

TWO RECENT ACQUISITIONS IN BELGRADE MUSEUMS*

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(Plates V-VIII)

I. A BRONZE HEAD OF MACRINUS

Discovered by a lucky accident, a Roman bronze head of remarkable quality was unearthed in 1969 in the village of Boleč near Belgrade (Plates V-VII).¹

Roman portraits in the Danubian provinces, where they are of above-average quality, invariably represent emperors or members of the imperial family. In the case of this bust, the type of beard and the general style show that we are dealing with a personage of the Severan period. The appearance of the beard may suggest a certain resemblance to the emperor Pupienus, but the identification does not bear further inspection, since his portraits differ from the new head significantly in most other details.

Until now there have been no certainly attested portraits of Macrinus, whether in bronze or marble², that would justify the ascription of the Belgrade head to this emperor. The identification, however, is nonetheless indicated by the portraits on the imperial coinage. According to H. Mattingly³, these may be divided into three groups: (1) portraits with a short profile and a slight beard; (2) portraits with a long profile and with strongly marked expressive features and heavy beard; and (3) portraits which represent compromises in style between the first two groups. It has been established beyond doubt that the coins which bear the portrait of the first group were exclusively issues of the mint in Rome. It bears no relation to Macrinus' real appearance, and it can be shown without difficulty that it is a somewhat modified version of the head of Caracalla from the last coin-series of that ruler. The second group, in the division proposed by Mattingly, comes from Antioch, and like the first is dated to the year A.D. 217. The head of Macrinus on these is remarkably close to our portrait. The hair, beard, forehead, face and general appearance are strikingly similar in every detail. The die-engraver has undoubtedly created a realistic likeness of the man himself, and has no intention of idealising or flattering the ruler. The portraits represent the man as the artist saw him in 217. Mattingly's third group represents a blended version, in so far as the mint of Antioch looked to that of Rome. Yet it is clear that in time the issues of the Rome mint decreased in number while those of Antioch increased, and this explains the original difference of styles in the emperor's portrait, and the large number which show a significant approximation to the authentic appearance of the emperor. From a comparison of our bust with the portrait heads of the Antioch issues referred to above (Pl. VII, 3), even allowing for the different impressions created by a coin portrait on the one hand and sculpture in the round on the other, we can only conclude that they refer to the same subject, a man in his late fifties.

In many of its characteristics the bust of Macrinus conforms to the style of the Severan and post-Severan period. To be sure, there is a certain softness of line and of the modelling of the facial details, and one may detect something of the classicising influence in the smoothness and refinement of the rendering. Nevertheless, more in the overall effect than in the treatment of individual details, the Belgrade head shows some departures from the traditional examples of this school. A distinct element of realism can be seen in the attempt by our artist to reveal the inner feelings of the man.

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¹Dimensions: height of surviving part 0.41 m, height of head (from beard to crown) 0.33 m, width of head (from ear to ear) 0.22 m. Made from bronze in hollow casting. The entire surface is covered with a light green patina. Preserved in the City Museum,

Belgrade, inv. no. 2636. Published with further detail in Serbian, *Godišnjak grada Beograda* xviii (1972), 1 ff.

²For a number of doubtful attributions see, among others, J. J. Bernoulli, *Die Bildnisse der römischen Kaiser und ihrer Angehörigen*, iii: *Pertinax bis Theodosius* (Stuttgart 1882-94), 74 ff.

³H. Mattingly, *BMC Rom. Emp.* v (London, 1950), ccxiii f.

It is clear, to follow the analysis of L'Orange⁴, that the sculptor was striving for new effects in the rendering of facial expression; and by indicating the movement of certain parts of the face such as the brow, he has suggested the play of changing facial expressions and captured his subject in a particular moment and a particular mood. Certainly we may see here the face of a complex character of many experiences, none of them easy. His features reveal a personality more imposing than that which is usually conceded to Macrinus.⁵ Yet it must, of course, remain an open question how far this portrait can furnish evidence for an attempt to rehabilitate Macrinus.⁶

It would be interesting to know how this excellent portrait, which was undoubtedly created in the East, came to be found on the *limes* of Upper Moesia. The findspot lies on the road between Singidunum and Viminacium, and is in an area where there were wealthy Roman villas.⁷ The head may have been set up in a villa on imperial property or, more probably, on the property of an important personage in close contact with Macrinus. Four such men, who may have had connections with Upper Moesia, can be suggested on present evidence: L. Marius Maximus, *dux exerciti Mysiaci apud Byzantium* (sic) between the years A.D. 193 and 196⁸ and *praefectus urbi* under Macrinus;⁹ Q. Anicius Faustus, governor of Upper Moesia in 202¹⁰ and governor of Asia under Macrinus;¹¹ and the two Pomponii Bassi, father and son;¹² the elder Pomponius Bassus was governor of Moesia under Caracalla—and in the light of the Belgrade portrait this may have been Upper Moesia, while the younger Pomponius Bassus served under his father as legionary legate—perhaps of the *legio IV Flavia* at Singidunum. These two probably stood in favour with Macrinus; he punished Sulpicius Arrenianus, who had denounced the younger Pomponius during the reign of Caracalla. The episode may well have had political repercussions, for the elder Pomponius Bassus was put to death under Elagabalus and Sulpicius Arrenianus restored.¹³

II. AN UNRECORDED MEDALLION OF VALENTINIAN I

In the neighbourhood of Veliko Gradište, the ancient Pincum, which lies on the Danube in Upper Moesia, an important gold medallion came to light in 1965 (Pl. VIII).¹⁴

Obv. DN VALENTINI-ANVS PF AVG. Bust of the emperor facing r. with a diadem of pearls, and wearing cuirass and *paludamentum*.

Rev. VIRTVS DD NN AVGVS-TORVM. Emperor wearing a diademed (?) helmet, cuirass, cloak and decorated high boots. His cloak and long-sleeved tunic are richly embroidered. He is shown striding forwards to the right, while his body is partly turned to face the spectator. In his left hand, he holds a *labarum* over his shoulder; on the spectator's left is the hunched figure of a bearded male prisoner of war wearing embroidered coat and trousers, whose hair the emperor seizes with his right hand. In the right field, beside his head, is a small-scale flying victory with wreath and palm. On the spectator's right, facing to the r., kneels a female captive wearing a Phrygian cap, a long tunic with embroidered sleeves and a cloak; she looks

⁴H. P. L'Orange, *Studien zur Geschichte des spätantiken Porträts* (Oslo 1933), 2. H. v. Heintze ('Studien zu den Porträts des 3. Jahrhundert n. Chr.', *Röm. Mitt.* 62, 1955, 180), in discussing the realistic portraiture of a rather later period, suggests that it arose from the wish to reproduce realistically the facial features of military emperors, some of whom were of barbarian origin. Macrinus, whose origin was in Mauretania, certainly had distinctive facial characteristics, and it is conceivable that the forceful personality they registered could have inspired an artist to attempt a realistic portrayal.

⁵Cp. for example SHA, *Vit. Macr.* 14, 1: 'homo putidulus'.

⁶H. v. Petrikovits, *RE* xviii (1939), 540-58; H. Mattingly, *Studies presented to D. M. Robinson* ii (London, 1953), 962-9.

⁷Dj. Stričević, 'Brestovik, rimska grobnica', *Starinar* vii-viii (Beograd, 1958), 411 f.

⁸ILS 2935. A fine inscription from the Upper Moesian town Margum may refer to this well known historian (M. Mirković, *Živa Antika* xv (1966), 386, no. 5).

⁹Petrikovits, loc. cit. 550.

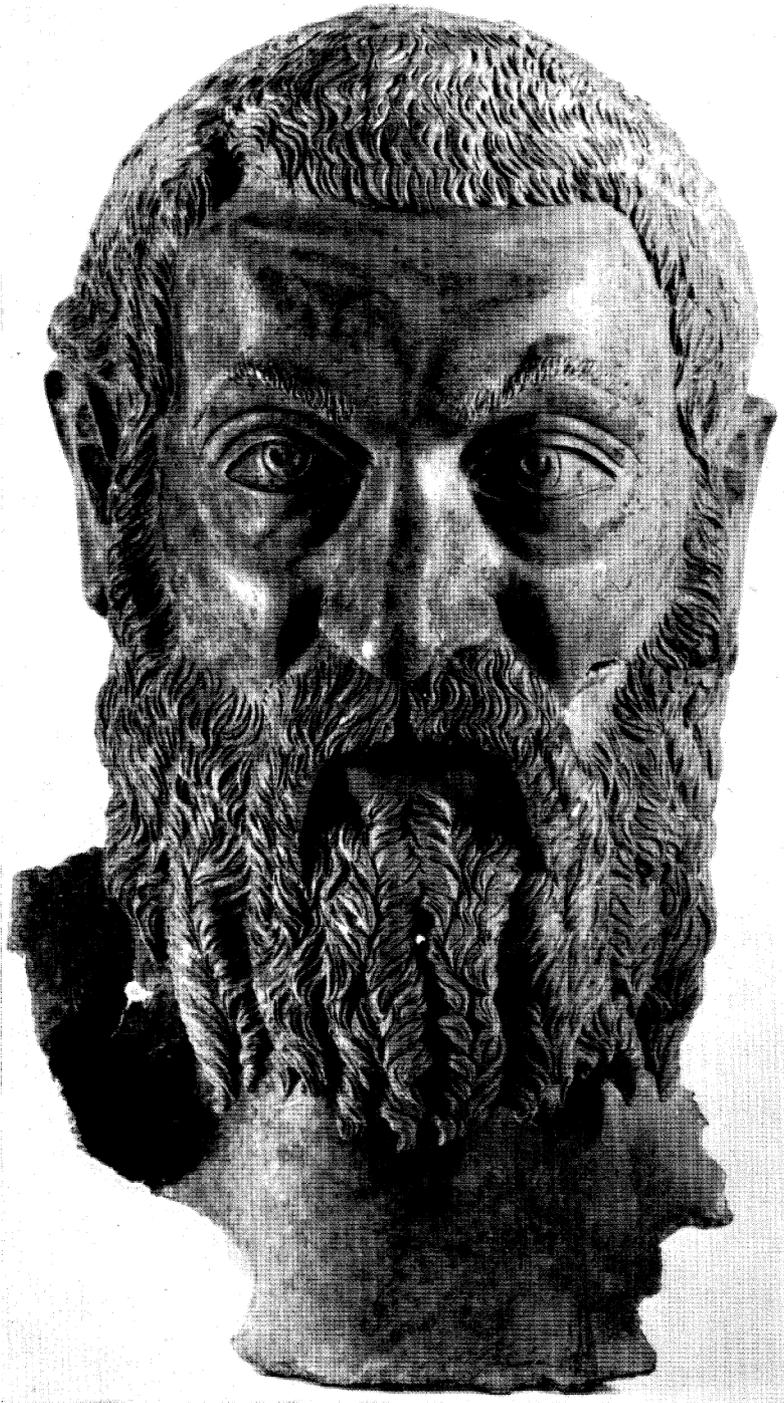
¹⁰Cp. N. Vulić, *Nekoliko pitanja iz antičke istorije naše zemlje i rimske starine* (Beograd, 1961), 28.

¹¹G. Barbieri, *L'albo senatorio da Settimio Severo a Carino* (193-285), 15, no. 27.

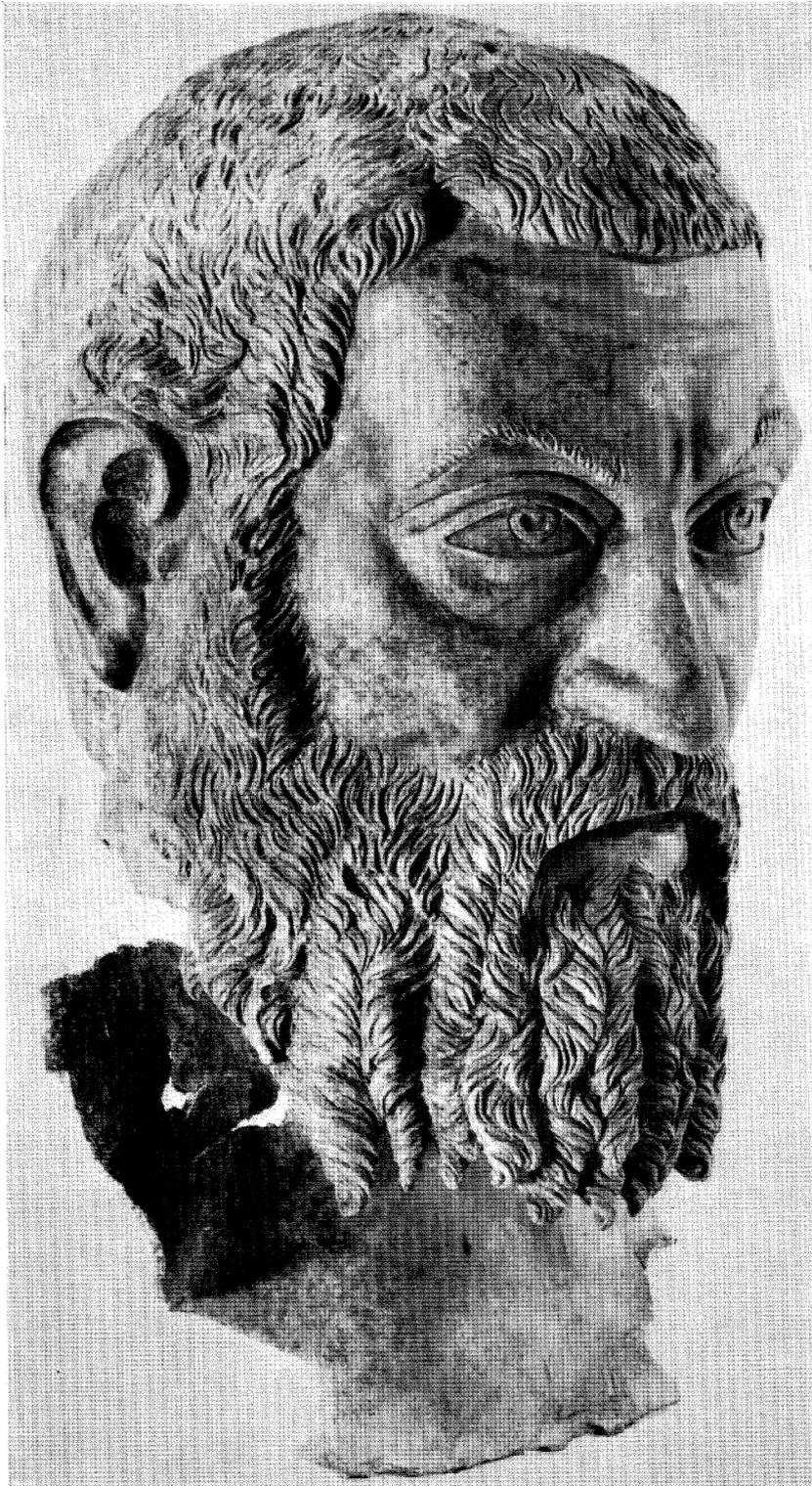
¹²On them see for example A. Stein, *Die Legaten von Moesien* (Budapest, 1940), 55; Barbieri, op. cit. 99 f., 421 f. and passim.

¹³Cass. Dio, lxxix, 5, 1, 4.

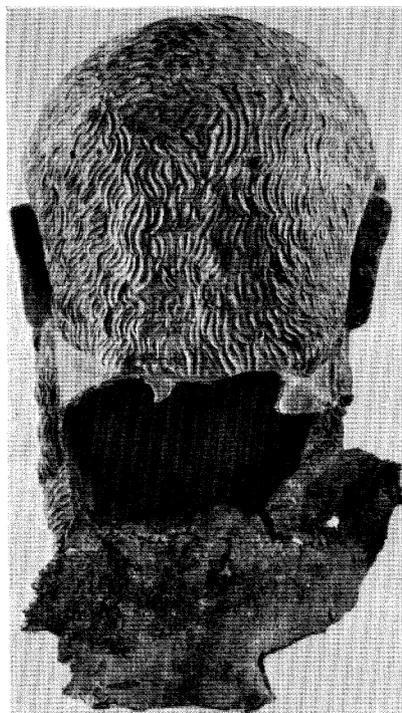
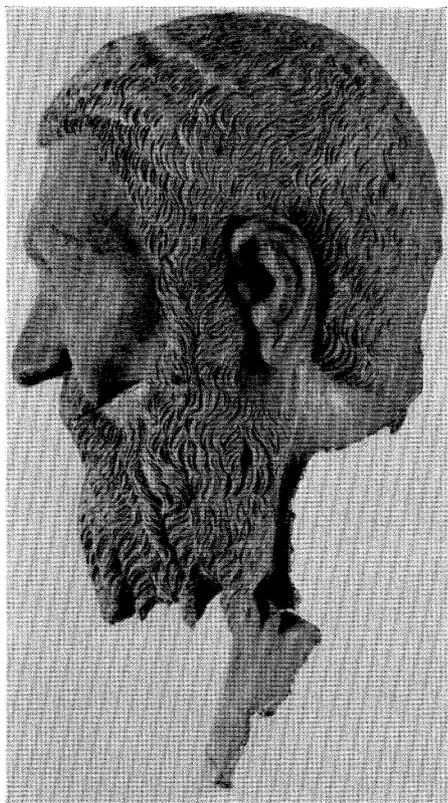
¹⁴The medallion is preserved in the National Museum, Belgrade. For a publication with greater detail, and with somewhat different conclusions (in Serbian), see *Starinar* xvii (Beograd, 1966), 46 (V. Kondić).



BRONZE HEAD OF MACRINUS: CITY MUSEUM, BELGRADE (see p. 47 f.)
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BRONZE HEAD OF MACRINUS: CITY MUSEUM, BELGRADE (see p. 47 f.)
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1, 2. BRONZE HEAD OF MACRINUS, SIDE AND BACK VIEWS: CITY MUSEUM, BELGRADE. 3. DENARIUS WITH PORTRAIT OF MACRINUS

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GOLD MEDALLION OF VALENTINIAN I, OBTVERSE (1) AND REVERSE (2): NATIONAL MUSEUM, BELGRADE (see p. 48 f.)
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back towards the left and lifts her left hand in supplication. In the exergue there is a panoply with the letters C (to l.) and S (to r.).

Weight: 80.45 g. *Diameter:* 53 mm.

The date of the medallion and the reasons for its coining cannot be fixed with any certainty. It is clear only that it does not date to the brief period of Procopius' rule in Constantinople, September 365-May 366.

It is tempting, however, to compare this with the gold multiple issued in Thessalonike by Valentinian and Valens about the beginning of 369 to mark the completion of their quinquennalia.¹⁵ One of these multiples has a reverse type similar to that of our example.¹⁶ The fact that the inscription on the reverse of our medallion mentions only the two senior emperors is in conformity with the occasional failure to mention Gratian at Thessalonike¹⁷ and elsewhere. In Constantinople a similar commemorative role seems to have been played by the series in gold and silver bearing the legends VOTA V and MVLTA X.¹⁸ These, as evidently also our medallion, are concerned as well with some military victory, as is clear from the scene on the reverse. J. W. E. Pearce believed that they referred to Valens' victory over the Goths.¹⁹ It is possible that this is also the case with our medallion, for the scene on the reverse shows a barbarian in what is apparently German dress.²⁰

National Museum, Belgrade

¹⁵ J. W. E. Pearce, *RIC ix: Valentinian I-Theodosius I* (London, 1951), 177, no. 19-21.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* no. 19.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 163.

¹⁸ *Cp. ibid.* 201 f. Interesting also is *Aes II*, *ibid.* 219, no. 40.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 202

²⁰ *Cp. G. Girke, Die Tracht der Germanen in der vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Zeit* (Leipzig, 1922).