

Leu Numismatik Auction 4 25 May, 2019  
THE AURUM BARBARORUM COLLECTION



**Lot 430**

**TROAS. Alexandria Troas. Gallienus, 253-268.** 'Aureus' (Gold, 22 mm, 6.98 g, 9 h), struck north of the Danube with dies stolen from the mint of Alexandria Troas, after 262. IMP LICINI GALLIENVS Laureate, draped and cuirassed bust of Gallienus to right, seen from behind. *Rev.* COL AVGO / TRO Horse grazing right. Cf. Bellinger A451 (for the Alexandrian issue in bronze). Bursche & Myzgin Abb. 3 = Gabinet Numizmatyczny, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, No. MNK VII-A-9587 = Gorny & Mosch 126 (2003), 1818 (*same dies*). Of the highest rarity, by far the best of just three known examples. A lustrous and very attractive coin, and without the hole that was applied to all other extant examples of this fascinating series. Very light marks on the reverse, *otherwise*, good extremely fine.

The story of this coin reads like an ancient thriller: It is the year 262, when the inhabitants of Alexandria Troas spot a fleet approaching the Dardanelles from the south. Alarm bells ring and cries of panic fill the streets: "The Goths are here, the Goths are here!". Thousands of Gothic plunderers land on the coast of the Troas, loaded with stolen riches from all over Greece and Asia Minor, and start besieging the wealthy city. Archaeological excavations have shown that the battle-hardened barbarians had no issues penetrating the city walls before they massacred the population and looted the temples and houses.

Change of scene to Paris, 1881: the Bibliothèque Nationale acquires a holed Gallienus coin from Alexandria Troas featuring a local motive on the reverse (Lupa Romana) - but to everyone's astonishment, it is minted in gold. The unusual metal and the slightly blundered legends on the obverse lead the numismatists to conclude that this must be a rather curious barbaric imitation.

Munich, 2003: another 'aureus' of Gallienus from Alexandria Troas is sold in a Gorny & Mosch auction - once again it is holed, but this time it is struck from what look like official dies.

What was it about these 'aurei' from a provincial mint, which was very active under Valerian I and Gallienus

but only minted in bronze? It was not until 2017 that a solution to this riddle was proposed, when A. Bursche and K. Myzgin published two further holed 'aurei' of Gallienus from Alexandria Troas. They were able to show that the local provincial mint must have fallen into the hands of the Goths when the city was plundered in 262. When the barbarians returned to their homelands northwest of the Black Sea, they took the stolen coin dies back home with them and began to strike their own coins with the looted gold. The final evidence for their theory was provided in the Paris example, which was struck from a recut obverse die while the reverse corresponds to the provincial coinage from Alexandria Troas: it now became obvious that this was not a mere imitation, but that the coin was struck by the stolen dies from the provincial mint of Alexandria, and that a Gothic artist had, at some point, recut the obverse die due to heavy wear.

The present example is now the sixth known gold coin minted by the Goths from the stolen Alexandrian dies, and it is the only one without a hole. The exceptional condition indicates that it was most likely lost very soon after it was produced, before it could be reworked into a pendant. It is by far the best preserved example and a unique testimony to the troubled era of the Gothic invasions of the mid and late 3rd century.

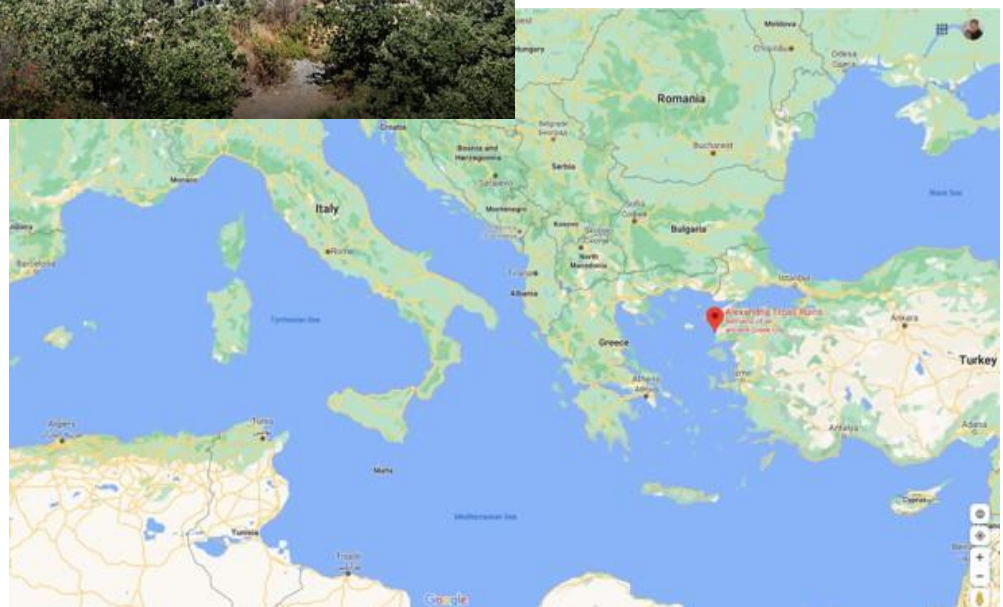
For a longer note on the coinage of the Transdanubian Goths, see the introduction to the 'Aurum Barbarorum Collection' in the printed catalogue, p. 434.

Estimate: 15000 CHF  
Starting price: 12000 CHF  
Hammer price: 20000 CHF



at left

Alexandria Troas today



at right

Alexandria Troas shown  
on map of  
Mediterranean