

Regalianus, Dryantilla, and the Carnuntum Mint

Regalianus, briefly acclaimed as emperor by the Danubian legions in AD 260 or 261, is scarcely attested in the literary record, appearing primarily in a fleeting and unreliable mention in the *Historia Augusta*. His coinage, however—struck at the Pannonian capital of Carnuntum—not only confirms his historical existence but also offers insight into the political messaging of his regime. Unlike most third-century usurpers who emphasized military leadership and opposition to the sitting emperor Gallienus, Regalianus' coin types closely resemble official imperial issues. Notably, his wife Dryantilla appears prominently as *Augusta* alongside the AVGG legend—typically reserved for co-emperors. The coin types used, as well as the appearance of the empress, suggest a deliberate assertion of dynastic legitimacy and political stability rather than the militarized defiance characteristic of many other usurpers in this period.

Although Regalianus' brief reign has limited sustained scholarly engagement, recent numismatic discoveries—particularly those documented by Cristian Gazdac—have renewed interest in this usurper. Gazdac's work shows that Regalianus employed overstriking, repurposing earlier Severan *denarii* rather than minting debased *antoniniani*. This practice has important implications for understanding his regime's political strategy, as this paper aims to demonstrate. The choice to reuse higher-quality silver coins implies a concern for monetary stability and a desire to contrast his authority with the inflationary policies of Gallienus. Moreover, overstriking allows us to identify the original coin types, casting Regalianus as an active participant in shaping symbolic messages through numismatic imagery.

To give a couple of examples analyzed in this study: an overstruck *denarius* of Septimius Severus, Regalianus retains a few traditional imperial titles but deliberately omits *Parthicus*

Maximus, avoiding claims of military glory despite reports of Danubian victories in the *HA*.

Another case involves a *denarius* of Maximinus Thrax, whose original reverse featured Pax and whose obverse was replaced with a portrait of Dryantilla and Juno Regina. In my estimation, these alterations reflect more than cosmetics: they suggest a conscious effort to suppress martial imagery in favor of promoting dynastic legitimacy and provincial order. The Carnuntum mint, then, deliberately chose to change the original coin types to better reflect the administrative aims of the usurpation.

This paper reexamines Regalianus' coinage within the broader context of third-century imperial fragmentation. It argues that the Carnuntum mint reflects not a simple opportunistic military usurpation but as a complex claim to power articulated through dynastic and political imagery. Regalianus, and by extension his wife Dryantilla, emerge not as minor rebels, but as calculated political actors navigating the ideological terrain of a fractured empire.

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