



GÖBL, ROBERT

GÖBL, ROBERT, Austrian numismatist (b. Vienna, 4 August 1919; d. 8 December 1997; ; [Figure 1](#)). He joined the military in 1938, after graduating from high school, and spent the next nine years in the service, returning to Vienna only after the end of World War II. Göbl entered the University of Vienna in 1947, where he studied ancient history, classical archaeology, and ancient numismatics, graduating in 1950. The title of his doctoral thesis was “Numismatisch-historische Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Kaiser Valerianus und Gallienus.” His mentor in studying numismatics was Karl Pink, whose methodology had a lasting influence on Göbl’s further academic career. One of Göbl’s most pressing aims was to try out Pink’s structural methodology of the minting of coins in the Roman Empire on other well-defined numismatic complexes.

Göbl’s acquaintance with Franz Altheim made him interested in the coinage of the Sasanians. He published his “Aufbau der Münzprägung des Sasanidenstaates” in 1954, which is still today a valid structural analysis of coinage. In it, Göbl was able to apply successfully to other areas of study the systematic principles within the field of Roman numismatics as developed by Pink. It was submitted as his habilitation, which he defended in 1955 and which consequently qualified him to receive a lecturer position at the University of Vienna. He also took over from Pink the Numismatischer Lehrapparat, which had been founded by Wilhelm Kubitschek at the Department of Ancient History, Epigraphy and Classical Archaeology. Later on he expanded this same contribution in his *Handbuch zur Sasanidischen*



Numismatik, which was published in German in 1968 and in English translation in 1971. In 1973, Göbl published his *Sasanidischer Siegelkanon*, which has become a tool for the analytical classification of Sasanian seal stones. This contribution was closely connected to the recording of a large hoard of clay sealings from Taḳt-e Solaymān, which were assigned to Göbl for classification by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (q.v.).

Göbl's interest in ancient oriental numismatics extended beyond the geographical limits of the Sasanian state. Prompted by Franz Altheim, he published in 1957 an article about Kushano-Sasanian coinage that eventually became the groundwork for his *Dokumente zur Geschichte der iranischen Hunnen in Baktrien und Indien* (4 vols, Wiesbaden, 1967), a major contribution that revived a fascinating chapter in Asian history and that will undoubtedly remain as one of the milestones in the study of Oriental numismatics. Roman Ghirshman (q.v.) arranged for Göbl's participation at the second Kanishka conference, which was held in London in 1960. This conference induced Göbl to make the coinage of the Kushans the central part of all his future research. In 1984, he published his monograph on the system and chronology of Kushan coinage, in which he gave an in-depth commentary on its controversial chronology. He published another study of the subject, *DONUM BURNS: Die Kušānmünzen im Münzkabinett Bern und die Chronologie* (Vienna, 1993), which he considered his "Kushan testament." At the request of the present writer, however, he made further studies of the chronology problem following the publication of the Rabatak inscription in 1996.

In 1962, Ghirshman brought Göbl to Afghanistan as a UNESCO field expert in order to arrange the coin collection at the Museum of Kabul. During the course of his stay Göbl also traveled to Pakistan and discovered that some of the inscriptions of the Tochi-Agency kept in the Museum of Peshawar were not written in Mongolian, as had previously been presumed, but in Bactrian. Helmut Humbach read the bilingual texts, and the double datings included in them from then on formed a central point in Göbl's argument for considering year 1 of Kanishka's rule to be 232 C.E.

In 1965, the University of Vienna, on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of its foundation, established the Department of Ancient Numismatics and Pre-Islamic History of Central Asia, with Göbl, now Professor of Ancient Numismatics and the Pre-Islamic History of Central Asia, as its chairman. From this point on Göbl made the building up of this department the focal point of his attention, turning it into a major research institution that can



justifiably be considered as the most prestigious of its kind throughout the world.

Göbl was a devoted, enthusiastic teacher, who never allowed his administrative responsibilities as department chairman to divert his attention from training his students. Some of his lectures have been published in his *Antike Numismatik*, which is an analytical handbook on ancient numismatics.

The Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften elected Göbl as corresponding member in 1963 and as full member in 1971. In 1970, the Numismatic Commission was formed within the Akademie der Wissenschaften and Göbl was appointed as its director, a position he kept until his death in 1997. From the very beginning Göbl led the Commission towards the goal he had envisaged for it, namely, to design and pursue larger projects that would serve the principles of research in the field of numismatics. This included preparation of the *Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Österreich*, the publication of coin collections within the framework of the *Thesaurus nummorum Romanorum et Byzantinorum* and the *Moneta imperii romani* series, which aimed to portray the structural analysis of Roman coinage in the imperial era.

Göbl's main concern during the last decade of his tenure at the University of Vienna was to guarantee that the subject of numismatics would remain an independent discipline within the field of historical studies and to make it comprehensible to the beneficiaries of numismatic research. It was against this background that *Numismatik, Grundriss und wissenschaftliches System* was produced, in which his comprehensive understanding of numismatics as the science of the monetary system is expounded with precision.

Göbl retired as professor emeritus in 1989, earlier than expected, in order to concentrate all of his energy on the projects lying ahead of him. In a life of relative seclusion that was forced upon him by the increasing loss of hearing, he resumed the scholarly pursuit that he had started with, concentrating primarily on the reconstruction of the Roman minting system of the 3rd century in the framework of his *Moneta imperii romani* series, which he carried out within the Numismatic Commission at the Akademie der Wissenschaften. He published his *Münzprägung des Kaisers Aurelianus* (2 vols, Vienna, 1993) and followed it with a complete revision of his 1950 thesis. He died, however, before the latter could be published (*Die Münzprägung der Kaiser Valerianus I, Gallienus, Saloninus [253-268], Regalianus [260] und*



Macrianus [und] Quietus [260-262], Moneta imperii romani 36, 43-44, Vienna, 2000).

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