

A recent work about the coin hoards in Roman Dacia (Suciu 2001), offers important information on this particular kind of historical sources and allows interesting observations. Among them there is the emergence of some big sized coin hoards, whose existence in this area requires further approach.

Until present day, 135 coin hoards were registered in Roman Dacia (Suciu 2000, 417). Fourty deposits contain less than 100, eleven 100 to 500 coins and only twenty one have more than 1000 pieces. The size of 15 hoards remains unknown (Suciu 2000, 423). These size of tthese deposits have been induced on the only base of the recovered and classified coins, and therefore they are arbitrary. What are the differences, except the size, between a hoard of about 800 and another of 1150 coins ?

One can notice, in the first place, that the small sized ones, containing less than 500 pieces, represent the largest proportion (88, i. e. 70,4 %), while the greater ones (until 1000 pieces) are less under 9 %. Together, they sum up 99 coin hoards, i. e. 73 % of the whole material under analysis. The 21 hoards appreciated as "big sized" represent only 16,8 % of their number. But even these are far from being uniform. Nine of them do not overpass 1500 coins. To their list one can add the Stănești coin hoard which was not yet studied. It contains more than 1000 silver denarii (Poenaru-Bordea, Mitrea 1994 -1995, 469-470 nr.72). Therefore, the number of the big sized hoards increases at ten, as follows (we enlisted the name of the hoard, the number of coins, the moment of the burying, the basic literature and the number on the map):

- Alba Iulia IV 1213 - Gallienus (Pavel 1976, 73-97) (1);
- Amărăștii de Jos 1333 - Gordianus III (Protase 1965, no. 6) (2);
- Apahida 1068 - Balbinus (Ardevan 2000, 494-498 (3);
- Belcinu > 1000 - Philippus Arabs (Protase 1965, no. 15; Popilian, Stan-Mircești *SCN*9, 1989, 42-43) (4);
- Frâncești 1356 - Elagabalus (Protase 1965, no. 34) (12);
- Gilău 1170 - Philippus Arabs (Protase 1965, no. 37) (13);
- Gruia 1501 - Gordianus III (Mitrea 1973, 412 no. 60; Poenaru Bordea, Mitrea 1991, 221 no. 44) (14);
- Pișteștii din Vale 1440, - ?? (Poenaru Bordea, Mitrea 1990, 306 no. 90) (16);
- Stănești > 1000 - Trebonianus Gallus (Poenaru Bordea, Mitrea 1994-1995, 469- 470 no. 72) (23);
- Țaga 1013 - Gordianus III (Protase, Crișan 1968, 139-173) (21).

As we think, these hoards are not basically different from the closest lower class and do not go too far from the middle sized deposits in the province of Dacia. One must underline, on the other hand, the small preponderance of southern Dacian territories in this picture (six finds in Little Wallachia and four in Transylvania).

There are other coin hoards overpassing 2000 coins (sometimes even on a large scale). They do not fit the common numismatic pattern in Roman Dacia, are far less frequent and represent much greater accumulated fortunes. Consequently, we think that they are spotting the light on a special economic and social phenomenon.

To the twelve such hoards, registered until now we can add also three more finds. The first one is the Bozovici II lost coin hoard. We know that it contained cca. 5 kg. silver coins whereas the opinion that it could reach a number rather close to 2000 pieces(1). Another is the Poiana Sărată coin hoard, which definitely belongs to the province (Goos 1877, 125 nr. 6;

Ardevan, Petac - under print). We also have to take into account the not yet studied hoard from Scundu because of its size (around 3000 denarii)(Mitrea 1958, 155; Preda 1958, 467). All these raise the number of big sized coin hoards to fifteen. The list is the following (containing the same data as the previous one):

- Băile Herculane > 2000 - Severus Alexander (Protase 1965 no. 11; Winkler 1965, 207-208) (4);

- Bârca, 2429 - Decius (Petolescu 1990, 17-34)(3) (6)(2);

- Bozovici I > 2000 - Philippus Arabs (Protase 1965 no. 20) (7);

- Bozovici II > 1785 - Philippus Arabs (?) (Protase 1965 no. 21) (8);

- Castranova > 8000 - Elagabalus (Protase 1965 no. 25) (9);

- Celei I c. 4000 - Philippus Arabs (Protase 1965 no. 26) (10);

- Dănești c. 2000 - Severus Alexander (Poenaru Bordea, Mitrea 1991, 221 no. 36) (11);

- Pădurețu c. 5000 - Philippus Arabs (Preda 1992-1993, 109-116) (15);

- Poiana Sărată c. 3000, - Commodus (Goos 1877, 125 nr. 6; Ardevan, Petac) (17);

- Sălașuri 3200 - Antoninus Pius (Molnár, Winkler 1965, 269-293) (17);

- Sâmburești 4300-4500 - Elagabalus (Chițescu, Popescu 1975, 222-227) (18);

- Scundu c. 3000 - Elagabalus (Preda 1958, 467) (20);

- Slatina c. 2250 - Commodus (Protase 1965 no. 66) (19);

- Slobozia c. 3000 - Philippus Arabs (Protase 1965 no. 67) (20);

- Vețel 2090 - Severus Alexander (Petolescu, Mărghitan 1984, 119-127) (22).

It appears obvious that such accumulations of silver coins occur in very different historical moments. Their percentage goes increasingly. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century there are only three such cases (Poiana Sărată, Sălașuri and Slatina), one in the first and two in its second half. On the other hand, six coin hoards are dated in the first third of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, during the Severan age (Băile Herculane, Castranova, Dănești, Sâmburești, Scundu, Vețel) and six during the military anarchy (Bârca, Bozovici I and II, Celei I, Pădurețu, Slobozia). The map shows only three very dissipated discoveries in northern Dacia (Poiana Sărată, Sălașuri and Vețel), three a certain groupment in Banat (Băile Herculane, Bozovici I and II) and ten in the today Little Wallachia. The preponderance of such big coin hoards in southern Dacia appears clearly obvious. If we add the three finds from Banat, the southern Dacia shows thirteen such hoards (86 %).

The existence of exceptional coin hoards in a specific place could be explained also through different circumstances. The two hoards from Bozovici seem to represent a wealth originating from the mines' business (Wollmann 1996, 31-33; 150-153), while the Băile Herculane hoard could have been hidden while its owner was visiting baths there (IDR III/1, 76). As the Vețel hoard was found in the proximity of the important Roman auxiliary fort of Micia, it seems to represent the wealth of a military official or of a *negotiator* dealing with the army (Petolescu, Mărghitan 1984, 123, 126). The Poiana Sărată hoard was found near a very important mountain passage; it could mirror the wealth of a merchant (Ardevan, Petac, *l.c.*).

As far as other coin hoards are concerned one cannot sustain similar explanations. These great accumulations of money must have originated in the current economic activities and represent some riches of the members of a Roman-Dacian social elite, the local upper class. It is worth underlining that these hoards occur generally far from towns or important garrisons (with the single exception of Celei I; Toropu, Tătulea 1987, 54, 58-59, 100-102, 104-105), commonly in rural areas. Only one (Sălașuri) was found in Transylvania. The other ones are grouped in Little Wallachia, mostly in three limited zones (see fig. 1): a) the Târgu Jiu bassin (Dănești, Slobozia); b) around Buridava (Pădurețu, Sâmburești, Scundu); c) in the south-eastern plain (Bârca, Castranova, Celei I, Slatina). The last one is the richest in this respect. If we also take into account the number of coins, the better endowment of southern Dacia with such great sized hoards and the hierarchy of the mentioned limited zones become more obvious (3).

This phenomenon requires an explanation. It is usually accepted that the plain of Little Wallachia is extremely well endowed with Roman rural settlements during the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries Roman province (Popilian 1976, 152-154 pl.LXXXIII; 1986, 54-63). The archaeological research or surveys registered equally numerous existing or supposed *villae rusticae* (about 45), some of large dimensions (Șandru 2000). The study of the Roman pottery stands for the same assertions (Popilian 1976, 152-153; 157-221). Big-sized coin hoards were found not in the very proximity of the Roman towns, but especially in their supposed *territoria*. The Târgu Jiu basin belonged to the town of Drobeta. Romula had also a vast territory, while the juridical status of Sucidava remains still a matter of debate (Ardevan 1998, 70-72, 95-96). The imposing hoards of Pădurețu and Sâmburești occurred not too far from the supposed location of the much debated Malva town, which must have been the capital of *Dacia Malvensis*, despite the lack of a municipal title (Piso 1993, 91; Ardevan 1998, 98-99). As far as we know, the coin hoards discovered in the provincial towns have allways smaller dimensions(4).

In conclusion, we think that these great coin hoards point the existence of a rich upper class in the rural milieu, a social level of rich landowners, possessing greater rural estates (Suciu 2001, 421, 426). Indeed, such hoards represent only a small percentage of the fortunes of this class, or of some of its servants (*liberti, actores, villici* etc.)(5). Their existence is connected with the developpment of large-sized land ownership in Roman Dacia, a phenomenon becoming visible especially in the Severan age (Piso 1995, 442-443; Ardevan 1998, 219-220, 231). The concentration of such coin hoards shows a greater developpment of these social trends in southern Roman Dacia. The society of this area seems to have known a greater social and economic polarisation as in the rest of the province. This situation finds its causes in the geographic background, as well as in the type of economy and a rather limited degree of urbanisation. Even here, however - as overall in Roman Dacia -, the growing and concentration of the rural properties never reached the level of a real *latifundia*, and even their richest owners never acceded into the senatorial order (Piso 1995, 438, 440, 443; Ardevan 1998, 219-220, 347). In our province, the local aristocracy consists in fact of town *decuriones*, some of them reaching mostly the equestrian rank (Piso 1995, 438, 440, 443; Ardevan 1998, 219-220, 347).

Some inscriptions from southern Little Wallachia show very rich private individuals, possible owners of *villae rusticae*, who never entered, however, the municipal aristocracy (IDR II, 147, 157, 187, 323, 635, 645, 647) (some of them *peregrini* - IDR II, 134).

The possession of larger land properties was a condition for the provincial aristocracy (Ardevan 1998, 163-166), but it never became its exclusive right.

Unfortunately, a small number of settlements from southern Roman Dacia have been from coin circulation viewpoint. In fact, only the town of Drobeta (Stânga 1998, 143-208) and the village from Orlea (Winkler, Băloi 1973, 191-193) were completely investigated. One can add partial archaeological investigations at Dierna (Chițescu, Poenaru Bordea 1981-1982, 184-185) and auxiliary fort from Slăveni (Popilian 1974, 75-82). The data offered by these researches are usefull for the understanding of the economic life in the province and the specific features of southern Roman Dacia as well. However, they are still quite a few in order to allow a complete control of our previous assertions.

## NOTES

1. A Roman denarius should weigh 3,99 g in the Augustan age, and only 3,41 g after the Nero's reform (Mattingly 1967, 122-124). The coins found actually hoarded or as stray finds, have usually much smaller weight. We appreciated a denarius at 2,80 g, as a common pattern. Consequently, the Bozovici II hoard should have had at least 1785 coins.
2. The four hoards found in this village could belong to a single greater hidden treasure (Iliescu 1971, 329; Petolescu 1990, 19). Against this opinion: Popilian 1965, 432 and Petac 1998, 27-39; the

main argument is the findspot. But at least Bârca III and IV coin hoards were discovered in the very same place (Popilian 1976, 188; Petolescu 1990, 17); together they would count 2047 coins.

3. The concentration of hoards in the bassin of Târgu Jiu offers a number around 5000 coins, while in the Buridava area numbers more than 12000 and in the south-eastern plain - more than 16600 pieces.
4. They consist of silver denarii (with a single exception): Romula - around 700 (Tudor 1978, 121); Drobeta - 5 *aurei* (Davidescu 1980, 137); Apulum I - 573 (Gâzdac 1996, 135-151); Apulum II - 115 (Winkler 1965, 232-233); Apulum III - 224 (Winkler 1965, 233); Apulum IV - 1209 (Pavel 1976, 93-97); Apulum V - 130, Apulum VI - around 250, Apulum VII - more than 800 (all of them not yet published but presented in numismatic conferences); Napoca I - 102 (Ardevan 1995, 181-194); Napoca II - more than 1200 (unpublished; kind information from our colleague S. Cociş); Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa - 21 (unpublished; kind information from Prof. I. Piso); Porolissum I - 21 and Porolissum II - 41 (unpublished; kind information from Prof. N. Gudea).
5. Their value is rather small in comparison with the usual spends of a local aristocrate (Ardevan 1995, 170-171, 206, 220). The evergesy mentioned in CIL III 1448 (80000 HS) means 20000 denarii, i. e. much more than the greatest coin hoard discovered in our province.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ardevan 1995 = Ardevan, R. 1995 in: *Din istoria Europei romane*, Oradea 181-194.
- Ardevan 1998 = Ardevan, R. 1998 *Viața municipală în Dacia romană*, Timișoara.
- Ardevan 2000 = Ardevan, R. 2000 XII. Internationaler Numismatischer Kongress, Berlin (1997). Akten - Proceedings - Actes I Berlin 494-498.
- Ardevan, Petac 2001 = Ardevan, R., Petac, Em. 2001 *Tezaurul monetar de la Poiana Sărată și problema numerarului din Dacia romană la sfârșitul secolului II p. Ch.*, typewritten manuscript (on print).
- Chițescu, Popescu 1975 = Chițescu, M., Popescu, E. 1975. *Tezaurul monetar imperial de la Sâmburești (jud. Olț)*, Studii și Cercetări Numismatice VI 1975, 222-227.
- Chițescu, Poenaru Bordea 1981-1982 = Chițescu, M., Poenaru Bordea, Gh. 1981-1982. *Contribuții la istoria Diernei în lumina descoperirilor monetare din săpăturile arheologice din 1967*, Buletinul Societății Numismatice Române 75-76 (129-130) 184-185.
- Davidescu 1980 = Davidescu, M. 1980 *Drobeta în secolele I-VII e.n.*, Craiova.
- Gâzdac 1996 = Gâzdac, Cr. 1996. *Il tesoro monetale romano imperiale. Apulum I. Ricercato di nuovo*, Ephemeris Napocensis 6, 135-151.
- Goos 1877 = Goos, C. 1877 *Die neuesten antiken Munzfunde Siebenburgen*, Archäologisch-Epigraphische Mitteilungen aus Österreich-Ungarn I 2 Wien 124-125.
- Iliescu 1971 = Iliescu, O. 1971 *Primul tezaur de monede găsit la Bârca (jud. Dolj)*, Studii și Cercetări Numismatice V 329.
- Mattingly 1967 = Mattingly, H. 1967 *Roman Coins from the Earliest Times to the Fall of the Western Empire*, London.
- Mitrea 1958 = Mitrea, B. 1958 *Descoperiri recente de monede antice pe teritoriul Republicii Populare Române*, Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche IX 1, 150-158.
- Mitrea 1973 = Mitrea, B. 1973 *Decouvertes des monnaies antiques et Byzantines dans la Republique Socialiste de Roumanie*, Dacia XVII 412 no. 60.
- Molnár, Winkler 1965 = Molnár, I., Winkler, I. 1965 *Tezaurul de monede romane de la Sălașuri (r. Târgu Mureș, reg. Mureș-Autonomă Maghiară)*, Acta Musei Napocensis II 269-293.
- Pavel 1976 = Pavel, V. *Tezaurul de monede romane imperiale descoperit la Alba Iulia în anul 1963*, Apulum XIV 1976, 73-97.
- Petac 1998 = Petac, Em. 1998 *Considerații cu privire la data finală a tezaurelor monetare îngropate la mijlocul secolului 3 p. Chr. în Dacia romană de la sud de Carpați*, Studii și Cercetări Numismatice XII 27-39.
- Petolescu 1990 = Petolescu, C. M. *The fourth coin hoard discovered at Bârca, Dolj county*, Cercetari Numismatice VI 17-34.
- Petolescu, Mărghitan 1984 = Petolescu, C. M., Mărghitan, L. 1984 *Tezaurul de monede romane imperiale de la Micia*, Studii și Cercetări Numismatice VIII 119-128.

- Piso 1993 = Piso, I. 1993 *Fasti provinciae Daciae. I. Die senatorischen Amtsträger*, Bonn.
- Piso 1995 = Piso, I. 1995 in: *Du latifundium au latifondo. Un héritage de Rome, une création médiévale ou moderne ?* Bordeaux 442-443.
- Poenaru Bordea, Mitrea = Poenaru Bordea, Gh., Mitrea, B. 1990 *Chronique. Découvertes monétaires en Roumanie-1989 (XXXIII)*, Dacia N.S. XXXIV 306 no. 90.
- Poenaru Bordea, Mitrea = Poenaru Bordea, Gh., Mitrea, B. 1991 *Chronique. Découvertes monétaires en Roumanie-1989 (XXXIV)*, Dacia N.S. XXXV 1991, 221 no. 44.
- Poenaru Bordea, Mitrea 1994-1995 = Poenaru Bordea, Gh., Mitrea, B. *Chronique. Découvertes monétaires en Roumanie -1989 (XXXVII)*, Dacia N.S. XXXVIII-XXXIX 469-470 no. 72.
- Popilian 1965 = Popilian, Gh. 1965 *Noi tezaure monetare imperiale descoperite în Oltenia*, Revista Muzeelor II 432.
- Popilian 1974 = Popilian, Gh. 1974 *Aspecte ale circulației monetare în castrul și așezarea romană de la Slăveni, Oltenia*, Studii și comunicări, Craiova I 75-82.
- Popilian 1976 = Popilian, Gh. 1976 *Ceramica romană din Oltenia*, Craiova.
- Popilian 1986 = Popilian, Gh. 1986 *Villae rusticae în Dacia Romană de la sud de Carpați*, Arhivele Olteniei VI 1986, 54-63.
- Popilian, Stan - Mircești 1989 = Popilian, Gh., Stan-Mircești, I. 1989 *Tezaurul de monede romane imperiale de la Butoiești (județul Mehedinți)*, Studii și Cercetări Numismatice IX 37-42.
- Preda 1958 = Preda, C. 1958 *Alte descoperiri monetare*, Studii și Cercetări Numismatice II 467.
- Preda 1992-1993 = Preda, C. 1992 -1993 *Tezaurul monetar imperial de la Pădurețu, jud. Vâlcea*, Buletinul Societății Numismatice Române 86-87 (140-141) 109-116.
- Protase 1965 = Protase, D. *Les trésors monétaires de la Dacie romaine*, in: Congresso Internazionale di Numismatica, Roma 11 -16 settembre 1961. Atti II Roma 423-430.
- Protase, Crișan 1968 = Protase, D., Crișan, I.H. 1968 *Tezaurul de monede imperiale romane de la Țaga (jud. Cluj)*, Studii și Cercetări Numismatice IV 139-173.
- Stângă 1998 = Stângă, I. 1998 *Viața economică la Drobeta în secolele II-VI p.Ch.*, București.
- Suciu 2000 = Suciu, V. 2001 *Tezaure monetare din Dacia romană și postromană*, Cluj-Napoca (on print).
- Suciu 2000 = Suciu, V. 2000 *Structura economico-socială a Daciei romane oglindită în tezaurele monetare*, Apulum XXXVII/1, 417-427.
- Șandru 2000 = Șandru, I. 2000 *Vilele rustice în Dacia romană*, doctoral type written dissertation, Cluj-Napoca.
- Tudor 1978 = Tudor, D. 1978 *Oltenia romană*, București.
- Winkler 1965 = Winkler, I. 1965 *Circulația monetară la Apulum*, Acta Musei Napocensis II 215-255.
- Winkler 1965 = Winkler, I. 1965 *"Pușculițe de bani, loculi" din Dacia romană*, Apulum V 203-217.
- Winkler, Băloi, 1973 = Winkler, I., Băloi, C. 1973 *Circulația monetară în așezările antice de pe teritoriul comunei Orlea*, Acta Musei Napocensis X 181-209.
- Wollmann 1996, = Wollmann, V. 1996 *Mineritul metalifer, extragerea sării și carierele de piatră în Dacia romană*, Cluj-Napoca 150-153.

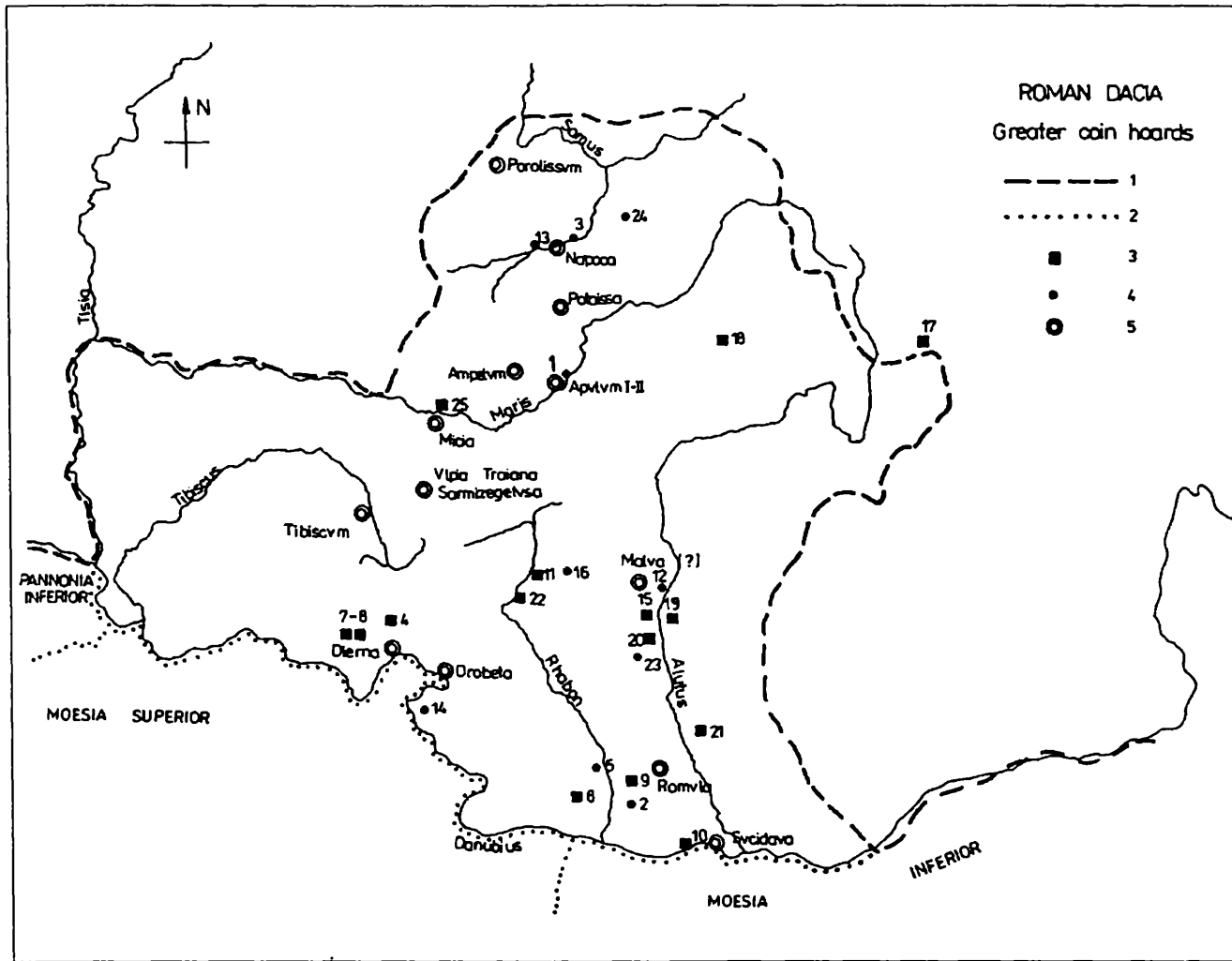


Fig. 1. ROMAN DACIA - Greater coin hoards

1. Frontier of the Roman Empire; 2. Frontier of a Roman province; 3. Coin hoards consisting of more than 2000 pieces; 4. Coin hoards consisting of 1000-1500 pieces; 5. Roman urban settlements.