

THE MONETARY CIRCULATION AND THE ABANDONMENT OF DACIA - A COMPARATIVE STUDY

The chronological period of a strong debasement of the monetary circulation in the Roman province of Dacia is followed the reign of Philip. The present study tries to present a situation of the monetary circulation by a comparison with other provinces of the Roman Empire during the period between the jointed reign of Valerian and Gallienus and the reign of Aurelian. We choose this period to demonstrate the role of numismatics in the controversy problem of the moment when Dacia was abandonment by Roman administration and army.

The period 253 - 260 was considered by the numismats as one of a fast debasement¹. Around the year 260 the antoninian has the lowest value². The emperor Gallienus tried to redress the financial situation of the Empire³. Now were opened the mints at Siscia Smyrna, Mediolanum⁴. The whole monetary policy of this emperor seems to be destined to the payment of army to keep their faith⁵. In Dacia for the period of Gallienus can be seen a light increasement of the monetary index but its value is still very low than in the time of Philip (fig. 7). At the same time, we must point out that a part of the coin finds have been published on the old catalogues which make some difficulties concerning the exactly identification of coins of Gallienus in the jointed reign with Valerian, years 253-260, and those of the single reign, years 260-268.

The monetary production of the central mints in the period of years 260-270 it is known as one of a huge quantities of coins, the production index reaches now the highest level (fig. 1)⁶. So, the coins issued in this period should be found in a big quantities. In Gaul, the monetary circulation in the 3rd century is characterised by a permanent and a strong coin supply with small variations of index⁷. By the years 250⁷ were opened the provincial mints inside of the provinces where they must supply the neighbouring area⁸ and near the border to pay the troops⁹. Thus, the troops from the Rhine border to be paid it was opened the mint from Treveri in 257¹⁰. For the same purpose, between 260-274 Postumus issued huge quantities of antoninians, this denomination become the main coinage of that time¹¹. Some scholars consider, on the right way, that the monetary picture reflected, more or less, the military activity, on the most of cases,

¹ J. Fitz, *La Pannonie sous Gallien*, Latomus, 148, 1976, p. 18.

² *idem*, *loc.cit.*, p. 19.

³ J.P. Callu, *La politique monétaire des empereurs romains de 238 à 311*, Paris 1969, p. 478.

⁴ *ibidem*; L. de Blois, *The Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, Leiden 1976, p. 93.

⁵ L. de Blois, *op.cit.*, p. 98.

⁶ G. Depeyrot, D. Hollard, *Pénurie d'argent-métal et crise monétaire au IIIe siècle après J.C.*, Histoire et mesure, vol. II-1, Paris 1987, p. 57 sqq.

⁷ D. Hollard, *La circulation monétaire en Gaule au IIIe siècle après J.-C.*, Coin Finds and Coin Use in the Roman World. The thirteenth Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary History 1993, (SFMA), 10, 1996, p.216

⁸ Ch. Howgego, *Coin Circulation and the Integration of the Roman Economy*, JRA, 7/1994, p. 12 sqq.

⁹ D. Hollard, *loc.cit.*, p. 216.

¹⁰ *ibidem*.

¹¹ *idem*, *loc.cit.*, p. 206.

the coin movements can be explained by the movements of troops linked with trade, taxes etc.¹².

The secession of Gaul was for Gallienus - by the monetary point of view - a difficult point because he loose some sources of metal in the same time with the increase of the money demands for troops. The measures of Gallienus were to reduce the weight and the contents of coins¹³. Concernig the payment for troops it is characteristic for this period that not the regular pay increased but more the gifts and awards (*donativae, annonae*)¹⁴. The huge quantity of antoninians still continue to grow until 280 thanks to the Italian mints and the irregular issues¹⁵.

The monetary situation of Britain is similar with that of Gaul. The possibility that the soldiers could be paid by some usurpers, make Rome to send to Britain huge quantity of coins¹⁶ (fig. 2). At 270 the coins issued at Rome come to Britain together with those issued in the Gallic Empire¹⁷. For the same purpose were opened the provincial mints from Londinium, Trier, Lugdunum to supply with regularity Britain and neighbouring areas¹⁸.

By the analyse of the tables of R. Reece can be observed that in northern Italy, south and east of Gaul and Britain the period 260-275 is one of a rich coin supply but a coinage of a very low content of silver (fig. 4). In the territories ruled by the usurpers exists a huge quantity of coins issued in some provincial mints which was destined to the payment of troops. The provincial issues didn't stop the penetration of the central coins. Moreover, the central monetary authority known now a full process of dissolution, this phenomena can be seen in the comparison between the provincial and central issues¹⁹(fig. 3). The provincial mints have the tendency to replace the central mints. In the same time the monetary situation represents the loss of the political control of this territories because of the usurpers who use the same coinage to strike their own coins but with a better content of silver²⁰. As an answer to the missing of control of the western mints, during the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus, the mints from Syria and Palestina stopped their Greek issues and started to strike roman denominations. Thus that in the eastern parts of the Empire we can mention a strong increase of the imperial authority of coins and the integration of the eastern mints in the Roman monetary system²¹.

In the provinces from the neighbourhood of Dacia the monetary circulation follows the graphic of the coin production. Thus, in both Pannonia, the monetary index has

¹² Ch. Howgego, *The circulation of silver coins, models of the Roman economy and crisis in the third century AD; some numismatic evidence*, Coin Finds and Coin Use in the Roman World. The thirteenth Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary History, 1993, (SFMA), 10 Oxford 1996, p. 224.

¹³ G. Depeyrot, D. Hollard, *loc. cit.*, p. 127.

¹⁴ Ch Howgego, *Ancient History from Coins*, Londra-New-York 1995, p. 127.

¹⁵ D. Hollard, *loc.cit.*, p. 207.

¹⁶ R. Reece, *Coinage in Roman Britain*, Londra 1987.

¹⁷ *idem, op.cit.*, p. 19.

¹⁸ *idem, op.cit.*, p. 118.

¹⁹ A. Kunisz, *Obieg monetarny w Cesarstwie Rzymskim w I - IV wieku cechy charakterystyczne [Monetary Circulation in the Roman Empire from the 1st to 4th century A.D. - characteristic features]*, Prace i Materiały Muzeum Archeologicznego i Etnograficznego w Łodzi, Łodz, no. 9, 1990, p. 31; Cathy King, *The Circulation of Coin in the Western Provinces A.D. 260-295*, BAR, I.S., 109, 1981, p. 101.

²⁰ G. Depeyrot, D. Hollard, *loc. cit.*, (n. 6), p. 70.

²¹ K.E.T. Butcher, *Coinage and currency in Syria and Palestine to the reign of Gallienus*, Coin Finds and Coin Use in the Roman World. The thirteenth Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary History, 1993, (SFMA), 10, 1996, p. 112.

recorded a high jump for the period 268-284, because of a enormous supply with coins (fig. 8)²².

Concerning the monetary circulation from other towns and other military places of the Empire it confirmed the huge quantity of coins for the period 260-275. In the case of towns Poetovio, Carnuntum, Vindobona, Brigetio, Emona, Celeia, Neviodunum the coin finds graphic riches the maximal limits²³ (fig. 5, fig. 6). In Dacia, the main towns and military garrisons Apulum and Potaissa are over the middle index of the province but not at a very high level. The small quantity of the coin find in these two sites (Apulum: Gallienus 53 -pieces; Potaissa: Gallienus - 20 pieces)²⁴, seems to indicate a low level of economical life or the coin would not has a strong position in the commercial relationship. It is difficult to explain what happened in this case with the pays of soldiers from the two legions - XIIIth Gemina and Vth Macedonica - garrisoned in those two towns.

It can be observed that in Dacia the reign of Claudius II represent a regress from the monetary circulation point of view (fig. 7). While in Pannonia - where until now the graphic of the monetary circulation was similar with that of Dacia²⁵ -, the period of 268 - 284 it is one of reinforcement and stabilization²⁶, (fig. 8). In the same time in the both provinces of Moesia the coinage of Claudius II can be found in abundance²⁷, but in Dacia it is very rarely (16 pieces from isolated finds in the settlements²⁸).

For the reign of Aurelian the first impression is that of a constantly monetary circulation (fig. 7) in comparison with the period of Claudius II. This impression comes because of the very high value of the index of the Sucidava settlement, the other settlements - except the settlement of Orlea - presents a decrease of index of the monetary circulation during the reign of Aurelian²⁹. The reform of monetary system of Aurelian in the fall of 274 when the bronze coinage become is award with credibility³⁰ could have only some later effects for Dacia.

Based on the statistic analyses and graphic comparisons between some provinces of the Roman Empire we affirm that probably at the end of the reign of Gallienus Dacia was out of control of the Roman Empire from the financial point of view.

²² J.P. Callu, *op.cit.*, (n. 3), p. 478; J. Fitz, *loc.cit.*, (n. 1), p. 18.

²³ P. Kos, *The Monetary Circulation in the Southeastern Alpine Region ca. 300 B.C.- A.D. 1000*, Situla, 24 (1984-1985) 1986, p. 94 ff.

²⁴ C. Găzdac, *The Monetary Circulation in the Main Settlements from Roman Dacia - 244-332*, Carnuntum Jahrbuch, 1998 (forthcoming).

²⁵ *ibidem*.

²⁶ J. Fitz, *loc.cit.*, (n. 1), p. 18.

²⁷ S. Dušanić, *Apects of Roman Mining in Noricum, Pannonia, Dalmatia and Moesia Superior*, ANRW, II/6, 1977, p. 93; B. Gerov, *Die Einfälle der Nordvölker in den Ostbalkanraum im Lichte der Münzschatzfunde. I. Das II u. Z. III Jahrhundert (101 - 284)*, ANRW, II/6, 1977, p. 142.

²⁸ C. Găzdac, *loc.cit.*

²⁹ *ibidem*.

³⁰ J.P. Callu, *op.cit.*, (n. 3), p. 479.

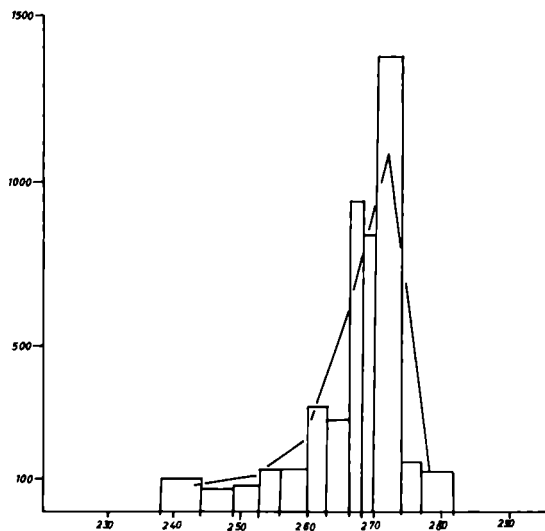


Fig. 1 - The index of the central mints' production (after G. Depeyrot, D. Hollard, *Pénurie d'argent-métal et crise monétaire au IIIe siècle après J.C.*, Histoire et mesure, vol. II-1, Paris 1987).

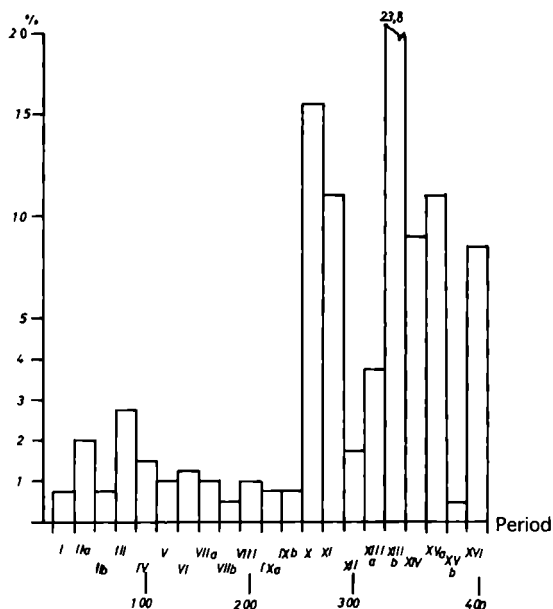


Fig. 2 - Percentage of coins finds from British sites by period (after R. Reece, *Coinage in Roman Britain*, Londra 1987). I - until 41 A.D.; IIa - 41-54; IIb - 54-69; III - 69-96; IV - 96-117; V - 117; VI - 138-161; VIIa - 161-180; VIIb - 180-192; VIII - 193-222; IXa - 222-238; IXb - 238-260; X - 260-275; XI - 275-296; XII - 296-317; XIIIa - 317-330; XIIIb - 330-348; XIV - 348-364; XVa - 364-378; XVb - 378-388; XVI - 388-402.

Britain (260-295)

(34 sites) = 17438 coins

Official mints	3906	= 22,39%
Mints of Gaule	6196	= 35,53%
Mints of Britain	2635	= 15,11%
Barbarian (copies)	4701	= 26,95%
Total:	13532	= 77,60%

North Gaule (260-295)

(20 sites) = 4933 coins

Official mints	911	= 18,46%
Mints of Gaule	785	= 15,91%
Mints of Britain	5	= 0,10%
Barbarian (copies)	3232	= 65,51%
Total:	4022	= 81,53%

Central-East Gaule (260-295)

(12 sites) = 3164 coins

Official mints	2026	= 64,03%
Mints of Gaule	1042	= 32,93%
Mints of Britain	9	= 0,28%
Barbarian (copies)	87	= 2,74%
Total:	1138	= 35,96%

South Gaule (260-295)

(26 sites) = 2811 coins

Official mints	1973	= 70,18%
Mints of Gaule	736	= 26,18%
Mints of Britain	7	= 0,24%
Barbarian (copies)	95	= 3,37%
Total:	838	= 29,81%

Fig. 3 - The percentage of the central and provincial coin's issues in Britannia and Gallia (after Cathy King, *The Circulation of Coin in the Western Provinces A.D. 260-295*, BAR, I.S., 109, 1981).

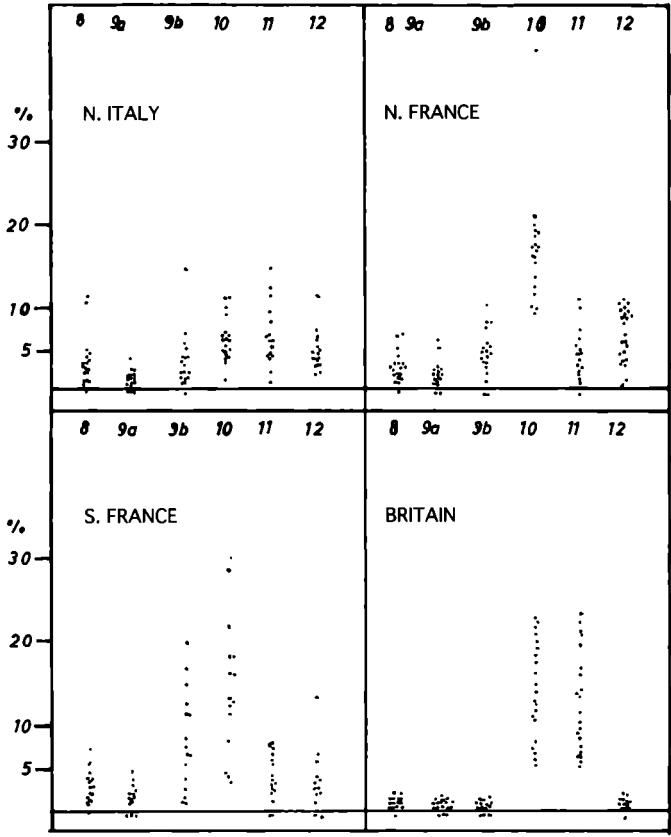


Fig. 4 - Distribution of base silver coins in Britain, France and Italy AD 193 to 317 (after R. Reece, op.cit.)

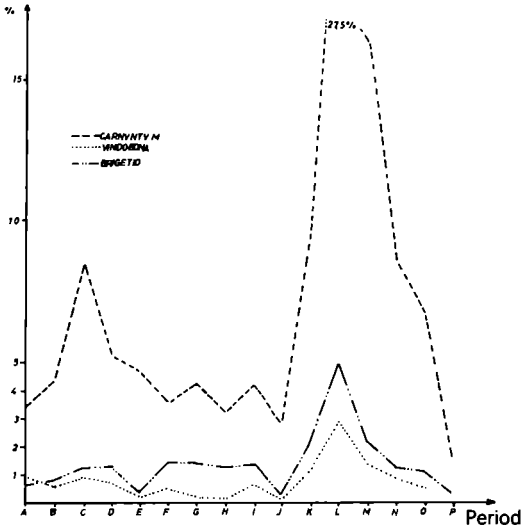


Fig. 5 - Graph showing the comparative intensity of the coin finds between Carnuntum, Vindobona and Brigetio (after *The Monetary Circulation in the Southeastern Alpine Region ca. 300 B.C.- A.D. 1000*, Situla, 24 (1984- 1985) 1986).

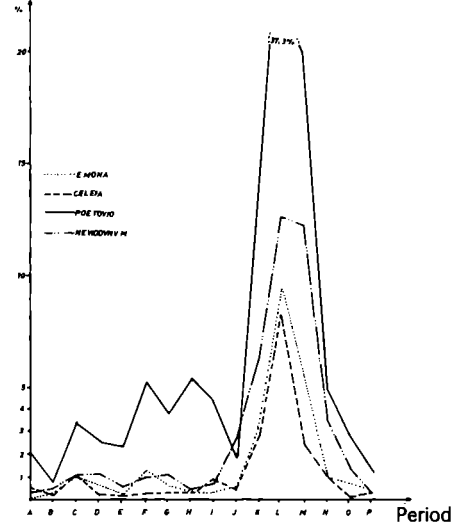


Fig. 6 - Graph showing the comparative intensity of the coin finds between Poetovio, Ermona, Celeia and Nevidunum (after P. Kos, *loc.cit.*).

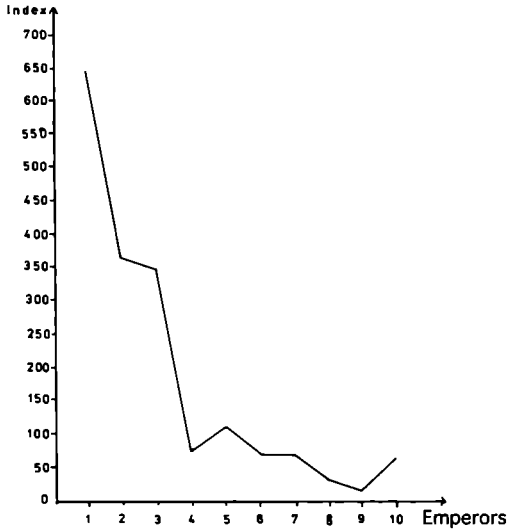


Fig. 7 - Graph showing the value of the monetary circulation from Dacia (after C. Găzdac, *The Monetary Circulation in the Main Settlements from Roman Dacia - 244-332*, Carnuntum Jahrbuch, 1998 (forthcoming)).
 1 - Philip; 2 - Trajan Decius; 3 - Trebonianus Gallus; 4 - Valerianus; 5 - Gallienus; 6 - Claudius 2nd; 7 - Aurelianus; 8 - years 275-284; 9 - Diocletian; 10 - years 305-332.

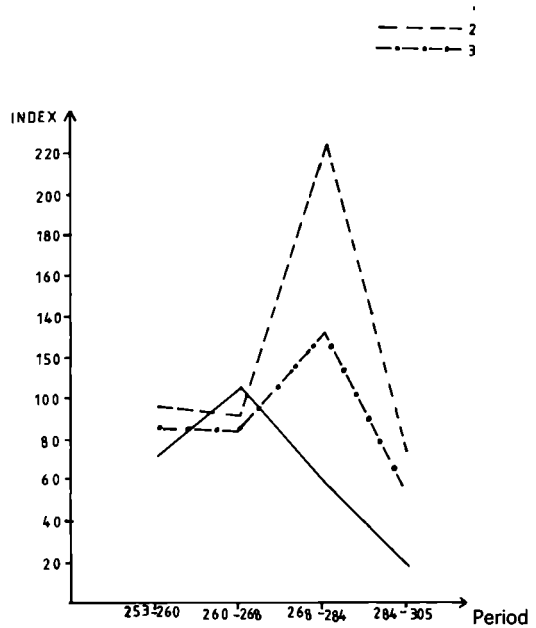


Fig. 8 - Graph showing the comparative monetary indexes from provinces of Dacia, Upper and Lower Pannonia. 1 - Dacia; 2 - Upper Pannonia; 3 - Lower Pannonia (C. Găzdac, *loc.cit.*).