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THE COINAGE “PROVINCIA DACIA” – A COINAGE FOR ONE PROVINCE ONLY? (AD 246-257)

For those less familiar, this type of coinage was first issued in AD 246, during the reign of Philip I, when the emperor allowed the province of Dacia to strike its own bronze coinage. This coinage respect the standards of imperial issues, so on the obverse appears the emperor’s portrait or one of the members of the imperial family with the legend in Latin and in concordance with the official formulas. On the reverse, always appears the legend *PROVINCIA DACIA*, sometimes the words are split following the distribution of the image in the field. In exergue is inscribed the year of minting under the formula *AN I – XI*. The image depicted represents the personification of the province of Dacia, standing or seating between the two symbols of the legions from Dacia: an eagle with a wreath in his beak and a lion. The female can hold either two standards inscribed “V” and “XIII” (the legions 5th *Macedonica* from *Potaissa* –today Turda and 13th *Gemina* from *Apulum* – today Alba Iulia, Romania); a *phalx* (the Dacian sword); or an olive branch and a standard inscribed “DF” (*Dacia felix*).¹



Fig. 1. A coin “PROVINCIA DACIA”.

Although it was struck in a province this coinage, made of bronze only, was minted according to the official bronze denominational system of the imperial mint: *sestertius*, *dupondius* and *as*.

This coinage is not unique. A very close analogy can be seen in the bronze coinage minted at *Viminacium* (today Kostolac) in *Moesia Superior* (today Serbia) started from AD 239 until AD 254-255². The very close resemblance between these two coinages has made some authors to consider that actually the coinage “*PROVINCIA DACIA*” was minted at *Viminacium*, as well.³

The minting of official denominations also in a province at the same time with those from Rome is known for earlier emperors. For example, the *Britannia asses* have been assumed to be produced in Britain, since they are found mainly there⁴ but ‘there was no

¹ For a detailed description about this coinage see F. Martin: *Kolonialprägungen aus Moesia Superior und Dacia*, Budapest-Bonn 1992, *passim*; Á. Alföldy-Găzdac, and C. Găzdac: *The coinage “Provincia Dacia”*, Cluj-Napoca 2004, (forthcoming).

² F. Martin (n. 1), 21.

³ For the discussions on the location of the mint that issued the coinage “*PROVINCIA DACIA*” see Ardevan, R.: *Monetăria provincială de la Sarmizegetusa*, in BSNR 86-87, 1992-1993, 117-122; Á. Alföldy: *Circulația monedelor de tip PROVINCIA DACIA în Dacia romană*, B.A. thesis, Cluj-Napoca 2002, 19ff; Á. Alföldy-Găzdac, C. Găzdac (n. 1).

⁴ D. Walker: *Roman Coins from the Sacred Spring at Bath. The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath. II. Finds from the Sacred Spring*, Oxford 1988, 296-297.



Fig. 2. Denominations of coinage "PROVINCIA DACIA": sestertius, dupondius, as.



Fig. 3. Sestertius of Viminacium

Sestertius of "PROVINCIA DACIA".

apparent shortage of supply, and local, barbarous imitations of second century bronze are comparatively rare'.⁵

As an argument that the coinage "PROVINCIA DACIA" was directly related to the imperial monetary policy is the fact that the denominations of this coinage followed the same pattern of debasement as those minted at Rome did:

a.) the smaller denominations (*dupondius*, *as*) were getting more and more scarcely due to the strong devaluation of the Roman monetary system, especially the silver coinage, which implied the pull out of the smaller bronze denomination;

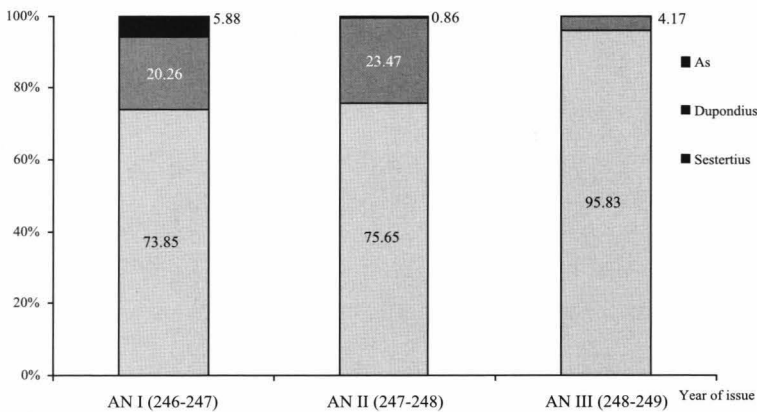


Fig. 4. Proportions of denominations for coin finds "PROVINCIA DACIA" in Roman Dacia.

⁵ D. Wigg: Coin supply and the Roman army, in Roman Frontier Studies 1995. Proceedings of the XVIth International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies (eds. W. van Waateringe, B. van Beek, W. Willems, S. Włynia), Oxford 1997, 287.

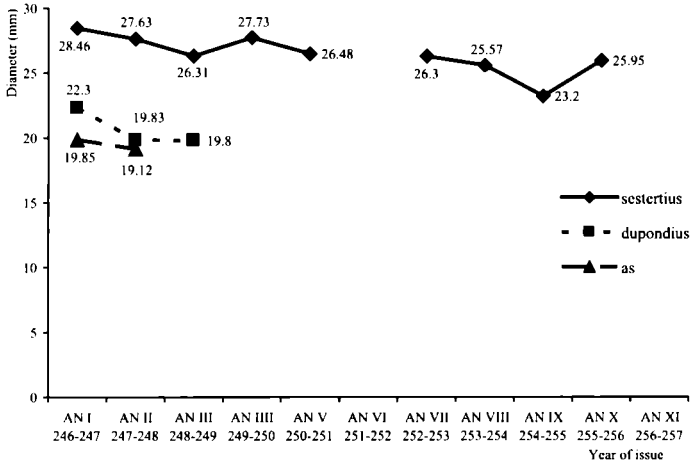


Fig. 5. Average diameter fluctuation of the coinage "PROVINCIA DACIA".

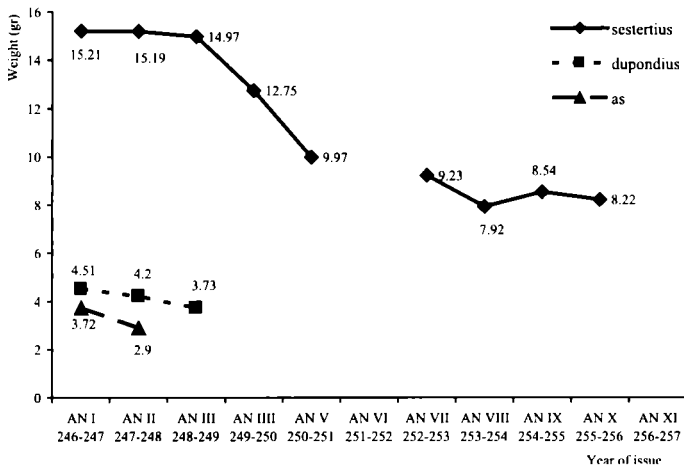


Fig. 6. Average weight fluctuation of the coinage "PROVINCIA DACIA".⁶

b.) the *sestertius*, is following the same tricky pattern: the diameter kept almost the same size while the weight was decreasing.

In Dacia such coinage was found at almost all the Roman sites which underwent researches and their existence did not stop before the reign of Philip I. Normally, such coins were also found by chance (see Map 1). As it has been demonstrated, the quantity of coins recovered depends on the extent and quality of excavation and the nature of the site.⁷ So far, the Roman sites from Dacia make no exception from this rule. The largest quantity of such coinage is coming from the site of *Apulum* (today Alba Iulia) where in the Roman period were two towns (*Colonia Aurelia Apulensis* and *Colonia Nova Apulensis*) and a legionary fortress (the 13th *Gemina*). It is followed by two other big sites *Porolissum* (today Moigrad) and *Potaissa* (today Turda) both Roman towns and military garrisons. They are followed by other sites which underwent systematic excavations. Of

⁶ It must be mentioned that the lack of any value for the average diameter and weight for year 6th of minting (AD 251-252) is due to the way of publication of the two coins "PROVINCIA DACIA" minted in this year found so far, F. Martin (n. 1), 101.

⁷ Ch. Howgego: *The Supply and Use of Money in the Roman World 200 BC to AD 300*, in JRS 72, 1992, 3.

course, unlike the find spots where such a coinage was discovered just by chance, in the case of the sites mentioned above, also this way of finding has to be taken into account.⁸

The study of this coinage has revealed some interesting aspects.

A first observation, which can be noticed, is that the first year of issue of this coinage "AN I" (AD 246-247) seems to be also the most productive one.⁹

Unfortunately, in the absence of any possibility to establish the exact quantity of coin-production of this coinage this aspect will remain, at the moment, at a hypothetical level.

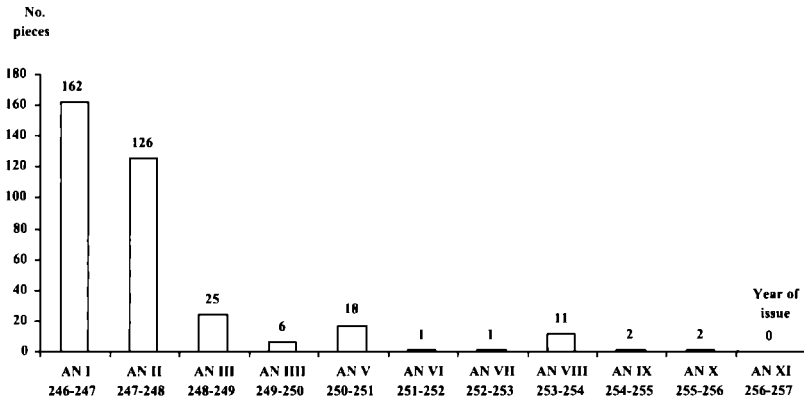


Fig. 7. "PROVINCIA DACIA" finds in Roman Dacia.

Actually, for the reign of Philip I, "PROVINCIA DACIA" coinage became the main one in the supply of Dacia with bronze coinage. For the bronze coins minted in the period of AD 249-253, the comparative percentages indicate that the main mint to supply Dacia with bronze coinage was *Viminacium* (*Moesia Superior*) (today Kostolac, Serbia). For the last period of existence of this coin, AD 253-257, the frequency of coin finds suggests again a predominance of coinage *PROVINCIA DACIA* upon the one minted at *Viminacium*.¹⁰

The relative recent publication of a large quantity of numismatic material with the mention of the find spots allows us to establish some local and regional patterns of this coinage movement.

In the case of the site of *Porolissum* (today Moigrad, Romania) (see map 1) – a very heavy militarized site¹¹ – 64% of the coins "PROVINCIA DACIA" minted during the reign of Philip I were found on the territory of the fort from Pomăt Hill while 36% of the coins "PROVINCIA DACIA" minted in the same period were found on the territory of the civilian settlement.¹²

⁸ The inventory registers from those museums located at the Roman sites prove this way of finding.

⁹ The number "0" for the year of issue AN XI (AD 256-257) indicates that coins of the type "PROVINCIA DACIA" minted in that year have not yet been found either at sites from the former province of Dacia or amongst the finds by chance from Romania. They still exist, as they are present in a private collection (Mr. F. Kecskés, Bezdan, and former Yugoslavia), see F. Martin (n. 1), 106, n°. 7.67, pl. viii, n°. 7.67.1; and in the collections of the Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum (National Hungarian Museum) in Budapest, see M. Bakos: *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum Hungary II. Dacia - Moesia Superior*, Milano 1994, 36, n°. 116, tav. XI, no. 116. In both cases there is only one piece.

¹⁰ It must be mentioned that the results for the period of Valerianus I must be regarded with circumspection as the number of coins studied is very low (12 pieces), as well as the mint from *Viminacium* was closed two years earlier (AD 255) than the mint from *Dacia*, see F. Martin (n. 1), 21.

¹¹ N. Gudea: *Porolissum, cheia de boltă a apărării Daciei Porolissensis*, in *ActaMP* 12, 195-214.

¹² Á. Alföldy-Găzdac: *Pénzverés a római Dáciában (246-257)*, in *Hétköznapi élet a római Dáciában*, Cluj-Napoca 2004, (forthcoming).

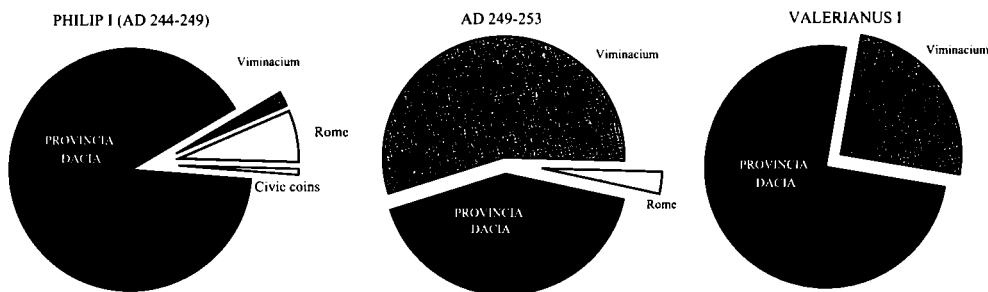


Fig. 8. Percentages of coins "PROVINCIA DACIA" and colonia Viminacium in hoards from Lower Danube.¹³

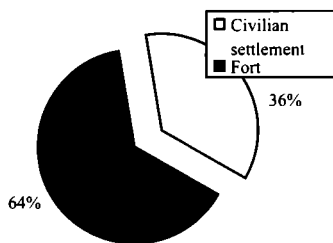


Fig. 9. The percentage of coins "PROVINCIA DACIA" at the site of Porolissum.

At the level of the whole province of Dacia regional patterns can be established for the distribution of this coinage.¹⁴

As it can be noticed from the graph above, the coins "PROVINCIA DACIA" minted in the reign of Philip I are more frequently found in the intra-Carpathian territory, while for those coins minted for later reigns they are more often found on the outer-Carpathian territory. This pattern is not a particular one for this coinage but is related to the similar phenomenon of the entire monetary circulation in Dacia.¹⁵

Until the period of AD 249-253 the percentage of finds/ year is much higher for the sites in the interior of the province. The explanation of this situation is the location of the majority of towns (6 of 9) as well as the higher concentration of military bases,

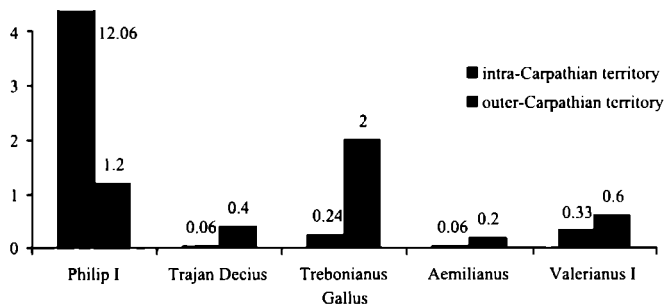


Fig. 10. Regional patterns of coin finds "PROVINCIA DACIA" in Roman Dacia.

¹³ These pie-charts are based on the database from C. Găzdac: Monetary circulation in Dacia and the provinces from the Middle and Lower Danube from Trajan to Constantine I (AD 106-337), Cluj-Napoca 2002, tab. D 1, Philip I – Valerianus I.

¹⁴ Á. Alföldy (n. 3), pl. 3.

¹⁵ C. Găzdac (n. 11), pl. Q1.

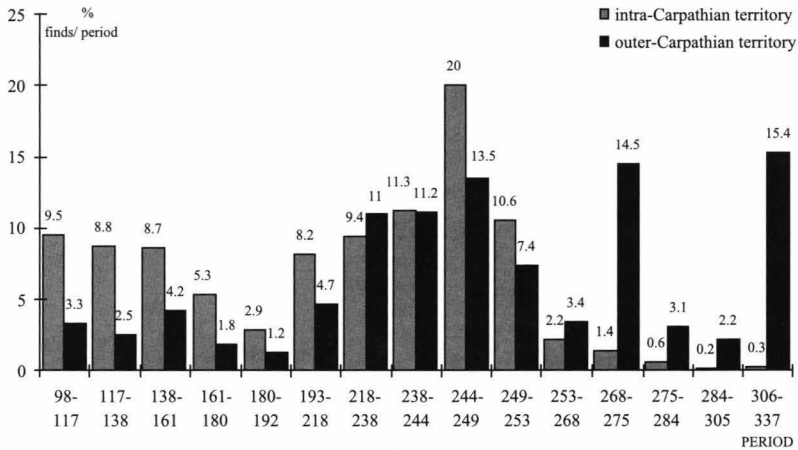


Fig. 11. Regional patterns of isolated coin finds from Roman Dacia.

including the two legions, in the two *Daciae*: *Apulensis* and *Porolissensis* (the intra-Carpathian area, see map 1).

The percentage value of coin finds/ year records a different pattern for the two areas of *Dacia*, north and south, for the last period of Roman administration and the post-provincial period. Starting with the period of AD 253-268 the percentage of coin finds/ year of the southern sites becomes higher than that of northern sites. At this stage of research, it can be suggested that the higher value recorded for the period of AD 268-275 at southern sites can be tentatively explained by high traffic in the area of the crossing of the Danube, especially *Drobeta* (today Turnu Severin, Romania) and *Sucidava* (today Celei, Romania) (see map 1), caused by the abandonment of the province and the foundation of the new provinces south of Danube, *Dacia Ripensis* and *Dacia Mediteranensis*. The proximity of the Empire produces a much higher percentage of coin finds in the southern area in the post-provincial period, than for the northern sites. This situation can be explained though the exchange relationship between the centre (the Roman Empire) and the periphery, and later the hinterland (the province of *Dacia*).

The recent publication of coin finds from Roman sites on the territories of the former provinces adjacent to *Dacia*¹⁶ – the two *Pannoniae* and the two *Moesiae* – allow us to push the research on the coinage “*PROVINCIA DACIA*” circulation beyond the borders of *Dacia*.

The analyze of the bronze coin finds from the most well researched and published sites from these provinces – *Carnuntum* (today Petronell, Austria), *Brigetio* (today Szöny, Hungary), *Poetovio* (Ptuj, Slovenia), *Intercisa* (today Dunaújváros, Hungary), all located in *Pannonia*¹⁷ – reveal a completely different picture of the percentage of “*PROVINCIA DACIA*” coinage from what we have in *Dacia*. One can easily notice that at the most well researched and published sites from Pannonia the main mint for supply with bronze coinage was *Viminacium*. For the minting period AD 244-253¹⁸, compare to the

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ It must be mentioned here that the absence of the sites from *Moesia Superior* is the result of the very poor state of publication of the numismatic material provided by the sites located on the territory of this former Roman province (today Serbia mainly and small part of Macedonia). In the case of *Moesia Inferior*, the coins “*PROVINCIA DACIA*” are absent from the sites studied in that work, see n. 14.

¹⁸ Although the analyses were carried out for the period of Valerianus I (AD 253-259), as well (see the table with the percentages of bronze mints), the very scarce number of bronze coins found at the sites mentioned (between 1 and 3 pieces) made the results irrelevant.

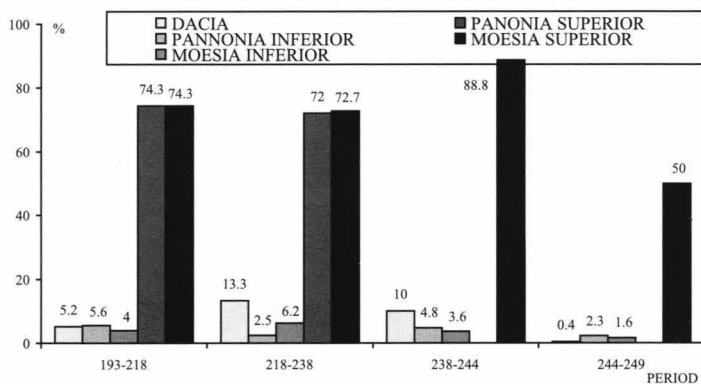


Fig. 12. Comparative graph of % civic coins in the provinces from Lower Danube.

other mints – Rome, “PROVINCIA DACIA” and Civic (Greek) mints – this mint has between 63.1% and 88.8% of the bronze coin finds at those sites (see table 1, pl. 1 and 2).

In the province of *Moesia Inferior*, the absence of coins “PROVINCIA DACIA” can be explain by the large quantity of civic (Greek) coin finds, which probably were destined to cover the shortage of the official bronze coinage.¹⁹

The province *Moesia Superior* reveals a particular case. Although, no coins “PROVINCIA DACIA” were found as isolated finds at different Roman sites, they appear in the few bronze (between 21 and 81 bronze coins) hoards found on this territory (see map 2). The analyses of these hoards indicate the same huge dominance of the coins minted at *Viminacium* upon the coins “PROVINCIA DACIA” (see the pie-charts of the bronze hoards from *Moesia Superior*). In these hoards the mint of *Viminacium* holds between 84.21% and 90.9% of the coins in the hoards (see pl. 3).²⁰

At this point, it must be mentioned that at the moment, hoards containing coins “PROVINCIA DACIA” in the other provinces from the Lower Danube region are very scarce found, as well as the bronze hoards itself. So far, 8 coins were found in the hoard *Sirmium I* (today Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia) (154 bronze coins Antoninus Pius – Trajan Decius)²¹, 1 coin “PROVINCIA DACIA” in the hoard *Preajba Mare* (Romania)²², 1 coin “PROVINCIA DACIA” in the monetary finds (5 coins) from *Porolissum* (today Moigrad, Romania).²³

An illustrative picture about the role of coinage “PROVINCIA DACIA” is the comparative graph in fig. 13.

This graph is based on the isolated coin finds only from Roman sites attested for sure. In order to have a picture close to the reality, as much as possible the percentages are calculated from the aggregate of all types of denominations (gold, silver bronze; official, provincial and civic coins).

Comparing *Dacia* with the adjacent provinces indicates that the *PROVINCIA DACIA* coins are mainly found in this province and very scarce in the surrounding ones. While

¹⁹ C. Găzdac: *Circulația monetară în Dacia și provinciile învecinate de la Traian la Constantin I*, Cluj-Napoca 2002, I, 49.

²⁰ The data for these hoards at C. Găzdac II, (n. 19), 529-530.

²¹ *Ibidem*, II, 513.

²² *Ibidem*, II, 481. In the case of the hoard from *Preajba Mare* the number of *PROVINCIA DACIA* coins could have been larger but the hoard was partially recovered, 7 coins out of 30, see E. Petac, A. Pănoiu: *Un fragment dintr-un tezaur de monete romane imperiale descoperit la Preajba Mare, Târgu Jiu, județul Gorj*, in *Litua. Studii și comunicări* 7, 1997, 55.

²³ Á. Alföldy (n. 3) 67.

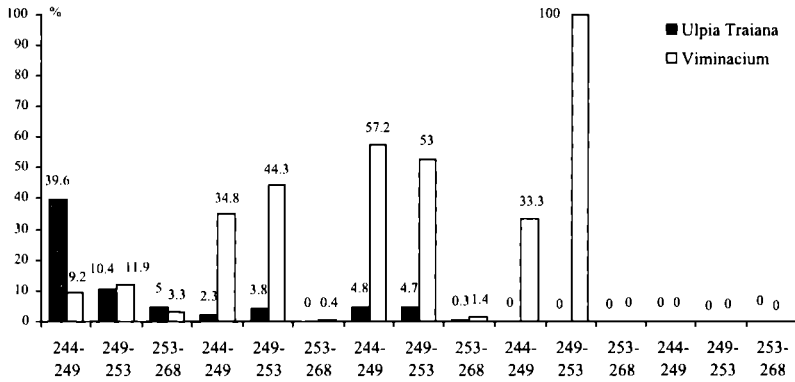


Fig. 13. Comparative graph of % for the coins minted at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa (PROVINCIA DACIA) and Viminacium (P M S COL VIM).

the coins issued during the reign of Philip I reached almost 40% of the all coin finds in *Dacia*, they do not pass more than 4.8% in *Pannonia Inferior*, 2.3% in *Pannonia Superior* and are not found as isolated coins in the provinces of *Moesia*. In the case of *Moesia Superior* it is a matter of very scarce material available for research. For the provinces of *Pannonia*, the finds of Viminacium overwhelmed those of the mint of *Dacia*. The fact that *Pannonia Inferior* was located closer to *Dacia* than *Pannonia Superior* produced a slightly higher percentage of *PROVINCIA DACIA* issues in this province.

On conclusion, it can be suggested that the coinage “*PROVINCIA DACIA*” it was virtually destined to this province, similar to the neighboring mint of *Viminacium* - which was the main mint for the supply with bronze coinage of the provinces *Pannonia* and *Moesia Superior* - from the reign of Philip I to that of Valerianus I. In fact both here we have a good example of a monetary policy intended to supply bronze coins locally and to neighboring areas from the nearest mint.²⁴ Like the coinage minted at *Viminacium*, the coinage “*PROVINCIA DACIA*” had to cover up a shortage of imperial bronze coinage.

Although it was minted in a province – *Dacia* -, this coinage it was issued according to the Roman official monetary system of bronze denominations.

It follows the patterns of overall monetary circulation in *Dacia* of the coins issued in the period AD 244-259.

It was a temporary solution, which failed at the end.

Periodical abbreviation:

- BSNR *Buletinul Societății Numismatice Române*, Bucharest, Romania
 JRA *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, Portsmouth, U.S.A
 JRS *Journal of Roman Studies*, London, United Kingdom

²⁴ Ch. Howgego: Coin circulation and the integration of the Roman economy, in JRA 7, 1994, 10.

CARNVNTVM

Mint	244-249		249-253		253-259	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Provincia Dacia	10	8.1	8	6.8		
Viminacium	77	63.1	89	76		
Rome	23	18.8	12	10.2	1	100
Civic (Greek)	12	9.8	8	6.8		
TOTAL	122		117		1	

POETOVIO

Mint	244-249		249-253		253-259	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Provincia Dacia	1	2.7	3	10		
Viminacium	19	52.7	17	56.6		
Rome	16	44.4	10	33.3	2	100
TOTAL	36		30		2	

BRIGETIO

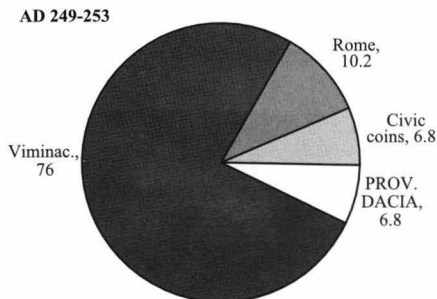
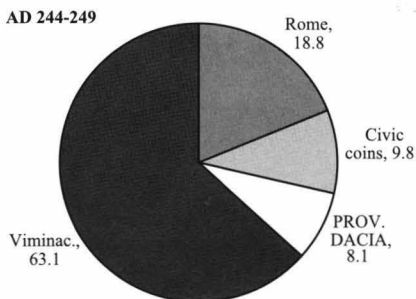
Mint	244-249		249-253		253-259	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Provincia Dacia	1	3.7	1	3.7		
Viminacium	23	85.1	24	88.8		
Rome	2	7.4	2	7.4		
Civic (Greek)	1	3.7				
TOTAL	27		27			

INTERCISA

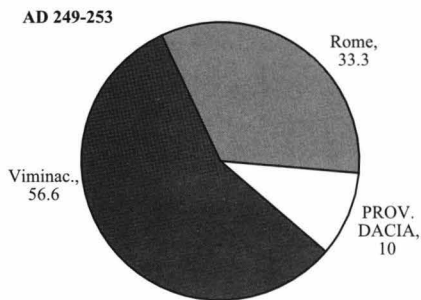
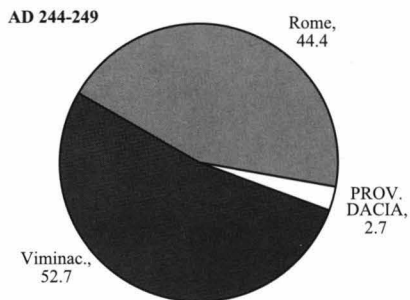
Mint	244-249		249-253		253-259	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Provincia Dacia	8	10.6	7	13.7	2	66.6
Viminacium	64	85.3	44	86.2	1	33.3
Rome	3	4				
TOTAL	75		51		3	

Table 1. Percentages of mints in the supply with bronze coinage at sites from *Pannonia*.

CARNVNTVM

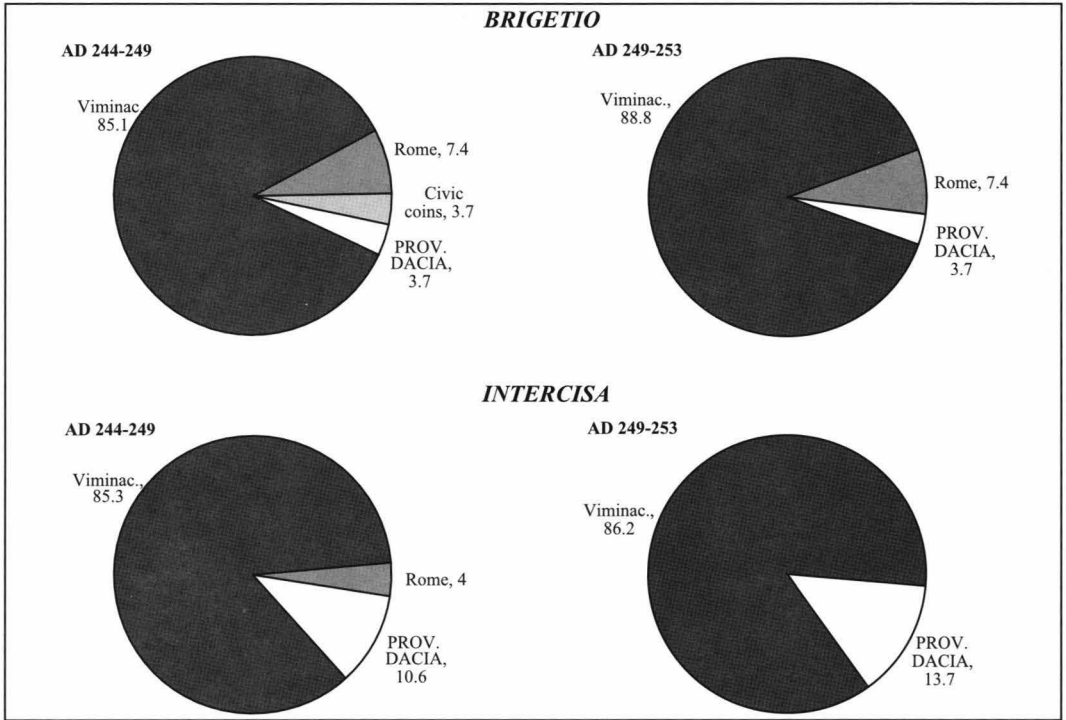


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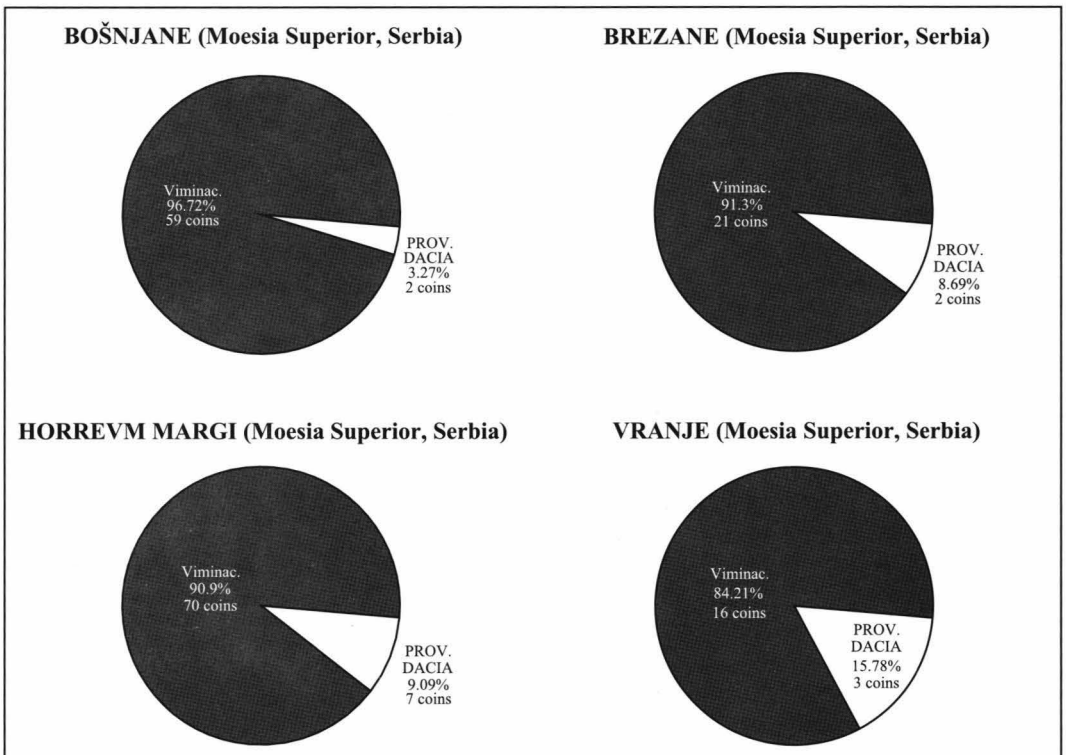


Pl. 1.¹ Pie-charts of mint distribution at sites from *Pannonia Superior* and *Inferior*.

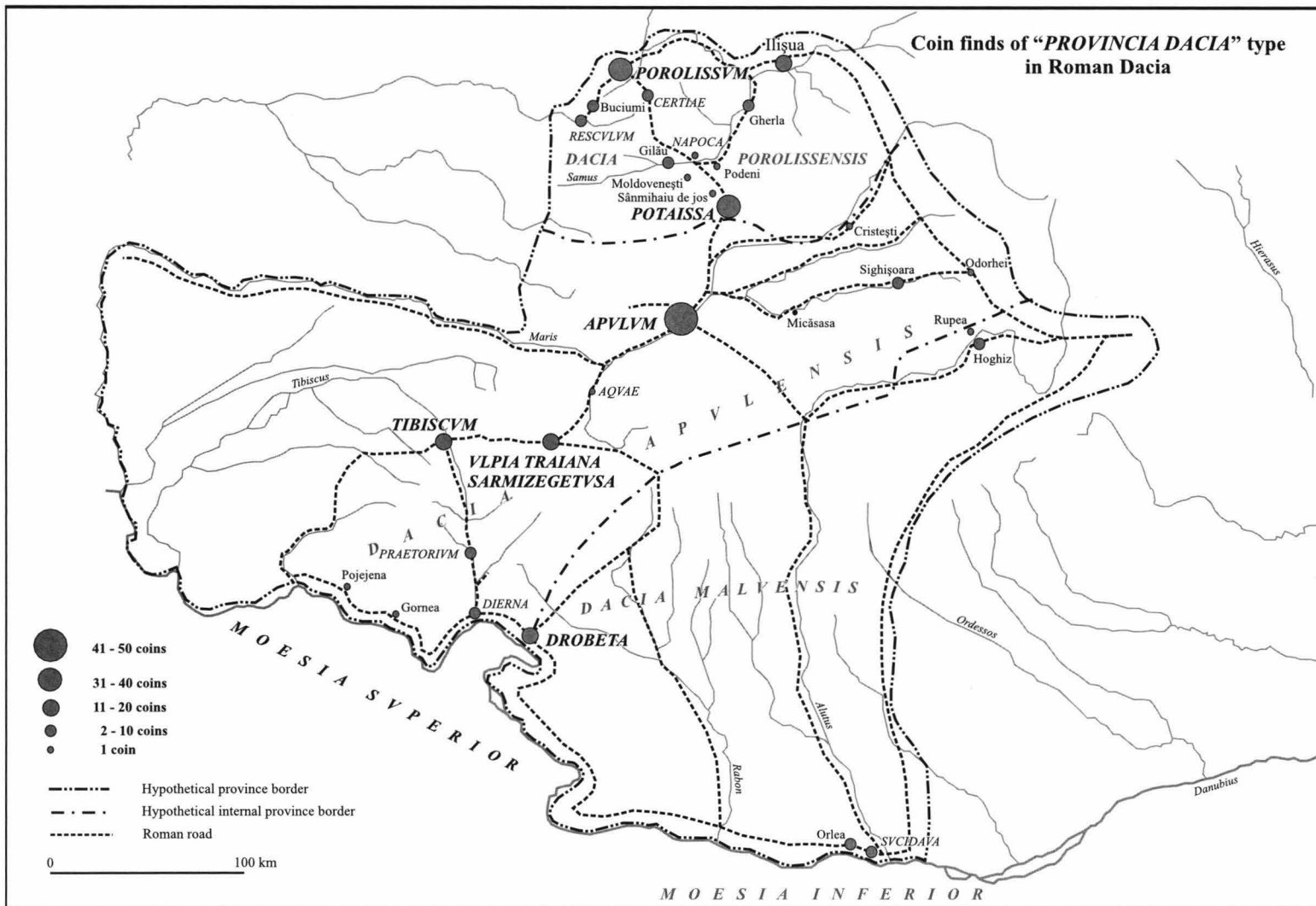
¹ The data for these sites at Gázdac, C.: *Monetary circulation in Dacia and the provinces from Middle and Lower Danube from Trajan to Constantine I (AD 106-337)*, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, tab. D 2-3, Philip I - Valerianus I.



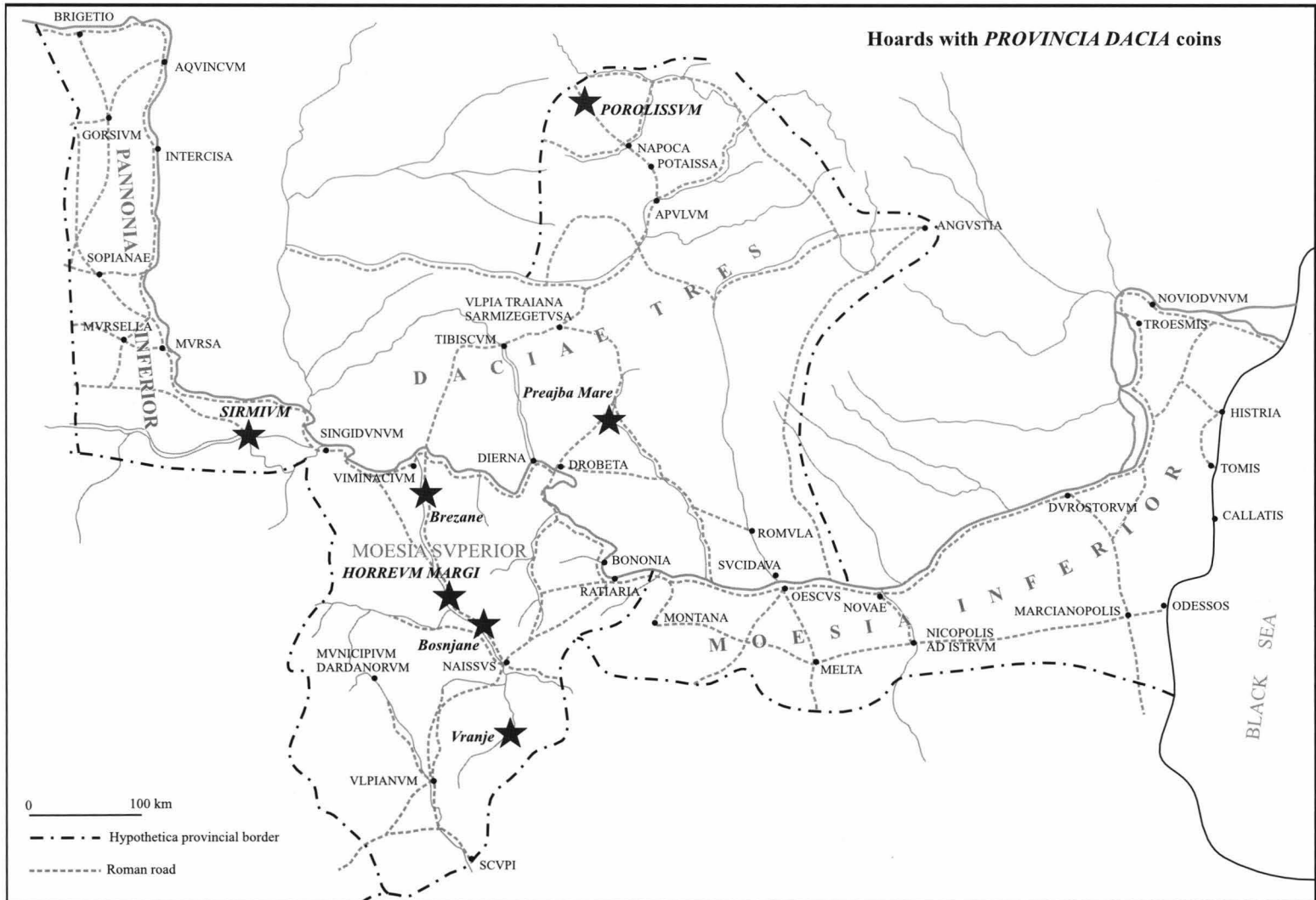
Pl. 2. Pie-charts of mint distribution at sites from *Pannonia Superior* and *Inferior*.



Pl. 3 Coins "PROVINCIA DACIA" and Colonia Viminacium in the hoards from Moesia Superior.



Map 1. The map of Roman Dacia.



Map 2. The map of the Roman provinces from the Lower Danube.