

Fifth Dura Hoard

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THE FIFTH DURA HOARD
By EDWARD T. NEWELL

The American Numismatic Society
Broadway at 156th Street
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1933

THE FIFTH DURA HOARD

By Edward T. Newell

The subject of this study is a hoard consisting of twenty-nine silver pieces unearthed¹ on November 15th, 1930, at Dura "in the street west of the 'Cistern House,' against the wall of the house at the floor level of the big room to the south of the central court of that house." The hoard, when found, presented a compact and rounded mass, the individual coins of which were heavily corroded and closely adhering to each other. The outer surfaces of this conglomerate mass showed distinct traces left by the mesh of the cloth which once had served as a container to the hoard, but which was now completely rotted away. The roundish shape of the lump further attested the fact that this container had apparently once been some sort of cloth purse or bag.

The heavy corrosion and close adherence of the coins rendered them illegible, and therefore the entire mass was subjected by Dr. Bellinger to an electrolytic bath. This immersion was successful in disintegrating the lump into its component parts and the coins were finally carefully cleaned, one by one, by the writer. The following specimens, comprising twenty-two tetradrachms, six denarii and one an-toninianus, eventually emerged :

GROUP I

Antioch

Period: 49-20 B.C.

tetradrachms

1. *Obv.* Diademed head of Philip Philadelphia to r. within filleted border.

Rev. ##### in two perpendicular lines on the r., ##### in two perpendicular lines on the l. Zeus enthroned to l. holding a wingless Nike in his outstretched r. and resting his l. upon his sceptre. In l. field . Beneath throne, ✕. In the exergue #. Thunderbolt above Zeus and the entire design surrounded by a laurel wreath. Struck in year 4 (#) of the Caesarian era, or between Oct. 1st, 46 and Sept. 30th, 45 B.C. (cf. Numismatic Chronicle, 1919, p. 88, no. 8). Gr. 11.79.²

¹According to information kindly supplied the author by Dr. Bellinger in a letter of Dec. 8th, 1931. The present writer desires herewith to express his great appreciation to Drs. Rostovtzeff and Bellinger for the opportunity accorded him of publishing this most interesting little hoard.

²This and the following weights are those secured *after* cleaning. It had not proved feasible to weigh the coins before cleaning as they were not only too heavily corroded but also closely stuck together. The metallic composition of these coins is known to have originally contained a large proportion of copper, which copper—by the slow electrolytic action to which the coins have been subjected in the earth for some seventeen hundred years—had gradually become deposited upon the surface of each coin where it turned to verdegriis. The removal of this verdegriis by the process of cleaning reduces considerably the weight of the coin. Thus our tetradrachms, in addition to loss of weight incurred by many years of circulation in ancient times, are also lighter by the amount of copper which their alloy had once contained.

2. Similar to the preceding. In the exergue, #. Struck in year 6, or 44-43 B.C. This year is as yet unpublished for the series, though there is now a similar specimen in the author's collection. Gr. 11.49.

3-4. Similar to the preceding. In the exergue, #. Struck in the year 9, or 41-40 B.C. Also an unpublished date.
Gr. 11.82; 12.20.

5. Similar to the preceding. In the exergue, BI(?). Struck in the year 12, or 38-37 B.C. cf. Num. Chron. 1919, p. 100, no. 17.
Gr. 10.83.

6-7. Similar to the preceding. The dates are "off flan" but the form of the throne leg proves these coins to have been issued between the third and nineteenth years of the Caesarian era (cf. *loc. cit.*, p. 104).
Gr. 11.81; 12.24.

8. Similar to the preceding. In the exergue, #I. Struck in the year 19, or 31-30 B.C. *Loc. cit.*, p. 104, no. 23.
Gr. 12.08.

9. Similar to the preceding. In the exergue, K. Struck in the year 20, or 30-29 B.C. *Loc. cit.*, p. 106, no. 25.
Gr. 12.28.

10. Similar to the preceding. In the exergue KA or ##. Struck in year 21 or 24, that is in 29-28 or 26-25 B.C. *Loc. cit.*, nos. 29 and 33.
Gr. 12.60.

11. Similar to the preceding. In the exergue, #K. Struck in the year 26, or 24-23 B.C. Same reverse die as *loc. cit.*, p. 109, no. 36.
Gr. 13.56.

12-15. Similar to the preceding. The dates are "off flan" but the form of the throne leg proves these specimens to have been struck after the year 19 of the Caesarian era (cf. *loc. cit.*, p. 104).
Gr. 10.70; 10.79; 11.04; 11.80.

GROUP II

Antioch

Nero. 54-68 A.D.

tetradrachms

16. *Obv.* #####. Laureate bust of Nero to r. wearing Aegis.

Rev. Eagle facing to l. on a winged thunderbolt. Palm branch on l. ; # above HP on r. Struck 59-60 A.D. W. Wruck, *Die syrische Provinzialprägung von Augustus bis Traian*, p. 182, no. 37.

Gr. 11.40.

17-19. Similar to the preceding but the date is Z above ##. Struck 60-1 A.D. Wruck, *loc. cit.*, p. 182, no. 38.

Gr. 10.94; 11.04; 11.47.

20. Similar but the date has been obliterated.

Gr. 13.62.

Galba. 68-69 A.D.

tetradrachm

21. *Obv.* Inscription completely obliterated. Laureate head to r. Star in front.

Rev. ETOYC NEOY IEPOY B. around an eagle facing to l. upon a thunderbolt. Palm branch upright in l. field. Struck Dec. 68 A.D. cf. Wruck, *loc. cit.*, p. 184, nos. 57-58. Gr. 12.84.

Titus, under Vespasian

tetradrachm

22. *Obv.* ..TOKP... Laureate head to r. Worn and double struck.

Rev. ##### # IEPOY. Eagle with open wings to l. Over its l. wing appear the tops of a quiver and bow. In l. field, club. Struck 72-73 A.D. Wruck, *loc. cit.*, variety of p. 188, no. 100.

Gr. 10.46.

GROUP III

Rome

Trajan. 98-117 A.D.

denarius

23. *Obv.* IMP CAES NER TRAIAN OPTIM AVG GERM DAC. Laureate, draped bust to r.

Rev. PARTHICO P M TR P COS VI P P S P Q R. In the exergue: FORT RED. Draped figure of Fortuna seated to l. holding rudder in r. and cornucopiae in l. Struck 114-7 A.D. Mattingly and Sydenham, Roman Imperial Coinage, II, p. 266, no. 315.

Gr.2.67.

Marcus Aurelius. 161-180 A.D.

denarii

24. *Obv.* M ANTONINVS AVG TR P XXVIII. Laureate head to r.

Rev. IMP VI COS III. Winged Victory, holding wreath in outstretched r. and trophy in l., advancing to r. Struck Dec. 173—June 174 A.D. Mattingly, etc., loc. cit., III, p. 235, no. 287.

Gr. 2.47.

25. *Obv.* M AVREL AN—TONINVS AVG, Laureate head to r.

Rev. TR P XXXIII IMP VIII COS III P P. Mars standing r., holding spear and leaning on shield. Struck Dec. 178—Spring 179 A.D. Mattingly, etc., III, p. 244, no. 396.

Gr. 2.68.

Lucius Verus. 161-8 A.D.

denarius

26. *Obv.* IMP L VERVS AVG. Laureate head to r.

Rev. PROV DEOR TR P III COS II. Providentia standing l., holding globe and cornucopiae. Struck Dec. 162—Autumn 163 A.D. Mattingly, etc, III, p. 253, no. 491 (Variety).

Gr. 3.00.

Commodus. 180-192 A.D.

denarius

27. *Obv.* COMM ANT AVG P BRIT. Laureate head to r.

Rev. PM TR P X IMP VII COS III P P. In the exergue, ANN. Annona standing l., holding statuette in r., cornucopiae in l. ; to l., modius ; to r., prow. Struck 184-5 A.D. Mattingly, etc., III, p. 377, no. 106.

Gr. 2.97.

Crispina

denarius

28. *Obv.* CRISPINA AVGVSTA. Draped bust to r.

Rev. CERES. Ceres standing l., holding wheat ears and torch. Mattingly, etc., III, p. 398, no. 276.

Gr. 2.77.

GROUP IV

Mediolanum (?)

Valerian Sen. 253-260 A.D.

antoninianus

29. *Obv.* Only faint traces of the inscription and features remain visible.

Rev. SALVS AVGG. Salus standing r., feeding serpent in arms. Assigned to the mint at Mediolanum. Mattingly, etc., V¹ (Webb), p. 57, no. 250-1.

Gr. 2.57.

The composition of our hoard, as made evident by the preceding catalogue, is, to say the least, rather extraordinary. Even more surprising (if that were possible) is the list of things we should have every right to expect to be present but which are curiously lacking. And yet, as stated above, the coins had been corroded into a single compact mass and this unbroken mass—just as it was lifted from the ground by the discoverers and sent to New Haven for cleaning and study—proves conclusively that the hoard must be considered as having reached us absolutely intact.

The Fifth Dura Hoard, as it lies before us, is composed of four distinct groups of coins well separated from each other by their denominations and the date of their several coinings. First, both in point of time and number, come the fifteen posthumous tetradrachms bearing the name and types of the Seleucid king Philip Philadelphus. It has been shown³ by the present writer that these tetradrachms represent a late re-issue of Seleucid type brought out by the city of Antioch in the days of Julius Caesar and Octavian his successor. The dates which these coins bear are calculated according to the Era of Pharsalia established by Julius Caesar himself. In the Dura Hoard we find the more or less legible dates #, #, #, IB, #I, K, KA (or ##?), #K—representing various years between 46/5 and 24/3 B.C. Even the specimens with illegible dates (nos. 12-15) can scarcely be later than 17/6 B.C. which represents the latest known date which has come down to us of this particular series. Our coins are all very much worn.

The second group comprises seven imperial tetradrachms, also from the Antioch mint,⁴ bearing portraits of Nero, Galba, Titus, together with dates running from #/HP (59-60 A.D.) under Nero to #E#o## # (72-73

³The Pre-Imperial Coinage of Roman Antioch, Num. Chron., Fourth Ser., Vol. XIX, 1919, pp. 69-113.

⁴In this regard only the coin of Titus (no. 22) is open to doubt. Most authorities, including Dieudonné (*Rev. Num.*, 1909, p. 458 ff.), Macdonald (Hunterian Collection, III, p. 160, no. 138) and Wruck (*Loc. cit.*, pp. 126-130) assign it and similar pieces to Antioch, while Rouvier (*Journ. International d'Archéologie Numismatique*, Vol. 6, 1903, p. 329, no. 2273) gives it to Tyre. Hill, *Brit. Mus. Cat., Greek Coins of Phoenicia*, pp. cxxxvii-cxxxix, is

A.D.) under Titus. These coins, too, all show evidences of long circulation and, in fact, are hardly less worn than nos. 1 to 15.

Thus between the first and second groups of tetradrachms our hoard displays a hiatus of over eighty years duration unrelieved by even a single specimen of the rather common tetradrachm struck at Antioch by Augustus bearing his portrait and a representation of the seated Tyche. This fact, while curious, is not without precedent. The identical phenomenon recurs in a much larger hoard from Nineveh which has recently been published by Dr. Hill.⁵ In this there turned up no less than one hundred and twenty-one of the posthumous Seleucid type tetradrachms from Roman Antioch, together with a few tetradrachms of Nero (the earliest, as in our hoard, dated #/HP or 59/60 A.D.) and his successors. Apparently, then, in and about the Mesopotamian region these posthumous Seleucid coins continued to circulate in considerable numbers down to a comparatively late date.⁶

The third group contains six imperial denarii from the mint at Rome, all being in a good, some in even a fine state of preservation. The earliest is a denarius of Trajan issued between the years 114 and 117 A.D.; the latest are a denarius of Commodus (struck in 184-5 A.D.) and an undated one of his wife Crispina issued about the same time. In other words we have here a group of six coins, better preserved than any of those in the first and second groups, struck between the years *circa* 114 and 185 A.D. Not only do they thus cover a period of some seventy years but their earliest is later by over forty years than the latest issue (no. 22) of the immediately preceding group. This contrasts with the above-mentioned Nineveh hoard which contained an unbroken series of denarii running from Galba to and including the dynasty of the Severi and thus are closely linked, in point of time, with the accompanying imperial tetradrachms of the Antioch mint.

Lastly, and strangest of all in view of what precedes, comes the solitary antoninianus (no. 29) bearing the portrait of Valerian Senior. This coin is known⁷ to have been struck between the years 253 and 260 A.D. and is thus nearly seventy years later than the latest issues (nos. 27 and 28) of Group III! Thus the Fifth Dura Hoard represents a rather curious state of affairs somewhat difficult to explain. According to the excavators and to Dr. Bellinger who had charge of the cleaning, there can be no doubt but that the coins had all been amalgamated by corrosion into a single lump, thus proving beyond any possible doubt that the hoard before us is intact and that the coins were buried at one and the same time.

Leaving aside no. 29, whose present poor condition allows of no conjecture as to its original state of preservation when buried, the three first groups show varying stages of wear proportionate to their several ages. Thus, Group I is entirely composed of very much worn coins. Group II, as a whole, is somewhat less

distinctly hesitant about attributing these pieces to Tyre. The "club and bow" behind the eagle on the coin of Titus described by Hill (*ibid.*, p. cxxxviii), which would thus certainly seem to suggest Tyre, is really a *quiver* and bow.

⁵ G. F. Hill, A Hoard of Coins from Nineveh, Num. Chron., 5th Ser., Vol. XI, 1931, pp. 160-170.

⁶ It is extremely interesting to find these posthumous tetradrachms of Philip Philadelphus in two late Roman hoards, evidently circulating alongside of Imperial Roman tetradrachms from the Antioch mint. Their presence in these particular hoards further substantiates the evidences, deduced by the present writer from their types and style alone, that they must have been issued posthumously some years after the fall of the Seleucid empire and after the last direct scion of the royal house of Seleucus had long been dead. In fact, this late revival under Roman rule of Seleucid types with royal portrait, name and titles constitutes one of the curiosities of numismatics.

⁷ Voetter in *Numismatische Zeitschrift*, vol. xxxii, 1900, pp. 138-141. Because of the badly damaged obverse it is impossible to assign this coin to its particular position (whether early or late) in the issue. Probably it was struck between 253 and 255 A.D. The coin is attributable to Mediolanum, not to Tarraco as Voetter supposes.

worn and one of its specimens (no. 19) is actually still in a very good state of preservation. Group III is composed of even better preserved coins than the immediately preceding lot, some of the pieces showing but slight signs of circulation. If the hoard had ended here one would be justified in considering it to have been put away some time in the reign of Commodus, or shortly afterwards. One would surmise that its former owner had felt a peculiar predilection for tetradrachms of the posthumous Philip Philadelphus type and had thereunto added others of Nero, Galba and Titus, the while (following some idiosyncrasy of his own) rejecting the at least equally common tetradrachms of Augustus, Vespasian and Trajan—to say nothing of the somewhat scarcer but far from rare tetradrachms of Domitian, Nerva, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius and the young Commodus. Neither any available analysis nor the experiences of many years of active collecting would suggest that the rejected types represent coins of poorer alloy than those actually chosen. The denarii (nos. 23-8) accompanying the tetradrachms were probably selected because of their generally good condition, earlier denarii from Nero to Trajan being by *circa* 190 A.D. presumably already in a noticeably more worn condition. The total absence of denarii of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius would suggest that the accumulation of Group III, at least, took place after the Parthian conquests of Lucius Verus and the absorption of the Dura-Europos district into the Roman Empire.

The unexpected—and one might almost say unwelcome—presence of Valerian's lone coin (no. 29) considerably alters the whole aspect of the hoard. Because of the presence of this one piece the hoard could not possibly have been put away finally until the middle of the third century A.D. And if "buried" at this late date how is one to account for its consequently somewhat extraordinary composition? The first and second Dura hoards⁸ recently published by Dr. Bellinger give an excellent idea of what must assuredly have constituted the ordinary circulating medium at Dura-Europos immediately preceding the fall of the city in 256 A.D. Barring copper coins representing "small change," the general circulating medium evidently consisted almost exclusively of Antiochene tetradrachms from Septimius Severus to Trebonianus and Volusianus, together with imperial "antoniniani" from Caracalla to Valerianus and Gallienus. With the exception of no. 29 not one of these coins is represented in the present hoard. It is therefore difficult to believe that any of our twenty-eight pieces were actually circulating as late as *circa* 250 A.D. But granting this for sake of argument, then we must admit that the former owner of our hoard had evidently rejected all Syrian and Imperial Roman issues later than Septimius Severus (perhaps because of their increasingly inferior metal) and, further, had made a very rigid selection of the earlier currency passing through his hands, laying aside only tetradrachms struck before *circa* 73 A.D. (not including those of Augustus, Vespasian, etc.) and certain denarii of the two last Antonines. All of which is decidedly strange.

In the light of the above mentioned Nineveh Hoard, and especially in the light of two further hoards since found in Dura,⁹ our Nos. 1 to 28 inclusive form a group distinctly reminiscent of an epoch earlier than the date at which our hoard was actually abandoned. Nos. 1-28, then, when taken as a group, appear clearly anomalous in a hoard from *circa* 256 A.D. and so would seem to suggest either that the last owner of our hoard (he of the "Antoninianus" of Valerian) had inherited¹⁰ it or had been the lucky finder of an earlier

⁸Two Roman Hoards from Dura-Europos, Numismatic Notes and Monographs No. 49, by Alfred R. Bellinger. New York, 1931.

⁹The Third and Fourth Dura Hoards, Numismatic Notes and Monographs, No. 55, by Alfred R. Bellinger. New York, 1932.

¹⁰Admitting this much, should we logically go still further, attempting to account for the *three* distinct groups into which nos. 1-28 seem to fall? Is it that we have in these coins, as it were, a family estate handed down from father to son for many generations—in other words the savings of a whole dynasty of dwellers in Dura? Were

accumulation, and that, into this—for some reason known only to himself—he had placed a coin of his own time and generation.

In any case, the presence of Valerian's coin is absolutely definitive and fixes the date *post quem* for the final abandonment of our hoard. It must therefore be compared with the "First and Second Dura Hoards" described by Dr. Bellinger and proved by him to have been buried not earlier and probably, also, not later than *circa* 256-7 A.D. Because of the coins of Valerian and Gallienus which they contained, because of the overwhelming evidence presented by similar coins found scattered over the entire site of Dura-Europos, and because of the apparent date of destruction of associated buildings and inscriptions, the interment of these several hoards must be directly connected with the final assault and capture of the fortress of Dura by the Persians¹¹ under Sapor I—an event which for historical reasons could only have taken place in the year 256-7 A.D. At that time the city was sacked and burned by the enemy and ever afterward remained deserted except, perhaps, for a small Persian military post, or such wandering Arab tribes as from time to time may have used it as a temporary camping site.

However curious the actual composition of our present hoard may seem, we must take it as chance has decreed—gratefully accepting the lone coin of Valerian as definite proof that our treasure had been finally abandoned in 256-7 A.D. The word *abandoned*, not *buried*, is here advisedly used as the finder's report clearly states that the little mass of conglomerated coins was actually found "...in the street ... against the wall of the house at the floor level ..." Obviously the hoard would not have been placed deliberately in such a position but, more probably, had been lost there by some terrified citizen fleeing the enemy, or inadvertently dropped by an over-burdened looter in the frenzied confusion attending the sack of the city by the victorious Persian soldiery.

nos. 1-15 accumulated by some great-great-grandfather living in the days of Augustus? Following this line of speculation then, the succeeding heir must have flourished under the Flavians and added nos. 16-22 to the family fortune, leaving it, in turn, to some descendant who in the days of the later Antonines added his modest savings of six denarii (nos. 23-28) to the family estate. The final heir, perhaps a bit of a spendthrift, added but one debased coin to the accumulated pile—only to abandon the lot in the terror of the final days of Dura's existence. But this grows rapidly more improbable, and as there exist numerous evident objections (such, for instance, as the different stages of wear exhibited by the several groups) the whole somewhat amusing speculation had best be rejected without further comment.

¹¹The Excavations at Dura-Europos. Preliminary Report of Third Season, 1929-1930, pp. 163-4. New Haven, 1932. Numismatic Notes and Monographs. No. 49. Two Roman Hoards from Dura-Europos, p. 55.

DURA HOARD V









