

COIN FINDS AT GRĂDIȘTEA MUNCCELULUI DURING THE EXCAVATION CAMPAIGNS OF 1803-1804

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Abstract: The excavations carried out in 1803 and 1804 at Grădiștea Muncelului by the Austrian tax authorities resulted in the discovery, among other archaeological materials, of several ancient coins in gold, silver and bronze, remained novel so far. This article is based on the numismatic evidence offered by the reports issued on occasion of such excavations.

Keywords: numismatics; Kosons; the period of the Dacian kingdom; Grădiștea Muncelului; Austrian tax authority excavations.

Rezumat: Săpăturile efectuate în anii 1803 și 1804 la Grădiștea Muncelului de către fiscul austriac s-au soldat cu descoperirea, între alte materiale arheologice, a mai multor monede antice de aur, argint și bronz, rămase inedite până în prezent. Articolul de față valorifică informațiile numismatice din rapoartele emise cu ocazia acelor săpături.

Cuvinte cheie: numismatică; cosoni; epoca regatului dac; Grădiștea Muncelului; săpăturile fiscului austriac.

The discovery, by the natives, of two large coin hoards in the autumn of 1802 and spring of 1803, close to the ruins at Grădiștea Muncelului, resulted in measures taken by the Austrian tax authority. The decision was to perform official excavations in the fortress area, prohibiting the villagers to search for treasures on the imperial properties. The aim of the excavations carried out by the authorities was still that to find gold, yet the scholars of that time quickly understood the special archaeological value of the area. Despite the fact that financial gain upon the excavations were still expected, and the authorities in Vienna were not at all convinced of the importance of the undertaking, the interventions of certain scholars contributed to the maintained interest for the remains at Grădiștea Muncelului by early 19th century¹.

Two excavation campaigns were carried out, the first in 1803, and the second in the following year. In 1803, excavations unfold for three months, without spectacular results for the leading Viennese. After their discontinuance, despite interdictions, the villagers began the search for treasures again, and in the spring of 1804 another hoard of approximately 1000 Kosons was found. The second campaign lasted for almost six months, yet failed to identify the gold that the authorities believed hidden within the fortress. By the end of 1804, the Imperial Chamber decided to cease the excavations, arguing that the spent amount is higher than the gained profit.

¹ Among counted the tax procurator P. Török, treasurer I. Bethlen, Abbot F. Neumann, director of the Imperial collections of antiquities, and count C. Zichy, chairman of the Imperial Chamber, who kept Emperor Francis himself informed on the finds at Grădiștea Muncelului.

Reports were issued during the excavations, in the first campaign twice a month, and in the following year, weekly². Although the excavations followed no method, the main finds were still recorded, and these accounts represent a precious information source regarding the site at Grădiștea Muncelului. Among these finds, several golden, silver and bronze coins are recorded. The numismatic data provided by the documents issued on the occasion has not been turned to advantage insofar³. The aim of the article herein is to make such documentary information available.

Coin finds following the campaign of 1803

There is scarce information on coinage finds in the summer of 1803 because not all reports issued on the occasion were identified in the archives. Excavations were performed between 21 July and 11 September, with 2 miners and 8 day labourers. Reports were issued every other two weeks, under the signature of I. Bodoki, inspector of the tax authority in Sibișel and B. Aigler, a mining supervisor, who coordinated the excavations. The last two reports of that year, those concerning the activity carried out between 16–31 August and 1–11 September, could not be found in the archives, yet some information related to their content could be inferred from the documents recording the forwarding of the reports by the Monetary and Mountain Treasury to that of the Chamber⁴. Seemingly, precisely those reports recorded the only coin finds of the campaign. Thus, the report of 10 September 1803 mentions the discovery of a few Lysimachi by early September 1803, by the three employees of the tax authority in Sibișel, close to the ruins at Grădiștea Muncelului⁵. Until the recovery of the report in question, we are not able to have more details on its content. The Rescript of the Imperial Chamber from 20 October 1803 confirms the discovery of the Lysimachi during that year's campaign⁶, without yet providing further details on neither the number of coins nor the find spot.

Still, there is another source that provides certain data on the discovery of the Lysimachi, namely the summary report submitted by metal work inspector A. Bögözi, on 25 April 1805 to the Administration of Hunedoara domain⁷. He mentions the discovery of certain Lysimachi and Kosons in the areas he noted *C* and *E*, broadly corresponding to the granaries terrace and the pond area⁸. Since in 1804 no further

² The information on the finds by the early century at Grădiștea Muncelului, as well as most documents referring to the excavations of 1803–1804, were published by S. Jakó, see Jakó 1966; Jakó 1968; Jakó 1971; Jakó 1972; Jakó 1973. I express my gratitude towards Alexandru Müller (Stuhr, Germany) for helping me translate the documents from German.

³ Except for Benea 2004, who mentions some of the coins, yet without providing further details.

⁴ Although in 1966 S. Jakó promised to completely publish the reports of 1803, after only two years he stopped with the report of 16 August 1803, arguing that he was unsuccessful in finding the last two reports (Jakó 1968, 443, note 3).

⁵ The Archives of the Monetary and Mountain Treasury, 3330/1803, see Jakó 1966, 116, note 40.

⁶ Jakó, 1971, 447.

⁷ Jakó 1973, 630.

⁸ S. Jakó did not succeed to find in the archives the addendum of the report, which comprised the layout of the excavated areas. Finály 1916, 18, Fig. I reproduces a plan after J. C. Eder who, in his turn, had summarised the texts of several reports, including that of Bögözi. It is possible for it to derive from

Lysimachi would be discovered, they could not be other than those found in 1803. However, A. Bögözi does not mention how many pieces were discovered.

Treasure hunters were forced to deliver to the Mint of Alba Iulia the hoards found in 1802 and 1803, where they were to be melted. P. Török's inquiry shows they preserved part of the coins, which they later sold. The authorities in Vienna wished that the found gold would be sent to the imperial capital. Notified on 15 September 1803 by Count Zichy regarding the coin finds from Grădiştea Muncelului, Emperor Francis decided that all discovered coins, or those to be discovered, would be delivered to the Numismatic Cabinet in Vienna⁹.

The coins identified following the excavations of 1803 originally reached Sibişel, where inspector Bodoki resided. On 30 September, the Treasury ordered that the objects be sent from Sibişel to Hunedoara¹⁰, and from there to Vienna¹¹.

Coin finds following the campaign of 1804

The situation of the finds in the following year was much better. In 1804, excavations commenced on 5 May 1804 and ended on 27 October. This time, 14 miners were involved, and reports were drafted on a weekly basis and in much more detail. The signatories of the accounts were the Mining Intendent I. Molitor and the scribe of the Tricesimal Office at Deva, L. Barta. The first coins identified that year were under the care of an officer in the Splényi infantry regiment, who, together with 33 soldiers, supervised and supported the excavations at Grădiştea Muncelului¹². The domain Administration body subsequently requested that all valuable pieces be sent to Hunedoara, weekly, together with the excavation report. From Hunedoara, they were sent to Vienna on 21 December 1804, accompanied by an inventory note, signed by J. J. Zörnlaib, Administrator of the domain.

We shall present below the finds, as recorded in the original documents, in the chronological order of their listing, as well as the excerpt of the inventory note referencing the coins.

1) 23 June 1804, Grădiştea Muncelului¹³.

„Es wurden in dieser Woche von zwey Gemeinen-Mann des hierortigen Sicherheits K. Militair-Comando 2 Cosonische Dukaten eine Spanne tief in der schon lang angegrabenen Erde gefunden“.

Bögözi's plan, since the numbering of the area in the drawing coincides with that in the report. A similar plan, drawn by under officer A. Szöts, is dispatched on 31 December 1804 by the Administration of the domain to the Treasury, and in February 1805 was presented to the Imperial Chamber. The five areas, noted from A to E, are as follows: A - the fortification; B - the building south the fortification; C - the granaries terrace; D - the pentagonal tower; E - the pond.

⁹ Jakó 1971, 447.

¹⁰ Jakó 1971, 447.

¹¹ In P. Török's possession were, at some point, several Lysimachi and Kosons confiscated from the villagers in the area, as he recorded it in his report of 26 August 1803 (Jakó 1971, 444). He imprinted in wax some of these coins prior further delivering them, as per a letter addressed to Gh. Aranka in 1806 (Jakó 1973, 636).

¹² Jakó 1972, 591.

¹³ Jakó 1972, 591.

"This week were found two ducats of Koson type by two common individuals in the Royal military corps, at one palm deep, in the previously disturbed earth."

2) 7 July 1804, Grădiştea Muncelului¹⁴.

„In der Festung eine vermutlich alte kupfer Münze“.

"Inside the fortress, an ancient coin, likely of copper."

„(...) beim Waschwerk in der abgewaschenen Erde, 1 Spann tief, durch Bergmann Repinski 2 Kosonishce Dukaten“.

"Upon earth cleaning, in the washed earth, at a palm deep, two ducats of Koson type discovered by miner Repinski."

3) 14 July 1804, Grădiştea Muncelului¹⁵.

„Beim Waschwerk wiederum 2 Cosonische Dukaten“.

"Upon earth cleaning, again two ducats of Koson type."

4) 28 July 1804, Grădiştea Muncelului¹⁶.

„Gegen Mittag beim Stadt-Thor, wo die Mauer 1 Klafter tief in der Erde liegt (...) eine erdene, grobe Schüssel voller Pech, welche mit einem Quadrat-Ziegel zugedeckt war, und unter dieser Schüssel eine silberne Münze, woran auf einer Seite ein Pferd sichtbar ist, auf der andere vielleicht alte Buchstaben“.

"Southwards, near the fortress gate, where the wall is about one fathom in the ground, (...) a coarse clay vessel, full of pitch, covered with a square brick, and below it, a silver coin, with a horse visible on one of the sides and on the other side, possibly some ancient letters."

„Bei der Militair-Wacht gegen Sebeshely wurde 1 Klafter breit ein Schramm gerissen und nur ein Schuh tief in der schon oft aufgegrabenen Erde 4 Cozonische Dukaten gefunden, weiter aber in der Erde hinein nichts“.

"Near the military guard, towards Sibişel, a furrow of approximately one fathom and one foot deep was dug and, in the ground already dug [by others], were identified 4 ducats of Koson type, then nothing else was found in the ground."

5) 11 August 1804, Grădiştea Muncelului¹⁷.

„Beim errichteten Waschwerk wurde durch Waschen 1 Kozonischer Dukat gefunden“.

„Upon earth cleaning, when washed, a ducat of Koson type was found."

6) 20 October 1804, Grădiştea Muncelului¹⁸.

„Es wurde in dem neben entdeckten Gebäu gegen Mittag (...), eine messingene, oder mit Kupfer vermischte, vermutlich römische Münze gefunden, welche auf einer Seite einen gekrönten Kopf und um etliche fällig halbverdorbene lateinische Buchstaben hat, auf der andere Seite einen kaum sichtbaren Ritter unten mit diesen zwey lateinischen Buchstaben S C und um mehreren fast vom Alter ausgelöschten, von welchen diese lesbar sind S.T.Q.R.O.P“.

"In the building discovered nearby, southwards, was found a coin, likely Roman, of brass or mixed copper, which on one side has a crowned head and all around

¹⁴ Jakó 1972, 594.

¹⁵ Jakó 1972, 595.

¹⁶ Jakó 1972, 597.

¹⁷ Jakó 1972, 599.

¹⁸ Jakó 1973, 619.

half damaged Latin letters, and on the other side a poorly visible knight below who are two Latin letters, S C, and around there are letters worn by time and of which S.T.Q.R.O.P. are legible.”

7) 21 December 1804, Hunedoara¹⁹.

„(...) wird in dem Anschlusse die Specification deren zu Gredistye gefundenen und gesamleten Alterthümer nebst einem Verschlag worunter auch 12 Stück kozonische Ducaten, 1 alte Silber-Münz und 1 versilbertes Kupferbattl separierter beiliegen ... überstendet“.

“This is forwarded as ending to the specification of the antiquities found and gathered at Grădiște, together with a box where there are separately 12 pieces of ducats of Koson type, 1 ancient silver coin, 1 silver plated copper tablet.”

[Under number 51] „1 Stück altes silbernes Münz, im Berichte als Kupfer beschreiben, untern 7 Jul. 1804“.

“1 silver ancient coin, in the report of 7 July 1804 mentioned as of copper.”

[Under number 58] „12 Stück Kozonische Ducaten, nebst 1 Silber-Münz und versilbertem Kupferblatte“.

“12 ducats of Koson type, together with a silver coin and a silver plated copper tablet.”

It results, from the above, that 11 Kosons, a silver coin and two bronze coins were discovered. The final report mentions though 12 Kosons. It is possible that the twelfth Koson was found in the week 26 August-1 September 1804, the only interval in the respective year for which Jakó could not find the excavation report²⁰.

Another inconsistency between the reports and Zörnlaib's list is the silver piece under number 51, of which we are told in the inventory, that it was reported on 7 July, however in bronze. Under number 58, together with the Koson, appears a second silver coin, definitely the one mentioned in the report of 28 July. It is possible that in the report of 7 July an error was made, caused by the rushed examination of the coin, which might have appeared of bronze at first sight. Once reached Hunedoara, the coin was once again examined and framed as silver coin, yet without further details.

Noticeably, in 1804 most of the coin finds are represented by Kosons. Unfortunately, there is no clear indication on their find spot: five specimens come from the washed excavation earth, two were found in the previously dug ground and four near the guard from Sibișel, at a depth of one foot, still in the already excavated earth. The earth was brought for washing from several places of excavation: the fortress plateau, terrace IV (in the current numbering scheme of the terraces), the fortress wall (eastern and western gates and an excavation on the west side, northwards), the granary, the terrace X (spring area), terrace XI (the overflow canal and the terrace wall), the pentagonal tower and the building south the fortification²¹. One cannot determine with precision either the area with deranged earth, mentioned in

¹⁹ Jakó 1973, 625-627.

²⁰ Text 25 refers to the period 19-25 August and text 26 to the period 2-8 September, see Jakó 1972, 600. In-between these two there must have been another report.

²¹ Information corroborated also with the plan published by C. Daicoviciu (Daicoviciu, Ferenczi 1951, Fig. 21), recording the early 19th century excavation traces.

the report of 23 June, or the location of the military guard “Sibișel-wards”. Though the reports provide no detailed data, the recovery of the information that some of the found Kosons come from the fortress and that they represent isolated finds is still very much valuable. This changes the picture over a by excellence treasured coinage, found only outside the fortress.

The Kosons reached for sure the Numismatic Cabinet of Vienna, as the emperor requested. When in 1912 the first inventory of the Kosons (which were spread in various collections) was published, at Vienna were kept 14 of such coins²², of which 12 had to come from the excavations at Grădiștea Muncelului, unless they were transferred to another location over one century, and the Cabinet kept Kosons from other sources as well²³. Interestingly, of the 14 coins in the imperial collection, six display striking peculiarities, recording an obvious clumsiness in their making: three have a doubled image on the reverse due to recurrent striking, two of them display engraving errors, and one is “barbarised”²⁴. If 12 of the 14 coins come from Grădiște, this means that at least four of the six rudimentarily made coins should belong to the lot dispatched from Hunedoara.

The information concerning the discovery of Kosons during the excavations carried out by the Austrian tax authorities is surprising, since no such coins had been recorded insofar but as chance finds, or following poaching, most grouped in hoards located outside the fortress²⁵. Isolated finds are rare and deemed displacements of the great hoards discovered in the previous centuries or coming as early as Antiquity from the spoils subsequent the conquest of Sarmizegetusa Regia²⁶. Useless to add, the Koson finds following the campaign of 1804 dismiss the hypothesis, recently formulated, on this coin type belonging to the Medieval period, as production of some Antiquity affectionates²⁷.

The coin reported on 7 July as made of bronze was later re-evaluated, as mentioned above, and in the inventory of December 1804 it appears listed as in silver. There is no other detail in aid of its determination. Concerning the find spot, we only know it comes from inside the fortress, without any further specifications. We also know from previous reports that up to that date, excavations were carried out on the fortress plateau, where two trenches were excavated in a cross, on terrace IV, not far from the eastern gate, and in two places by the fortress wall, on the interior (by the eastern gate and western side). Even though we cannot further restrict the find area, these four possibilities are to be considered.

²² M. Bahrfeldt *apud* Winkler 1972, 174.

²³ Unfortunately, the Numismatic Cabinet of Vienna has no information on the origin of the 14 Kosons, the oldest mention in inventories dating starting with 1875 (information given by Dr. Klaus Vondrovec, curator of the Ancient Coins Department of the Numismatic Cabinet of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, whom we hereby thank for his kindness). Therefore, we can only state with certainty that those coins entered the collections of the Cabinet prior this date.

²⁴ Winkler 1972, 175-177.

²⁵ The inventory of finds with Winkler 1972, 173-174; Preda 1973, 354-355; Glodariu 1974, 300; Preda 1998, 230-231; Munteanu 2004, 267-270; Petolescu 2011, 18-20. None of these inventories include the items discovered in the excavations carried out by the Austrian tax authorities.

²⁶ Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 1990, 92.

²⁷ Preda 1998, 226 sqq.; Preda 2008 s.v. *koson*. Other arguments against this hypothesis in Cojocaru et alii 2000; Gheorghiu 2005, 193; Vilcu 2010, 803-804.

The silver coin of 28 July was found by the fortress wall, in a relatively well defined context. This was the excavation of a wall portion near the western gate, south of it, where a clay vessel, full of pitch covered with a square brick, was identified. The coin was deposited under the vessel's bottom. In the same spot were also identified: much slag, brick pieces, tin, lead and copper pieces, iron and copper tablets, glass pieces, nails, an iron knife, a silver plated copper ringed item and other. This inventory could point to the existence, on that spot, of a metal processing workshop. Such a discovery should not be surprising, since the route of the wall intersects, on its southern segment, a Roman smithy discovered in 1987 (which, at its turn, overlaps a Dacian coin workshop) and also a Dacian building, nearby the western gate²⁸.

The item is described as silver-made, with a horse visible on one side, and "ancient letters" legible on the other side. It is hard to determine to which coinage type it belongs, however it is not excluded for it to be a Dacian coin of Hunedoara type, as in fact discovered once more on the same southern side of the fortification, south the coin workshop, still underneath the wall route²⁹. The find context would plead for the same direction, although one should bear in mind that the layer the find belonged to is unknown. The position of the coin under the pitch vessel may bear significance, yet whatever it was, it is hard to establish more precisely³⁰. Both silver coins were sent to Vienna.

Finally, the bronze coin reported on 20 October presents better circumstances concerning its find spot and description. It was identified in the building south the fortress, later deemed Roman bath, yet the report does not specify the room. The inscription on the obverse could not be read by the finders; however a crowned head was visible. A rider could be seen on the reverse, in the exergue the initials *S C*, and around the figure the letters *S T Q R O P*, which evidently must be read *SPQR OP[TIMO PRINCIPI]*. This is obviously a sesterce issued under Trajan, after 103, celebrating the victory against the Dacians (RIC II, p. 282, no. 534-537, 543, Roma, AD 103-111)³¹. It's the latest coin found at Grădiştea Muncelului until now³². It was likely brought by the Romans stationed there either in-between the wars or after 106³³. After the cease of the excavations, likely the bronze coin remained with the Administration of the Hunedoara domain, together with other small value objects.

²⁸ Glodariu 1995, 109.

²⁹ Glodariu 1995, 109.

³⁰ Benea 2004, 14 tends to deem it still as a Dacian coin, possibly ritually deposited under the vessel.

³¹ We wish to thank this way Professor Radu Ardevan for his support in determining the coin. Benea 2004, 17 deems it as an unidentified Roman imperial coin.

³² At least four other coins from Trajan are mentioned in the literature as originating in the site at Grădiştea Muncelului: a denarius, without the title *Dacicus*, on the fireplace of a house in the western settlement (Daicoviciu et alii 1952, 306); a sesterce issued in 101-102, found in the circular house where the vessel inscribed *Decebalus per Scorilo* was also found (Daicoviciu et alii 1954, 202); two asses coming from the fortress plateau, one being issued in 98-102, and the other having an illegible legend (Florea, Suci 2004, 65, notes 7 and 8). A coin dating back to Trajan, bearing the title *Dacicus Maximus*, was mentioned by Daicoviciu et alii 1989, 160, but with an erroneous reference to Crişan, Ferenczi 1973, 67-68, where there is no record of the coin.

³³ A *dupondius* with the same legend on the obverse, yet with other representations, dated to the same interval (AD 103-111), was discovered at Costeşti-Cetăuie, see Macrea 1936, 158.

The above picture could be completed by following certain investigations of the archives, by recovering the missing reports: the two reports from 1803, and the one from September 1804. Thus, the coins reported on the occasion of the early 19th century excavations could be a significant part of the long expected catalogue of the coin finds from Grădiștea Muncelului.

The inventory of the coin finds from Grădiștea Muncelului, reported during the excavation campaigns of 1803–1804

No.	Report date	Find spot	Monetary type	No. of pcs.
1.	10 September 1803	Close to the ruins	Lysimach	?
2.	23 June 1804	In the earth previously disturbed by the villagers	Golden Koson	2
3.	7 July 1804	Inside the fortress	Silver, undetermined	1
4.	7 July 1804	Washed excavation earth	Golden Koson	2
5.	14 July 1804	Washed excavation earth	Golden Koson	2
6.	28 July 1804	Southern side of the fortress wall	Silver, undetermined, possibly Dacian	1
7.	28 July 1804	Nearby the guard from Sibișel-wards	Golden Koson	4
8.	11 August 1804	Washed excavation earth	Golden Koson	1
9.	1 September 1804?	?	Golden Koson	1
10.	20 October 1804	Building south the fortification	bronze, sesterce Trajan, AD 103–111	1

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