallienus on horseback (*RIC V Gallienus and Saloninus* 1), close the category with 33% and 17% of the mentions of relatives. The categories of Gallienus's sole reign, on the other hand, are much more concise and we have already had to mention them: that of army and triumph presents only one type of gold medallion with the legend *FIDES MILITVM* inscribed within a laurel wreath (*RIC V Gallienus* 13), while that of other representations we have preserved a type of silver medallion with the legends *FELICIBVS AVGG* and *QVATERNIO*, the latter inscribed in 4 lines (*RIC V Valerian and Gallienus* 2).

<sup>45</sup> Present in two types of gold and silver medallions with the legend *PAX AVG* (*RIC V Gallienus* 14 and 147).

<sup>46</sup> Always associated with the army through three types of gold medallions with the legend *FIDES MILITVM* (*RIC V Gallienus* 10–12).

<sup>47</sup> Always about the virtue of the emperor, with his combat capacity and endurance on the battlefield, through three different types of gold medallions with the legend *VIRTVS AVG* (*RIC V Gallienus* 16) or *VIRTVS GALLIENI AVG* (*RIC V Gallienus* 5–6).

<sup>48</sup> Between the five of them they account for 83% of the representations of divinities on the reverses of the types of medallions in which Gallienus appears. The set is completed by *Salus* (2 types, 5%: *RIC V Gallienus* 143–144), *Concordia* (1 type, 3%: *RIC V Gallienus* 8), *Libertas* (2 types, 5%: *RIC V Gallienus* 145–146) and others (1 type, 3%: *RIC V Gallienus* 135).

<sup>49</sup> In three types of medallions already mentioned: through two types of silver with the legend *ADLOCVTIO AVGVSTI* (*RIC V Gallienus* (joint reign) 106–107) in which they appear standing on a platform, addressing three soldiers holding banners, and through another golden one on horseback next to Saloninus (*RIC V Gallienus and Saloninus* 1).





in which his figure appears standing (2 types, 17%)<sup>50</sup>, the ones in which he appears sacrificing (*idem*)<sup>51</sup> and the one in which he is riding a steed (*idem*)<sup>52</sup>. The activities most represented in his medallions are, therefore, those that have to do with his father and senior emperor, and in which he appears sacrificing, on horseback or, simply, standing. But these subcategories also undergo modifications over time. Thus, if during the joint period with Valerian, the representations of the emperor with his paternal counterpart (3 types, 50%) or seated (1 type, 17%) are more frequent, in those of the sole reign he appears more frequently on horseback (2 types, 40%), sacrificing, walking or standing (1 type each, 20%). His image, therefore, becomes more dynamic in the second period and becomes an effigy less in tune with his family and more focused on his military and religious achievements.

### Chronology of the medallions

As a final element of analysis of the medallions in which Gallienus appears, it is interesting to investigate their chronology: 2/3 of them (34 types, 67%) belong to the period 260–268, with a peak of up to 34 different possible types in the year 263<sup>53</sup>, and only 1/3 (17 types, 33%) to the interval 253–259. It is evident, in the light of these data, that, during the emperor's sole reign, the need for awards and gifts for the high military commanders, *protectores* and other Illyrian army officers became more pressing than in the first period: the continued and bleeding devaluation of legal tender coins made the system of awards through heavy and luxurious medallions for the high ranks of the army increasingly necessary, who noted their enormous importance as guarantors of the stability of the emperor and his family and who, therefore, could not afford a decrease in their purchasing power.

### Conclusions

In conclusion, our examination of the medallions of Emperor Gallienus offers valuable insights into his complex portrayal and influence during the tumultuous mid-third century. The medallions serve not only as artistic and historical artefacts but also as

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<sup>50</sup> In two gold and silver medallions, in one holding a spear, standing between four ensigns (*RIC V Gallienus* 7), while, in the other, crowned by Victory, offering his hand to a soldier, standing to the right (*RIC V Gallienus* (joint reign) 108).

<sup>51</sup> In two gold medallions: in one holding a short sceptre and sacrificing on a tripod (*RIC V Gallienus* 4), while in the other *capite velato*, with the *toga*, standing left, sacrificing on an altar (*RIC V Gallienus* (joint reign) 65).

<sup>52</sup> In two gold and silver medallions: in one Gallienus appears holding a spear and crowned by Victory (*RIC V Gallienus* 3), while in the other he is preceded by a soldier (*RIC V Gallienus* 149).

<sup>53</sup> A large group of 5 gold and 1 silver medallion, with the images of the *Tres Monetae* (*RIC V Gallienus* 1–2), *Hercules* (*RIC V Gallienus* 5–6), Victory (*RIC V Gallienus* 3) and *Uberitas* (*RIC V Gallienus* 135) were dated by *RIC V* 1 to the year 263.



symbols of political and military messaging in a time of crisis. Firstly, Gallienus emerges as a victorious general, celebrated in a wide array of sources, including literary, artistic, and epigraphic, which collectively underscore his role in safeguarding the Empire amidst growing instability. Secondly, while medallions constitute a relatively minor portion of Gallienus's overall numismatic output, only 4%, they hold symbolic weight due to their selective usage. Thirdly, the high-quality materials, pure and substantial gold, and silver, used in crafting these medallions were essential, both as status markers and as prestigious rewards reserved for high-ranking military officials who were vital to the Empire's defence. Fourthly, the medallions' obverses highlight CONCORDIA between Gallienus and his family members, notably his father Valerian, his wife Salonina, and their descendants. This theme of familial unity would have bolstered Gallienus's image as a stabilizing force within the Empire. Fifthly, the prominence of MONETA AVG inscriptions, representing 31% of the medallions, and the iconography of the *Tres Monetae* (46%) emphasized the emperor's commitment to ensuring the quality and value of the monetary rewards bestowed, often under the aegis of martial deities such as *Victoria*, *Pax*, *Fides*, and *Hercules*, all of whom embodied virtues critical to Roman resilience and strength. Finally, medallions took on heightened significance during Gallienus's sole rule from 260 to 268, a period defined by accelerated monetary devaluation and economic pressures, where these high-value medallions stood as both fiscal and ideological statements in a time of widespread instability. This nuanced portrait of Gallienus through his medallions thus enhances our understanding of his leadership approach and the ways he sought to communicate stability and resilience to his contemporaries.

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## Figures

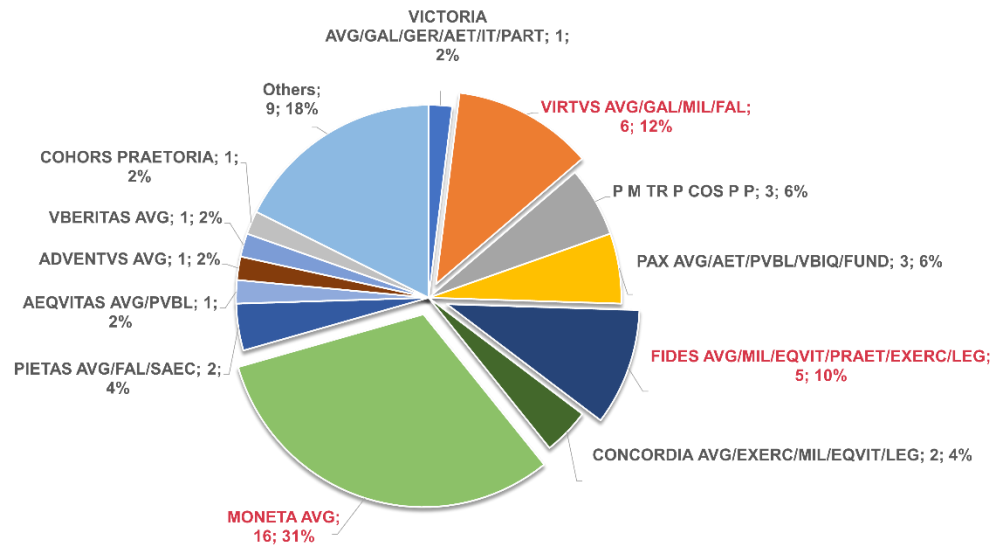


Fig. 1. Reverse legends in central medallions featuring Emperor Gallienus.



Fig. 2. Obverse: Draped armored bust of Gallienus with laurel wreath in chest view to the right; reverse: The three *Monetae*, standing side by side, facing the observer, heads to the left. The central *Moneta* holds a pair of scales with a long handle in its right hand, the other two *Monetae* have pairs of scales with short handles. In front of each moneta to the left is a pile of coins. Silver medallion from the Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin 18205983 (from <https://ikmk.smb.museum/object?id=18205983>).



Fig. 3. Obverse: Bust of Gallienus facing right with laurel wreath and *cyrassium*; Reverse: *Fides* is standing to the left, holding a standard in each hand. Gold medallion from the Münzkabinett des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien, ID123413 (from <https://www.ikmk.at/object?id=ID123413>).

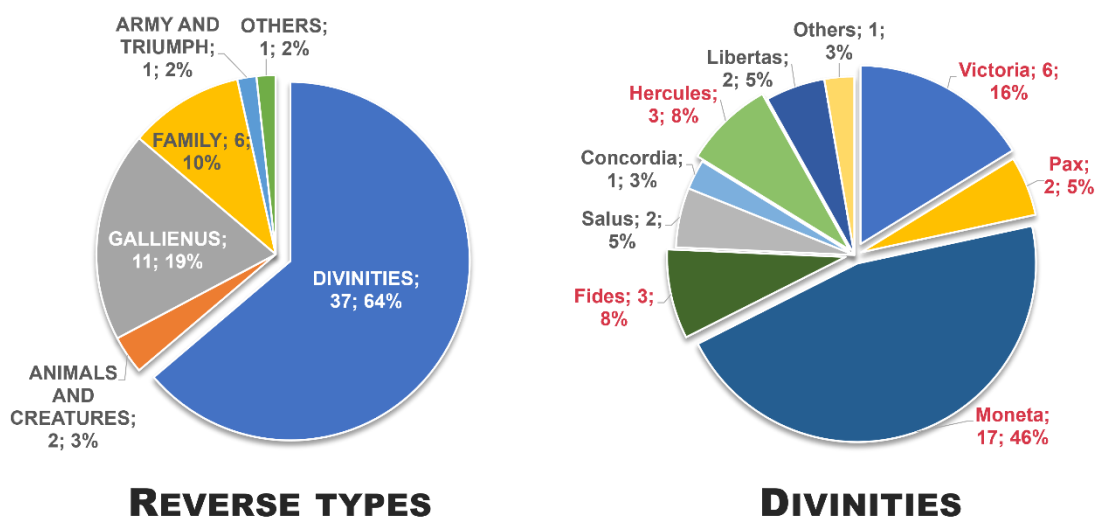


Fig. 4. Types of central medallions on the reverse of Emperor Gallienus featuring divinities.