Introduction: Imperial and Aristocratic Largesse in Late Antiquity

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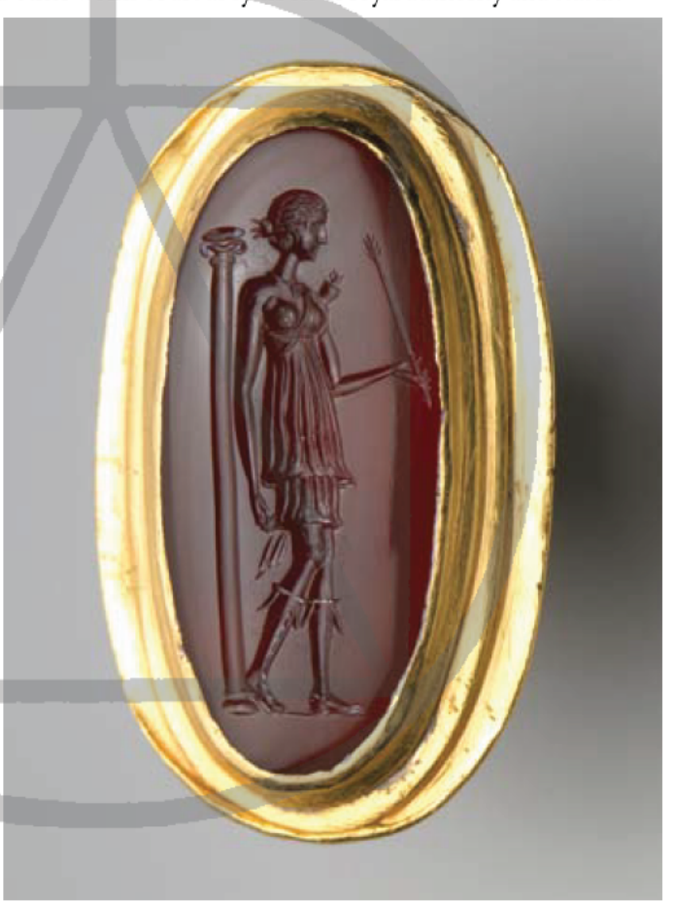
Wealth and Luxury Come to Rome

The enormous wealth attained by the Greeks after the conquests of Alexander the Great in the fourth century BC spurred a great interest in luxurious and frequently ostentatious works of art, many of which were created under the patronage of the newly created kings who divided Alexander's vast empire stretching from Greece to northern India. Gold and silver, gemstones, ivory, and other exotic materials were highly valued and fashioned into beautiful objects, including coins and medallions, plates and cups, personal seals and cameos, miniature sculpture, and all manner of jewelry. Alexander himself allowed only one man, his court engraver, Pyrgoteles, to carve gems with the royal portrait, and surviving gems of the Hellenistic era signed by the artists who carved them demonstrate the high regard for gem engravers in the royal courts.[1] The delicate quality of the jewelry discovered in Macedonian tombs of the late fourth and third centuries BC attest to the newly acquired wealth of Greece, and the fashions of the Macedonian royal court quickly spread throughout Alexander's fragmented empire. Alexander's general Ptolemy and his heirs, who ruled Egypt until the Roman conquest, were especially famous for their luxurious tastes, and it was these rulers more than any others who established the custom of employing precious jewelry, engraved gems and cameos, silver and gold vessels, and other works of art as symbols of royal authority and status.

In contrast, the Romans, if we are to believe their moralizing writers, such as Livy and Pliny the Elder, resisted the temptations of luxury until their conquest of Greece in the second century BC but then succumbed to the corrupting influence of foreign wealth. Pliny lamented that "it was conquered Asia which first sent luxury to Italy."[2] He specifically noted the craze for engraved silver plate in Rome which followed the defeat of the Syrian King Antiochos III in 189 BC by the Roman general Scipio, who returned with an enormous quantity of booty. More riches would follow with the conquest of Macedonia in 168 BC and Pompey's defeat of the wealthy King Mithridates the Great in 61 BC. Pliny writes, "It was the victory of Pompey, however, that first inclined our taste toward pearls and gems, just as that of L. Scipio and Cn. Manlius had turned it toward engraved silver."[3] Mithridates himself



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was a collector of gems, and his collection was brought to Rome and displayed on the Capitoline. Many Romans were inspired by this display of wealth, including Julius Caesar, who accumulated a large number of gems, which he dedicated in the temple of Venus Genetrix in Rome.[4]

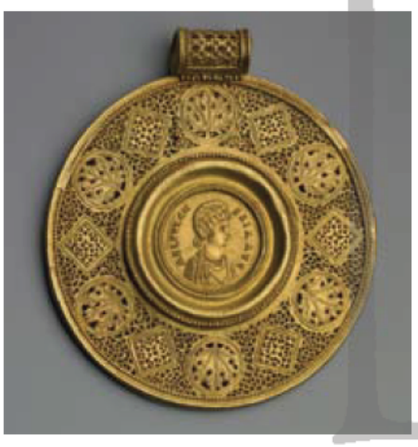
The Romans, however, had traditionally assigned rings a more formal function, reflecting the highly regulated social structure of their society. During the years of the Roman Republic, the gold ring was a sign of office, a custom that may have been borrowed from the Etruscans.[5] Envoys on missions of state wore gold rings but relinquished them on their return to Rome.[6] In the city of Rome, ownership of gold was discouraged. Men usually wore rings made of iron, and only citizens of the highest social and political class could display a ring of gold. In the fourth century BC, only those who had been consul (*nobiles*) were allowed a gold ring.[7] This right was then extended to the equestrian class (*ordo equester*), which ranked just below the senatorial class.[8] At the time of the Third Punic War, in the mid-second century BC, military tribunes were allowed to wear gold rings, an indication of the special privileges for the army that would continue in imperial times,[9] although it was not until AD 197, in the time of the emperor Septimius Severus, that all soldiers were allowed to wear gold rings.[10] By the end of the Republic, officials could bestow the gold ring on individuals of lower class, but many traditionalists disapproved.

The use of rings and other types of jewelry, especially earrings, necklaces, pendants, and bracelets, became increasingly widespread among Roman men and women during the early years of the empire, no doubt an indication of wealth but seldom of official status. Even the newly rich could own quantities of gold jewelry. The conspicuous display of wealth was ridiculed by some Roman writers, such as the first-century satirist Petronius in his *Satyricon*, in which the excesses of the wealthy former slave Trimalchio and his wife Fortunata are parodied. Trimalchio, referring to his wife's solid gold bracelets, anklets, and hair net, remarks, "Look at the woman's fetters...she must have six and half pounds on her!"[11] Large amounts of personal jewelry have, in fact, been discovered, notably in the excavations of the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum buried by the volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79, but a good amount of jewelry has been found in all parts of the empire, from Britain to Syria. In addition to jewelry, wealthy households also accumulated silver plate, partly for display at banquets but also as a store of wealth. Many silver treasures, too, have been discovered.

The Emperor's Largesse and Aristocratic Gift-Giving

In 86 BC, when King Ptolemy IX presented the Roman general Lucullus with a gold ring set with an emerald engraved with the king's portrait, Lucullus accepted the gift only with reluctance,[12] but such marks of royal status soon appealed to the new rulers of the Roman Empire. Like their royal Greek predecessors, the Roman emperors presented money, jewelry, silver plate, and other luxury objects as gifts on ceremonial occasions, a practice that became increasingly institutionalized as time went on. The first Roman emperor, Augustus (27 BC-AD 14), was certainly influenced by Ptolemaic royal tradition in distributing gems and cameos cut with his own image, as well as portraits of members of the imperial family. Pliny refers to individuals close to the Emperor Claudius (AD 41-54) wearing gold rings engraved with the emperor's portrait as symbols of their special status.[13] Many of these works were produced by artists associated with the imperial court, such as the Greek engraver Dioskourides, who was mentioned by several contemporary Roman writers and a number of whose signed gems and cameos survive.[14] These gems would presumably have been distributed as gifts to members of prominent Roman families, high officials, and military officers, although the details of such distributions at this date are unknown. The tradition continued throughout the imperial period, as shown by the remarkable cameo plaque in the Ferrell collection (cat. 48) depicting the emperor Marcus Aurelius receiving his co-emperor Lucius Verus on the occasion of the victory over the Parthians in AD 166, a gift that could only have been presented

to an individual of extraordinarily high status. Such gifts were especially popular under the Severan emperors in the late second and early third centuries. The superb cameo portraits of Septimius Severus and his empress Julia Domna, set in a gold pendant (cat. 50), is one of the finest surviving examples of such an imperial presentation piece.



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Another tradition begun by Augustus (although rare until the time of Hadrian) and continued into early Byzantine times was the presentation of medallions in gold, silver, and bronze bearing the portrait of the emperor and images commemorating any number of celebratory occasions. Presentations were often made on the New Year, when the emperor assumed his various titles (receiving the office of consul or the tribunican power), renewed his public vows, and celebrated the anniversary of his accession. The medallions were struck by the imperial mint, at first only at Rome but by the beginning of the fourth century at a variety of other cities. The sizes of the medallions, issued in various multiples of the standard denominations of coins, indicated the importance or social rank of the recipient. Inscriptions sometimes provide clues to who the recipient may have been, such as the fourth century medallions intended as gifts to senators, knights, and military officers.[15]

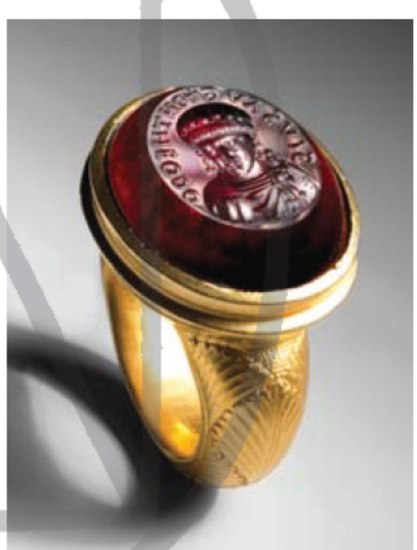
Those who received gold medallions often chose to display them by setting them in gold mounts and wearing them as pendants on necklaces. For example, an enormous 10-aurei medallion of Gordian III mounted in a gold pendant and placed on a fine gold chain commemorated the emperor's crossing of the Hellespont on his way to fight the Sasanian Persians in AD 242.[16] A gold medallion in the Ferrell collection (cat. 67) dating from the reign of Gallienus (AD 253-268) addressed a more mundane concern and depicts the three *Monetae*, personifications of money itself, perhaps to reassure the people that the imperial currency was sound. A mounted coin also in the Ferrell collection (cat. 68), although not properly a medallion, served a similarly official function, as a payment to an army officer who served under Emperor Diocletian around the year AD 286. Similarly, the use of gold coins in rings (cat. 40-41), a common practice in the late third and early fourth centuries, may also have been a fashion favored by military officers.

In the Constantinian period (AD 307-363), gold medallions were set in superb openwork (*opus interrasile*) mounts and worn on necklaces, the finest surviving examples being those now divided between museums in London, Paris, Washington, and Cleveland, all of which were discovered in a single hoard in Libya.[17] The quality of the gold work suggests they are products of an imperial workshop in Constantinople, and they were likely distributed under imperial authority as gifts in this finished form. The medallions in the Ferrell collection depicting Theodosius I (AD 379-395) and Aelia Pulcheria (AD 399-453) (cat. 71-72) continued the Constantinian tradition and are similarly set in openwork mounts of the finest quality. Similarly mounted medallions of Honorius (now in Berlin) and Theodosius I (in Washington) were included in a hoard of jewelry discovered at Assiut in Egypt, which must have belonged to a Byzantine woman of considerable status.[18] The tradition continued well into the sixth and seventh centuries. A medallion of Emperor Justinian (AD 527-565) was mounted in an openwork pendant discovered in Syria,[19] and four large medallions of the emperor Maurice Tiberius (AD 582-602), along with thirteen coins, were set in a remarkable gold belt discovered in a treasure of jewelry and silver plate on the island of Cyprus, no doubt once the property of a high-ranking Byzantine official.[20]

By the beginning of the fourth century, imperial gift-giving had acquired a considerable bureaucracy. Gold and silver medallions were produced at several cities throughout the empire, including Antioch,

Thessalonica, Aquileia, and Trier, and these workshops, in addition to others located in Cologne, Naissus, Nicomedia, Ephesos, and elsewhere, also were charged with the production and distribution of gold and silver ingots and silver plate.[21] The Count of the Sacred Largesses (*comes sacrae largitiones*) and his office were responsible for these precious metal objects, as well as for the distribution, on behalf of the emperor, of other luxury items, such as jewelry, ivory diptychs, and engraved glass vessels.[22] Surviving material, most notably inscribed silver vessels, provide evidence for such imperial largesse. Silver bowls and plates record, for example, the twentieth anniversary (*vicennalia*) of the rein of Emperor Galerius in AD 311, the tenth anniversary of the public vows (*votae*) of Licinius, the twentieth anniversary of the public vows of Constantius II, the tenth anniversary (*decennalia*) of the accession of Constans in AD 342, and an official largesse (*largitio*) of Emperor Valentian I or II.[23] A silver bowl in the Ferrell collection (cat. 129) is inscribed with the name of Emperor Zeno (AD 474-491) and must also have served as imperial *largitio*.

The distribution of gold and silver plate continued into the early Byzantine period, although few of these objects have survived. The gifts presented during the consular celebrations of Justin II on January 1, AD 566, are described in detail by his court poet, Corippus.[24] Each group of men, according to rank beginning with the senators, stepped forward and received gold and silver coins and objects. Corippus also describes gold plates decorated with scenes honoring the deeds of Justin's predecessor, Justinian.[25] Although it is a matter of some conjecture, the remarkable group of nine silver plates from the Cyprus treasure portraying scenes from the life of King David may have served as allusions to the triumphs of Emperor Heraclius (AD 610-641) and been objects of imperial largesse, especially in view of their presence in a hoard with imperial gold medallions.[26] Gems, too, appear to have been presented as gifts, including the large sapphire once in the Trivulzio collection in Milan, which is engraved with a scene of Emperor Constantius II hunting a boar on the grounds of his imperial villa at Caesarea in Cappadocia.[27] An enormous sardonyx intaglio now in Saint Petersburg depicts the investiture of a young prince by two senior emperors.[28] The exceptionally fine garnet intaglio engraved with the portrait and name of Emperor Theodosius II (AD 401-450) in the Ferrell collection (cat. 47) must also have been a gift to someone of the highest status.



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Gift-giving was not confined to the emperor and the imperial bureaucracy but was also considered a duty of members of the senatorial class on becoming consul or assuming other high office.[29] Such gifts, as well as presenting games for the public, were made at their own expense and did not involve the office of the *sacrae largitiones*, although no doubt the same workshops were employed. The usual gifts were ivory diptychs carved with the image of the consul, a number of which survive, and silver bowls, dishes, and spoons. Engraved and inscribed spoons were presented by Eusebius, who was consul in AD 347 or 359.[30] A silver dish commemorating the consulship of Flavius Ardaburius Aspar and his son in AD 434 is in Florence.[31] Letters of the prominent senator Symmachus record that he presented his friends an ivory diptych and a silver bowl weighing two pounds on the occasion of his son's holding the office of quaestor and presenting games in AD 393 and again for his praetorian games in 401. In the same year, AD 401, the consul Tatianus also is known to have presented diptychs and silver bowls.[32] A more remarkable gift is the silver plate now in Madrid depicting the investiture of an unnamed official before the Emperor Theodosius I on the occasion of his *decennalia* in AD 388.[33] A similar composition appears on the fragment of an engraved glass dish from Rome, which

honors an official named Severus before an uncertain emperor celebrating his *vicennalia*.[34] Engraved gems appear to have been presented, too, although only one is known, the now lost sapphire depicting the influential Gothic official Flavius Ricimer on the occasion of his consulship in AD 459.[35]

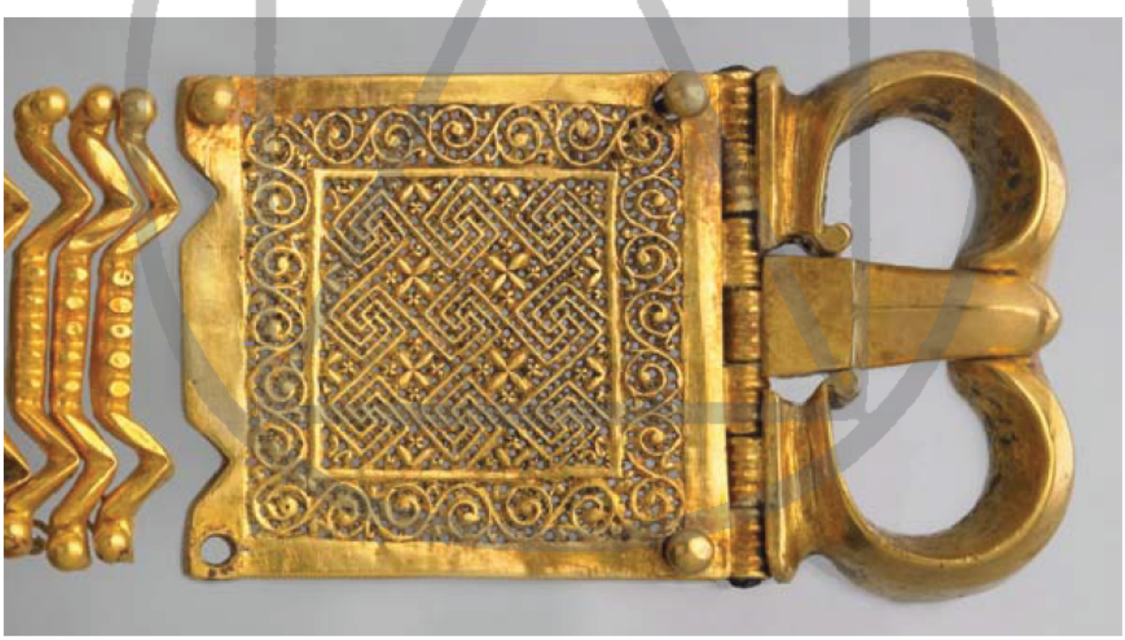
The other major responsibility of the office of the *sacrae largitiones* was the production and distribution of payments to the army. Some of these payments were in the form of objects presented as imperial largesse (*donativa*) to emphasize the importance of the emperor and the loyalty owed to him.[36] Gold and silver medallions and coins, gold and silver ingots, and silver plate were presented to important officers, as a number of hoards makes clear, most notably the spectacular treasure from Kaiseraugst (Switzerland), which contained silver medallions of Constantius II and Constans, a silver plate commemorating the *decennalia* of Constans (along with a considerable amount of other fine silver dishes), and silver ingots stamped with the image of the usurper Magnentius, suggesting that the hoard belonged to an officer who transferred his allegiance to Magnentius around the year AD 350.[37] The grave of a Roman officer of the early fourth century discovered in Macedonia eloquently preserves a range of similar objects on a more modest scale, including a silver plate engraved with small busts of the imperial princes, other silver vessels, an inscribed gold fibula, and a finely cut glass beaker.[38] Other valuable objects manufactured specifically for the military included rings, fibulae, torques, belts, helmets, and weapons. These items, along with the issue of standard military requisitions, such as food, horses, servants, and money, are specified in detail in a letter of the mid-third century, preserved in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* (*Claudius* 14.2-15), from the emperor Valerian to the procurator of Syria as payment to the military tribune (and future emperor) Claudius: "...two red military tunics each year, two military cloaks, two silver-gilt fibulae, and one gold fibula with a bronze pin; one silver-gilt belt, one ring set with two gems weighing an ounce, an arm band weighing seven ounces, a one pound torque, one gilded helmet, two shields with gold inlay, one cuirass to be returned..."

By the beginning of the third century, soldiers were permitted to wear gold rings. A number of gems and rings displaying the emperor's portrait do, in fact, survive, most dating from the Severan period, and it is likely that they belonged to military officers.[39] The practice of presenting rings to military officers is more clearly apparent in the fourth century, beginning in the reign of Constantine the Great.[40] A good number of surviving gold rings, including an example in the Ferrell collection (cat. 42), are inscribed FIDEM CONSTANTINO or FIDES CONSTANTINI, "loyalty to Constantine." Similar rings continued to be made until the mid-fourth century, including three further examples in the Ferrell collection, one (cat. 43) naming Constantine's son, Constans (AD 337-350), and the other two (cat. 44-45) DOMINIS NOSTRIS AVGVSTIS, "our lord emperors," no doubt referring to joint rule of Constantine's sons. A ring in Vienna with the name of Constans also includes the abbreviation N(*ovo*) A(*nno*), "on the New Year," indicating the occasion of this official gift.[41] A ring is also known bearing the name of the usurper Magnentius (AD 350-353).

During the same period, high ranking soldiers, as well as individuals holding high civic offices, were presented also with gold fibulae of crossbow type, while soldiers of lower rank wore silver or gilded bronze fibulae. The finer quality fibulae served as symbols of rank and status superior to the simple bronze examples, which survive in vast numbers. Some gold fibulae, including a particularly finely decorated pair in the Ferrell collection (cat. 87-88),were decorated with niello inlay, portraits of imperial princes, and sometimes inscriptions referring to the emperor, including Maximianus, Licinius, Maxentius and Romulus, Constantine, Constans, and Julian.[42] Another important group of gold crossbow fibulae, decorated in openwork, originated in a late fifth century imperial workshop in Constantinople and were distributed as gifts to high officials and foreign dignitaries.[43] Similar fibulae continued to be used into the sixth century and can be seen on the shoulders of the officials who accompany Justinian in the mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna.

Another symbol of military rank was the sword belt (*cingulum*). Military belts and buckles had long been important to the Roman soldier and were often decorated,[44] but by the third century belt buckles in silver and gold, sometimes ornamented with gems, served as a sign of official status and were often presented as imperial largesse. The illustrations of the *Notitia Dignitatum* (a now-lost illustrated manuscript of the fifth century, known only through fifteenth- and sixteenth-century copies, which details the structure of the extensive Roman bureaucracy in the fifth century, including the office of *sacrae largitiones*) conspicuously include gold buckles among the other items of imperial largesse, such as bags of coins and silver plate.[45] A relatively early example of an official belt in the Ferrell collection (cat. 93) is composed of a silver buckle and additional elements, all executed in fine openwork, one of which bears the name, in Greek, of Philip, very likely a reference to the emperor Philip I (AD 244-249). Several other exceptional examples of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries are known, including a number from the Constantinian period engraved with busts of members of the imperial family, a large belt fitting in the Ortiz collection,[46] a buckle found in a hoard of jewelry in England,[47] a gilt-bronze buckle decorated with the bust of a fifth-century emperor,[48] and the gold openwork buckles, probably of Constantinopolitan manufacture, in the Ferrell collection (cat. 135). Decorated and inlaid silver and gold buckles became popular also with Gothic aristocrats and no doubt served as indicators of status. Some were of Byzantine manufacture and were likely presented as military gifts or payments, while others were local works (cat. 115-119).

By the fifth century, swords ornately decorated with gold and garnet inlay were also presented to important officials, military officers, and foreign dignitaries. Most of the surviving examples, in fact, have been preserved in Gothic burials of warriors and princes discovered in many parts of Europe, from the Black Sea coast of south Russia to France.[49] Although some of the decoration may have been made by Germanic craftsmen, many decorated swords are likely to have been produced in imperial workshops in Constantinople and served as diplomatic gifts. This is surely the case with the garnet inlaid, gilt-bronze crossguard for a sword in the Ferrell collection (cat. 102, and see also cat. 127), which is engraved with a remarkable religious image, a depiction of the Prepared Throne flanked by angels. Other military items were also presented as gifts, including helmets (some with silver attachments, gilding, and inlaid stones) and folding camp stools decorated with gold and silver inlay, several of which have been found in Gothic graves (cat. 126 and 128).



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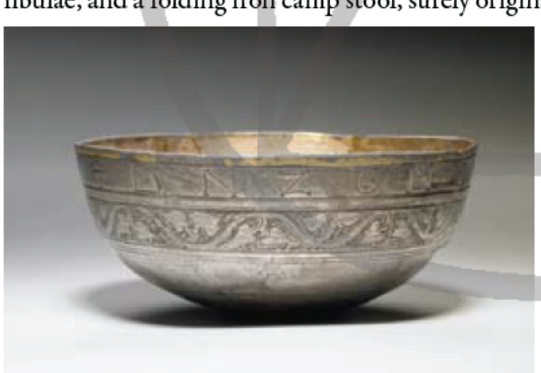
Imperial Gifts to Foreign Dignitaries

Indeed many of the same objects presented to Roman officials and military officers were also bestowed on foreign aristocrats as diplomatic gifts or tokens of imperial authority. Among the earliest and most notable of such gifts were gold medallions struck at imperial Roman mints, often set in gold mounts to be worn as pendants.[50] Numerous mounted medallions have been discovered widely in barbarian territory, primarily in eastern Europe and south Russia but also as far away as the Baltic region, Scandinavia, and the Netherlands. Few of these medallions, however, are set in the skillful openwork mounts that were typically produced in Constantinople, but rather in the simpler settings of "barbarian" style, consisting of a frame of beaded wire and a ribbed gold loop for suspension that was soldered directly on to the medallion; the join was often decorated with granulation in a triangular pattern. The seven medallions in the Ferrell collection (cat. 108-114), thought to have been discovered together, are all mounted in this fashion. Some mounts are more elaborate, with added filigree in serpentine or zigzag patterns, and on occasion the goldwork is inlaid with garnet. The relatively large number of surviving medallions in "barbarian" mounts is an indication of the attempts by the Roman state to purchase security with prestigious diplomatic gifts, especially during the fourth century, when Rome and the Gothic kings shared a peace treaty (*foedus*). Over the course of the fifth and sixth centuries, however, increasingly large sums of money in gold were paid directly to the various migrating groups, notably the Visigoths and Huns, in an attempt to stave off invasion.

In addition to gold medallions, other imperial gifts, including silver plate, rings, fibulae, buckles, swords, helmets, and finely inlaid military camp stools, have been found throughout the barbarian kingdoms, as distantly dispersed as Anglo-Saxon burials in England, royal Frankish tombs in France and Belgium, Visigothic graves in Spain, Vandalic burials in North Africa, Ostrogothic and Lombardic tombs in Italy, and Alemannic, Gepidic, and other East Gothic burials in Germany, Switzerland, eastern Europe, and south Russia. How these objects reached their burial sites is seldom known. Some were certainly imperial gifts to foreign royalty, such as the gold and garnet fibulae, buckles, and jewelry of extraordinary quality in the tomb of the Frankish King Childeric (who died c. AD 481), which was discovered in 1653 in Tournai (Belgium).[51] Gifts from the Byzantine emperor were still being sent in the late sixth and seventh centuries, such as the enormous gold medallions (now lost) each weighing a pound (72 solidi) sent by Emperor Tiberius II (AD 578-582) to the Frankish King Chilperic (c. AD 539-585).[52] The treasure of gold fibulae, buckles, silver plate, and other precious objects discovered at Apahida in Romania, evidently the property of a local Germanic (perhaps Gepidic) aristocrat named Omharus, whose name appears on a ring, includes a number of objects certainly made in the Byzantine capital, similar to the finds in the tomb of Childeric. [53] A group of late fifth-century objects in the Ferrell collection (cat. 126-149), which contains a silver bowl with the name of Emperor Zeno and other silver plates and vessels, gold buckles and fibulae, and a folding iron camp stool, surely originated for the most part in Constantinople as imperial gifts to a foreign dignitary or prince of uncertain origin. Byzantine historians record numerous attempts to form alliances with foreign kingdoms to defend against invasion by migrating tribes from the East. For example, the kingdom of the Lazi, located in the area of ancient Colchis (in modern day Georgia), served as a buffer state between the Byzantine Empire and the Huns. Their king was recognized by the Byzantine emperor, and gifts were sent as "symbols of office," which, although



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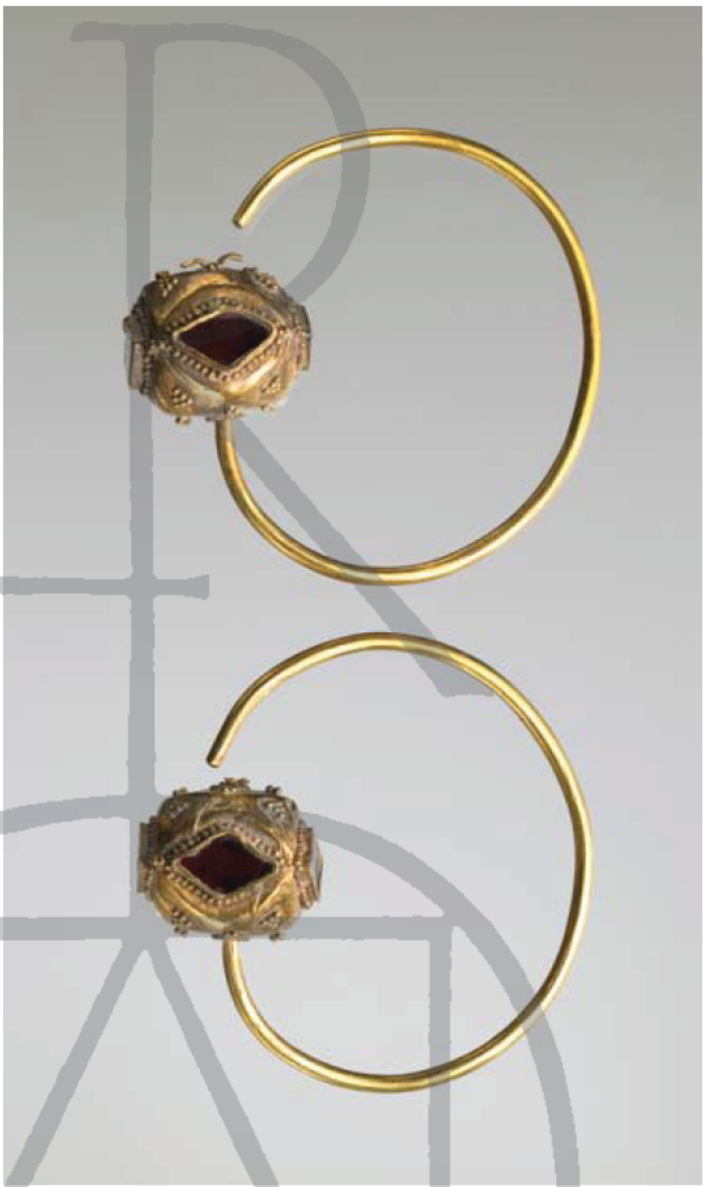
not described, probably consisted of medallions, silver plate, fibulae, belts, and other items denoting high rank.[54] The Huns themselves were courted with valuable gifts, too. The Hunnish Queen Boa was "won over by the emperor Justinian with many gifts of imperial raiment and a variety of silver vessels and not a little money," while another king, Grod, was baptized in Constantinople and sent back to the Bosporus to guard the border, presumably also with imperial gifts.[55] A rare surviving example of Byzantine gifts presented to a foreign ally is the hoard of gold and silver vessels, jewelry, and swords discovered in 1912 at Malaja Pereščepina (in modern-day Ukraine) and now in Saint Petersburg.[56] The objects are believed to have been presented to the Bulgarian ruler (*khan*) Kuvrat by the Byzantine emperor Heraclius in the 630s at a time when the Bulgarians and Byzantines faced a common enemy in the Avars. As a child, Kuvrat was raised in Constantinople, converted to Christianity, received the honorary title of patrician, and evidently was friendly with the emperor. Items discovered in the treasure include gold rings, clearly products of a workshop in Constantinople, engraved with Greek monograms naming Kuvrat, as well as a fine gold belt buckle and Byzantine silver vessels.



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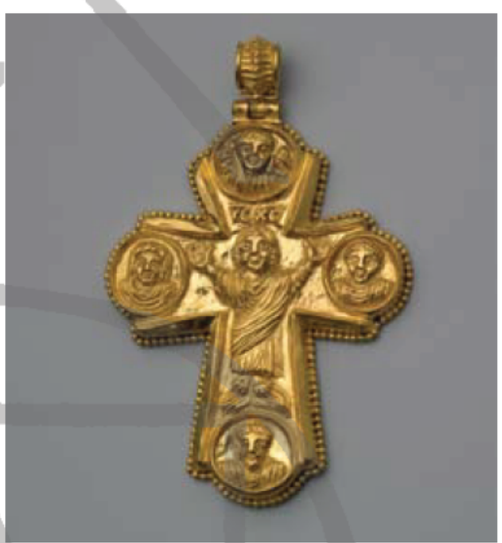
Although many superb objects from Rome and Byzantium reached foreign lands, local craftsmen in the Gothic kingdoms also produced their own luxury items, often influenced by Byzantine models, for their aristocratic patrons. Especially popular was the use of garnet inlay, a tradition that may have originated in south Russia but which became a Byzantine specialty in the fifth century. Gothic versions of fibulae, buckles, and various types of jewelry quickly developed and achieved tremendous popularity throughout Europe. Some varieties, such as large hoop earring with garnet inlay (cat. 123) and fibulae in the shape of eagles, reached all parts of the Gothic kingdom, from Russia to France. Other objects display a distinctly local taste, such as the large bronze buckles with elaborate garnet and glass inlay from Visigothic Spain (cat. 120). The Germanic custom of burying the dead with their jewelry and other marks of status allowed the discovery of a wealth of such material.

Early Byzantine Jewelry, Sixth-Seventh Centuries

In the sixth and seventh centuries, after the Roman Empire lost the western half of its territory to the barbarian invaders, craftsmen in Constantinople, the capital of a still enormously wealthy and powerful empire, produced a range of jewelry and luxury objects in a new style and for a variety of patrons. The imperial court still distributed medallions, silver plate, and ivory diptychs on special occasions. There was also, however, a considerable amount of gold in private hands, as the large number of surviving coins and pieces of personal jewelry attests. Necklaces, earrings, bracelets, rings, belts, and other items were finely crafted from gold and often set with pearls and precious stones, including sapphires and emeralds, in quantities rarely seen before. That this jewelry belonged primarily to the aristocracy associated with imperial circles is clear, as is shown by the presence of both jewelry and imperial medallions in the extraordinarily rich treasures from Cyprus and Egypt, as well as the conspicuous display of jewelry worn by the women attending Empress Theodora in the mosaics that decorate the walls of the church of San Vitale in Ravenna.



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Fashion trends were no doubt set in Constantinople, but finds of jewelry throughout the Byzantine Empire, from Sicily to the Black Sea, are remarkably consistent in style. Although workshops producing the finest quality jewelry were likely located in the capital, other ateliers that copied Constantinopolitan models may well have been located in provincial centers, such as Antioch, Egypt, Carthage, Syracuse, and perhaps elsewhere.[57] Two particularly rich treasures, one thought to be from Assiut, Egypt, and the other the Second Cyprus Treasure (which also contained the magnificent silver plates decorated with scenes from the life of King David now in New York and Nicosia), provide the finest surviving Byzantine jewelry of the sixth and early seventh centuries. The Cyprus treasure, no doubt the property of an important Byzantine official, contained, in addition to the silver plates and imperial medallions, a variety of women's jewelry, including finely decorated necklaces, pendant crosses, bracelets, and earrings.[58]

The hoard of jewelry from Assiut, Egypt (now divided between museums in Berlin, London, New York, and Washington) is of similar date and perhaps of even finer quality.[59] The presence of gold medallions of Theodosius I (AD 379-395) and Honorius (AD 393-423), each elaborately mounted as a gold pendant, suggest ties to the imperial court, although the medallions were certainly heirlooms and quite old at the time of the burial of the treasure. The mounts incorporated gold coins primarily of the late fifth and sixth centuries, as late as the reign of the Byzantine emperor Justin II (AD 565-578), which suggests that the treasure was hidden towards the end of the sixth century. On stylistic grounds, the jewelry does indeed appear to date primarily from the sixth century, although there are some earlier pieces. Most of the necklaces and earrings, however, are typically Byzantine, utilizing woven gold chains, emeralds, sapphires, amethysts, and pearls. There is frequent use of openwork and embossed gold elements of the finest execution as well. A number of close parallels can be found in the jewelry in the Ferrell collection.

Jewelry of the early Byzantine period often combined the luxurious use of gold and colorful precious stones and pearls with religious imagery. Crosses made of gold and decorated with gems or embossed with

images of Christ, saints, and angels were worn by pious aristocratic women (cat. 152-159). Even personal monograms engraved on rings were written in the form of a cross (cat. 179). The Ferrell collection also includes a large cameo depicting the Annunciation (cat. 151), no doubt a product of an imperial workshop in Constantinople, one of several surviving examples but the only one in its original gold and pearl frame, suspended on a heavy chain. Though still conveying a sense of power and status, the jewelry of Byzantium now honored Christ rather than the emperor.

Byzantine Church Silver

A relatively large number of Byzantine silver vessels (plates, cups, spoons, and other items) dating from the sixth and seventh centuries survive. Imperial workshops continued to supply the emperor with silver for distribution and also made plate for private patrons, but now churches, too, obtained silver items for liturgical use and display. Silver objects were manufactured at a variety of workshops, some producing works of far superior quality than others, although there is a general stylistic unity in the sixth and seventh centuries. Constantinople was no doubt the primary source for silver, and an official system for controlling the production of silver plate under the jurisdiction of the office of the *sacrum largitionum* and the Prefect of the City of Constantinople. Silver vessels often preserve the imperial stamps bearing the emperor's portrait and the names of the responsible officials (like hallmarks), a system that was established at the end of the fifth century and continued into the seventh (cat. 130-132, 190-192, and 197). The purpose of this elaborate system is unclear. The marks may indicate that the silver was sold (presumably for gold) by an official institution, or they may have been merely a means of taxation. Although the place of origin or source of patronage is rarely apparent from the stamps and inscriptions on surviving silver, it is known that the imperial bureaucracy continued to commission silver plate for distribution as gifts, that aristocratic families continued to amass silver for personal use, and that churches purchased silver objects for liturgical use.[60]

Since the time of Constantine, the Church, benefitting from imperial and aristocratic patronage, received an enormous quantity of precious metal objects. The *Liber Pontificalis* (chapter 34) records in detail the many patens, chalices, lamps, and even altars, fonts, and statues, all of gold and silver, presented by Constantine to the newly erected churches in Rome and elsewhere in Italy. Generous donations from successive emperors and bishops followed. Although none of these imperial donations survives—indeed no fourth-century liturgical silver has been found—a good amount of church silver dating to the sixth and seventh centuries has been discovered, primarily in Italy, Asia Minor, Syria, and Russia.

Patens typically took the form of shallow plates with flat rims and bottoms, the centers sometimes engraved with a *chi-rho* monogram or a simple cross (cat. 189-190). The quality of workmanship varied, some patens being of light weight and simple design and decoration, while others (such as those in the Sion Treasure discovered in southwest Anatolia and now divided between the Antalya Museum, Dumbarton Oaks, and the Ortiz collection in Geneva) are massive, with scalloped or embossed decoration on the rims, niello inlay, and gilding.[61] Only three patens, including an exceptionally fine example in the Ferrell collection (cat. 190), have embossed central images, all showing Christ administering the Eucharist to the apostles.

Embossed decoration is more common on other vessels, notably chalices and censers, which sometimes display standing figures of Christ, the Virgin, angels, and saints. Other ecclesiastical objects frequently found in treasures included hanging lamps in the form of bowls that once held glass liners (cat. 199-208); hanging polycandela with holes for cone-shaped glass lamps (cat. 197); buckets (cat. 192); ladles (cat. 193); spoons (cat. 217-225); and boxes that once contained relics (cat. 194). Two examples (one in the Ferrell collection, cat. 195, and the other in New York) are known of a silver dove suspended from a chain,

which once hung above the altar to represent the Holy Spirit.

In addition to bearing official stamps, many of these objects were inscribed, sometimes with biblical or liturgical verses but more often with the names of the donors, who had offered the vessels to the church in memory of a loved one or in fulfillment of a vow. The names provide a rare glimpse into the lives of the parishioners of early Byzantine towns.

The striking coherence of style and the superb skills of the early Byzantine silversmith demonstrate the importance of these works to Byzantine society in the sixth and seventh centuries, when Byzantium was at the height of its power. The iconoclastic movement in Byzantium at the beginning of the eighth century, which condemned the use of religious images, severely disrupted the production of traditional crafts, including church silver and personal jewelry. The revival of craftsmanship in precious metal and related skills did not occur until more than a century later and then in an entirely new style.

Notes

1. For Pyrgoteles, see Pliny, *Natural History* 7.125, and Plutarch, *Alexander* 4.1. There is a list of Hellenistic gem engravers in Plantzos 1999, p. 146. The newly discovered papyrus of works by Posidippus, a third century BC Macedonian poet, includes the *Lithika* (*Stones*), a book of epigrams describing engraved stones and their artists, very likely written for the Ptolemaic kings; see Kuttner 2005.
2. Pliny, *Natural History* 33. 148-150
3. Pliny, *Natural History* 37. 12-14
4. Pliny, *Natural History* 37. 11
5. Florus, 1.5
6. Pliny, *Natural History* 33.11
7. Pliny, *Natural History* 33.18
8. Livy 9.7.8; 23.12.2
9. Appian 8.104
10. Herodian 3.8.5
11. *Satyricon* 67
12. Plutarch, *Lucullus* 3.1
13. Pliny, *Natural History* 33.41
14. Vollenweider 1966, pp. 56-64; Dioskourides is mentioned by Pliny 37, 8; and Suetonius, *Augustus* 50.
15. Toynbee 1944, pp. 116-17.
16. Ortiz 1994, no. 238.
17. See the excellent study by Deppert-Lippitz 1996b; also Buckton 1983-84; and Ross 2005, pp. 141-70, nos. 180-83; for the coins in the hoard (as late as Arcadius, c.388 AD), see Casey 1977.
18. Dennison 1918, pp. 87-166; pp. 117-121, no. 2, pls. 1, 10, and 11 (medallion of Theodosius); Greifenhagen 1970, pp. 65-71, pls. 45-52; the medallion of Honorius, pp. 65-66, pls. 45-46, 1 (but not in Dennison). Stolz 2006 suggests the jewelry belonged to a member of the imperial family.
19. de Ridder 1911, pp. 261-2, no. 1417, pl. 7.
20. Weitzmann 1979, pp. 71-72, no. 61; Evans 2001, p. 37.
21. For gold and silver ingots with official stamps, see, most recently, Wiegels 2003.
22. For studies on the function of the office of the *sacrae largitiones*, see MacMullen 1962; Delmaire 1989; and Hendy 1989.
23. See Kaufmann-Heinimann 2003a.
24. Cameron 1976, pp. 112-3 and 197-8 (IV.90-263)
25. Cameron 1976, pp. 104-5 and 184 (III.120-124)
26. Spier 2007b, pp. 22 and 285-6, no. 84A-B, with further literature cited there.
27. Spier 2007a, pp. 19-20, no. 12
28. Spier 2007a, pp. 97-98, no. 572
29. See especially, Cameron 1992; and Cameron 2006.
30. Shelton 1983, pp. 7-23; the spoons were discovered in the eighteenth century and are now lost.
31. Toynbee and Painter 1986, pp. 28-29, no. 17, Pl. 11a.
32. Cameron 2006, pp. 701-2.
33. Toynbee and Painter 1986, pp. 27-28, no. 16, pl. 10a; Cameron 2006, p. 700
34. Harden 1987, pp. 223-4, no. 124.
35. Spier 2007a, p. 27, no. 85.
36. For a discussion of the coins and medallions distributed as special payments (*donativa*), see Bastien 1988.
37. Cahn and Kaufmann-Heinimann 1984; Guggisberg 2003.
38. Ivanovski 1987.
39. See, for example, the heavy silver ring set with the nicolo gem with the portrait of Elagabalus, Greifenhagen 1975, p. 87, pl. 63, 14 and 17; and the ring with the bust of Caracalla in relief, Greifenhagen 1975, p. 88, pl. 64, 10-12.
40. Noll 1986, pp. 102-8; Wamser and Zahlhaas 1998, pp. 173-4, nos. 228-229; Demandt and Engemann 2007, nos. I.7.27, I.10.21, and I.10.22.

41. Noll 1974, p. 27, no. 45, fig. 37.
42. Johansen 1994; and for gilded bronze examples, see Kaufmann-Heinimann 2003b.
43. Deppert-Lippitz 1996.
44. Künzl 1977.
45. Johansen 1994, pp. 230-2, with further notes on decorated buckles; see also Feugère 1993, pp. 250-4, for the significance of belts in late antiquity.
46. Ortiz 1994, no. 247.
47. Johns and Potter 1983, pp. 79-80, no. 1.
48. *Kofler-Truniger* 1964, p. 64, no. 608c, pl. 34.
49. Menghin 1983; and Böhner 1987. For the social significance of swords in Germanic aristocratic burials, see Theuws and Alkemade 2000.
50. Bursche1999; Bursche 2001; and see also Ploumis 2001.
51. Brulet 1995, with further literature; the tomb was first published by Chiflet 1655.
52. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks* 6.2.
53. Bianchini 2000, pp. 184-90, no. 30 (Radu Harhoiu).
54. Procopius, *History of the Wars* 2.15.2-4
55. John Malalas, 18.13-14; Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Scott 1986, pp. 249-50.
56. Werner 1984; Kazanski and Sodini 1987; and Werner 1992; and for the historical details of Kuvrat, see Ostrogorsky 1959.
57. Lippolis 1999, pp. 29-43, lists twenty-five hoards containing jewelry, dating from the fifth through the eighth century; see also Manière-Lévêque 1997.
58. For discussions of the treasure see, Dalton 1906; Stylianou 1969; Brown 1984, pp. 13-14; and Entwistle 2003; see also Weitzmann 1979, nos. 61 (belt with medallions), 285 (chain with cross), 287 (a medallion), and 292 (bracelets); and Yeroulanou 1999, p. 132, fig. 236, and p. 210, no. 39 (necklace of openwork elements and a pendant cross)
59. See n. 18.
60. Dodd 1961; Mango 1992; and Dodd 1992. For the significance of the Prefect of Constantinople, see Feissel 1986.
61. See Boyd and Mango 1992; and Ortiz 1994, no. 257.