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COIN FINDS IN GRAVES FROM THE PROVINCE OF SECOND MOESIA IN LATE ANTIQUITY

Abstract: At the beginning of Late Antiquity, the newly established province of Second Moesia included lands with an already established fortification and settlement system, as well as well-developed road infrastructure. Based on research, it is clear that the information about “the world of the living” obviously surpasses the knowledge about the “world of the dead”. Collecting and analyzing the data provides details that originate from thirty necropolises. In general, the grave goods provoke the greatest interest and appear to be the most diverse materials for studying. Among grave-goods, the greatest number belongs to coins. Until now, on the territory of Second Moesia, they are registered in complexes of 14 necropolises. There are reliable data on the location of 239 numismatic finds, which have been found in at least 47 closed funerary complexes (graves and tombs). The number of coins varies from 1 to 50. Regarding the metal the coins were made of, 237 finds are minted in bronze, only two are silver and not a single golden piece was registered. According to the date of minting, the earliest coins from two tombs were struck at the end of the 3rd century (reign of Probus), 195 are issued in the 4th century and 10 at the end of 4th – the first half of 5th century. Only two coins are issued in the 6th century.

Key words: Late Antiquity, coin finds, graves, Second Moesia, Bulgaria

At the end of the 3rd century, as a result of the administrative reform of Emperor Diocletian, the province of Second Moesia inherited a significant part of the territory of fragmented and no longer existing province of Lower Moesia. Its borders include lands with an already established fortification and settlement system, as well as well-developed road infrastructure. Second Moesia occupies an area of about 29,000 km² and it is a component of the diocese of Thrace, Prefecture of the East.¹ In the west, on the Osam

¹ Велков 1959, 55-56; Плетньов 2017, 30-31.

river (Asamus/Ansamus fl.),² it borders with the province of *Dacia Ripensis*. In the east, it borders with the province Scythia and in the south, with the provinces of Thrace and Haemimontus. Nowadays, the lands of Second Moesia comprise significant part of Central North and Northeast Bulgaria.

For more than a century, the remarkable remnants of material culture have been subject to archaeological and historical survey by generations of researchers, as a result of which considerable scientific information has been obtained. Substantial works were published on the Late Antique cities,³ the Lower Danube defense system,⁴ the early Byzantine fortresses,⁵ the rural settlements (*vici*)⁶ and the road network.⁷ Monographs and studies dedicated to residential⁸ and early Christian architecture⁹ are of a similar nature.

Based on research, it is clear that the information about “the world of the living” obviously surpasses the knowledge about the “world of the dead”. So far, there is no universal study related to the funeral rites in Late Antiquity at the territory of the Second Moesia. Collecting and analyzing the data provides details that concern thirty necropolises (Fig. 1). The structure of investigation follows the pattern shown here – topography of the site, shape of the grave complexes, way of burial, grave goods and tombstones.

Generally, grave goods provoke the greatest interest and appear to be the most diverse materials for studying. They are usually divided into two major groups – personal belongings and grave-goods. The largest share among the finds from the second group includes coins. Until now, on the territory of Second Moesia, they are registered in complexes of 14 necropolises (Fig. 2). The items are well known from the legionary camps Durostorum (13 coins)¹⁰ and Novae (2 coins),¹¹ the Late Antique towns Odessos (the exact number of the coins is unknown),¹² Marcianopolis (4 coins)¹³ and Abritus (6 coins),¹⁴ the limes fortress Tegra (32 coins)¹⁵ and the civil/rural settlements at Babovo, Rousse region (1 coin),¹⁶ Belogradets, Varna region (10 coins),¹⁷ Kovachevets, Targovishte region (13 coins),¹⁸ Peychinovo, Rousse re-

2 Торбатов 2021, 35-40.

3 Велков 1959.

4 Иванов 1999.

5 Динчев 2006.

6 Динчев 2002а, 156-163.

7 Torbatov 2000, 59-72; Маджаров 2009.

8 Аладжов 1965, 213-241; Dinchev 1997, 47-63; Динчев 2002b, 216-219.

9 Чанева-Дечевска 1999.

10 The coins are not published yet, but I owe the information to S. Gancheva, for which I thank her.

11 Vladkova 2012, 485.

12 Мирчев 1951, 95-96; Лазаренко и Манолова-Войкова 2017, 477-480. In 2016, at the Lyudovic Zamenhof Street in Varna, during rescue excavations of the western necropolis of Odessos six coins were discovered. They are still unpublished, but I owe the information to I. Lazarenko, for which I thank him.

13 Димитров 1960, 100; Минчев и Георгиев 1979, 109.

14 Радославова 2007, 57-58. The publication doesn't include pictures and catalog data of the coins.

15 The coins are not published yet, but I owe the information to D. Dragoev, for which I thank him.

16 The coin is not published yet, but I owe the information to D. Dragoev, for which I thank him.

17 Велков 1938, 423.

18 Gerasimov 1979, 137; Русев 2012, 29.

gion (129 coins),¹⁹ Pavlikeni (6 coins),²⁰ Han Krum, Shumen region (1 coin),²¹ Veliki Preslav, the site of Deli-dushka (2 coins)²² and Stoyan Mihaylovski (more than 14 coins).²³ So far, there are reliable data on the location of 239 numismatic finds, which have been found in at least 47 funerary complexes (graves and tombs). However, their exact number is unclear, because the information concerning the sites like Odessos, Novae, Marcianopolis, Belogradets, Kovachevets, Veliki Preslav and Stoyan Mihaylovski is not published in detail. Another problem is the absence of several coins in the museum funds. For example, three pieces discovered on the Durostorum territory cannot be traced in Regional museum of Silistra. Further on, the initial entries in the museum books or scientific literature are not verifiable. These are basically the reasons that do not allow a detailed analysis of the total number of monetary finds. Nevertheless, 181 coins are well-described (75.73%), and they can be examined and discussed considering their precise chronology. For 36 pieces (15.06%) only the name of the emperor is known, which, after all, is a dating indicator. The remaining 22 finds (9.21%) are minted generally during Late Antiquity.

The first step of analysis is to consider finding spots of coins. The pieces have been found in six hypogeum type tombs (Durostorum, Abritus, Babovo and Belogradets) and 41 graves (Durostorum, Novae, Odessos, Marcianopolis, Abritus, Tegra, Kovachevets, Peychinovo, Pavlikeni, Han Krum, Veliki Preslav and Stoyan Mihaylovski). In only one complex, the burial rite is described as cremation (Kovachevets), while all of the other cases (97.87%) included inhumations. The number of the coins in the graves and tombs varies from 1 to 50. In 22 of the funeral complexes, just a single coin was unearthed (Durostorum, Novae, Odessos, Marcianopolis, Tegra, Babovo, Han Krum and Veliki Preslav), while in two there were two coins (Durostorum and Peychinovo). Three pieces are registered in eight cases (Odessos, Marcianopolis, Abritus, Tegra and Peychinovo), while the grave goods of only one complex include four coins (Tegra). Five pieces are documented in three graves from the necropoleis of Tegra and Kovachevets, and up to six coins have only been found at Pavlikeni. There are two sites with eight finds (Durostorum and Kovachevets) and also two with 14 (Peychinovo and Stoyan Mihaylovski), while the other examples represent isolated cases – Belogradets (ten coins), Peychinovo (12, 19, 29 and 50 coins).

Regarding the exact position of coins related to the body of the deceased is recorded in 20 graves and in the other 27, the published information is not sufficient. In eight funerary complexes (40%), coins were placed into the mouth or around the head (Novae, Odessos, Tegra and Peychinovo). In five graves (25%), coins were deposited upon the chest of the deceased (Marcianopolis, Tegra and Peychinovo), while in three cases (15%), placing coins upon the deceased's shoulder are registered (Tegra, Peychinovo and Veliki Preslav). The same number has been placed next to

19 Димова 1966, 27.

20 Цочев 1998, 114-115; Църков 2005, 113-114.

21 Стоева 2014, 454.

22 Иванова 1948, 66; Балабанов, Стоева и Славов 2008, 524.

23 Герасимов 1957, 325. Only two graves have been documented. The number of coins in the first one is unknown, but in the second one 14 pieces were registered.

one of the arms/hands (Novae, Marcianopolis and Psychinovo). Only in two graves (10%) in Tegra, coins were deposited close to the legs/feet. There is a similar situation with finds upon the abdomen – two graves at Psychinovo. Finally, the information about four funerals is not very precise, since it mentions that the coins have been dispersed over the buried body (Odessos, Abritus, Psychinovo and Stoyan Mihaylovski). Ten complexes containing a larger number of coins deserve special attention (Durostorum, Belogradets, Kovachevets, Psychinovo (five graves), Pavlikeni and Stoyan Mihaylovski). Their number varies from 6 to 50 and perhaps the pointed cases could be described as personal belongings of the buried individual. According to A. Tenchova, who summarizes all data from Bulgaria, number of coin hoards from funerary contexts dated in the 4th century is 48.²⁴ They are documented in all Roman provinces from both sides of the Balkan mountain and there is possibly more than one hundred of them.

If one considers the metal they were made of, 237 finds are minted in bronze (99.16 %), only two are silver (0.84 %) and there were no golden pieces. Several different nominals can be distinguished among them. The earliest coin is a poorly preserved denarius of Antoninus Pius (Tegra), while the second silver piece is undeterminable, struck during the reign of Valens (Belogradets). Chronologically, the next two bronze specimens are coins of Probus (Durostorum), but they are lost now and cannot be interpreted correctly. Only one antoninianus of Maximian Herculeus from Durostorum is identified with certainty. The other 234 coins include various bronze nominals. They are well-preserved and described in publications and they are statistically distributed as follows: folles – 78 pieces (dated 294-337; Durostorum, Tegra, Babovo, Kovachevets, Psychinovo and Pavlikeni); base billon and bronze – 82 pieces (dated 337-363; Odessos, Tegra, Kovachevets and Psychinovo); bronze, Æ 3 and Æ 4 – eight pieces (dated 364-395; Odessos, Tegra and Han Krum); bronze, Æ 3 and Æ 3-4 – ten pieces (dated 395-435; Odessos, Tegra and Psychinovo); folles – one single find (dated in the 6th c.; Tegra). The coins dated only after the name of the emperor or reverse type include 33 pieces. Among them, 30 were struck during the 4th century (Marcianopolis, Abritus, Belogradets, Kovachevets and Stoyan Mihaylovski), one at the end of 4th – beginning of 5th century (Abritus), another one during the 5th century (Abritus) and a single one during the 6th century (Durostorum). The undefined coins, dated roughly in the Late Antiquity (4th–5th c.) include 13 finds (Odessos, Tegra, Psychinovo and Veliki Preslav). Nine monetary finds are mentioned without any description (Novae, Marcianopolis and Stoyan Mihaylovski). One bronze imitation found in Tegra should be added to them. It represents a coin of Constans of *Fel Temp Reparatio* type, variant “galley” usually minted in Siscia in 348-350 (Fig. 3). Two other copies are registered in Tegra. They were components of a necklace, together with a denarius of Antoninus Pius, one bronze of Constantius II and one commemorative coin of Constantinople in secondary usage (Fig. 4). The two imitations show the *Urbs Roma* type with schematic images while the coin-shaped pieces were made together with hanging loops (Fig. 4.3-4).

24 Tenchova 2009, 449-450.

The condition of 118 coins (49.37%) enables one to recognize the name of the mint. They were found in six necropoleis (Durostorum, Tegra, Babovo, Kovachevets, Psychinovo and Pavlikeni).

If we divide the mints into four regional groups according to their geographic location, the following picture is obtained:

- no western mints (Londinium, Treveri, Arelate and Lugdunum) are registered;
- the central region is represented by Aquileia (one piece), Sirmium (one piece), Rome (three pieces) and Siscia (eleven pieces);
- the third regional group covers the Balkans and Asia Minor mints – Nicomedia (four pieces), Constantinople (16 pieces), Thessalonica (25 pieces), Cyzicus (26 pieces) and Heraclea (27 pieces);
- the eastern mints are underrepresented and they include Antioch (three pieces) and Alexandria (one piece).

In general, the coins that were produced in the West Roman Empire are 16 (13.56%) in total compared to the coinage of the East Roman Empire with 102 coins (86.44%).

The Late Antiquity tradition of placing coins in the funerary contexts (graves and tombs) represents a continuation from the Roman period (1st–3rd century) and it is linked to the so called “Charon’s obol”.²⁵ Such a practice is established at the territory of the present-day Bulgaria as early as the end of the 4th – first half of the 3rd century BC and it continuously continued to be part of the funeral rite.²⁶ Until the year 2013, at the territory of the province of Lower Moesia, 440 coins from 256 Roman graves (1st–3rd century) were discovered. This means that such a practice was extremely popular,²⁷ and remained so during Late Antiquity as well. According to the date of minting, the earliest coins from two tombs (Durostorum) were struck at the end of the 3rd century (reign of Probus), 195 are issued during the 4th century, ten at the end of 4th – the first half of 5th century and only two are emission from the 6th century. These quantitative data clearly show that in the 4th century, the ancient tradition is still alive, while in the 5th century the number of finds decreased significantly. In the 6th century, it was rather an exception.

25 Vojvoda and Mrđić 2015; Vojvoda and Mrđić 2017; Vojvoda, Golubović and Mikić 2021.

26 Домарадски 1987, 14-15.

27 Ota 2013, 215.

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НАЛАЗИ НОВЦА ИЗ ГРОВОВА ПРОВИНЦИЈЕ ДРУГЕ МЕЗИЈЕ У КАСНОЈ АНТИЦИ

РЕЗИМЕ

На основу досадашњих истраживања, произилази да подаци о „свету живих” очигледно превазилазе сазнања о „свету мртвих”, јер за сада не постоји детаљна студија о погребним ритуалима у касној антици на територији Друге Мезије. Гробни прилози побуђују велико интересовање истраживача, а посебно новац који чини највећи удео међу овом врстом налаза. Прикупљајући и анализирајући податке са одређеног броја некропола (Сл. 1) покушали смо да добијемо детаљнију слику о улози новца у погребним ритуалима.

До сада располажемо са поузданим подацима о месту налаза 239 новчића, који су пронађени у 47 затворених гробних целина (гробова или гробница) на 14 некропола у оквиру територије Друге Мезије. Број новчића у овим целинама варира од једног до 50. Већина је од бронзе (237) и само су два сребрна. Хронолошки посматрано, најстарији новчићи припадају емисијама с краја 3. века, 195 примерака потиче из 4. века, 10 их је датовано у крај 4. или почетак 5. века, док из 6. века потиче само два примерка. Када је заступљеност ковница у питању, запажа се да није регистрован новац ни једне западне ковнице (Лондинијум, Тревери, Арелате, Лугдунум); ковнице централне регије заступљене су малим бројем примерака (Аквилеја један; Сирмијум један; Рим три; Сисција један примерак); балканске и малоазијске ковнице присутне су у највећем броју (Никомедија четири; Константинопољ 16; Тесалоника 25; Кизик 26; Хераклеја 27 примерака); крајње источне ковнице поново су заступљене у мањем броју (Антиохија три; Александрија један примерак). Сажимајући ове податке можемо закључити да новац који потиче из ковница западног дела Римског царства (16 примерака или 13,56%) далеко мање заступљен у гробовима на територији Друге Мезије од оног кованог у источном делу Царства (102 новчића или 86,44%).

Спроведена анализа, на примеру наведених некропола, показује да се касноантичка традиција фунералне употребе новца надовезује на ону из класичног римског периода (1-3. век), која је вероватно повезана са тзв. „Хароновим оболом“. Слична истраживања ранијих историјских периода, показују да је ова пракса била уобичајена на територији данашње Бугарске још крајем 4. и прве половине 3. века с. е. и да има свој континуитет све до касне антике.



Fig. 1 – List and location of the Late Antique necropolises on the territory of province of Second Moesia.

Сл. 1 Списак и положаји касноантичких некропола на територији провинције Друге Мезије.

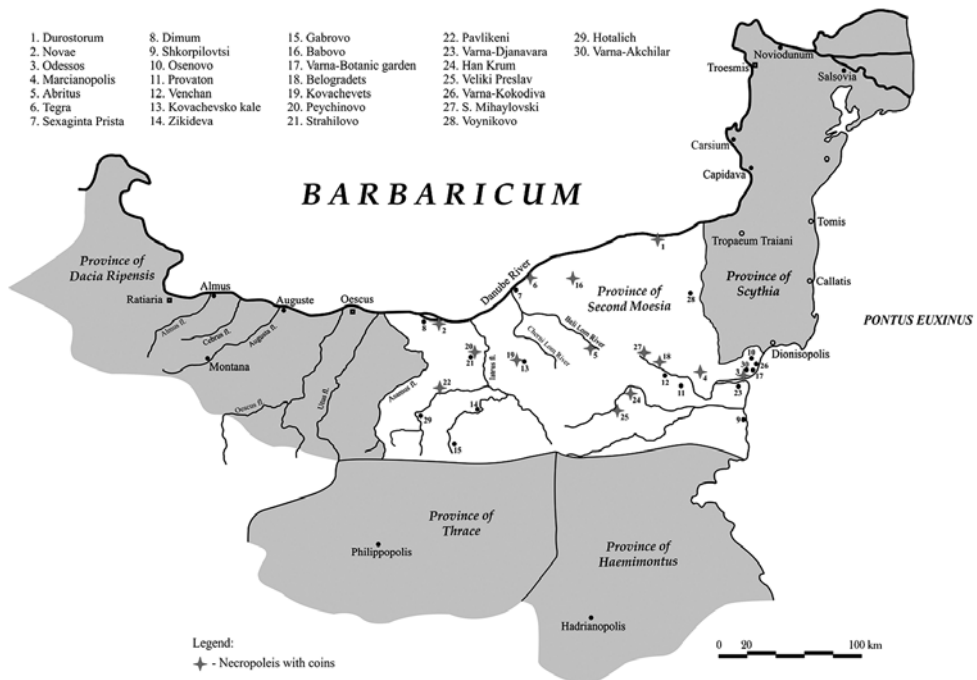


Fig. 2 – Location of the Late Antique necropolises with coins on the territory of province of Second Moesia.

Сл. 2 Положаји касноантичких некропола са новцем на територији провинције Друге Мезије.



Fig. 3 – Bronze imitation of Constans' coin of Fel Temp Reparatio type.
 Сл. 3 Бронзана имитација Констансовог новца типа Fel Temp Reparatio



Fig. 4 – A necklace with coins from Tegra, which comprises two imitations of Urbs Roma type.
 Сл. 4 Огрлица са новчићима из Тегре, састоји се од две имитације новца типа Urbs Roma.