

# SAN



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# THE SAECULARES COINAGE STRUCK TO COMMEMORATE THE COMPLETION OF ROME'S FIRST MILLENIUM

by  
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The one thousandth anniversary of the founding of Rome was elaborately celebrated by the ceremonies and games of the Ludi Saeculares held in the year A.D. 248. This celebration was a major event in the history of Rome and the high point of the reign of the Emperor, Philip I (the Arab), who commemorated it by striking an extensive series of coins bearing in their reverse legends the word "saeculares" or "saeculum". It is the purpose of this article to present the reader with a brief introduction to the centennial celebrations known as the Ludi Saeculares and the commemorative coinage of the thousandth anniversary, and to list in catalog form the coins belonging to this issue.



Figure 1 (Catalog coin #1). Reverse of AR Antoninianus of Philip I, struck by Officina I: SAECVLARES AVGG around male lion walking right.\*



Figure 2 (Catalog coin #23). Reverse of AR Antoninianus of Philip I struck by Officina V: SAECVLARES AVGG around stag with swept back antlers standing right. This piece and that portrayed in Figure 1 are illustrative of the various animal reverses struck in the names of Philip I, his wife, Octacila Severa, and his son, Philip II, to commemorate the 1000th Anniversary of the founding of Rome.

\*Note: All the coins illustrated in this article are Antoniniani struck at the mint in Rome in A.D. 247/248. All are approximately 23 mm. in diameter.

Misunderstanding has arisen around the celebrations known as the Ludi Saeculares. The Latin words literally mean, games or celebrations of an 100 year interval, yet in the Empire the period of separation of the Ludi Saeculares celebrated averaged only 44 years. Following the fifth Ludi Saeculares held in 17 B.C. only every other of the secular games was numbered. Unlike the numbered Ludi each of the un-numbered Ludi celebrated the passing of another centennial since the founding of Rome in 753 B.C. (a mythical date). The confusion has resulted when these discrepancies have been explained as being the result of certain emperors selecting to commemorate the Ludi Saeculares based on a date determined by the use of a 110 year saeculum established by Augustus, and other emperors using the traditional saeculum of 100 years. This explanation has long fostered the impression that all the Ludi Saeculares were the continuation of the same event. However, this view is, most probably, erroneous and in reality there were two distinct series of Ludi Saeculares, each determining its dates of celebration by using a length of saeculum different from the other and each measuring the time intervals from different points in the past.<sup>1</sup> These two series of Ludi Saeculares, the Sibylline and the Anniversary (my title), both struck commemorative coinage for certain Ludi. While this article deals only with the coinage of one of the Anniversary Ludi, some information as to the origin and dates of each of the two series of the Ludi Saeculares is necessary to allow the reader to see this particular event and coinage in their proper historical perspective.

Having derived from earlier Etruscan custom, the earliest known Ludi Saeculares (Sibylline) or Secular Games were those traditionally held every hundred years (one saeculum) to mark with ceremony, the intervals of an age which was considered to be a person's longest expected lifespan. Tradition has this event beginning in 456 B.C., but the first recorded celebration was in 249 B.C. by decree of the Sibylline Books to honor Dis Pater (Pluto) and Proserpine, the dieties of the underworld. A vow was made at that time that this celebration would be repeated every 100 years.<sup>2</sup> Later, this interval became extended to 110 years, but due to political events (civil war, etc.) even

1. See Seth W. Stevenson, *A Dictionary of Roman Coins*, B.A. Seaby, Ltd., London, 1964, pp. 524-525; Carl W.A. Carlson, "Ludi Saeculares Rites on the Roman Imperial Coinage (Part I)" in *SAN*, Vol. III, No. 1 (1971), p. 9 and note 8 (Carlson here cites I.B. Pighi, *De Ludis Saecularibus*, 2nd ed., Amsterdam, 1965, pp. 111-112); Michael Grant, *History of Rome*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1978, p. 10.
2. See Albert A. Trever, *History of Civilization*, Vol. II (The Roman World), Harcourt, Brace, New York, 1939, p. 322 notes 31-32; Oskar Seyffert, *Dictionary of Classical Antiquities*, Meridian Books, Cleveland and N.Y., 1966, p. 554; Stevenson, p. 524; Carlson, p. 11 note 1.

the 110 year cycle was not met on a regular basis. The next of the Sibylline series is believed to have been held in 146 B.C.<sup>3</sup> To introduce his new era, Augustus celebrated the supposedly fifth Ludi Saeculares in 17 B.C.<sup>4</sup> In A.D. 88 Domitian commemorated the sixth of the Sibylline saeculares.<sup>5</sup> Septimius Severus held the seventh Ludi Saeculares in A.D. 204 restoring the games to the proper year based on the date of the supposedly first celebration of this event (456 B.C.)<sup>6</sup> The numbered Ludi Saeculares (Sibylline) which had become one of Rome's greatest religious events was not held again, the rise of Christianity probably being the cause.

Primary to our purpose here are the Ludi Saeculares which are un-numbered and use a saecula of a hundred years starting from the mythical founding of Rome by Romulus and Remus in 753 B.C. Using this chronology, Claudius (perhaps to revive Augustus' "new era" theme), celebrated the 800th anniversary of Rome's founding on April 21, A.D. 47.<sup>7</sup> Antonius Pius continued this tradition by celebrating the 900th anniversary in A.D. 147.<sup>8</sup> The 1000th anniversary commemorated in A.D. 247, with which we are concerned, was probably the most magnificent celebration of this centennial anniversary series and was the last major celebration of the Ludi Saeculares.<sup>9</sup> Thereafter, the Anniversary Ludi decreased in importance and disappeared from history, apparently for the same reasons which ended the Sibylline Ludi.

By A.D. 247 the city which attributed its founding to twin brothers nursed by a she-wolf a thousand years earlier had truly come of age. Rome now prepared to celebrate her first millenium as the most important city of the western world. Set to begin on April 27, the actual celebrations had to be postponed to the end of the year due to the necessities of state, the Emperor Philip I, being away on a campaign against the barbarians; but with his return, the celebration of the Ludi Saeculares began.<sup>10</sup>

The actual religious celebrations commenced when purifying agents were distributed from the temples to the free populations of the city. Religious vigils were kept throughout the three days and nights of the festival. Barley, beans, wheat, pure white bulls, lambs and black she-goats were brought to the altars for sacrifice. Praises sung by children rang forth from the temples of Apollo, Diana, Juno, Jupiter and others. Whole animals along with the choicest agricultural produce were offered to the gods to solicit their favor at the beginning of this new era, so as to bring continued blessings upon the Roman people and the Empire.<sup>11</sup>

Yet the seriousness of the religious ceremonies was balanced by merriment and arranged entertainment. The 1000th Anniversary Ludi was highlighted by a splendid array of wild animals which had originally been collected for the intended triumph of Gordian III over the Persians. These were used by Philip I in magnificent displays and games put on in the Circus Maximus. This large collection of exotic wild beasts included: antelope, elephants, elk (moose), gazelles, giraffes, goats, hippopotami, wild horses, hyenas, leopards, lions, a rhinoceros, stags, tigers and wild asses.<sup>12</sup> It was these animals, collected for Gordian III, which, no doubt, inspired the many animal reverse types found on the commemorative coinage struck under Philip I.

During the years A.D. 247 and 248 the Saeculares coinage struck to commemorate the 1000th Anniversary of Rome included the following reverse inscriptions; SAECVLARES AVGG (the age of the Emperors), SAECVLVM NOVVM (the new age) and MILIARIVM SAECVLVM (the millenia). The series with animals as the reverse type shows at least eight different animals including the she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus, while the reverse architectural series illustrates various columns and temples.<sup>13</sup>

Struck in a wide range of denominations the series included the gold aureus, the silver antoninianus and quinarius, and the bronze sestertius, dupondius and as. Only the silver denarius of the period is not known in this large issue. Included also are issues of Otacilia Severa, Philip's wife, and Philip II, his eleven year old son who had been raised to the rank of Augustus.<sup>14</sup>

The mint at Rome striking the 1000th Anniversary coinage was apparently divided into six officina or workshops which are of much interest in that the eight animals illustrated were divided among them with Officina I striking only lions, II the she-wolf and lions, III gazelle and moose, IV hippopotamus, V stag, and VI antelopes. Also, generally speaking, the six officina were divided as to the royal personages shown on the obverse; Officinae I, II, V and VI minted for Philip I, Officina III minted for Philip II and Officina IV minted for Otacilia Severa.<sup>15</sup>

D.R. Walker in *The Metrology of the Roman Silver Coinage*,<sup>16</sup> lists the analysis of 17 antoniniani that are from this series. Using the average of the data from the tables the percentage of purity of the silver is 46.64 and the average weight is 4.22 grams. This is slightly higher than the mean given for all 24 antoniniani of this A.D. 247-248 period listed by Walker, which is 43.25 percent and 4.12 grams.

3. Seyffert, p. 524.

4. Trever, pp. 322-323; Grant, p. 271.

5. Carlson, p. 9 and note 3.

6. Anthony Birley, *Septimius Severus, the African Emperor*, Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y., 1972, pp. 224-225.

7. See Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars* (Claudius), Translated by Robert Graves, Folio Society, London, 1965, p. 195; Trever, p. 408; Stevenson, p. 525.

8. Stevenson, p. 55; Carlson, p. 9.

9. William Smith, *Classical Dictionary*, B.A. Seaby, Ltd., London, 1972, p. 562; Stevenson, p. 525.

10. H. Mattingly, E.A. Sydenham and C.H. Sutherland, (Eds.), *Roman Imperial Coinage* (Hereafter cited as *RIC*), Spink and Son, London, 1968, Vol. IV, Part III (Gordian III - Uranius Antoninus), p. 62.

11. See Seyffert, p. 554; Stevenson, p. 525; Trever, p. 323; Carlson, Part II in *SAN*, Vol. III, No. 2 (1971), p. 27; Stevenson, pp. 524-525; *RIC*, p. 62.

12. *RIC*, pp. 62-63.

13. *RIC*, pp. 62-63, 68-104.

14. *RIC*, pp. 62-63, 68-104.

15. See *RIC*, p. 70 notes 17 and 18, also p. 71.

16. D.R. Walker, *The Metrology of the Roman Silver Coinage*, Part III (From Pertinax to Uranius Antoninus), British Archaeological Reports (BAR), Supplementary Series #40, London, 1978, pp. 40-41.

## NOTES ON THE OFFICINAE

### Officina II

There are two major varieties in the She Wolf and Twins coinage. In two of the standard catalogue lists, Romulus and Remus are pictured as seated and reaching up to nurse (See *RIC*, #15 and *RSC*,<sup>17</sup> #178. The variety I have added shows the Twins standing to nurse (see #9 and Figure 3).



Figure 3 (Catalog coin #9). Reverse of AR antoninianus of Philip I struck by Officina II: SAEVLARES AVGG around she-wolf standing left nursing small twin boys (Romulus and Remus) who stand to reach her.

### Officina III & IV

A closer examination appears to be required of the sestertius of Otacilia Severa which is listed as having a goat or gazelle on the reverse. The coin which is catalogued as: *RIC* #201, Cohen<sup>18</sup> #66, and *HCC*,<sup>19</sup> #27 is described as a hybrid of Philip I. It would seem from a careful comparison of the animal portrayed on the reverse of *HCC*, #27 and the moose (once referred to as a goat of Philip II) shown on the reverse of *HCC*, #34 (see Plates 73 and 75 in *HCC*) that the animals are the same. Following the corrections made by John Twente of the cataloging error of the Philip II goat,<sup>20</sup> the hybrid listed therefore should be:

OTACILIA SEVERA, SESTERTIUS, REV: MOOSE,  
HYBRID OF PHILIP II.



Figure 4 (Catalog coin #12). Reverse of AR Antoninianus of Philip II struck by Officina III: SAEVLARES AVGG around young moose with short vertical antlers standing left (Previously listed as a goat, see *RIC* #224).

### Officina VI

There appears to be three distinct animals in the work from this officina. *RIC*, Vol. IV, Part III, on page 70 lists: an antelope (#22), a goat or hind (#23) and a stag (#19).

#### Subnote:

The photo of *RIC* #21 (*RIC* plate 6, #12) shows a beast with a long swept back set of horns. *RSC* Vol. IV, cross references this coin as being the same as *RSC* #189, but the photo of *RSC* #189 shows a taller looking animal with horns held at about a 45° to 50° angle. A similar specimen is listed (#27) in this article.

The question then arises as to what is the almost straight up horned, long tailed beast described in the footnote for *RIC* #23 (bottom of page 70). It is this author's suggestion that this is not a stag, as described in the above mentioned footnote, but is another variety of antelope, in this case the genus *ORYX* (see #30 and Figure 5).

John Twente<sup>21</sup> suggests the other type of antelope might be the *ADDAX*. Following with this line and what is seen in the coinage, it appears that this officina possibly portrayed three members of the antelope family, since a hind has no horns and the beast is taller than a goat.



Figure 5 (Catalog coin #30). Reverse of AR antoninianus of Philip I struck by Officina VI: SAEVLARES AVGG around oryx with tall vertical horns standing left.



Figure 6. (Catalog coin #35). Reverse of antoninianus of Philip I: SAEVLARES AVGG around tall column inscribed COS III.

17. H.A. Seaby, *Roman Silver Coins*, Vol. IV (Gordian III to Postumus), B.A. Seaby, London, 1971.
18. H. Cohen, *Description Historique des Monnaies frappées sous l'Empire Romain*, 8 vols., 1880-1892 (Reprint).
19. A.S. Robertson, *Roman Imperial Coins in the Hunter Coin Cabinet*, 3 vols., Glasgow, 1962-77.
20. John W. Twente, "Getting Junior's Goat" in *SAN*, Vol. IX, No. 4 (1978), pp. 56-58.
21. Twente, p. 56.

## KEY TO THE FOLLOWING CHART

| OBVERSE PORTRAIT     | DENOMINATION       | OBVERSE LEGEND                  | EXERGUE             | REFERENCES   | ILLUSTRATIONS                                  |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|--|--|
| PI - Philip I        | AU - Aureus        | a - IMP PHILIPPVS AVG           | Officina (workshop) | <i>HCC - Roman Imperial Coins in the Hunter Coin Cabinet</i> | + - Photograph of coin appears in this article |
| PII - Philip II      | Ant - Antoninianus | b - IMP. M. IVL PHILIPPVS AVGG. | Mark I through VI   |  |  |
| OS - Otacilia Severa | As - AS            |                                 |                     | <i>RIC - Roman Imperial Coinage, Vol. IV, Part III</i>       | ° - Coin is illustrated in reference cited     |
|                      | Dp - Dupondius     | c - OCTACIL SEVERA AVG.         |                     |  |  |
|                      | S - Sestertius     | d - MARCIA OTACIL SEVERA AVG.   |                     | <i>RSC - Roman Silver Coins, Vol. IV (B.A. Seaby)</i>        |  |
|                      | Q - Quinarius      |                                 |                     |  |  |

## LIST OF ALL KNOWN COINS IN MILLENIUM COMMEMORATIVE SERIES (REV: SAECVLARES AVGG. UNLESS NOTED)

| NO. | REVERSE           | DIRECTION | OBVERSE | DENOMINATION | LEGEND | EXERGUE | MINT | RIC   | COHEN | OTHER    |
|-----|-------------------|-----------|---------|--------------|--------|---------|------|-------|-------|----------|
| 1+  | LION              | R         | PI      | Ant          | a      | I       | Rome | 12°   | 173   | RSC 173° |
| 2   |                   | R         | PI      | Ant          | a      | *       | R    | 12*   |       | RSC 173a |
| 3   |                   | R         | PI      | Ant          | a      | II      | R    | 12*   |       | RSC 175  |
| 4   |                   | L         | PI      | Ant          | a      | I       | R    | 13    | 172   | RSC 172  |
| 5   |                   | R         | PI      | S            | b      |         | R    | 158   | 176   |          |
| 6   | Lions             | R & L     | PI      | Au           | a      |         | R    | 14    |       |          |
| 7   | SHE WOLF          | R         | PI      | Ant          | a      | II      | R    | 16    | 177   | RSC 177  |
| 8   | (Twins Seated)    | L         | PI      | Ant          | a      | II      | R    | 15°   | 178   | RSC 178° |
| 9+  | (Twins Standing)  | L         | PI      | Ant          | a      | II      | R    |       |       |          |
| 10  |                   | L         | PI      | S            | b      |         | R    | 159   | 179   |          |
| 11  | GAZELLE           | L         | PI      | Ant          | a      | III     | R    | 17    | 186   | RSC 180a |
| 12+ | MOOSE             | L         | PII     | Ant          | a      | III     | R    | 224°  | 72    | RSC 72   |
| 13  |                   | L         | PII     | S            | b      |         | R    | 264a  | 73    | HCC 34°  |
| 14  |                   | L         | PII     | As           | b      |         | R    | 264b  | 74    |          |
| 15  |                   | L         | OS      | S            | d      |         | R    | 201°  | 66    | HCC 27°  |
| 16  | HIPPO (Head Down) | R         | OS      | Au           | c      |         | R    | 116a° | 62    |          |
| 17  | (Head Down)       | R         | OS      | Ant          | c      | III     | R    | 116b1 | 63    | RSC 63°  |
| 18+ | (Head Looking Up) | R         | OS      | Ant          | c      | III     | R    | 116b2 | 64    | RSC 64   |
| 19  |                   | R         | PI      | Ant          | a      | III     | R    | 111   | 181   | RSC 181  |
| 20  |                   | R         | PII     | S            | b      |         | R    | 272   | 75    |          |
| 21  |                   | R         | OS      | S            | d      |         | R    | 200a  | 65    |          |
| 22  |                   | R         | OS      | As           | d      |         | R    | 200b  |       |          |

| NO. | REVERSE                               | DIRECTION | OBVERSE | DENOMINATION | LEGEND | EXERGUE  | MINT | RIC             | COHEN | OTHER                |
|-----|---------------------------------------|-----------|---------|--------------|--------|----------|------|-----------------|-------|----------------------|
| 23+ | STAG                                  | R         | PI      | Ant          | a      | V or U   | R    | 19 <sup>o</sup> | 182   | RSC 182              |
| 24  |                                       | L         | PI      | Ant          | a      | V or U   | R    | 20 <sup>o</sup> | 185   | RSC 185              |
| 25  |                                       | R         | PI & II | S            | b      |          | R    | 160a            | 183   |                      |
| 26  |                                       | R         | PI & II | As           | b      |          | R    | 160b            | 184   |                      |
| 27  | ANTELOPE<br>(Horns 45 <sup>o</sup> +) | R         | PI      | Ant          | a      | VI or UI | R    | 22              | 188   | RSC 188              |
| 28  |                                       | L         | PI      | Ant          | a      | III      | R    | 18              |       | RSC 180b             |
| 29  | (Horns swept<br>over back)            | L         | PI      | Ant          | a      | VI or UI | R    | 21 <sup>o</sup> | 189   | RSC 189 <sup>o</sup> |
| 30+ | (ORYX horns<br>straight up)           | L         | PI      | Ant          | a      | VI or UI | R    |                 |       |                      |
| 31  |                                       | L         | PI      | S            | b      |          | R    | 161             | 190   |                      |
| 32  |                                       | L         | PI      | Ant          | a      | VI or UI | R    | 23              | 187   | RSC 187              |

| NO. | REVERSE                  | OBVERSE | DENOMINATION | LEGEND | MINT | RIC               | COHEN | OTHER   |
|-----|--------------------------|---------|--------------|--------|------|-------------------|-------|---------|
| 33  | COLUMN SAECVLARES AVGG.  | PI      | Au           | a      | Rome | 24a               | 191   |         |
| 34+ | Low Column               | PI      | Ant          | a      | R    | 24c <sup>o</sup>  | 193   | RSC 193 |
| 35+ | Tall Column              | PI      | Ant          | b      | R    | 107               | 194   | RSC 194 |
| 36  | Low Column               | PI      | Q            | a      | R    | 24b               | 192   | RSC 192 |
| 37  |                          | PI      | S            | b      | R    | 162a              | 195   |         |
| 38  |                          | PI      | Dp           | b      | R    | 162c              | 197   |         |
| 39  |                          | PI      | As           | b      | R    | 162b              | 196   |         |
| 40  |                          | PII     | Au           | a      | R    | 225               | 77    |         |
| 41  |                          | PII     | S            | a      | R    | 265a <sup>o</sup> | 78    |         |
| 42  |                          | PII     | Dp           | a      | R    | 265c              | 80    |         |
| 43  |                          | PII     | As           | a      | R    | 265b              | 79    |         |
| 44  |                          | OS      | Au           | c      | R    | 117               | 67    |         |
| 45  |                          | OS      | S            | d      | R    | 202a              | 68    |         |
| 46  |                          | OS      | Dp           | d      | R    | 202c              | 70    |         |
| 47  |                          | OS      | Dp           | c      | R    | 202d              |       |         |
| 48  |                          | OS      | As           | d      | R    | 202b              | 69    |         |
|     | COLUMN MILIARVM SAECVLVM |         |              |        |      |                   |       |         |
| 49  |                          | PI      | S            | b      | R    | 157a              | 95    |         |
| 50  |                          | PI      | Dp           | b      | R    | 157c              | 97    |         |
| 51  |                          | PI      | S            | b      | R    | 157b              | 96    |         |

|                               |                     |     |     |   |         |                  |     |         |  |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|-----|-----|---|---------|------------------|-----|---------|--|
| 52                            |                     | PII | S   | b | R       | 271              | 20  |         |  |
| 53                            |                     | OS  | S   | d | R       | 199a             | 25  |         |  |
| 54                            |                     | OS  | Dp  | d | R       | 199c             | 27  |         |  |
| 55                            |                     | OS  | As  | d | R       | 199b             | 26  |         |  |
| <b>TEMPLE SAECVLARES AVGG</b> |                     |     |     |   |         |                  |     |         |  |
| 56                            | Hexastyle           | PI  | S   | b | R       | 163a             | 202 |         |  |
| 57                            | Hexastyle           | PI  | Dp  | b | R       | 163c             | 204 |         |  |
| 58                            | Hexastyle           | PI  | As  | b | R       | 163b             | 203 |         |  |
| 59                            | Octostyle           | PI  | S   | b | R       | 164              | 201 |         |  |
| <b>TEMPLE SAECVLVM NOVVM</b>  |                     |     |     |   |         |                  |     |         |  |
| 60                            | Hexastyle           | PI  | Au  | a | R       | 25a              |     |         |  |
| 61                            | Hexastyle           | PI  | Ant | a | R       | 25b <sup>0</sup> | 198 | RSC 198 |  |
| 62                            | (Philip Bust Left)  | PI  | Ant | b | Antioch | 86a              | 200 | RSC 200 |  |
| 63                            | (Philip Bust Right) | PI  | Ant | b | A       | 86b              |     |         |  |
| 64                            |                     | PI  | Ant | b | R       | 108              | 199 | RSC 199 |  |
| 65                            |                     | OS  | Au  | c | R       | 118 <sup>0</sup> | 71  |         |  |



Figure 7. (Catalog coin #18). AR antoninianus of Otacilia Severa struck by Officina IV (III): Obv. OCTACIL SEVERA AVG around diademed and draped bust of Empress facing right and resting on crescent. Rev. SAECVLARES AVGG around hippopotamus walking to right.



Figure 8. Obverse of AR antoninianus of Philip II: IMP PHILIPPVS AVG around radiate draped and cuirassed bust of young co-emperor. As both Philip I and his son, Philip II, used the same obverse legends, where other criteria are lacking, the coins of the son can usually be determined by his youthful portrait as illustrated on this coin obverse (compare with obverse portrait of Philip I in Figure 9).



Figure 9. (Catalog coin # 34). AR antoninianus of Philip I: Obv. IMP PHILIPPVS AVG around radiate draped and cuirassed bust of Emperor right. Rev. SAECVLARES AVGG around low column inscribed COS III (compare with the less common tall column pictured in Figure 6.).

# SAN



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# GETTING JUNIOR'S GOAT

A zoologist considers the animal coins of Philip's secular games

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According to the anonymous Augustan biographer<sup>1</sup>: "There were thirty-two elephants at Rome in the time of Gordian (of which he himself had sent twelve and Alexander ten), ten elk, ten tigers, sixty tame lions, thirty tame leopards, ten *belbi* or hyenas, a thousand pairs of imperial gladiators, six hippopotami, one rhinoceros, ten wild lions, ten giraffes, twenty wild asses, forty wild horses and various other animals of this nature without number. All of these Philip presented or slew at the secular games. All these animals, wild, tame, and savage, Gordian intended for a Persian triumph, but his official vow proved of no avail, for Philip presented all of them at the secular games, consisting of both gladiatorial spectacles and races in the Circus, that were celebrated on the thousandth anniversary of the founding of the City, when he and his son were consuls."

Of Gordian's menagerie, only a few of the above-mentioned animals were commemorated on the coinage of Philip I, II and Otacilia as secular games animals (via the legend SAECVLARES AVGG).<sup>2</sup> The officina of issue is indicated on the exergue of the antoniniani by Roman numerals. Bronze coins lack this designation.

Typically, the animals of both the silver and bronze issues are identified as follows (the officina numeration in parentheses): (I) lion, Philip I; (II) wolf and twins, Philip I; (III) goat, Philip II; (IIII) hippopotamus, Otacilia; (V) or (U) stag, Philip I; and (VI) or (UI) antelope, Philip I.<sup>3</sup> The problem of the specific determination of the identity of the animals shown on these coins has not been subject to critical appraisal by modern cataloguers.

Accurate identification of animals from artistic representations, however, is difficult, and a combination of subjective and scientific processes must be employed to make these tentative determinations. The lion is a lion, whether Asiatic or African is moot; the wolf is a wolf, by virtue of the twins; and the hippopotamus is just that (although it appears that a baby hippopotamus may have served as a model for some antoniniani). The stag is faithfully represented as such, obviously the European red deer, *Cervus elephas*. The North American form, *Cervus canadensis*, is known in North America as the wapiti, or, more commonly, elk. "Common-naming" is confusing since an elk to Europeans is what North Americans call a moose, and conversely, what Americans call a moose (*Alces alces*) is the animal Europeans refer to as an elk

(also *Alces alces*). For our purpose, here, *Alces* refers to that largest palmated-antlered cervid called an elk or moose depending upon the country of origin. The Greek *alce* is translated as elk.

The identity of the antelope is uncertain; many species could have been involved in the games. The sculpturing, positioning and curvature of the horns on most coins suggests possibly the Addax antelope (*Addax nasomaculatus*) which formerly ranged throughout the Sahara desert.<sup>4</sup> Whether different interpretations of the same species, or whether several species were depicted, to account for apparent differences of the coins, I cannot determine. The degree of artistic excellence in respect to accurate representation of the animals throughout the secular games series ranges from lifelike to caricature (Figures 1 and 2).



Fig. 1. Reverse of a sestertius of Philip II, with a realistic figure of a young moose in springtime, when horns are in velvet.



Fig. 2. Reverse of an antoninianus of Philip II from a poorly executed die. Except for the throat bell and broad nose, the animal might be mistaken for a deer, but never a goat. The British Museum has a similar specimen possibly from the same die.

1. *Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Gord 33* (translated by D. Magie in the Loeb Classical Library. Harvard University Press).  
2. L.A. Naughton, *Secular games and animals* (In Catalogue XXXIX Spring, 1976, Alex G. Malloy, New York), p. 3  
3. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

4. E. P. Walker et al., *Mammals of the World, Volume II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1964), p. 1444.



Fig. 1a & 1b. Sestertius reverses of Philip II, which clearly show a moose with forked horns, as they appear in springtime.

The animal that modern cataloguers refer to as a goat remains. How this creature became a goat in the eyes of Renaissance numismatists is amazing to me. Unquestionably, well executed dies (Fig. 1a and 1b) show this animal to be none other than *Alces alces*, our elk-moose.

Line drawings, presumably taken directly from sestertii of the Jacob Muselli collection,<sup>5</sup> show an animal that clearly is a goat, replete with chin whiskers, goat's horns and a goat's body (Fig. 3). One of these animals is even referred to as "Capra Amalthaea". I have not seen photographs or specimens of the coins from that collection, but I have seen no other sestertii of Philip II that even closely resemble a goat as do these drawings. It is probable that the chronicler of the Muselli Collection was inspired to bequeath caprine characteristics to *Alces* by earlier interpretation.<sup>6</sup>

The *Alces* on some antoniniani appears to be more goat-like than those on sestertii in that the bell appears to hang from the jaw rather than beneath the throat; this tends to give the effect of the goatee of the goat. One reverse die carried a die break that made it appear that whiskers reached from the jaw to near the ground.



Fig. 3. Line drawings from the 1751 publication of the Jacob Muselli Collection. No coins supporting these apparent distortions on the part of the illustrator have been found.

Smyth,<sup>7</sup> writing in 1834, describes the reverse of the Philip II sestertius under consideration as follows:

"Reverse. SAECVLARES AVGG. (Saeculares Augustorum). On the exergum S.C. A strange beast of the cervine tribe, which medalists have termed *Alces*, or Elk, though it has not the very high shoulders, nor large head of the *Cervus Alces*: its horns, instead of dilating to a broad palmated form, are small and erect; and it has a long tuft of hair pendant from the throat-not appended to the under-jaw as Pedrusi has figured it — and which evidently is not the caruncle alluded to by Linnaeus. The Alce, described in the Boeoties of Pausanias, as being between a stag and a camel, is not without some analogy to the creature under consideration; but it is not to be recognized in that mentioned by Julius Caesar, "De Bello Gallico," L. VI, cap 27, — nor in the Alce or Bonasus of Pliny, nor in the Equicervus of the Scholiast. From the striking accuracy with which lions, elephants, hippopotami, antelopes, and deer are delineated upon the medals of Philip, the faithfulness of this representation cannot be questioned; and it is much to be regretted that we have not yet found more of the rarer quadrupeds, which were exhibited on that great occasion, A reverse with the Camelopard, would have stifled the ebullitions of ignorance vented, less than 50 years ago, when Vaillant brought the skins of several of those animals, from Africa, — one of which was examined under a magnifying lens, to detect whether it was a composition. (These considerations made me the more regret the medals lost by the

5. *Numismata Antiqua a Iacobo Musellio Collecta et Edita* (Verona: 1751). Table CCIII.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 256.

7. W. H. Smyth, *Descriptive Catalogue of a Cabinet of Roman Imperial Large-Brass Medals* (Bedford: 1834), p. 273.

accident mentioned at p. 228, as there were possibly some *inedita* destroyed). It is well known that there were 10 Camelopards exhibited at Philip's Games. The remark, therefore, in the Philosophical Transactions for 1770, p. 27, of none having been seen in Europe since Julius Caesar's time, is erroneous. Several of the deer tribe unknown to Moderns, but described by Ancients, have been lately discovered in Ethiopia, by Messrs, Ehrenberg and Hemprich, the German naturalists. In the order of Ruminants, they say—"their discoveries were more especially brilliant, and furnished ample materials for the illustration of data afforded by the Ancients."

I have been unable to locate the sources of the medallists referred to by Smyth as recognizers of the animal in question as an *Alces*. Obviously, Smyth never even considered the animal on this sestertius to be a goat. Instead, he too is tempted to call it what it obviously is, an *Alces*. However, Smyth is over-cautious, speculating in a field not of his specialty, and instead subscribes to a theory that it may be an animal of unknown species. His footnote<sup>8</sup> alluding to the discovery by German naturalists of deer in Ethiopia obviously colored his thinking. The caution he exhibited is justifiable in light of the spectacular discoveries of new species of animals throughout the world about the time of his writing. We now know that Smyth's zoological hesitancy was unnecessary in respect to the German naturalists' finds which were in error. No deer, either recent or extinct, are known from Africa.<sup>9 10</sup>

Features which distinguished the *Alces*, as such, on the coins of Philip II include the position of the skin flap, or bell, usually from the throat, the large and bulbous nose, the long legs with huge feet, and the general shape of the body.



Fig. 4. Reverse of a SAECULARES AVGG antoninianus of Philip II, from the collection of the British Museum. Note the large feet.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 274.

9. G. G. Simpson, "The Principles of Classification and a Classification of Mammals." *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History*, Volume 85. New York: 1945. p. 152.

10. P. J. Darlington, Jr., *Zoogeography: The Geographical Distribution of Animals* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1957), p. 355.

Probably the confusion as to the identity of the animal actually stemmed from the nature of the antlers of the figured animals. Had the animal models at the secular games possessed the spectacular, palmated and majestic spread of the mature male *Alces* of late autumn there would have been no problem in respect to recognition. The coins show, instead, small, upright projections with just a hint of palmation. These would appear to represent one or two year old males, in velvet. Animals of this age progress little beyond the semi-palmate, two tined condition, which appears on the animals on the coins of Philip II. It seems likely that such young, velvety animals were relatively accurately represented as they appeared to the spectators at the time of the games in April, 248 A.D.<sup>11</sup> Their identity probably was well known by their exhibitors and the confusion lies in the modern cataloguers' perpetuation of an earlier error.<sup>12</sup>

11. I. B. Pighi, *De Ludis Saecularibus populi Romani Quiritium*. (Amsterdam: 1965). p. 88
12. The contemporary discovery of the identity of the animal in question was first made by my daughter Cricket Twente who, upon receiving the coin shown in Figure 1a as a gift remarked: "Why this is a moose." I am indebted to Dr. H. Frank MacInnis who originally stated the problem in respect to early disputes as to the species involved (*Coin World*, February 11, 1976. p. 20). It was he, in gracious correspondence, who pointed me towards that most pertinent Smyth reference.<sup>7</sup> Professor Robert J. Rowland, Jr. translated the appropriate aspects of Pighi, <sup>11</sup> made valuable suggestions in respect to the sources of historical importance to this paper, and criticized the manuscript in rough draft. The photographs were made by Charles Jorgenson. Any errors are completely of my own making.

#### Editor's Note

*With this article Dr. Twente brings to light another example of an error made by some numismatic author or cataloguer, perhaps several hundred years ago, which has been copied by author after author without question down to the present day. We feel that there are too many errors in our standard references and that it is time for numismatic cataloguers and authors to do more research toward producing corrective revisions rather than merely copying what previous authors have written. I did find one recently published book where the author had evidently recognized that the animal in question was definitely not a goat and had called it a deer.*

*The more common errors are in the inclusive dates of the various coinage series. The estimates of beginning and ending dates, which were made at a time when insufficient data was available to make an accurate determination still persist in catalogues and references, even though recent detailed archaeological and hoard data proves them wrong by many years. Members who have corrective evidence are encouraged to make their findings known through the pages of SAN.*

