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THE FUNERARY COIN HOARD DISCOVERED IN 2005 AT MANGALIA, CONSTANȚA COUNTY

Rezumat: În vara anului 2005, într-un punct situat la limita necropolei romane și apoi romano-bizantine de la Mangalia s-a descoperit un mormânt de inhumație, cu groapă simplă, care conținea alături de resturile umane un vas cu 15 denari imperiali. Aceștia se eșalonează de la Nero la Hadrian astfel : Nero 1, Galba 1, Otho 1, Vitellius 1, Vespasian 4, Traian 4, Hadrian 3. Cea mai recentă monedă datează din anul 132 p. Chr. Sunt de remarcat câteva rarități numismatice, fiind de semnalat mai ales a 15-a monedă din catalog, o combinație iconografică necunoscută până acum pentru segmentul cronologic precizat. Descoperirea este unică până acum în Dobrogea prin numărul denarilor depuși în mormânt, confirmând încă o dată pătrunderea mai timpurie la Kallatis a ritului inhumației, probabil prin prezența mai accentuată a unei bogate populații orientale. Semnalăm, de asemenea, o descoperire monetară izolată (denar de la Commodus), provenind dintr-un punct neprecizat de pe cuprinsul Kallatisului.

Keywords : Kallatis, Roman cemetery, inhumation tomb, Roman imperial denarii, Hadrian, chronology

In the summer of 2005, in the district Dobrudja II from Mangalia, Constanța county, was discovered a ancient inhumation tomb, in the courtyard of a former military unit, south of the road to Albești, at 200-300 m West from the Western limit of the Roman and Byzantine cemetery of Kallatis. In the same area were discovered other Hellenistic and Roman tombs. The present discovery consists in a simple grave, North to South oriented, head to the south. Near the head were found a fragmentary jug, which contains 15 Roman imperial denarii, from Nero to Hadrian. Another one, from Commodus, was found somewhere in the area of Kallatis.

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CATALOGUE OF THE COINS

HOARD

Nero

1. Denarius.

RIC, I, p. 148, nr. 52, Rome, 63-68 A.D.

BMC, I, p. 212, nr. 90, Rome, 64-68 A.D.

RIC, I², p. 153, nr. 60, Rome, 65-66 A.D.

Galba : Diva Iulia Augusta

2. Denarius.

RIC, I, p. 200, nr. 4 (var. 7), Rome, 68-69 A.D.

BMC, I, p. 310, nr. 8 var., Rome, 68-69 A.D.

RIC, I², p. 242, nr. 186, July 68-January 69 A.D.

Otho

3. Denarius.

RIC, I, p. 219, nr. 12, Rome, 69 A.D.

BMC, I, p. 366, nr. 18, Rome, 69 A.D.

RIC, I², p. 260, nr. 8, Rome, 69 A.D.

Vitellius

4. Denarius.

RIC, I, p. 224, nr. 2, Rome, 69 A.D.

BMC, I, p. 368, nr. 1, p. 369, nr. 7 or p. 371, nr. 20, Rome, 69 A.D.

RIC, I², p. 271, nr. 66, p. 272, nr. 73 or 90, Rome, 69 A.D.

Vespasianus

5. Denarius.

RIC, II, p. 17, nr. 20, Rome, 69-71 A.D.

BMC, II, p. 7, † b.

6. Denarius.

RIC, II, p. 19, nr. 42, Rome, 72-73 A.D.

BMC, II, p. 11, nr. 64, Rome, 72-73 A.D.

7. Denarius.

RIC, II, p. 22, nr. 67 (1), Rome, end of the year 73 A.D.

BMC, II, p. 20, nr. 105, Rome, 73 A.D.

8. Denarius.

RIC, II, p. 27, nr. 114, Rome, 79 A.D.
BMC, II, p. 44, nr. 246, Rome, 79 A.D.

Trajan

9. Denarius.

RIC, II, p. 252, nr. 116, Rome, 103-111 A.D.
BMC, III, p. 71, nr. 276, Rome, group V, 103-111 A.D.
Hill, p. 140, nr. 484, Rome, issue 15, 108 A.D.

10. Denarius.

RIC, II, p. 263, nr. 269, Rome, 112-114 A.D.
BMC, III, p. 89, nr. 418, Rome, 112-117 A.D.
Hill, p. 144, nr. 617, Rome, issue 20, 114 A.D.

11. Denarius.

RIC, II, p. 267, nr. 331, Rome, 114-117 A.D.
BMC, III, p. 120, nr. 616, Rome, group VI, 112-117 A.D.
Hill, p. 150, nr. 762, Rome, issue 24, 117 A.D.

12. Denarius.

RIC, II, p. 269, nr. 365, Rome, 114-117 A.D.
BMC, III, p. 119, nr. 607 var., Rome, group V, 112-117 A.D.
Hill, p. 150, nr. 764, Rome, issue 24, 117 A.D.

Hadrian

13. Denarius.

RIC, II, p. 358, nr. 146 var., 125-128 A.D.
BMC, III, p. 563, Addenda; cf. p. 282, before nr. 334, Rome, 125-128 A.D.
Hill, p. 162, nr. 367 and 373, Rome, issue 15, 128 A.D.

14. Denarius.

RIC, II, p. 368, nr. 240, Rome, 134-138 A.D.
BMC, III, p. 320, nr. 621, Rome, 134-138 A.D.
Hill, p. 165, nr. 493, Rome, issue 20, 132 A.D.

15. Denarius.

RIC, II, -.
Type BMC, III, p. 381, nr. 35 var., East (Asia ?) or semi-barbarous issue
(see also pl. 70, nr. 18).
For another obverse legend see also RIC, II, p. 370, nr. 257, Rome, 134-138
A.D. and

BMC, III, p. 327, nr. 688, Rome, 134-138 A.D.
Hill, -; p. 59, Rome, group 3, 128 A.D.

ISOLATED FIND

Commodus

16. Denarius.

RIC, III, p. 389, nr. 210, Rome, 190 A.D.

BMC, IV, p. 741, †, Rome, 190 A.D.

The fifteen denarii from the hoard are issues from Nero to Hadrian (Nero 1, Galba 1, Otho 1, Vitellius 1, Vespasianus 4, Trajan 4, Hadrian 3). The last coin from the catalogue – the sixteenth – is an isolated find (denarius from Commodus) from an unknown place from Kallatis. The structure of the hoard (53,33 % coins from the second half of the first century A.D. and 46,66 % issues from the first two Antonins) reflects the normal distribution of the coins from the contemporary hoards. Despite the rarity of the similar contemporary finds from Dobrudja¹, there are no doubts that we have a classical distribution of the existent issues in the decades which follow the monetary reform of Trajan from 107 A.D. (Dio Cassius, LXVIII, 15; BMC, III : LXVIII; Hill 1970 : 216). Although the contemporary discoveries from the Roman Dacia are not much more relevant, the hoards from Flămânda-Cremenari, Galicea commune, Vâlcea county (Mitrea 1954: 472, nr. 3; 1957: 407-412; Tudor 1968: 119; Petac 2000: 354, nr. 70), Locusteni, Daneți commune, Dolj county (Tudor 1968: 117; Popilian 1983: 121-122), Moșna, Sibiu county (Windisch 1790: 162; Protase 1958: 254, note 1, nr. 15) – if the last two are really ended during Hadrian reign – and Timișoara II (1954), Timiș county (Mitrea 1978: 367, nr. 71; Mitrea, Nussbaum 1983: 152; Petac 2002: 81-83) reflects the massive presence of the post-neronian silver issues (Petac, 2000, 30-31).

Although the number of the monetary hoards discovered in tombs is not a significant one, the period between the IInd to the Vth century A.D. are well covered (Poenaru Bordea, Ocheșeanu 1991: 347-371). Usually, they contain few common metal coins (Bucovală 1991 : 199; Poenaru Bordea, Ocheșeanu 1991 : 369; Simion 1995: 121-149) and occasionally one or two silver issues (Bucovală, Pașca 1992 : 236). As it was already noticed (Poenaru Bordea, Ocheșeanu 1991: 349), the rarity of this type of discoveries depends on the absence of systematic archaeological researches in Roman cemeteries – a significant exception being represented by the Kallatis situation (Preda 1980) – and by the other hand because of the expansion of Charon's obol – usually represented by one or two common

¹ From the first half of the IInd century A.D. we have in Dobrudja only two small hoards (20 and 68 denarii), both of them from Antoninus Pius : Dăeni, Tulcea county (Mitrea 1976 : 290, 78; 1981 : 584, 171) and Medgidia, Constanța county (Vertan 1978 : 227-234), first of them containing only common metal coins and the second only denarii. For both of them, see also Vertan 2002 : 172; 179-180; 274, 12; 280, 21).

metal coins (Poenaru Bordea, Ocheșeanu 1991: 349). The offerings containing more coins are generally explained by their attribution to several persons (Poenaru Bordea, Ocheșeanu 1991: 349). The situation became much more complex when such a funerary offering is deposited in a pot, as it happened at Șipote (Stavru 1972: 236, 241-244) and Mangalia-Dobruđja II, 2005. It is for the first time that such a funerary monetary offering, containing 15 denarii, was found in Dobruđja. Such a significant offering, in an inhumation tomb (with simple grave) from the Hadrian time, reflects not necessary the social position of the family or the personal attachment (Stavru 1972: 244; Poenaru Bordea, Ocheșeanu 1991 : 370), but more probably the presence and the importance of an wealthy Oriental population in the area of Kallatis (Bârlădeanu-Zavatin 1977 : 149; Simion 1995 : 128). The situation is a normal one for this West pontic city, where the predominance of the early inhumation cemeteries is an already well-known phenomenon (Barbu 1977: 206).

There are some interesting numismatic remarks concerning several coins from this funerary hoard. For Vespasian, RIC, 20 (nr. 5) the catalogue notice only another single coin, from the Gneccchi collection². For the coin nr. 12 – Trajan, RIC, 365 – we notice a new distribution of the reverse legend (PM TRP COS – V – I PP SPQ – R / PRO – VID) then in the other two already known situations (PM TRP COS – VI PP SPQ – R / PRO – VID respectively PM TRP CO – S VI PP SP QR / PRO – VID)³. It seems to be for the moment the single known example with this distribution of the text, although, considering the number of the already published variants⁴, this Roman mint issue from 117 A.D. seems to be a large one. Finally, the last coin from the tomb – nr. 15, Hadrian, BMC, III, p. 381, nr. 35 var. – have on the obverse the emperor's head, without laurel wreath and unbearded, to right, and the legend HADRIANVS AVGVSTVS – PP and on the reverse Pietas standing to the left, keeping the extended right hand over a left side altar, with the legend PIETA – S AVG. In the Berlin Museum there is a denarius with a certain typological similarity – the single one known until now⁵ – but with another obverse iconography (bust, not head of the emperor, also without beard or laurel wreath), having a different obverse legend (HADRIANVS AVG COS III PP) and a distinct distribution of the reverse text (PIETAS – A – VG) was considered a semi-barbarous issue or maybe an issue of an oriental Roman mint⁶. Even if in the last years we noticed the growing number of the coins from the same group with the

² BMC, II: 7, †, note.

³ BMC, III: 119, nr. 607.

⁴ Several variants of the reverse legend distribution for the coins type RIC, 325 : P – M TRP COS – VI – PP SPQR / PRO – VID (Gorny & Mosch Giessener Münzhandlung, Auction 125, 13.10.2003, lot 470 and Gorny & Mosch Giessener Münzhandlung, Auction 138, 7.03.2005, lot 2081, possible the same sample); PP TRP COS VI PP SPQR / PRO – VID (Auctionhaus H.D. Rauch GmbH, Mail Bid Sale 8, 1.10.2004, lot 403); PM TRP COS – VI – PP SP – QR / PRO – VID (Gorny & Mosch Giessener Münzhandlung, Auction 142, 10.10.2005, lot 2471); PM TRP CO – S VI PP S – PQR / PRO – VID (Gorny & Mosch Giessener Münzhandlung, Auction 147, 7.03.2006, lot 2079); P – M TRP CO – S – VI PP SPQR / PRO – VID (Jean Elsen & ses Fils S.A., Auction 87, 11.03.2006, lot 1369).

⁵ BMC, III: 381, nr. 35 and plate 70, nr. 18.

⁶ BMC, III: CLIV-CLV; 381, nr. 35.

Berlin piece, so we know today five samples⁷, the Berlin denarius still keeps its oneness, being the single one having on the obverse the bust and not the emperor's head and also the single with the registered reverse legend. Otherwise, examining the reverses of the five mentioned coins, we saw each time a different distribution of the legend⁸, clear sign of a large monetary issue. Following the chronology of Ph. V. Hill, all these coins belong to the fifth group, the latest (132-138 A.D.)⁹ from the third monetary period of Hadrian's reign¹⁰. The specificity of the obverse legend (HADRIANVS AVG COS III PP) and the exclusively descriptive legend of the reverse (PIETAS – A – VG)¹¹ are quite clear in this sense. In contrast with all them, the coin from the funerary hoard discovered at Mangalia in 2005 belongs to the third group of issues from the third monetary period of Hadrian's reign, from 128 or beginning of 129 A.D.¹², being the first point out of this type in this chronological sequence.

The latest coin from the depot is a Hadrian's denarii RIC, 240 type : HADRIANVS AVG COS III PP / FELICITATI AVG, with galley (Hill 1970: 165, nr. 493), belonging to the same five period. It was struck in 132 A.D., recording probably the beginning of the third imperial journey¹³. So, we can suppose that the funerary offering was buried to the middle of the fourth decade from the IInd century A.D.

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⁷ See eBay, item 280376923, sold by Pegasi Numismatics, March 2000 (1); Gorny & Mosch Giessener Münzhandlung, Auction 115, 5. 03. 2002, lot 1613 (2); Gorny & Mosch Giessener Münzhandlung, Auction 130, 8. 03. 2004, lot 2153 (3); Auctionhaus H.D. Rauch GmbH, Mail Bid Sale, 12.09.2006, lot 766 (4).

⁸ PIET – AS AVG (1) ; PIETA – S – AVG (2) ; PIETAS – AVG (3) ; PIETA – S AVG (4).

⁹ Hill 1970 : 64.

¹⁰ Hill 1970 : 52.

¹¹ Hill 1970 : 64.

¹² Hill 1970 : 59, 62.

¹³ Hill 1970 : 65.

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Plate 1: The pot and funerary hoard (nr. 1-10) from Mangalia (Dobrudja II, 2005).



Fig. 1: The coins from the funerary hoard from Mangalia-Dobrudja 2, 2005 (nr. 11-15) and denarius from Commodus (nr. 16) - isolated find.

