

# FROM THE LATE ANTIQUITY TO THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES - THE BYZANTINE COINS IN THE TERRITORIES OF THE IRON GATES OF THE DANUBE FROM THE SECOND HALF OF THE 6<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY TO THE FIRST HALF OF THE 8<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

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To my Master in Numismatics,  
Octavian Iliescu, at his 80th anniversary

This study dedicated to Octavian Iliescu, the real founder of scientific and systematic research of the finds of Byzantine coins in Romania, aims to contribute, from a numismatic point of view, at a more correct understanding of some economic, social and political phenomena related to the dissolution of the Roman-Byzantine civilisation and to the emergency of the mediaeval civilisation in the territory of the Danube Iron Gates, north of the river<sup>1</sup>. This approach is based both on the processing of older data, published by several researchers, evidently reinterpreted in the light of the latest Byzantine numismatic literature, and on the use of significant unpublished finds, resulted from the studies conducted by us in several museum and private collections. Our research has covered also the finds in the neighbouring areas south of the river, situated north - western Bulgaria and north - eastern parts of present day Serbia, on the territories of the former provinces of Dacia Ripensis and Moesia I. Such an approach seems only natural when taking into account the common evolution of the territories on both banks of the Danube downstream the Iron Gates

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<sup>1</sup> On the connexions between Oltenia (or Lesser Wallachia) and Banat with the late Roman Empire and early Byzantine Empire see: D. Tudor, *Legăturile dintre Imperiul romano-bizantin și teritoriul din stânga Dunării în sec. IV-VI*, in *Istoria României*, vol. I, *Comuna primitivă. Slavagismul. Perioada de trecere la feudalism*, Bucharest, 1960, pp. 654-665 (furthermore abbreviated IR.); O. Toropu, *Romanitatea târzie și străromânii în Dacia traiană subcarpatică*, Craiova, 1976, pp. 30-37, (furthermore abbreviated, *Romanitatea*); M. Rusu, *Transilvania și Banatul în secolele VI-IX*, in *Banatica*, 4, 1977, pp. 200-201; Idem, *Avars, Slavs, Romanic Population in the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, in *RBAPMPOTR*, ed. by M. Constantinescu, St. Pascu și P. Diaconu, Bucharest, 1975, pp. 152-153, (furthermore abbreviated *RBAPMPOTR*) and A. Bejan, *Banatul în secolele IV-XII*, Timișoara, 1994, pp. 32-69. More recently see I. Barnea, *Sur les rapports avec Byzance du territoire situé au Nord du Bas-Danube durant la période Anastase I<sup>er</sup> - Justinien I<sup>er</sup> (491-565)*, in *Études Byzantines et Post-Byzantines*, 2, 1991, pp. 47-57 and C. M. Tătulea, *Romula-Malva*, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 120-176.

See also, Gh. Ștefan, *Justiniana Prima și stăpânirea bizantină la Dunărea de Jos în secolul al VI-lea*, in *Drobeta*, 1, 1974, pp. 65-70 and P. Sânpetru, *Orașe și cetăți romane târzii la Dunărea de Jos*, Bucharest, 1994, *passim*.

area, as well as the fact that in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages the region emerged as an economic unity brought about by the complementary natural resources and the convergent main roads of the military and civil communication network. The presence of a large number of inhabitants used to speak Latin, north of the Danube, related to the dominant Romanic population, south of the river, brought the similarity of the development pattern even closer.

The first systematic publication, with acceptable scientific standards, of the Byzantine monetary finds from the 6<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries on the Romanian territory is owed to Ir. Dimian, who in 1957 carried out a repertory of hoards and, in part, of the isolated finds in this region<sup>2</sup>. Since the '70s, as the knowledge on late Roman and Byzantine coinage was radically renewed, due to the publication of some crucial works of the researchers of A. Bellinger, Ph. Grierson, D. M. Metcalf, Cecile Morrison, and W. Hahn, has started a new phase in the systematic investigation of monetary finds centuries in the territories between the mouths of Tisza river, the Danube and the Olt rivers and the Carpathians, as a matter of fact, from all over Romania. O. Iliescu gave the signal, by republishing some finds previously published on the basis of outdated catalogues<sup>3</sup>. Contrary to the studies mentioned above, there is one published by Iudita Winkler and C. Băloi, regarding the finds in the Sucidava - Orlea area<sup>4</sup>. Published under an outdated form, and using for the identification of coins long obsolete catalogues, the work has the only merit of gathering a significant material, but its scientific processing continues to remain the task of future researchers. At the same time, we remind C. Preda's study dedicated to the "circulation" of Byzantine coins on Romania's territory<sup>5</sup>. Besides including the highly controversial term of "monetary circulation", which the author tried to accredit, in spite of obvious local economic and social realities, from the 6<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries, from most part of the area north of the Danube, the work mentioned is characterized also by the mechanical takeover of some older data, that were not updated, even where the available data and material allowed such an updating of the information. In spite of all that, the article mentioned represents the first attempt to bring together all the monetary finds

<sup>2</sup> Ir. Dimian, *Câteva descoperiri monetare bizantine pe teritoriul R.P.R.*, in SCN, 1, 1957, pp. 189-216.

<sup>3</sup> O. Iliescu, *Monede romane și bizantine, ponduri, cântare, plumburi comerciale*, in *Cultura bizantină în România*, Bucharest, 1971, pp. 117-191, passim and Idem, *Emisiune monetară la Antiochia în aprilie-iunie 540*, in BSNR, 68-69, 1973-1975, 121-123, pp. 115-116.

<sup>4</sup> Iudita Winkler and C. Băloi, *Circulația monetară în așezările antice de pe teritoriul comunei Orlea, AMNapocensis*, 8, 1971, pp. 161-172 and in AMNapocensis, 10, 1973, pp. 181-212.

<sup>5</sup> C. Preda, *Circulația monedelor bizantine în regiunea carpato-dunăreană*, in SCIV, 23, 1972, 3, pp. 375-415, passim, partly republished in English, Idem, *The Byzantine Coins-An Expression of the Relations between the Empire and the Populations North of the Danube in the 6<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, in RBAPMPOTR, pp. 219-234.

from the 6<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries on the present territory of Romania, including those from Banat and Oltenia.

At the same time, it is worth mentioning O. Toropu and O. Stoica's article from 1974, that made known to the researchers a considerable number of Byzantine monetary finds in Oltenia from the 6<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries, providing, at the same time, a set of complete scientific and technical data<sup>6</sup>. Very important as source of historical reconstruction regarding the territories between the Danube and the Southern Carpathians in the 7<sup>th</sup> century is the study dedicated by B. Mitrea to the hexagrammata hoard discovered at Priseaca (Priseaca comm., Olt county)<sup>7</sup>. The dynamics of circulation and then of the penetration of coins to Oltenia in the 4<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries was the subject - matter of the first great attempt of synthesis by O. Toropu<sup>8</sup>. Unfortunately, the part comprising the analysis of the historical significance of numismatic documents in this paper was excessively dependent on a series of preconceived patterns, and in other cases, the presentation of the material does not surpass the level of a simple compilation. That is even more regrettable as the author had access also to many finds of isolated pieces or unpublished hoards. Unfortunately, for obscure reasons, the data published by O. Toropu more often than not were too concise. Data on the situation in Banat can be found in the publication regarding the monetary finds at Orșova. Besides the analysis of the situation from the Roman Age, Maria Chițescu and Gh. Poenaru Bordea provided also a critical discussion on the numismatic material from the 6<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries, published previously<sup>9</sup>.

A very important synthesis regarding the penetration of the early Byzantine coin, from the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries, is owed to the Iassy researcher V. Butnariu<sup>10</sup>. The author made a remarkable effort not only for gathering a vast material, spread in tens of publications, but he also strove to recover all the possible data on the finds already published, to reassign the coins and redate them, according to the most recent reference catalogues. This way, V. Butnariu succeeded in provides new historical coordinates to a source of information that seemed buried and long forgotten. Wherever possible, the author studied the pieces directly, and, even published original coins, from different public and private collections. We may assert that any

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<sup>6</sup> O. Toropu and O. Stoica, *Monede bizantine descoperite în Oltenia*, in *Drobeta*, 1, 1974, pp. 159-168.

<sup>7</sup> B. Mitrea, *Date noi cu privire la secolul al VII-lea. Tezaurul de hexagrame bizantine from Priseaca (county Olt)*, in *SCN*, 6, 1975, pp. 113-125.

<sup>8</sup> O. Toropu, *Romanitatea.*, pp. 93-217 and the table of the annexe n° 1-27, *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> Maria Chițescu and Gh. Poenaru Bordea, *Contribuții la istoria Diernei în lumina descoperirilor monetare din săpăturile arheologice din 1967*, in *BSNR*, 75-76, 1981-1982, 129-130, pp. 169-208, specially pp. 176, n° 106-109, 178, n° 141-143, 179, n° 162-168 și 172, 182, n° 249-251 și pp. 198-200.

<sup>10</sup> V. Butnariu, *Răspândirea monedelor bizantine din secolele VI-VII în teritoriile carpato-dunărene*, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, pp. 199-235, *passim*.

new research on the monetary finds in the entire area of the Lower Danube, from the age mentioned, cannot be achieved without resorting to these real wells of information. In the early '90s, C. Chiriac has been remarked for his attempts to reinterpret the historical significance of some hoards from the 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries originating north of the Danube, including those of Oltenia<sup>11</sup>. In the same period also the controversial monograph by G. L. Duncan was issued, which was dedicated to the monetary circulation in the Balkan provinces of the Roman and Byzantine Empires between 294 and 578<sup>12</sup>. Recently, a new archaeological and historical synthesis was published, due to Al. Madgearu, regarding the area between the Danube and the Carpathians in the 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>13</sup>, the author using to a large extent the monetary finds as source of reconstruction of the political, social, and cultural history of the age. At the same time one dedicated to the economic life at Drobeta in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries was issued<sup>14</sup>.

We considered it useful to begin our analysis regarding the relations between the population in the area between the rivers Tisza, Danube, Olt and the Carpathians Mountains and the south - east European world after the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, in the wake of the emergence of the Avars as a great power at the Lower Danube and the start of the processes of changing the ethnic structure and the political equilibrium in the Balkans<sup>15</sup>. Relatively recently some important works were issued, such as those by V. Butnariu and Al. Madgearu, that spare us a detailed presentation of the evolution of the relations between the Empire and its north - Danubian enclaves in the first part of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. In order to understand better the way the Roman - Byzantine socio - economic structures underwent a process of erosion and the phenomenon of demonetisation of the economy that occurred in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, we consider that we have to go down to 565-578, to the time of Justinus II, whose reign announces a new historical age at the Lower Danube.

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<sup>11</sup> C. Chiriac, *Despre tezaurile monetare bizantine din secolele VII-X from Est și Sud de Carpați*, in *Pontica*, 24, 1991, pp. 373-378.

<sup>12</sup> G. L. Duncan, *Coin Circulation in the Danubian Provinces of the Roman Empire AD 294-578*, London, 1993, pp. 72-73 și 116-117.

<sup>13</sup> Al. Madgearu, *Continuitate și discontinuitate culturală la Dunărea de Jos în secolele VII-VIII*, Bucharest, *passim* (furthermore abbreviated as CDCDJ.), pp. 68-89.

<sup>14</sup> I. Stingă, *Viața economică la Drobeta în secolele II-VI p. Ch.*, Bucharest, 1998, pp. 152-155, n<sup>o</sup> 217-247, 268-270, 189-190, 194, 196, 199-201, 207-208. The author had omitted to mention that all the coins from the 6<sup>th</sup> century, published there, were identified by us.

<sup>15</sup> On the Slavonic and Avaric tribes on the Romanian territory cf. Maria Comșa, *Socio-Economic Organization of the Daco-Romanic and the Slav Populations on the Lower Danube during the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, in RBAPMPOTR, pp. 171-200; D. Gh. Teodor, *Slavii la nordul Dunării de Jos în secolele VI-VII d. H.*, in *Arh. Mold.*, 17, 1994, pp. 223-251, and more recently see Al. Madgearu, CDCDJ., *passim*.

In the case of the Oltenia area, from the time of the reign of Justinus II (565–578) a sample of 113 coins were available. The samples originating in Oltenia and those from the other finds in the Diocese of Dacias have the following chronological structure:

OLTENIA	DIOCESE OF DACIAS <sup>16</sup>
565–566 - 4 sp. (uncertain)	3 sp.
566–567 - 4 sp.	4 sp.
567–568 - 3 sp.	8 sp.
568–569 - 22 sp.	17 sp.
569–570 - 16 sp.	20 sp.
570–571 - 8 sp.	29 sp.
571–572 - 7 sp.	11 sp.
572–573 - 3 sp.	6 sp.
573–574 - 5 sp.	8 sp.
574–575 - 7 sp.	23 sp.
575–576 - 8 sp.	8 sp.
576–577 - 7 sp.	3 sp.
577–578 - 2 sp.	5 sp.
568–578 (?) - 1 sp.	- sp.
574–578 - 1 sp.	- sp.
565–578 - 12 sp.	- sp.

Within the Oltenia finds, the Drobeta sample is rather large in number. It is made up of 24 coins<sup>17</sup>, distributed as follows:

<sup>16</sup> Ivana Popović, *Index nummorum*, in *Numizmatičar*, 7, 1984, pp. 91-92. The author had used date offered by 20 hoards from 6<sup>th</sup> century found on the territory of the Diocese of Dacias, the largest part found in the area of the Danube Iron Gates (Boljetin, Bosman, Caričin Grad A-G, Dobra, Malo Golubinje, Klinovac, Niš, Veliko Orašije, Pincum-Veliko Gradište, Pirost, Slatinska Reka, Suva Reka, Taliata-Veliki Gradac and Tekija).

<sup>17</sup> Our sample consists of several more coins than those previously published by I. Stîngă, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-154, n<sup>o</sup> 228-243. The coins were preserved in the collection of the Muzeul Regional al Porților de Fier from Drobeta-Turnu Severin (furthermore abbreviated MPF) and were identified by us during the years 1987-1990. Our remarks concern the inv. n<sup>o</sup> 5398 (K, THE), a. 564-565, 5416 (K, THE), a. 567-568, 5269, 5400 and 5219 (M, CON; M, CON and K, CON), a. 568-569, 5236, 5235 and 5264 (M, CON; M, NIK și K, THE), a. 569-570, 5399, 5401, 5404 and 5414 (M, MOMIL-CON; M, CON; M, NIK și K, THE), a. 570-571, 5393 (M, NIK), a. 571-572, 5231 and 5237 (K, THE), a. 574-575, 5255, 5402 și 5394 (M, NIK; M, CON and K, THE), a. 575-576, 5298 (K, THE), a. 568-578, 5393, 5410 and 5417 and two pieces of 1/8 follis (pentanoummia) from the collection of the Craiova Branch of Institute of Thracology (E, CON, two pieces. and E, NIK, K, THE, two pieces), a. 565-578. It is impossible to identify between those coins the pieces already mentioned by C. Pređa, see our remarks from the note n<sup>o</sup> 120. Strangely, O. Toropu, *Romanitatea.*, p. 34 stated that at Drobeta are unknown the monetary finds from the time of Justinus II.

- 565-566 (?) - 1 sp.
- 566-567 - 0 sp.
- 567-568 - 1 sp.
- 568-569 - 3 sp.
- 569-570 - 3 sp.
- 570-571 - 4 sp.
- 571-572 - 1 sp.
- 572-573 - 0 sp.
- 573-574 - 0 sp.
- 574-575 - 2 sp.
- 575-576 - 3 sp.
- 576-577 - 0 sp.
- 577-578 - 0 sp.
- 568-578 (?) - 1 sp.
- 565-578 - 5 sp.

In our opinion, the few periods lacking coins are not long enough to clearly prove the hypothesis of Drobeta being destructed during the reign of Justinus II, as previously thought<sup>18</sup>.

From Sucidava we have at our disposal a much larger sample than those from previous periods, comprising 47 coins<sup>19</sup>. Chronologically they are distributed as follows:

- 565-566 - 2 sp.
- 566-567 - 2 sp.
- 567-568 - 0 sp.
- 568-569 - 12 sp.
- 569-570 - 3 sp.
- 570-571 - 3 sp.
- 571-572 - 2 sp.
- 572-573 - 3 sp.
- 573-574 - 4 sp.
- 574-575 - 4 sp.
- 575-576 - 3 sp.
- 576-577 - 3 sp.
- 577-578 - 1 sp.
- 565-578 - 4 sp.

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The author considered that the „absence” of the coins from this reign was caused by a destruction of the fortress.

<sup>18</sup> O. Toropu, *Romanitatea.*, p. 37 and M. Davidescu, *Drobeta.*, p. 227.

<sup>19</sup> V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, pp. 221, n° 97 and 227, n° 24-47.

A few coins from Justinus II found in Oltenia have been published over the years. We may remind those from: Ostrovul Corbului (Hinova comm., Mehedinți county)<sup>20</sup>, Balta Verde (Gogoșu comm., Mehedinți county)<sup>21</sup>, Romula (Reșca, Dobrosloveni comm., Olt county)<sup>22</sup>, Studina (Studina comm., Olt county)<sup>23</sup>, from an unspecified locality from the former county of Romanați<sup>24</sup>, Calafat (Dolj county)<sup>25</sup>, Ghindeni (Dolj county)<sup>26</sup>, Giurgița (Giurgița comm., Dolj county)<sup>27</sup>, Terpezița (Lazu comm., Dolj county)<sup>28</sup>, Valea Stanciului (former Bârza, Dolj county)<sup>29</sup>, Dobrușa (Ștefănești comm., Vâlcea county)<sup>30</sup>, Râureni (suburb comm. of Râmnicu Vâlcea city, Vâlcea county)<sup>31</sup> and from the Râmnicu Vâlcea area<sup>32</sup>. Other 27 pieces come from unspecified localities in Oltenia. The occurrence of coins from the same denomination come from unspecified localities in Oltenia. The occurrence of the same coins from the same denomination, mint, and year seems to indicate that they include fragments of stray hoards<sup>33</sup>.

The number of finds in Banat is rather large too. The sample of 19 coins, on which we have full data has the following chronological structure:

565–566 - 0 sp.

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<sup>20</sup> E. Nicolae, *Descoperiri de monede antice și bizantine*, in *BSNR*, 88-89, 1994–1995, 142-143, p. 272, n° 29.

<sup>21</sup> D. Berciu and E. Coșa, in *MCA*, 2, 1956, p. 402; C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 395 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983–1985, 131-133, p. 217, n° 13.

<sup>22</sup> M. Ionescu, in *BSNR*, 67-69, 1973-1975, 121-123, p. 331, n° 13 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983–1985, 131-133, p. 222, n° 132.

<sup>23</sup> Unpublished coin, kept in the collection of Muzeul Romanaților from Caracal (furthermore abbreviated as MRC), inv. n° 4639.

<sup>24</sup> Unpublished coin, kept in the collection of Muzeul Județean de Istorie Olt from Slatina (furthermore abbreviated as MJIOT), inv. n° 216.

<sup>25</sup> Gh. Poenaru Bordea and C. Voicu, in *SCIVA*, 26, 1975, 1, p. 154, n° 10 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983–1985, 131-133, p. 224, n° 176.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 153-154, n° 5-6 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983–1985, 131-133, p. 219, n° 62-63.

<sup>27</sup> O. Toropu and O. Stoica, in *Drobeta*, 1, 1974, p. 164 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983–1985, 131-133, p. 221, n° 65-66.

<sup>28</sup> Unpublished coin, kept in the collection of Muzeul Olteniei from Craiova (furthermore abbreviated as MOC), inv. n° I 9184.

<sup>29</sup> O. Toropu, *Romanitatea.*, p. 206.

<sup>30</sup> Idem and O. Stoica, in *Drobeta*, 1, 1974, p. 165; C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 400 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983–1985, 131-133, p. 219, n° 43.

<sup>31</sup> O. Iliescu, in *SCN*, 2, 1958, p. 453, n° 12; C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 407 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983–1985, 131-133, p. 222, n° 133.

<sup>32</sup> Unpublished coins, kept in the collection of Muzeul Județean de Istorie Vâlcea from Râmnicu Vâlcea (furthermore abbreviated as MJIVL), inv. n° 4906-4907.

<sup>33</sup> Unpublished coins, kept in the collection of MOC, inv. n° I 7617/3, I 27030, I 14067, I 7611, I 27032, I 3584 b, I 27036, I 14060/4, I 14066/1, I 14066/2, I 27031, I 7616/2, I 7616/1, I 3590 a, I 2924, I 7668/1, I 3411, I 10904, I 14060/3, I 14061/1, I 7617/1, I 14064, I 7617/4, I 7616/3, I 14061/2, I 7617/2 and I 3584 a.

- 566-567 - 0 sp.  
 567-568 - 5 sp.  
 568-569 - 0 sp.  
 569-570 - 4 sp.  
 570-571 - 1 sp.  
 571-572 - 2 sp.  
 572-573 - 0 sp.  
 573-574 - 2 sp.  
 574-575 - 2 sp.  
 575-576 - 1 sp.  
 576-577 - 0 sp.  
 577-578 - 1 sp.  
 567-578 - 1 sp.

From the reign of Justinus II come two coins at Orșova (Mehedinți county). One of them was issued at Nicomedia, in 567-568, and the other at Constantinople, in 571-572<sup>34</sup>. A follis of this emperor was found at Moldova Veche (Moldova Nouă, Caraș-Severin county)<sup>35</sup>. From Giarmata (Giarmata comm., Timiș county) comes a follis issued at Nicomedia, in 574- 575<sup>36</sup>. At Arad was uncovered a follis struck at Nicomedia, in 570-571<sup>37</sup>. From Borča<sup>38</sup>, in the Yugoslavian Banat comes half of a follis from this emperor. Another coin from Justinus II, probably also a bronze, was uncovered at Banatski Brestovac, in the Yugoslavian Banat<sup>39</sup>. The pieces are kept in the collection of the Museum of Banat in Timișoara, but the lack of certain details in their description prevents us from identifying them among the other coins of the same kind in the collection of the institution. Also in the Yugoslavian Banat was mentioned a follis find from Justinus II in the locality of Potporanj - Crkvine<sup>40</sup>. 11 bronze coins, four folles and seven and a half folles coming from unspecified localities in the

<sup>34</sup> E. Chirilă and I. Stratan, *Descoperiri monetare antice și bizantine în Banat (I)*, in *Studii și Comunicări-Brukenthal*, 19, 1975, p. 84; B. Mitrea, in *Dacia*, N.S., 21, 1977, n° 129 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, p. 221, n° 97-98.

<sup>35</sup> Unpublished coin from the collection of Dr. E. Sachelarie, from Drobeta-Turnu Severin, the coin belongs to the type *MIB*, 43 a, CON, a. 570-571.

<sup>36</sup> B. Mitrea, in *Dacia*, N.S., 11, 1967, p. 389, n° 74; C. Preda, in *SCIV.*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 402 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, p. 219, n° 64. The author mentioned that the coin was found at Giarmata, Mureș county, but such a village is unknown in this county.

<sup>37</sup> B. Mitrea, in *Dacia*, N.S., 7, 1963, p. 597, n° 45; C. Preda, in *SCIV.*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 395 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, p. 217, n° 6.

<sup>38</sup> I. Berkeszi, *Délmagyarország éremleletey*, in *TRÉ, S.N.*, 23, 1907, 1-2, p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> Liljana Bakić, *20 vekove novca u jugostočnom Banatu*, Vršac, 1994, p. 30, n° 108 (furthermore abbreviated as *20 vekove.*). The coin belongs to the type of *MIB*, II, 43 a, CON, a. 577-578.

historical Banat are preserved in the collection of the Museum of Banat in Timișoara<sup>41</sup>. Taking into account that most come from the former collection Zs. Ormós, it seems that a large part of them was uncovered in the area of Orșova and Moldova Veche<sup>42</sup>. From Banat come three gold coins from Justinus II. Thus, a Constantinople solidus of this sovereign, issued in 567–568 was uncovered in an unspecified locality in the Yugoslavian Banat<sup>43</sup>. From unspecified localities from the historical Banat come other two pieces, a solidus and a tremissis, preserved in the collection of the Museum of Banat<sup>44</sup>.

South of the Danube, in the area delimited by Morava and Timok are mentioned extremely little stray coin finds from Justinus II. That obviously contradicts local realities. 23 coins come from Viminacium. They are 22 bronze pieces - two folles, 20 halves folles and a solidus<sup>45</sup>. A piece of half of follis was uncovered at Hajdučka Vodenica<sup>46</sup>. During the archaeological excavations at Justiniana Prima–Caričin Grad were uncovered two halves of folles from Justinus II, struck at Thessalonica in 568–569 and 574–575<sup>47</sup>. The lacunose data regarding the circulation of the coins of Justinus II in the area between Morava and Timok are, to a certain extent, completed by the data coming from the study of several local hoards, whose concealment took place in 565–578. In this sense, we mention the hoard uncovered at Pirotd. It consists of 11 coins from Justinus II, all issued at Constantinople in 570–571<sup>48</sup>. Another hoard is the one uncovered during the archaeological researches from the fortification at Boljetin. It consists of six coins, one from Justinianus I and the rest from Justinus II. The last coin dates from 577–578<sup>49</sup>. A more important hoard is the one uncovered in the fortification at Slatinska Reka. It reunites 22 coins dating from 539–576. 10 coins

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<sup>41</sup> Unpublished coins from the collection of MBT, inv. n° 11 and 820. The coins belong to the type of *MIB*, II, 43 a, CON, a. 567–568, 43 d, CON, a. 570–571 and 573–574, 46 a, NIK, a. 575–576, 68 a, THE, a. 567–568 (2 sp.) and 569–570, 70 e, THE, a. 569–570 (2 sp.) and a. 574–575 (2 sp.). It is possible that some coins represent a part of a hoard. One of these pieces was of ½ follis was found at Bor ča.

<sup>42</sup> I. Berkeszi, in *TRÉ*, S.N., 23, 1907, 1-2, p. 28 and 30.

<sup>43</sup> Liljana Bakić, *20 vekove.*, p. 30, n° 107. The coin belongs to the type of *MIB*, II, 3 a, CON, a. 567–568.

<sup>44</sup> Unpublished coins from the collection of Muzeul Banatului from Timișoara (furthermore abbreviated as MBT), inv. n° 67, type *MIB*, II, 4, CON, a. 567–578 and inv. n° 71, belongs to the type of *MIB*, II, 11, CON, a. 565–578.

<sup>45</sup> V. Ivanišević, *Vizantijski novac (491–1092) iz zbirke Narodnog Muzeja u Požarevacu*, in *Numizmatičar*, 11, 1988, pp. 93-94, n° 32-53.

<sup>46</sup> VI. Popović, in *Numizmatičar*, 5, 1988, pp. 134-135, n° 12.

<sup>47</sup> Idem, in J. Guyon, G. Cardi in *Caričin Grad*, vol. I, ed. N. Duval and VI. Popović, Belgrade–Rome, 1984, p. 90, n° 4 and p. 101, n° 1-2.

<sup>48</sup> VI. Popović, *Petits trésors et trésors démembrés de monnaies de bronze protobyzantins de Serbie*, in *Numizmatičar*, 7, 1984, pp. 69-70, n° 1-11.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem.*, pp. 71-72, n° 1-6.

were issued during the reign of Justinus II. Three of them are folles, and the rest are halves of folles<sup>50</sup>.

The coins from 565-578 in Oltenia and Banat follow closely the evolution of the monetary mass, both within the Diocese of the Dacia and Thracia<sup>51</sup>, but it differs significantly from the structure of the finds in Wallachia and Moldavia, illustrated by the diagram published by Al. Madgearu<sup>52</sup>. In order to be able to judge with objectivity the documentary value of the sample of coins from Justinus II coming from Oltenia, we have to take into account also the evolution of the ratio between solidus and folles in 565-578. During the first two year of reign was preserved the old legal exchange rate of 216 folles for a solidus, more exactly, 12 bronze pounds for 4.55 g of gold, in use as early as 550. The first change that resulted in a serious inflation took place in 566. On that occasion, the folles began to be legally equalled to 525 folles for a solidus. On that occasion, the folles lost 59% of its real value as against the solidus, even if legally the decrease in its value was only 50% (according to the new legal provisions, a solidus used to be equivalent to 25 bronze pounds, as against 12 previously). The decreasing exchange rate of the folles in the 6<sup>th</sup> century reached its peak in 570-578. Following this strong inflation, the solidus was equalled to 720 folles, which represented a real loss of 28% of its purchasing power, although legally the admitted loss was only 17% (according to the new exchange rate, a solidus was equalled to 30 bronze pounds, as against 25 previously)<sup>53</sup>.

In the first three years of reign one can notice a slow resuming of the flow of coins in the areas on the other side of the Danube, after the strong decline remarked in the last part of the reign of Justinianus I. The dynamics of the introduction of coins to the Byzantine bridgeheads is characterized by a double sine. There are two very clearly defined peaks, in 568-570 and in 574-576. I consider that these peaks have also a certain connexion with the payments of the five years *donnativa* for the army, which occurred in 569-570 and 574-575. The second growth, more moderate than the first one, representing only about 50% of the size of the previous one, and in real terms, the growth percentage was much lower, if we take into account the strong depreciation of the Byzantine bronze coin as compared with gold. They were followed by periods of plummeting decline. The first took place in 572-573, being followed by another critical moment in 577-578. The peak moments follow closely

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<sup>50</sup> Al. Jovanović, *Un petit trésor de monnaies de bronze from forteresse protobyzantine près de Slatinska Reka*, in *Numizmaticar*, 7, 1984, pp. 31-38, n° 1-20.

<sup>51</sup> See Cécile Morisson, *La circulation monétaire dans les Balkans à l'époque justinienne et post-justinienne*, in *Acta XIII. Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae-Radovi XIII. Međunarodnog Kongresa za Starokršćansku Arheologiju, Split-Porečka*, 25.9-1.10. 1998, Vatican-Split, 1998, pp. 925-926 and 929.

<sup>52</sup> Al. Madgearu, *CDCD*., p. 73.

<sup>53</sup> W. Hahn, *MIB*, II, pp. 15-16.

the curve of the Byzantine military effort in the Balkans and of the stronger pressure of the Avars and the Slavs. Nevertheless, we have to emphasize that, partially, they reflect the impact on the monetary market in Oltenia of the two inflationary shock waves from 566 and 570. Both phases of decline can be linked to the conflict with the Avars and the Slavs, as these events are well documented and to certain hoards from the Serbian area of the Iron Gates, such as the one at Slatinska Reka<sup>54</sup>.

Before taking into consideration aspects of economic and social history of the Oltenia territories during the third quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, we would like to point out that the apparently large number of coins from Justinus II is not to be interpreted automatically as a result of a flourishing, peaceful period of economic boom. The standard samples from Oltenia and the Diocese of Dacias have the following structure:

OLTENIA

Folles -	54 sp. - 47.78%
Half of follis -	54 sp. - 47.78%
Eighth of follis -	4 sp. - 3.53%
Unspecified -	1 sp. - 0.8%

DIOCESE OF DACIAS

Folles -	54 sp. - 40%.
Half of follis -	81 sp. - 60%.
Eighth of follis	0 sp.
Unspecified -	0 sp.

The differences between the two samples are firstly due to the legal practices linked to the hoarding process. The differences were caused to a small extent by the different development level of the monetary economy on the two banks of the Danube. In spite of all that, it is possible that the territories north of the river might have depended during this time less on the mint of the Prefecture of the Illyricum, Thessalonica, that used to strike exclusively pieces of half of follis. On the other hand, the structure of the two samples reflects a process of "equalizing" of the degree of economic and social development of the territories of the province of Dacia Ripensis on both sides of the river, an "equalizing" to a large extent generated by the massive destruction of the urban socio - political structures under the blows from the Avars and the Slavs. A large part of the increase in number of the coins from that age comes from a dramatic increase in the share of small denominations, first of all the pieces of half of a follis, making up 47.74% of the analysed sample and the eighth of follis (pentanoummia), representing 3.60%. Together, the two denominations, make up 51,35% of all the pieces from Oltenia. In our opinion, the larger amount of coins from the 565-578 finds is directly linked to the inflationary wave that occurred in the Byzantine Empire at that time. The inflation was characterized by an increase in the amount of bronze issues, the degradation of the follis/solidus ratio and higher prices.

<sup>54</sup> Vl. Popović, *Les témoigns archéologiques des invasions avaro-slaves dans l'Illyricum byzantin*, in MEFR, 87, 1975, 1, p. 467 and Idem, in CRAI, 1978, 3, pp. 617, 619-620.

The increase in the number of finds in the imperial bridge heads in Oltenia must have been generated also by a more intense military activity in the area of the Iron Gates and the middle Danube, brought about by the wars against the Gepidae, the Avars and the Slavs. One can only suspect that in this confrontation were drawn some way or another also the Byzantine garrisons north of the river. The cut in subsidies to some Barbarian tribes ordered by Justinus II, ever since he had come to power, was followed by an increase in subsidies to the army, including bronze coins payments. In spite of these remarks, that are meant above all for historians and archaeologists, tempted to interpret in a simplified manner the significance of the absolute number of monetary pieces from a certain period, we cannot deny the existence of rather clear evidence of the development of the monetarized economy in the Byzantine enclaves in south Oltenia and the Banat. The most eloquent sign of this situation is given by the very increase in the number of half of follis and the emergence of those of eighth of follis (pentanoummia), typical denominations for the human groups that used to practise the daily exchanges of low value goods and services, characteristic of the urbanized societies in the Byzantine world<sup>55</sup>. Much harder to explain is the absence from Oltenia finds of gold pieces, if one takes into account the increase in the general amount of gold metal issues between 565 and 578, the higher military expenses, and the fact that the tumultuous history of that age favoured the process of hoard concealment and coin loss.

From the point of view of their place of origin, the coins of the two samples have the following structure:

OLTENIA	DIOCECE OF DACIAS
Constantinople - 40 sp. - 36.03%.	39 sp. - 28.88%.
Nicomedia - 22 sp. - 18.90%.	17 sp. - 12.59%.
Cyzicus - 4 sp. - 3.60%.	3 sp. - 2.22%.
Antioch - 2 sp. - 1.80%.	1 sp. - 0.07%.
Thessalonica - 38 sp. - 33.33%.	75 sp. - 55.55%.
Carthage - 1 sp. - 0.9%.	
The "Moneta Militaris Imitativa" - 1 sp. - 0.9%	
Unspecified mint - 3 sp. - 2.7%.	

During the reign of Justinus II, the share of provincial mints surpassed, for the first time, the place traditionally occupied by metropolitan coins on the monetary market in the Byzantine enclave in south Oltenia and the Banat. The products of provincial mints represent 60.97% of the sample analysed by us. The change is due to

<sup>55</sup> On the survival of the urban life in the territories north of the Danube, during 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries cf. O. Toropu, *Romanitatea.*, pp. 77-78 and E. Popescu, *Câteva precizări privind continuitatea urbană între Antichitate și Evul Mediu*, in RdI, 41, 1988, 11, pp. 119-123.

the massive presence of the pieces of half of follis struck at Thessalonica, representing 33.33% of the total of the analysed sample. By the end of the reign of Justinianus I, but especially during the time of Justinus II, the Thessalonica mint specialized in issuing this denomination, and soon its production began to dominate the circulation of halves of folles over the entire Balkan region. The prevailing role of the Thessalonica mint in the field of the pieces of half of follis was favoured also by a smaller amount of similar issues of Constantinople, Nicomedia and Cyzicus. The higher share of Thessalonica coins can be considered also a proof of the more important role of the administration of the Prefecture of the Illyricum, controlling the troops in south Oltenia, in the financing of the war efforts during the second part of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, so much more as the centre of hostilities on the Balkan limes, moved towards the Middle Danube and in the Iron Gates area. The second position among the provincial coins in Oltenia is occupied by the pieces issues at Nicomedia (18.90%). Next come the issues at Cyzicus, with 3.60%, and at Antioch, with 1.80%. For the first time, the sample of Byzantine coins in Oltenia comprises also a coin issued at Carthage, as well as one of the "Military Mobile Mint", the so - called *Moneta Militaris Imitativa*. Their presence is important as documentary element, to illustrate the relations with Byzantine Africa, or with the troop manoeuvres, but their role in the current circulation is only symbolic, 0.90% each.

On the territory of Oltenia are known nine coins from Tiberius II Constantinus (578-582). The standard samples for Oltenia and the Diocese of Dacias are distributed chronologically, as follows:

OLTENIA	DIOCESE OF DACIAS
578-579 - 2 sp.	5 sp.
579 - 1 sp.	0 sp.
579-580 - 2 sp.	0 sp.
580-581 - 2 sp.	1 sp.
581-582 - 0 sp.	2 sp.
578-582 - 4 sp.	-

Two of the coins of Tiberius II Constantinus come from Drobeta<sup>56</sup>. At Sucidava five bronze pieces are mentioned<sup>57</sup>. They include a follis previously

<sup>56</sup> Unpublished coins, kept in the collection of MPF, inv. n° 5382 (M, NIK), a. 580-581 și 5434 (E, CON), a. 578-582. Might be some coins are identical with those mentioned O. Toropu, *Romanitatea.*, p. 201 and C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 410.

<sup>57</sup> C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 398 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, pp. 221, n° 95 și 225, n° 48-50. An unpublished coin was preserved in the collection of the village grammar school from Orlea, inv. n° 5659, studied by us during the spring of 1991. It was a ½ follis, XX, CON; A, non-dated, of the type *MIB*, II, n° 30 a, dated between a. 578-582.

assigned, hypothetically, to Phocas, by Professor D. Tudor<sup>58</sup>. Instead, we deleted from the list of monetary finds assigned to this emperor, a tremissis found before 1953, at Celeiu, that was more times mentioned in the relevant literature, as a coin from Tiberius II Constantinus<sup>59</sup>. In reality, the coin is an issue from Mauricius Tiberius. A piece from Tiberius II Constantinus was found during the archaeological researches in the Roman - Byzantine fortification of Ostrovul Banului<sup>60</sup>. At Giurgîța (Giurgîța comm., Dolj county) is mentioned the discovery of a coin of half of follis from this emperor<sup>61</sup>. Another coin comes from an unspecified locality in Oltenia<sup>62</sup>.

In the old inventory book of the Museum of the Banat in Timișoara is mentioned a bronze coin received from Tiberius II Constantinus, originating in an unspecified locality in the historical Banat<sup>63</sup>. From our investigations it results that such a coin no longer exists in the collection of the Timișoara institution. We think that I. Berkeszi wrongly identified a coin from Mauricius as belonging to Tiberius II Constantinus, starting from the reading of the name of TIB or TIBER, which can be found also on the issues of Mauricius Tiberius.

Until now, in the area between Morava and Timok no stray coin finds from Tiberius II Constantinus were published, but we think that such coins cannot lack. Instead, in the mentioned area are known a few hoards whose concealment took place during the reign of this emperor. Of these we mention the one in the fortification of Transdierna - Tekija, situated on the bank opposite Orșova - Dierna. Of the 24 coins of his, one belongs to Tiberius II Constantinus that was issued in 578-579<sup>64</sup>. Another contemporary hoard is the one from Veliki Orašje, from the area of the great Roman - Byzantine centre of Horreum Margi. The hoard comprises 34 coins, of which only one from Tiberius II Constantinus. It is dated, being issued in 578-579<sup>65</sup>. From the Roman - Byzantine fortification of Pincum-Veliko Gradište comes a hoard of 17 coins, of which one from Tiberius II Constantinus, issued in 580-581<sup>66</sup>. Two tremisses

<sup>58</sup> D. Tudor, in *Dacia*, N.S., 7-8, 1937-1940, p. 398, n° 14. The same opinion was presented by dr. Gh. Poenaru Bordea, mentioned by V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, p. 233, note n° 51.

<sup>59</sup> The coin was presented to the Coin Room of the Romanian Academy by the late professor D. Tudor. It is preserved under the inv. n° 1076 and inv. n° 51474.

<sup>60</sup> C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 403; M. Davidescu, *Drobeta.*, p. 215 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, p. 221, n° 77. The find is mentioned twice, by error, by the last author, once as being found at „Insula Banului”, p. 220, n° 77 and for the second time as being found at „Ostrovul Banului”, p. 221, n° 77.

<sup>61</sup> O. Stoica and O. Toropu, in *Drobeta*, 1, 1974, p. 164 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, p. 219, n° 67.

<sup>62</sup> Unpublished coin kept in the collection of MOC, inv. n° I 14066/6 (M, NIK), a. 580-581.

<sup>63</sup> Muzeul Banatului, Old Access Book, vol. I, entry n° 959. The coin was presented in 1878, by Kosztyal Béla.

<sup>64</sup> Vl. Popović, in *Numizmatičar*, 7, 1984, pp. 72-75, n° 1-24.

<sup>65</sup> Dobriła Gaj-Popović, in *Numizmatičar*, 7, 1984, pp. 23-26, n° 1-34.

<sup>66</sup> Vl. Popović, in *Numizmatičar*, 7, 1984, pp. 75-77, n° 1-17.

from Tiberius II Constantinus were found in unspecified localities in the district of Pleven, in the border area between the provinces of Moesia Secunda and Dacia Ripensis<sup>67</sup>.

The number of coins from Tiberius II Constantinus coming from Oltenia is much larger than that dating from the last years of the reign of Justinus II. The real value of these pieces is by far much higher, taking into account the fact that in 578–579, the new sovereign took an important deflationary measure. The value of the follis as against the solidus was considerably increased. By imperial decision the bronze coin resumed the legal exchange rate of 512–538 and 550–566 that is 216 folles for a solidus. The increase by 30% of the purchasing power of the follis was accompanied by the restoring of the old ration between solidus and bronze, which was established at 12 metal pounds, as against 30 previously (- 40%)<sup>68</sup>. The Oltenia sample comprises both folles, and halves of folles, and, surprisingly even a piece of an one eighth of follis. The coins of Tiberius II Constantinus found in Oltenia come from the mints of Constantinople, Thessalonica, Nicomedia and Antioch.

The monetary finds mentioned seem to indicate a certain stabilization, perhaps even the return to the situation in Byzantine Oltenia, after the events of 572–576. The developments in the north - Danubian bridgehead must have been due to strictly local political and military factors. It is very different from the one found south of the Danube, where the position of the imperial authorities seem to have known further critical moments. Our statement is proved by the existence of hoards concealed during this period, such as: Augusta - Härlec<sup>69</sup>, Transdierna - Tekija, Horreum Margi-Veliko Orašje and Veliko Pincum - Gradište. All these finds comprise extremely few coins from Tiberius II Constantinus, that add, after a relatively long pause, to older issues, from Justinus II and from his predecessors.

The coins of Mauricius Tiberius (582–602) found in Oltenia mark the beginning of a new stage, the final one, of the monetary circulation in the area of the Byzantine enclaves north of the Danube. The thorough analysis of these finds, as well as that of those issued by his successors, is very important for a better understanding of the chronology of the break up of the Byzantine limes in the region between the Olt flow into the Danube and the Iron Gates. The Oltenia sample analysed by us comprises 51 coins, and a representative sample from the Diocese of Dacias. The coins are distributed as follows:

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<sup>67</sup> Teodora Kovačeva, in *Numizmatika*, 24, 1990, 4, p. 17, n° 19-20.

<sup>68</sup> W. Hahn, *MIB*, II, p. 15.

<sup>69</sup> S. Mašov, *Kásnoantičien kastel i ranovizantiskijat grad Augusta pri selo Härlec, občina Kozloduj (Lokalizrane, izvori, topografija i ukrepiteľna sistema)*, in *IMSZB*, 16, 1990, pp. 21-45. The author mentioned the finding of a hoard, consisting of 40 bronze coins and one in gold. The last coin is dated in a. 582.

## OLTENIA

582-583 - 7 sp.
583-584 - 6 sp.
584-585 - 2 sp.
585-586 - 1 sp.
586-587 - 4 sp.
587-588 - 3 sp.
588-589 - 4 sp.
589-590 - 0 sp.
590-591 - 4 sp.
591-592 - 3 sp.
592-593 - 4 sp. (uncertain one)
593-594 - 0 sp.
594-595 - 3 sp.
595-596 - 2 sp.
596-597 - 3 sp.
597-598 - 0 sp.
598-599 - 1 sp.
599-600 - 1 sp.
600-601 - 0 sp.
601-602 - 0 sp.
583/584-602 - 1 sp.
582-602 - 3 sp.

## DIOCESE OF DACIAS

0 sp.
1 sp.
1 sp.
0 sp.
2 sp.
1 sp.
1 sp.
2 sp.
1 sp.
0 sp.
1 sp.
0 sp.
1 sp.
3 sp.
0 sp.

The two samples point to the deepening of the process of divergent evolution of the monetary circulation in the territories next of the Iron Gates, situated north and south of the Danube. As already mentioned, the phenomenon had begun by the end of the reign of Justinianus I and grew more intense during the reigns of Justinus II and Tiberius II Constantinus.

From the area of Drobeta come 14 coins, including a light solidus of 20 of siliquae<sup>70</sup>.

582-583 - 3 sp.

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<sup>70</sup> Unpublished coins preserved in the collection of MPF, inv. n° 5250 (M, CON), a. 582-583, 5225 (K, CON), a. 582-583, 5283 (K, THE), a. 582-583, 5281 (M, CON), a. 588-589, 5259 (M, THEUP), a. 590-591, 5387 (M, CON), a. 591-592, 5406 (M, CON), a. 591-592, 5212 (M, NIK), a. 592-593 (?), 5411 (K, THE), a. 594-595, 5413 (K, THE), a. 595-596, 5277 (M, THEUP), a. 596-597, 5465 (K, THE), a. 598-599, ale MNIR, inv. n° 238.864 (Sol., 20 siliquae, CON), a. 583/584-602 and in the collection of dr. E. Sachelarie, from Drobeta-Turnu Severin (K, THE), a. 583-584. Lacking any details concerning the coins of Mauricius Tiberius already mentioned by O. Toropu and C. Preda, it is impossible to identify this issues in the present collection.

583–584 - 1 sp.  
584–585 - 0 sp.  
585–586 - 0 sp.  
586–587 - 0 sp.  
587–588 - 0 sp.  
588–589 - 1 sp.  
589–590 - 0 sp.  
590–591 - 1 sp.  
591–592 - 2 sp.  
592–593 - 1 sp. (uncertain)  
593–594 - 1 sp.  
594–595 - 0 sp.  
595–596 - 1 sp.  
596–597 - 1 sp.  
597–598 - 0 sp.  
598–599 - 1 sp.  
599–600 - 0 sp.  
600–601 - 0 sp.  
601–602 - 0 sp.  
583/584–602 - 1 sp.

The sample of coins from Mauricius Tiberius found in the area of Sucidava comprises 20 coins, including one tremissis<sup>71</sup>. Those identified accurately are distributed as follows:

582–583 - 3 sp.  
583–584 - 2 sp.  
584–585 - 1 sp.  
585–586 - 1 sp.  
586–587 - 2 sp.  
587–588 - 2 sp.  
588–589 - 1 sp.  
589–590 - 0 sp.  
590–591 - 1 sp.  
591–592 - 0 sp.  
592–593 - 2 sp.  
593–594 - 0 sp.  
594–595 - 1 sp.  
595–596 - 0 sp.

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<sup>71</sup> V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983–1985, 131-133, p. 227, n° 51-63.

596-597 - 1 sp.

597-598 - 0 sp.

598-599 - 0 sp.

599-600 - 0 sp.

600-601 - 0 sp.

601-602 - 0 sp.

582-602 - 3 sp.

Coins from this emperor were uncovered at: Gogoşu (Gogoşu comm., Mehedinţi county)<sup>72</sup>, Ostrovu Mare (Gogoşu comm., Mehedinţi county)<sup>73</sup>, Caracal, (Olt county)<sup>74</sup>, Popoviceni (Goicea Mică comm., Dolj county)<sup>75</sup>, the area of Craiova<sup>76</sup> and the area of Râmnicu Vâlcea<sup>77</sup>. Nine pieces come from unspecified localities in Oltenia<sup>78</sup>. The existence of a presupposed hoard comprising coins from Constantinus I at Mauricius, uncovered at Ostrovul Mare<sup>79</sup>, has no real correspondent, as the confusion comes from an erroneous reading of a very clear text by Al. Bărcăcilă<sup>80</sup>. Other four pieces of half of follis dating from the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, inaccurately identified may belong to Justinus II or to Mauricius Tiberius. Three pieces come from Sucidava<sup>81</sup> and one from Romula - Reşca (Dobrosloveni comm., Olt county)<sup>82</sup>.

A few coin finds from Mauricius Tiberius are mentioned on the territory of the Banat. A coin of this emperor was found at Orşova (Mehedinţi county)<sup>83</sup>. It is part of the collection of the Museum of the Banat in Timişoara, but the lack of further details makes it impossible to identify it as one of the two coins from Mauricius

<sup>72</sup> Al. Bărcăcilă, in *SCN*, 1, 1957, p. 421, n° 1 - MPF, inv. n° 5282 (M, CON), a. 597-598.

<sup>73</sup> D. Berciu, in *MCA*, 1, 1953, p. 589-591; C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 405 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, p. 221, n° 104.

<sup>74</sup> Unpublished coin, kept in the collection of MRC, inv. n° 7784, (M, CON), a. 590-591.

<sup>75</sup> Gh. Poenaru Bordea and C. Voicu, in *SCIVA*, 26, 1975, 1, p. 154, n° 9 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, p. 222, n° 120.

<sup>76</sup> Unpublished coins from the collection of O. Ciocşan, from Craiova (M, CON), a. 587-588 and (K, THE), a. 588-589.

<sup>77</sup> Unpublished coin kept in the collection of MJIVL, inv. n° 4584 (K, THEUP), a. 594-595.

<sup>78</sup> Unpublished coins kept in the collection of MOC, inv. n° I 14066/3 (K, CON), a. 582-583, I 14066/7 (K, NIK), a. 582-583, I 27034 (M, CON), a. 583-584, I 14068 (K, CON), a. 586-587, 17613 (K, CON), a. 588-589, I 14062 (M, THEUP), a. 590-591, I 14066 (K, KYZ), a. 592-593, I 7614 (K, CON), a. 595-596 and I 40074 (K, THE), a. 599-600.

<sup>79</sup> M. Davidescu, *Drobeta.*, p. 206.

<sup>80</sup> Al. Bărcăcilă, in *SCN*, 1, 1957, p. 419.

<sup>81</sup> D. Tudor, in *Dacia*, 11-12, 1945-1947, p. 204, n° 74-76.

<sup>82</sup> B. Mitrea, in *SCIV*, 14, 1963, 2, p. 474, n° 52.

<sup>83</sup> I. Berkeszi, in *TRÉ, S.N.*, 23, 1907, 1-2, p. 30 and C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 405.

Tiberius, belonging to the heritage of this institution<sup>84</sup>. One of these comes from an unspecified locality in the historical Banat. At the same time some coin finds from Mauricius Tiberius were uncovered during the archaeological excavations at Banatska Palanka - Sapaja<sup>85</sup>. A solidus from Mauricius Tiberius comes from the locality of Česterek, from the Yugoslavian Banat (former Csösztelek, from the old county of Torontal)<sup>86</sup>.

South of the Danube the stray finds from Mauricius Tiberius were published only from Viminacium, where there are three pieces, dating from 587–588, 590–591 and 592–593<sup>87</sup>. In our opinion, this level of information does not reflect in the least the situation on the ground. From the Serbian area of the Iron Gates come two hoards whose concealment occurred during the reign of Mauricius Tiberius. The most important one was that uncovered in the stronghold at Veliki Gradac. The hoard comprises 107 coins, of which only two pieces from the reign of Mauricius. The most recent coin from the hoard dates from 594–595<sup>88</sup>. Contemporaneous with this find is the hoard at Bosman, counting 17 coins. The issues from the time of Mauricius Tiberius are well represented, by nine pieces, the last of which dates from 594–595<sup>89</sup>.

Two hoards concealed in 595–596 come from north - western Bulgaria, from Rakita and Reselec<sup>90</sup>. An isolated tremissis from Mauricius Tiberius was found at Sadovec (district of Pleven), and a solidus of the same emperor was found in an unspecified locality in the district of Pleven<sup>91</sup>.

The chronological distribution of the coins within the whole region of the Iron Gates and from each more important fortification, taken separately, as well as their number, may provide a series of clues as to the political and military situation of the Byzantine enclave on the north bank of the Danube, on the evolution of the limes within this region. Over the entire Oltenia the first two years of the reign of Mauricius seem to go on, or even, to develop the trends that occurred in 579–582. The number of coins in the first year from Drobeta is rather high. Also at Sucidava, the issues from the first years of reign of Mauricius Tiberius are also well represented.

<sup>84</sup> Unpublished coins from the collection of, MBT, inv. n° 11, belongs to the type of *MIB*, II, 67 D, CON, a. 586–587 and inv. n° 80, belongs to the type of *MIB*, II, 84 D, KYZ, a. 597–598.

<sup>85</sup> Liljana Bakić, *20 vekove.*, p. 13.

<sup>86</sup> Ö. Gohl, in *N. Közlöny*, 13, 1914, 1, p. 17. The coin belongs to the type of Sabatier, I, 239, pl. 24, n° 10 - *MIB*, II, 6, CON, a. 583/4–602.

<sup>87</sup> V. Ivanišević, in *Numizmatičar*, 11, 1988, p. 94, n° 54–56.

<sup>88</sup> Dušica Minić, in *Numizmatičar*, 7, 1984, pp. 39–49, n° 1–107.

<sup>89</sup> Vl. Kondić, in *Numizmatičar*, 7, 1984, pp. 51–56, n° 1–17.

<sup>90</sup> Y. Youroukova, *Trouvailles monétaire de Sadovetz*, in *Die antiken Befestigungen von Sadovec (Bulgarien). Ergebnisse der deutsch-bulgarisch-österreichische Ausgrabungen (1934–1937)*, Munich, 1992, ed. Wanda Uenze, pp. 306–308.

<sup>91</sup> Teodora Kovačeva, in *Numizmatika*, 24, 1990, 4, p. 17, n° 21–22.

Undoubtedly, the intense inflow of coins to the north of the Danube between 582 and 584 constitutes the consequence of the Byzantine - Avar peace, as well as that of the position of the lands in south Oltenia outside the attacks from the Sklavins, that affected the Byzantine provinces in the Diocese of Thracia in 581-584.

The situation would change dramatically when the confrontation between the Avars and the Byzantines was resumed in the autumn of 584<sup>92</sup>. Although unspecified by contemporary sources, this time the battles must have affected also the strongholds at Drobeta and Sucidava, as well as those in the entire region south of the Danube between Singidunum - Viminacium - Augusta. At Drobeta, the series of monetary finds is interrupted between 584 and 587, while at Sucidava, between 585 and 588. Over the entire Oltenia, we do not know one single monetary find from 585-586. The shift of the centre of operations towards the East, in Scythia Minor, in the east and centre of the Balkans made it possible to resume the introduction of bronze coins towards Byzantine Oltenia, before 587, the year when the Avar - Slav attacks ceased and a peace was concluded. In the light of the monetary finds accessible to study, life in the area of the main Byzantine bridgeheads, after the events of 584-586 must have returned to normal rather difficultly, especially at Sucidava, where the series of coins was resumed as late as 588. As a matter of fact, in this fortification the inflow of coins would go on, at a slower pace, up to 596-597. The Sucidava sample presents many caesuras - the years 589-592, 593-594 and 595-596. At Drobeta the coins began to reappear between 588 and 589 and would continue to come in, with short interruptions, up to 598-599. As in the case of Sucidava, the amount of money that penetrated Drobeta was much lower than the average levels reached previously, although after 585 the Byzantine state was affected by a new inflationary wave. From that year on the value of the follis was lowered by 54%; under the new conditions, a solidus had the legal value of 600 folles, or 25 bronze pounds (in that case, the devaluation was only 50%)<sup>93</sup>. Also at Drobeta the series of coins was interrupted only between 589-590 and 594-595. It is obvious that the two moments of interruption coincide, which proves that the reasons for such a situation were not strictly local, as they affected the entire area between the Iron Gates and the Olt mouth to the Danube. Until the present day, both in Oltenia, and in north - east Serbia, there are no coins from 593-594, 597-598 or after 600. In Banat the last acknowledged coin dates from 597-598.

The events that led to the cease in the penetration of coins from 589-590 cannot be identified in the contemporary sources that mention the peace was established between the Byzantines and the Avars between 587 and 593. Nevertheless, we should

<sup>92</sup> On the general political situation in the regions north of the Balkans during the reign of Mauricius Tiberius cf. Al. Madgearu, CDCDJ., pp. 19-23.

<sup>93</sup> W. Hahn, *MIB*, II, p. 16.

bear in mind the possibility of an attack from the Sklavins. The latter, although formally subjects to the Avars, would often conduct forays on their own, with or without the tacit consent from the qagan in Pannonia. The second interruption may be connected to the outbreak of a new wave of hostilities by the Avars against the Byzantine possessions in the Balkans. On that occasion, the bulk of Avar troops followed the Singidunum - Viminacium - Bononia path that is in the close vicinity of Byzantine Oltenia. Nevertheless, from 594 on, the field of operations moved to Moesia Secunda and to Wallachia, rather far from Oltenia. In spite of these political and military difficulties of the last years of the reign of Mauricius Tiberius, it is hard to explain why the coins ceased to penetrate the Byzantine possessions north of the Danube in 596–597 and 598–599. The main reason for not embracing easily the theory of the Oltenia fortifications being abandoned is the unexpected change in the balance of forces between the two conflicting parties as regards the control of the Danube. Starting with the spring of 596, after having annihilated the centres of the Sklavins in Wallachia, the imperial army began the offensive in the Viminacium - Sirmium region. The Byzantines did not limit themselves to recovering the territories south of the Danube. The imperial army conducted strong military actions also north of the river, with a view to destructing the core of the Avar power, situated in the area between the Danube and the Tisza. The defeated Avars asked for peace, a condition maintained up to the autumn of 597. The new attack of the Avars from the winter of 597-598 aimed only at Scythia Minor. It ended with a peace treaty that established the Danube as the border between the two powers. In 599 the Byzantines crossed the river, by the stronghold of Viminacium, crushing the forces of the Avars and of their allies north of Serbia and Banat. In 601 the imperial troops made futile an attempt by the Avars to infiltrate in the area of the Iron Gates. From that moment on, until the end of the reign of Mauricius Tiberius the historical sources that were preserved fail to mention the existence of new conflicts with the Avars in the area upstream the Iron Gates. In view of those tackled above, the interruption in the inflow of coins towards Drobeta and Sucidava between 596 and 599 must have been caused by the fortifications being abandoned by most garrisons, summoned to take part in the military operations unfolding mostly in their close vicinity, in the region of the Iron Gates or in west Wallachia<sup>94</sup>.

The analysis of monetary finds remains to this day the most important source of information on the evolution of the Byzantine limes north of the Danube during the last two decades of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup>, if one

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<sup>94</sup> The general theory in the Romanian historiography put in connexion the end of arriving of new monetary supplies with the leaving of the Byzantine fortresses, cf. D. Tudor, in *IR*, vol. I, p. 661, O. Toropu *Romanitatea.*, pp. 37 și 117-118 and M. Davidescu, *Drobeta.*, p. 227.

takes into account that written sources fail to mention directly their fate, and the results of archaeological researches cannot be used, both because of the methods of the excavations conducted at Drobeta and Sucidava during the '20-'50 of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and because of the fact that we have few published data on more recent researches, that could accurately present the finds from the last levels of Roman - Byzantine existence. The series of coins coming from the two important fortifications, as well as from the entire area of Oltenia point to an almost uninterrupted process of penetration by the Byzantine coinage until the last three years of the reign of Mauricius Tiberius, which can be interpreted also as a proof of the continuation of the *limes* functioning within the segment between Drobeta and Sucidava, in spite of the serious difficulties undergone by the Balkan - Danubian provinces during that age. As in the case of the fortifications at Singidunum and Viminacium, and at Drobeta, and to a certain extent also of that at Sucidava, it is obvious that the administration and the army found resources of restoring the system to its former state, even if after 587, the resumption of a normal life failed to achieve the standards usual before 578. With no intention of minimizing the meaning of the rather frequent interruptions remarked in the Oltenia monetary sample from the time of Mauricius Tiberius, we do think that most part of the territory remained under Byzantine rule and the population preserved previous forms of life, that is the urban ones and the organization characteristic of the imperial possessions up to 614-615<sup>95</sup>. Certainly, the caesuras in the succession of finds have a relevance that cannot be ignored, but we should point out that it is not sure that in all cases they indicate an end of Byzantine rule. More often than not these interruptions indicate only a cut in contacts with the rest of the province they were attached to, or with the rest of the imperial territories.

In Oltenia the coins begin to reappear after 602, and in the case of Dobruđa there is the proof of the fact that coins were penetrating again, also after 610. In spite of all that, the scarcity of subsequent finds makes us believe that after 598-599 only a small part of the troops stationed previously in this stronghold returned to the old garrison, or were replaced by another unit, possibly by Barbarian *foederati* of Ant origin, whose traces of material culture was uncovered in a few settlements in south Oltenia<sup>96</sup>. More delicate is the interpretation of the situation at Sucidava, where the last certain monetary find dates from 596-597. Unfortunately, the data on this Byzantine centre are confusing and precarious. D. Tudor pointed out that the last uncovered coins dated from 597-598 and that the settlement, having been

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<sup>95</sup> D. Tudor, in *IR.*, vol. I, p. 664 and O. Toropu, *Romanitatea.*, p. 37 dated the end of the life in the main Byzantine centres from Oltenia between 597-598 and 600. According to those authors, the stop of the monetary currency corresponds, directly, with the ending of the Imperial control in this region.

<sup>96</sup> On these kind of settlements cf. Maria Comşa, in *RBAPMPOTR.*, p. 173.

abandoned, fell victim to a violent fire<sup>97</sup>. It is unclear whether in the ash layer were found coins, in unequivocal stratigraphic conditions. C. Preda mentions the uncovering at Sucidava of a coin from Phocas, supposed to be a follis issued at Antioch, from 606–607. As already mentioned, the coin in question is rather an issue from Tiberius II Constantinus. At any rate, it is hard to find a plausible reason for the Byzantine authorities abandoning a valuable strategic point like that at the Olt outflow into the Danube, during a time when, between 597 and 602, the Byzantine Empire successfully resumed the offensive actions in the area between the Iron Gates and Sirmium, thus reconquering some important fortifications, such as: Viminacium, Singidunum and Sirmium, and north of the river<sup>98</sup>. Until the systematic publication of the entire numismatic material from Sucidava and its neighbourhood, we think that the end of the Byzantine control over the most important Byzantine fortifications in the Oltenia area of the Iron Gates remains an open issue that has to be resolved. The clearest sign of the decline of the monetarized economy, as well as of the economic, social, and political system on which used to rely the Byzantine provincial civilization is the dramatic decrease in the number of finds. The ratio between the value of all the coins of Mauricius known in Oltenia and the official exchange rate of 1 solidus - 600 folles<sup>99</sup> eloquently illustrates how much the relations between the Byzantine possessions north of the Danube and the rest of the Empire deteriorated.

The coins of Mauricius Tiberius come from the most important mints that used to function within the space of Propontida and Syria. The role of these mints in supplying the territories north and south of the Danube in the Diocese of Dacia is clearly illustrated by the proportions of the two standard samples:

OLTENIA	DIOCESE OF DACIAS
Constantinople - 23 sp. - 46%.	10 sp. - 71,42%.
Thessalonica - 14 sp. - 28%.	2 sp. - 14,28%.
Nicomedia - 5 sp. - 10%.	-
Antioch - 4 sp. - 8%.	2 sp. - 14,28%.
Cyzicus - 2 sp. - 5%.	-
Unspecified - 2 sp. - 4%.	-

The survival of the monetarized economy in the Byzantine bridgehead in Oltenia between 582 and 600 is illustrated by the presence of the most diverse bronze denominations, including the pieces of half of follis. The sample from 582–602 in Oltenia and the rest of the Diocese of Dacias has the following structure according to denominations:

<sup>97</sup> D. Tudor, in *IR.*, vol. I, p. 664.

<sup>98</sup> M. Rusu, in *RBAPMPOTR*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>99</sup> W. Hahn, *MIB*, III, p. 16.

## OLTENIA

Follis - 20 sp. - 40.81%.

Half of follis - 29 sp. - 59.18%.

Solidus of 20 siliquae - 1 sp.

## DIOCESE of DACIAS

Follis - 11 sp. - 78.57%.

Half of follis - 3 sp. - 21.42%.

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Continuing a process already begun during the time of Justinus II and within the monetary sample from the time of Mauricius Tiberius, most pieces of half of follis in Oltenia come from the mint at Thessalonica. It is worth mentioning the presence within the finds at Drobeta of that light solidus, of 20 siliquae. The coin is unique, not only north of the Lower Danube, but it is a rarity also among the finds in the septentrional area of the Balkans<sup>100</sup>. The light solidi would become more common within our space between 602 and 610. Thus, a light solidus, of 20 siliquae from Phocas was discovered at Săbed (Ceaușu de Câmpie comm., Mureș county)<sup>101</sup>, and another one at Histria<sup>102</sup>. More occurrences are signalled in the steppes north of the Caucasus and south of Russia, and the Ukraine, and above all in the hoard at Maloe Pereščepino, in the area of Poltava.<sup>103</sup> Recent researches proved that light solidi were issued not for trade with the "Barbarians", as believed for a long time, but in order to pay the stipendia and tributes for the rulers of some "allied" peoples at the northern periphery of the Byzantine Empire<sup>104</sup>. The occurrence of such a coin from Mauricius Tiberius at Drobeta, in a key position from the Danubian limes, could point to the settling in the area of a group of "Barbarian" foederati charged with protected the area, following the removal from the border of the old garrisons, shifted to the front in the Viminacium - Singidunum area, with a view to the military operations against the Avars.

The tendencies of slowing down the inflow of coins towards the area beyond the Danube would go on and strengthen up during the reign of Phocas (602-610). From the time of that emperor only three certain monetary finds are known in

<sup>100</sup> In Northern Bulgaria is mentioned only the find of a solidus of 23 siliquae from Mauricius Tiberius, the hoard n° C from Sadovec, cf. Yordanka Youroukova, *Contribution numismatique à la définition du caractère des agglomérations du VIe siècle dans les Balkans*, in *Mélanges de numismatique, d'archéologie et d'histoire offerts à Jean Lafaurie*, Paris, 1980, p. 280.

<sup>101</sup> The coin from Săbed was several times published, starting with, K. Horedt, *Contribuții la istoria Transilvaniei în secolele IV-XIII*, Bucharest, 1958, p. 107. According to C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 408 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, p. 222, n° 135, the coin was a solidus from Justinianus I, but in fact it is a issue from Phocas.

<sup>102</sup> *Șantierul arheologic Histria*, in *SCIV*, 3, 1954, 2, p. 247, Suzana Dumitriu, *Descoperiri monetare, în Histria-Monografie arheologică*, vol. I, ed. by E. Condurachi, Bucharest, 1954, p. 465, n° 471 and C. Preda, *Urme de viață la Histria în secolele XII-XIII*, in *SCIV*, 5, 1954, 4, p. 532. It is a solidus of 22 siliquae, belonging to the type of MIB, II, 19, CON, a. 607-609.

<sup>103</sup> J. Smedley, *Seventh-Century Byzantine Coins in Southern Russia and the Problem of Light Weight Solidi*, in *Studies in Early Byzantine Gold Coinage*, New York, 1988, pp. 113-114, n° 6.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibidem.*, pp. 128-129.

Oltenia. It is a follis uncovered at Argetoaia (Argetoaia comm., Dolj county)<sup>105</sup>, unfortunately too concisely mentioned, as well as the sample from Răcarii de Jos (Brădești comm., Dolj county)<sup>106</sup>. Most available data are on the follis issued in 607–608 at Nicomedia; originating in an unspecified locality from the former county of Romanai<sup>107</sup>. As already mentioned, the coin coming from Sucidava, hypothetically assigned to Phocas<sup>108</sup>, seems to be rather an issue from Tiberius II Constantinus.

In Banat are known only two coin finds from Phocas. A follis comes from Banatsko Novo Selo (Satu Nou), next to the town of Pančevo, in the Yugoslavian Banat<sup>109</sup>. In the same part of the province, at Krušica, a solidus from Phocas was uncovered<sup>110</sup>.

Until the present day, south of the Danube, in the region between Morava and Timok coin finds from Phocas are not mentioned.

In the light of the available data, the decrease in the number of finds between 602 and 610 in Oltenia must have been only a passing phenomenon. From the territory of Oltenia come a rather large number of samples issued by Heraclius (610–641). The sample from that time rises to 11 samples, of which ten bronze ones, struck, above all, during the first years of reign.

610–611 - 1 sp.

611–612 - 0 sp.

612–613 - 4 sp.

613 - 1 sp.

613–614 - 1 sp.

614–615 - 1 sp.

610–641 - 3 sp.

From Drobeta come two Constantinople folles, of which one issued in 612–613, and the other, in 613–614<sup>111</sup>. A Metropolitan follis dated in 612–613 was found in each

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<sup>105</sup> B. Mitrea in *Dacia*, N.S., 10, 1966, p. 412 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983–1985, 131-133, p. 217, n° 7. The author considered that the coin was found at Tănțăreni (com. Tănțăreni, county Gorj), or at Argetoaia, p. 223, n° 158. In fact the coin was found at Argetoaia.

<sup>106</sup> D. Tudor, in *Apulum*, 5, 1964, p. 253; C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 407 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983–1985, 131-133, p. 222, n° 128.

<sup>107</sup> Unpublished coin from the collection of MJJOT from Slatina.

<sup>108</sup> D. Tudor, in *Dacia*, 7-8, 1937–1940, p. 398, n° 4 and C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 398.

<sup>109</sup> Unpublished coin kept in the collection of MNIR, cust. CN-BAR n° 7282. The coin belongs to the type of *MIB*, II, n° 69 a, *NIK*, a. 609-610.

<sup>110</sup> I. Berkeszi, in *TRÉ.*, S.N., 23, 1907, 1-2, p. 24. The coin was part of the collection of Zs. Ormós, given to the MBT. We did not find the coin in the collection of this museum during our research. The coin was mentioned by B. Mitrea, in *SCN*, 6, 1975, p. 120, n° 18, using the data transmitted by I. Berkeszi. C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 400, mentioned, by error, as finding place Crușevița, comm. Sichevița, Caraș-Severin county.

<sup>111</sup> Unpublished coins, kept in the collection of MPF din Drobeta-Turnu Severin inv. n° I 5433 and I 5248.

of these localities: Craiova,<sup>112</sup> Almăj (Almăj comm., Dolj county)<sup>113</sup>, as well as in an unspecified locality in the same county<sup>114</sup>. A Constantinople piece of half of follis from Heraclius, overlapping an older sample from Phocas, comes from Cioroiu Nou (Cioroiși comm., Dolj county)<sup>115</sup>. Unfortunately, we do not possess further details regarding its dating. From the unspecified localities in Oltenia come three bronze coins from this emperor. One dates from 610–611, and was issued at Nicomedia<sup>116</sup>. The other two were struck at Constantinople in 612–613 and, 614–615<sup>117</sup>, respectively. Probably one of these coins is identical to that found by D. Tudor, during his excavations in the provincial Romanic settlement of Cioroiu Nou (Cioroiși comm., Dolj county), that, subsequently, intermingled with the rest of the pieces in the collection of the Museum of Oltenia<sup>118</sup>. Two solidi from Heraclius and Heraclius Constantinus (613–638) come from two unspecified localities in Oltenia. One of them is preserved in the CNBAR collection, found at present at The National Bank of Romania (BNR)<sup>119</sup>, and the other one belonged, before 1981, to a private collection in Craiova<sup>120</sup>.

On the territory of the Banat are also known a large number of coins from Heraclius and Heraclius Constantinus. Unlike the situation in Oltenia, they consist mostly of gold and silver issues. From unspecified localities from the area of the historical Banat, come four folles, issued in 612–613, 613–614, while the other two from 615/6–623/4<sup>121</sup>. It is likely that some of them come from the area of Orșova and Moldova Veche, as most Byzantine bronze pieces in the heritage of the Museum of the Banat come from the collection of Zs. Ormós, who collected many coins of this kind from the mentioned area<sup>122</sup>. The older literature mentions the discovery of a bronze coin at Beba Veche (Beba Veche comm., Timiș county), but further details on this piece do not exist<sup>123</sup>. Of all the gold coin finds, we mention a solidus from

<sup>112</sup> O. Toropu, in *MO*, 24, 1972, 9-10, p. 707; C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 399; O. Toropu and O. Stoica, in *Drobeta*, 1, 1974, p. 163-164; B. Mitrea, in *BSNR*, 67-69, 1973-1975, 121-123, p. 325 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, p. 220, n° 40.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. O. Toropu, *Romanitatea*, p. 205; B. Mitrea, in *BSNR*, 124-128, 1976-1980, p. 594 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, p. 217, n° 3.

<sup>114</sup> V. Petac, *Descoperiri inedite de monede antice și bizantine*, in *BSNR*, 86-87, 1992-1993, 140-141, p. 319, n° 3.

<sup>115</sup> C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 398; O. Toropu and O. Stoica, in *Drobeta*, 1, 1974, p. 163, n° 17 and O. Toropu, *Romanitatea*, Annex n° 17 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, p. 218, n° 31.

<sup>116</sup> Unpublished coin preserved in the collections of MO, inv. n° I 14066/5.

<sup>117</sup> Unpublished coins preserved in the collection of MO, inv. n° I 7615 and I 14 074/1.

<sup>118</sup> D. Tudor, in *MCA*, 8, 1962, p. 552.

<sup>119</sup> The coin is preserved in the collection of C.N.-BAR, pv. 1675.

<sup>120</sup> Unpublished coin preserved in a private collection.

<sup>121</sup> Unpublished coins from the collection of MBT, inv. n° 250/5 și 80 (3 sp.). The coins belong to the type of *MIB*, III, 159 b, *CON*, a. 612-613, *MIB*, III, 161, *CON*, a. 615/6-623/4 (2 sp.) and *MIB*, III, *NIK*, a. 613-614.

<sup>122</sup> I. Berkeszi, in *TRÉ*, *S.N.*, 23, 1907, 1-2, p. 28 and 30.

<sup>123</sup> Ö. Gohl, in *N. Közlöny*, 11, 1912, 1, p. 10.

Heraclius and Heraclius Constantinus, originating in Mehadia (Caraş - Severin county)<sup>124</sup>, the locality situated in the valley of Cerna, rather close to Drobeta. At Ostrovo<sup>125</sup> and at Bačko Petrovoselo, in the Yugoslavian Banat, were found solidi from Heraclius and Heraclius Constantinus, of which the last between 616 and 625<sup>126</sup>. From Şeitin (Nădlac comm., Arad county) comes a light solidus of the two emperors<sup>127</sup>. Similar solidi were found at Sânpetru German (Secusigiu comm., Arad county)<sup>128</sup>, at Sekić, in the Yugoslavian Banat<sup>129</sup>, as well as in an unspecified locality in the former county of Torontal<sup>130</sup>. In Banat are mentioned also other gold coin finds from Heraclius, but unfortunately, we have no supplementary data on them, which we might allow us to identify the denomination, the mint and the date of the issuing. Such a coin comes from Krstur, in the northern part of the Yugoslavian Banat<sup>131</sup>.

All these coins presented above, on which we have more detailed data are issues from 616–625 by the Constantinople mint. With very few exceptions, like the case of the light solidus at Hajdúdorog (Hajdú - Bihár county), dated between 610 and 613<sup>132</sup>, most gold coins from Heraclius found in the Avar graves on the present

<sup>124</sup> Unpublished coin kept in a private collection. The coin belongs to the type of *MIB*, III, 11, CON, a. 616–625.

<sup>125</sup> Ö. Gohl, in *N. Közölny*, 13, 1914, 1, p. 18. According to the author, this coin from *Heraclius and Heraclius Constantinus* belongs to the type of Sabatier, I, pl. XXXIV, n° 18 – Constans II and Constantinus IV, which, clearly is an error. According to us the solidus from Ostrovo might be of the type *MIB*, III, 8-38, struck between a. 613–632. Considering that the largest part of the solidi of Heraclius and Heraclius Constantinus found in the Avaric space dated between a. 613–625, it seems very plausible that the mentioned coin dates from the same period.

<sup>126</sup> Ö. Gohl, in *N. Közölny*, 13, 1914, 1, p. 17. The coin belongs to the type of Sabatier, I, p. 274, 48 bis = to the type of *MIB*, III, 21, CON, a. 616–625. It is possible that this coin was found at Petrovaselo, comm. Recaş, Timiş county, because the author mentioned as finding place „Petroszelló”, without mentioning the name of the county. Two villages with the same name were in the previous counties of Timiş and Bács-Bodrog, the latter now in Yugoslavia.

<sup>127</sup> B. Mitrea, in *Dacia*, N.S., 16, 1972, p. 373, n° 95 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983–1985, 131-133, p. 223, n° 149. The author wrongly considered that the coin was struck by Constantinus IV (668–685).

<sup>128</sup> E. Dörner, in *SCIV*, 11, 1960, 4, pp. 425 and 429-431; B. Mitrea, in *Dacia*, N.S., 6, 1962, p. 541, n° 49. The coin was identified using the picture published by K. Horedt, in *IR*, vol. I, p. 718, fig. 180, n° 6-7. It belongs to the type of *MIB*, III, 65, CON, a. 616–625.

<sup>129</sup> L. Huszár, *Das Münzmaterial in den Funden des Völkerwanderungszeit im mittleren Donaubecken*, in *ActaArchHung.*, p. 96, n° CXCII. The author considered that the coin belongs to the type of Sabatier, I, n° 48 bis - *MIB*, III, 65, CON, a. 616–625.

<sup>130</sup> Ö. Gohl, in *N. Közölny*, 13, 1914, 1, p. 17. The weight of 3,74 g, as the marking BOXX, clearly shows that the piece is a light solidus of 20 siliquae, *MIB*, III, 65, CON, a. 616–625 and not a normal solidus, as it indicated the author quotation from Sabatier, I, p. 274, n° 48.

<sup>131</sup> F. Milleker, *Délmagyarország*, II, p. 123-124 and L. Huszár, in *ActaArchHung.*, 5, 1954, 1-2, p. 98, n° CCLXIII.

<sup>132</sup> A. Kralovánzky, *A hajdúdorogi VII. századi avar temető (előzetes ismertetés)*, in *A Debreceni Déri Múzeum Évkönyve*, 1989–1990, p. 129, fig. n° 3. The coin is a light solidus of 20 siliquae and belongs to the type of *MIB*, III, 63, CON, a. 610–613.

territory of Hungary and Yugoslavia date from 616–625<sup>133</sup>. Relevant in this sense is also the light solidus of 20 siliquae coming from Szentes (Csongrád county)<sup>134</sup>. This remark is very important, as it may allow the correct assignment and dating of the whole range of solidi previously assigned to Constans II, Constantinus IV, Heraclius and Tiberius. It seems that both I. Berkeszi, Ö. Gohl, and L. Huszár often confounded the coins of Heraclius and Heraclius Constantinus, the type MIB, III, no. 31-37 (629–632), with those of the type MIB, III, no. 26-28, of Constans II and Constantinus (654–657). The two categories apparently have a similar pattern, but more distinctive elements. The confusion comes from both the simplified patterns in the plates of J. Sabatier's catalogue, and the insufficient experience in the field of Byzantine mint of the three Hungarian numismatists, which had a hard time assigning the pieces whose legend was not clear enough. That is obvious in the case of a coin from Heraclius and Heraclius Constantinus found in 1870, in an Avar grave, situated on the route of the Timișoara - Arad railway, between the localities of Carani (Sântandrei comm., Timiș county) and Orțișoara (Orțișoara comm., Timiș county). The quoted author does not write down clearly the identity of the issuers and the place of discovery. Once, when he mentioned that the pieces come from Carani, I. Berkeszi referred to a solidus from Constans II and Constantinus IV. In the other case, he asserted that two solidi of the type of Constans II and Constantine "Pogonatus" were found<sup>135</sup>. One of the coins from Orțișoara is preserved in the collection of the Museum of the Banat in Timișoara<sup>136</sup>. It is an issue from Constantinople from Heraclius and Heraclius Constantinus, dating from 613–616<sup>137</sup>. The same goes for the two solidi found at Ostrovo, in the Yugoslavian Banat, mentioned by Ö. Gohl. Also this find is published twice in the pages of the same article. At one time the author mentions the recovery

<sup>133</sup> A list of the finds, without any numismatic comments was given by J. Szentpéteri, *Az avar kori hadcsereg legfelsőbbvezető rétege a régészeti források tükrében*, in *Tisicum-A Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok Megyei Múzeumok Évkönyve*, 8, 1993, pp. 163-180.

<sup>134</sup> L. Huszár, in *ActaArchHung.*, 5, 1954, 1-2, p. 97, n° CCLIV. The coin was published using the reference to Sabatier, I, n° 48 bis, but its weight of 3,85g shows that it is a light solidus, belonging to the type of MIB, III, 64 or 65, CON, a. 616–625.

<sup>135</sup> See TRÉ, S.N., 6, 1890, p. 65, F. Milleker, *Délmagyarország*, II, p. 172, who mentioned the finding place as being Orțișoara. The coins were mentioned already by I. Berkeszi, in TRÉ, S.N., 23, 1907, 1-2, p. 28 and 29, who published them twice. Once, as found at Carani (once named Merczyfalva) p. 28 and for the second time as being found at Orțișoara, p. 29. The old data are used by D. Csallány, in *AÉ.*, 1943, p. 167; Idem, in *ActaArchHung.*, 2, 1952, p. 238; L. Huszár, in *ActaArchHung.*, 5, 1954, 1-2, p. 91, n° CLV; D. Protase, *Problema.*, p. 173; C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, p. 397 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983–1985, 131-133, p. 218, n° 28 și p. 221, n° 100-101. The first three authors mentioned the coins as being struck by Constans II and Constantinus IV. V. Butnariu, mentioned that one coin was from Constans II and the „second” from Constantinus IV.

<sup>136</sup> Unpublished coin from the collection of MBT, inv. n° 69.

<sup>137</sup> It belongs to the type of MIB, III, 8, CON, a. 613-616.

of two solidi, of which one was perforated. The perforated piece was identified as an issue from Heraclius and Heraclius Constantinus, but the reference to the catalogue corresponds to a coin from Constans the second, associated with Constantinus, and the other one, from Constans II, Constantinus, Heraclius and Tiberius<sup>138</sup>. On the next page is mentioned the uncovering of two perforated solidi from Constans II, Constantinus, Heraclius and Tiberius. As we already mentioned above, one of the pieces certainly belongs to Heraclius and Heraclius Constantinus.

A thorough research of gold coins found in Avar territory shows that the number of finds datable after 625 is very small, and of those of Heraclius' successors, that is Constans II and Constantinus IV is, in fact, almost negligible. That can be explained easily if we take into account the fact that their power weakened rapidly, after the defeat suffered under the walls of Constantinople, during the siege from 626. From that moment on the Avars ceased to represent a menace for the security of the Byzantine Empire, and, implicitly, to receive annual tribute. The money arrived at "Avaria" through political payments constituted the main source of funerary offerings, and when this inflow ceased, the practice of depositing coins in graves was less and less used, as the pieces obtained by means of commercial relations, or by imitating issues proved to be insufficient. In our opinion, most coins previously assigned to Constans II, associated with Constantine (IV), such as the solidus from Szeged (county of Csongrád), in Hungary<sup>139</sup>, in fact belong to Heraclius Constantinus. Taking into account the high occurrence of gold coin finds from 610–625 in Banat we think that also the solidus has no specified issuer found in an Avar grave from Igriş (Sânpetru Mare comm., Timiș county)<sup>140</sup>. Besides the many gold issues, the Banat monetary finds from the time of contain also a few silver pieces, hexagrammata, respectively. Such coins come from Sânnicolau Mare (Sânnicolau Mare comm., Timiș county)<sup>141</sup> and from Arad<sup>142</sup>. The coin from Arad dates from 615–625, and it appears that also the other piece must date from the period before the great Avar siege of Constantinople.

South of the Danube, in the area between Morava and Timok are mentioned a few finds from Heraclius. A solidus issued at Constantinople in 610–613 comes

<sup>138</sup> Ö. Gohl, in N. Közlöny, 13, 1914, 1, p. 18. This coin from Heraclius and Heraclius Constantinus was considered as being of the type of Sabatier, I, pl. XXXIV, n° 18.

<sup>139</sup> L. Huszár, in ActaArchHung., 5, 1954, 1-2, p. 95, n° CLXXXVIII, 412. The weight of the coin published by the author is very low, only of 2,54 g, without mentioning that the coins were clipped or plated.

<sup>140</sup> Ö. Gohl, in N. Közlöny, 13, 1914, 1, p. 17 și L. Huszár, in ActaArchHung., 5, 1954, 1-2, pp. 74-75, n° XLVI.

<sup>141</sup> I. Berkeszi, in TRÉ, S.N., 23, 1907, 1-2, p. 38; C. Preda, in SCIV, 23, 1972, 3, p. 408; B. Mitrea, in Dacia, N.S., 16, 1972, p. 373, n° 94; Idem, in SCN, 6, 1975 and V. Butnariu, in BSNR, 77-79, 1983–1985, 131-133, p. 222, n° 143.

<sup>142</sup> Unpublished coin from the collection of MNIR, from the former collections of CN-BAR, pv. 7953. It belongs to the type of MIB, III, 138, CON, a. 615-625..

from Viminacium<sup>143</sup>, and a semissis of this emperor was found at Dražmirovac, a settlement situated in the valley of Morava, south of the great Byzantine centre<sup>144</sup>.

The coin finds at Phocas, as well as those at Heraclius and his associates are extremely important, not only for the history of monetary circulation in Oltenia and Banat, but also for understanding the political history of the areas in the region north of the river, between the outflow of Tisza, the Iron Gates and the Olt. The lack of a monetary find from 602–610 at Drobeta and Sucidava is not to be interpreted as clear evidence of an end to the Byzantine rule, and much less, one of their being abandoned after the revolt of the troops on the Danubian front led by the centurion Phocas. The apparent lack of coins in fortifications, or in the old collection of the Museum of Oltenia in Craiova is can be explained, both by the small number of coins from Phocas arrived beyond the river, and by the random manner in which the samples of Byzantine coins were constituted, at least those studied by us. In our opinion, the finds of bronze coins from Phocas mentioned in Oltenia are evidence that the phenomenon of the monetary penetration continued to unfold after 602, even if on a smaller scale. The lack of coins from Phocas does not necessarily represent a sign of even a temporary cease of the monetary circulation, but rather its slower dynamics, as the entire Byzantine territory in the region between the Balkans and the Danube was becoming rural. Even in the case of a dramatic decrease in new money supply to the area of the Byzantine bridge head in Oltenia there still existed in circulation a high amount of bronze coins, not only from the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, but even from the age of the 2<sup>nd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries that might meet the needs of a modest monetary economy. The intense resuming of the penetration north of the Danube of bronze coins in the first four years of the reign of Heraclius, clearly emphasized both at Drobeta, and by the sample at the Museum of Oltenia, and that at the Museum of Banat. The samples available for study show that the area beyond the river had remained under the scrutiny of the imperial authorities, but they were no longer able in 610–615 to profit from every favourable moment in order to exert their rights.

The economic and historical interpretation of the situation in Banat is more complicated, as certainly there was under a tight control of the Avars after 602, and the neighbouring south - Danubian Byzantine centres, like Viminacium, had ended the last phase of their urban existence by 610–614. The rather large number of bronze coins from the first years of the reign of Heraclius (until 614), exceeds by far the level reached in the time of Mauricius Tiberius. It reaches a figure that can be compared to those coming from Oltenia. At the same time we have to reveal the existence in the

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<sup>143</sup> V. Ivanišević, in *Numizmatičar*, 11, 1988, p. 94, n° 59.

<sup>144</sup> M. Vasić, *L'or monnayé.*, III, p. 306, n° 107.

area of later coins, from 615–624, lacking in Oltenia. All these data may point to the maintaining of rather active relations between the territories from the outflow of Tisza and the Byzantine Empire, during the times of peaceful relations between the two powers. On the other hand, one has to bear in mind the hypothesis that the large number of bronze coins from Banat is due to the bringing of these pieces by the local participants in the spoils in the Balkans, or by the Byzantine prisoners, colonized in the area<sup>145</sup>. In the light of an analysis of all the contemporary finds, we may assert that certain forms of monetary economy survived a little longer in Banat, during the first decades of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The finds of very old Greek, Celtic and imperial Roman coins from the 1<sup>st</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries found in large numbers in Germanic and Avar graves, indicate the fact that the population used to gather such pieces and would use them systematically. We should not overlook the fact that also here, like in the Byzantine provinces, the old denomination might have had also in the 6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries a monetary function, especially during the crisis periods, when old supply sources were not available. Soon after 610, but especially between 616 and 625 a large amount of gold coins would enter Banat, as a result of the internal redistributions, between the various regional power centres in the Avaric Qaganat, of the stipends and the tribute received from the Byzantine Empire. The large number of light solidi from those years found in Banat seems to indicate the fact that the Avar aristocracy, or that of the associated populations, took the advantage of significant political payments, in such coins, meant above all for ceremonial. Also the last bronze coins that may be associated to a coherent economic and monetary phenomenon date from that period. As before 610, most gold pieces from Avar territory no longer had any monetary function, as they were hoarded and used as symbols of social prestige, having been reduced to source of raw matter for making sumptuous jewels, or as ritual objects, namely as funerary offering. The silver coins, and some bronze pieces, might have had the same fate, taking into account the fact that the graves of the population with a good social position from the Avar age often contain Celtic, Dacian or Roman silver or bronze pieces.

Also in Oltenia, like in the entire Balkan space, the heaviest blow to the Byzantine rule, and to the economic, social and cultural structures linked to this political element came from the strong Avar - Slav invasions begun in 614. They aimed at destroying systematically everything that had remained yet viable from the Byzantine urban and military structure inside the northern and central part of the Balkan Peninsula. Although peace was temporarily restored in 619, the Avars and the Slavs succeeded in crushing most strongholds, while those that survived, as modest

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<sup>145</sup> On the resettling of the „Roman“ captives by the Avars, cf. M. Rusu, *RBAPMPOTR*, p. 130.



Vodenica, renders plausible enough the hope of finding further Ostrogothic finds brought as spoils by the troops that took part in the battles in Italy, or that penetrated earlier, when a part of the territories between Sava and Drava belonged to the Kingdom of Theodoricus. Such issues are known in neighbouring regions, for example in Banat, northern Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia<sup>148</sup>. The collections of the Museum of the Banat in Timișoara include an Ostrogothic tremissis issued in the name of Anastasius I, in the time of Theodoricus, at Rome, in 492–518<sup>149</sup>. At the same time, as we have shown, south of the Danube occur rather frequently imitations of Gepidic origin of the gold issues from Theodosius II to Anastasius I.

Although by the middle of the second decade of the 7<sup>th</sup> century the Byzantine rule over the bridge head in Oltenia ended, as the process of monetary circulation did, there is evidence enough that in the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, at least a part of the area would establish some kind of a special relation with the Byzantine Empire. The stray finds of bronze finds prove that their penetration north of the Danube would be sporadically resumed in the time of Constans II (642–668). It is a half of a follis issued between 647 and 655, probably coming from the area of Reșca (Dobrosloveni comm., Olt county)<sup>150</sup>. The bronze coins issued by Heraclius' successors are exceptionally rare occurrences within the finds north of the Danube, as after 626 the inflow of Byzantine coins to this area became very scarce. The collection of the Museum of the Banat includes a follis from Constans II, originating in an unspecified locality in the historical Banat<sup>151</sup>. The coin was at first registered by I. Berkeszi as a follis from la Constantinus IV<sup>152</sup>. The piece is part of a donation from 1887 by Zs. Ormós, whose most Byzantine bronze coins came from finds at Orșova and Moldova Veche. That is why we think that also this follis could have come from a locality in the Danubian area of the mountainous Banat.

As mentioned above, in the old relevant literature, on the territory of Banat are mentioned a few finds of gold coins from Constans II and Constantinus IV, but in most cases the pieces come from Heraclius and Heraclius Constantinus. In fact, the collection of the Museum of the Banat includes a single gold coin from that

<sup>148</sup> See Ž. Demo, *Novac germanskih vladara druge pol. 5. do druge pol. 6. st. u numizmatičkoj zbirci Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu*, in *Arheološki Vesnik*, 32, 1981, pp. 454–481. J. Petrović, *Numizmatički izveštaji. I. Minimi iz Budve*, in *Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja u Sarajevu*, S.N., pp. 97–109 and P. Kos, *The Monetary Circulation in the South-eastern Alpine Region ca. 300 B.C.-A.D. 1000*, (Situla, 24), Ljubljana, 1986, passim. Idem, *Die Fundmünzen der Römischen Zeit in Slowenien*, Berlin, 1988, passim.

<sup>149</sup> Unpublished coin from the collection of MBT, inv. n° 5. The coin belongs to the type of MIB, I, 11, ROME, a. 492–518.

<sup>150</sup> Unpublished coin, kept in the collection of MO, inv. n° I 3590 b.

<sup>151</sup> Unpublished coin from the collection of MBT, inv. 11 and it belongs to the type of MIB, III, 166 or 171, CON, a. 643–655.

<sup>152</sup> The Access Book, The New Register, entry n° 2326.

sovereign. It is a Constantinople semissis from Constans II<sup>153</sup>. The coin was discovered at Checea (Cernei comm., Timiș county)<sup>154</sup>. Unfortunately, the semissis issues cannot be dated precisely, as their type remained unchanged during his entire reign, from 642 to 668. Much more precisely can be dated the solidus found at Beba Veche (Beba Veche comm., Timiș county)<sup>155</sup>. According to the reference to W. Wroth's catalogue, the coin dates from 642-647. One of the two solidi uncovered at Ostrovo<sup>156</sup>, in the Yugoslavian Banat, belong to Constans II and Constantinus IV.

The same series of north - Danubian finds from Constans II includes the half of follis issued at Carthage between 651/652 and 655/656, found at Novaci (Mihăilești comm., Giurgiu county)<sup>157</sup> and the two folles from Constans II (641-668), originating in the area of Bârlad<sup>158</sup>. One dates from 642-643 and the other from 656-657. Also during the reign of Constans II took place the burying of the hoard from Obârșeni (Voinești comm., Vaslui county)<sup>159</sup>. The last well-dated coins from that discovery are from 641-642, but some pieces could be even date from later times, by 656.

A special characteristic of the monetary finds from the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century in Oltenia is represented by the presence of a high number of silver hexagrammata, most of them gathered in hoards. A fragment of a hoard from which have been preserved just two hexagrammata from Constans II and Constantinus IV, Heraclius and Tiberius comes from Vârtopu (Vârtopu comm., Dolj county)<sup>160</sup>. Another find is that from Drăgășani (Vâlcea county), of which we know three hexagrammata from Constans II, issued between 659 and 668<sup>161</sup>. The most complete data are provided by the discovery from Priseaca (Priseaca comm., Olt county)<sup>162</sup>. Unlike the hoards from Vârtopu and Drăgășani, the one from Priseaca was probably

<sup>153</sup> Unpublished coin from the collection of MBT, inv. n° 66. The coin belongs to the type of *MIB*, III, 50, CON, 642-668. It was pierced in modern times.

<sup>154</sup> I. Berkeszi, in *TRÉ*, S.N., 23, 1907, 1-2, p. 24 și D. Csallány, in *ActaArchHung.*, 2, 1952, p. 235, but wrongly identified as being a "quinarius" from Constantinus IV.

<sup>155</sup> P. Harsányi, *A szegedi múzeumba került régipéncz-leletek*, in *N. Közlöny*, 11, 1912, 1, p. 12; D. Csallány, in *ActaArchHung.*, 2, 1952, p. 238 and C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 390. This coin is the same with the unidentified solidus found at Beba Veche, mentioned by Ö. Gohl, in *N. Közlöny*, 13, 1914, 1, p. 10. The coin was considered as belonging to the type of *BMC*, I, 1-10 - *MIB*, III, 3-4 or 6-7, CON, a. 642-647.

<sup>156</sup> Ö. Gohl, in *N. Közlöny*, 13, 1914, 1, p. 18. The coin from Heraclius and Constantinus is considered as being of the type of Sabatier, I, pl. XXXIV, n° 18 - *MIB*, III, 32, CON, a. 662-667.

<sup>157</sup> C. Preda, in *SCN*, 3, 1960, p. 591, n° 28.

<sup>158</sup> E. Oberländer-Târnoveanu and Elena Popușoi, *op. cit.*, pp. 230, n° 7-8.

<sup>159</sup> Ir. Dimian, *op. cit.*, p. 196 and V. Butnariu, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

<sup>160</sup> B. Mitrea, in *Dacia*, N. S., 21, 1987, p. 380 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, p. 224, n° 173-174.

<sup>161</sup> Idem, in *SCN*, 6, 1975, p. 118, note n° 17; *CH*, 1, 1979, p. 60, n° 192 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, p. 230.

<sup>162</sup> B. Mitrea, in *SCN*, 6, 1975, pp. 113-125 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, p. 230.

recovered entirely. It comprises 141 hexagrammata, two “starred” temple earrings, and a vessel in which was deposited a hand made jug, belonging to the Korčak culture. The coins were issued by Constans II and Constantinus IV (668–685). The find from Priseaca was flawlessly published 25 years ago by Professor B. Mitrea, being used on a large scale also by other researchers who studied the Byzantine silver coins from the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, such as P. Yannopoulos<sup>163</sup> and W. Hahn<sup>164</sup>.

As years passed by, we find it necessary to perform a new ordering of the material, in the light of the new progress of Byzantine numismatics. According to W. Hahn’s catalogue, the hoard from Priseaca has the following structure:

**Constans II - 10 sp.**

1. MIB, III, no. 149 - years 654 - 659 - 1 sp. <sup>165</sup>
2. MIB, III, no. 150 - years 654 - 659 - 1 sp. <sup>166</sup>
3. MIB, III, no. 152 - years 659 - 668 - 8 sp. <sup>167</sup>

**Constantine IV - 131 sp.**

4. MIB, III, no. 62 A - years 668 - 668 - 1 sp. <sup>168</sup>
5. MIB, III, no. 62 B - years 668 - 669 - 4 sp. <sup>169</sup>
6. MIB, III, no. 63 B - years 669 - 674 - 1 sp. <sup>170</sup>
7. MIB, III, no. 63 C - years 669 - 674 - 54 sp. <sup>171</sup>
8. MIB, III, no. 66 - years 674 - 681 - 42 sp. <sup>172</sup>
9. MIB, III, no. 67 - years 674 - 681 - 31 sp. <sup>173</sup>

The oldest issues date from 654–659 (1.41%), followed by those from 659–668 (5.67%). The major component of the hoard is constituted by the coins of Constantinus IV (92.90%). These include the five coins that can be dated between the end of 668 and the first part of 669. They represent only 3.54% of the structure of the hoard. The period of massive accumulation began in 669–674. That phase is represented by the hoard from Priseaca by 55 hexagrammata, making up less than 39% of the find bulk. The accumulation would go on later in the same strong rhythm between 674 and 681. From that last phase date 51.77% of the pieces of the hoard. A hexagrammon from

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<sup>163</sup> P. Yannopoulos, *L'hexagramme-Un monnayage byzantin en argent du VII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1978, passim.

<sup>164</sup> W. Hahn, *MIB*, III, passim.

<sup>165</sup> B. Mitrea, *SCN*, 6, 1975, catalogue, n° 2.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibidem*, catalogue, n° 1.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibidem*, catalogue, n° 3-8.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibidem*, catalogue, n° 13.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibidem*, catalogue, n° 9-10 and 11-12.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibidem*, catalogue, n° 14.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibidem*, catalogue, n° 15-68.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibidem*, catalogue, n° 69-110.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibidem*, catalogue, n° 111-141.

Constans II and Constantinus IV comes from an unspecified locality in Oltenia<sup>174</sup>, but we think that it could have belonged to the hoard from Vârtopu.

A thorough research into the finds from Priseaca and Drăgășani, on which we have more data, clearly point to the fact that the process of their accumulation was similar. It was an organic evolution, unfolded over more decades. The hoards consist of the assemblage of punctual sums, represented by coins originating in chronologically compact issues. If we take into account the fact that in the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century hexagrammata lost their original function, from the time of Heraclius, namely that of coins destined for exceptional military payments<sup>175</sup>, as they turned into coins destined for imperial ceremonial distributions, we shall understand better the function and significance of these hoards. During the reign of Constans II and Constantinus IV the sequence of hexagrammata issues used to be dictated by the major events in the life of the imperial family, the jubilees, the association or distancing of certain colleagues from the exertion of the supreme power, silver coins being provided to the Court representatives or to certain foreign political rulers, allied with the Empire.

Further data on the role of these pieces can be obtained also from studying the distribution of hexagrammata hoards. The finds published show their being concentrated outside the imperial borders. We have accounts on important hoards in Western Siberia, in the Caucasus, in the lands north of the Danube and the centre of the Balkans, in territories of crucial strategic importance, many of which are known to have been inhabited by populations allied with the Byzantium (the Armenians, the Gruzians, Lazes, Abhazians, the western Turks and the Serbs)<sup>176</sup>. The wide spreading of hexagrammata in the areas outside the Byzantine borders was favoured also by the popularity in the 7<sup>th</sup> century of the sumptuous garbs, jewels, and silver plates and dishes, whose raw matter were often melted Byzantine coins. The hoards from Priseaca and Drăgășani, as well as those contemporaneous from Galați<sup>177</sup>, in southern Moldavia, or Zemianský Vrbovok, in Slovakia<sup>178</sup>, originate in the accumulation by the same owners or by their families of sums received periodically under the form of political payments, as a result of services to the imperial authorities. It is worth

<sup>174</sup> Unpublished coin kept in the collection of MO, inv. n° I 1619 (CON, MIB, III, 152, a. 659-668).

<sup>175</sup> See W. Hahn, MIB, III, p. 99.

<sup>176</sup> P. Yannopoulos, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-108, P. Radoměřský, *Byzantské mince z pokladu v Zemianskom Vrbovku*, in *Památky Archeologické*, 44, 1953, pp. 109-127; I. Gedai, *Fremde Münzen im Karpaten aus dem 11-13 Jahrhundert*, in *Acta ArchHung.*, 21, 1969, p. 107, under the name of Nemesverbók and Vesna Radic, *Nalaz srebrnog novca careva Iraklija i Konstansa II iz zbirke Narodnog Muzeja u Beogradu*, in *Numizmatičar*, 17, 1994, pp. 75-84.

<sup>177</sup> On this hoard, cf. Ir. Dimian, in *SCN*, 1, 1957, pp. 196-197.

<sup>178</sup> P. Yannopoulos, *op. cit.*, p. 105. The hoard has 16 miliarensia and one hexagrammon from Constans II (MIB, III, n° 152, a. 659-668), and one hexagrammon from Constantinus IV (MIB, III, n° 63, a. 669-674).

mentioning an important concentration of hexagrammata hoards in Oltenia. That same place holds a very precious hoard consisting of silver jewellery and harness pieces uncovered at Coșoveni (Coșoveni comm., Dolj county)<sup>179</sup>. They are joined by many other prestigious finds: digited fibulas, buckles, “starred” earrings, etc. All this concentration of exceptional pieces seem to point to the existence in the south and centre of the region of a power centre of a so - called “Romania” or “Sklavinia”<sup>180</sup>, linked from a political and military viewpoint to the Byzantine Empire. To this area were directed important sums, under the form of subsidies, between 659 and 681<sup>181</sup>. We think that these payments were made in exchange for ensuring the closing of the access from Pannonia and Dacia, on the strategic communication roads on the valley of the Olt, the Jiu or the Cerna, to the territories south of the Balkans, as well as for supplying contingents to the imperial army, in wartime. The Empire must have tried to ensure this way also the salt supply to its territories inside the Balkans, especially to those in Serdika, depending on the Oltenia salt mines.

As contemporary sources lack direct accounts, the restoring of the political relations between the Byzantine Empire and the north - Danubian territories in the sector between the Olt and the Iron Gates may be interpreted only on the basis of data provided by monetary finds. It is rather obvious that the keenest interest of the imperial authorities for the territories in Oltenia is part of a wider process, aiming also at the area at the Mouths of the Danube, including southern Moldavia. It occurred in the context of the decline of the authority of the Avar Qaganat, after the defeat suffered in 626, more exactly after the victory won on the Persian battlefield in 629<sup>182</sup>. The Byzantine authority in the area of the Iron Gates was revigorated by the campaign in 658 of the Emperor Constans II against the “Sklavins” inside the Balkans, in Thracia, or in Macedonia, that once again revealed the strength of the imperial army and the political interest in the old possessions, occupied by Slav tribes. It was no coincidence that after 659 began to penetrate north of the Danube

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<sup>179</sup> On this hoard, cf. I. Nestor and C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor, *Der völkerwanderungszeitliche Schatz Negrescu*, in *Germania*, 22, 1938, 1, pp. 183-195.

<sup>180</sup> The archaeological findings show that during the 7th century on the territory of Oltenia were settled two Slavonic groups. One, arrived from Pannonia, known from the archaeological diggings from Șimian, Ostrovul Banului and Gura Văii, cf. P. Diaconu and P. Roman, *Câteva urme de viefuire din secolul VII în Insula Banului*, Craiova, 1967 and Maria Comșa, in *RBAPMPOTR*, p. 174, and a second one, originated from the East, bearers of the Hlincea I culture, cf. *Ibidem*, pp. 175-176.

<sup>181</sup> Al. Madgearu, *CDCD*], p. 164.

<sup>182</sup> On the re-establishing of the Byzantine control over the Central and Northern Balkans in the period between a. 630 and the middle of the 7th century, cf. P. Petrov, in *Istorija na Bălgarija*, vol. II, pp. 41-42 and E. Oberländer-Târnoveanu, *Monnaies byzantines des VII<sup>e</sup>-X<sup>e</sup> siècles découvertes à Silistra dans la collection de l'académicien Péricle Papahagi conservées au Cabinet des Médailles du Musée National d'Histoire de Roumanie*, in *Cerc. Num.*, 7, 1996, p. 104.

hexagramma, making up the oldest "layer" of the structure of the hoards from Drăgășani, Prișeaca, Vârtopu, Galați and Zemianský Vrbovok (Nemesverbók). These relations ended during serious turmoil occurred by 680, as proved by the dating of certain hoards mentioned above. The cause of concealing the coins, as well as other valuables in the area between the Olt and the Iron Gates must lie in the political and military consequences of the Bulgarians' invasion in 680-681, but it would be a mistake to place it directly in the context of the migration south of the Balkans of this population, as claimed by certain researchers<sup>183</sup>. The moving of a tribal group, gathering a relatively small number of people, over a territory of almost 1000 kilometres, from the mouth of the river to the Middle Danube is denied by written sources, being also impossible physically. Neither the hypothesis of a supposed attempt by the Bulgarians to penetrate the valley of the Olt, towards Pannonia<sup>184</sup> appears to be plausible. Equally unlikely are also the attempts to link the concealment of the hoards in Oltenia to the policy of moving certain Slav tribes or other populations practiced by the Bulgarians.<sup>185</sup> The deportations accounted in the Nicephore' chronicle<sup>186</sup> occurred later, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

In our opinion, the Bulgarian attack towards the Iron Gates took place by 681, after their settling in the north - eastern part of the Balkans. The campaign did not aim the attempt by these Turanic nomads to settle in the Pannonian steppe, but it was entailed by the necessity to remove from the area of the Lower Danube of any political force allied with the Byzantium, in order to make it impossible to attack on two fronts the new state. In this sense, the group of hoards that can be dated after 681 in Oltenia, belong to a wider range of contemporary finds occurring in the peripheral areas of the Byzantine Empire, such as those from Messembria<sup>187</sup> and Serdika (Sofia)<sup>188</sup>, proving Asparouch's intention of removing the possible imperial attack bases. This goal must have added to the desire of the Bulgarians to ensure the control of the access roads from "Avaria", towards the political centre of their state, crossing the north and south of region of the Iron Gates of the Danube. The failed

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<sup>183</sup> Maria Comșa, *Die Slawen im karpatisch-donauländischen Raum im 6.-7. Jh.*, in *ZfA*, 7, 1973, 2, p. 219, Eadem, *Unele considerații privind situația de la Dunărea de Jos în secolele VI-VII*, in *Apulum*, 12, 1975, p. 174, Eadem, *Slawen und Awaren auf Rumänischen Bode, ihre Beziehungen zu der Bodenständigen Romanischen und späteren frührumänischen Bevölkerung*, in *Die Völker Südeuropas im 6. bis 8. Jahrhundert*, ed. B. Hänsel, München, 1987, p. 223 and Eadem, *Betrachtungen über das Diadem von Bălteni im Zusammenhang mit den Ereignissen der Jahre 670/680*, in *Problemi na prabălgarskata istorija i kultura*, Sofia, 1989, p. 83; B. Mitrea, in *SCN*, 6, 1975, p. 124; D. Gh. Teodor, *Romanitatea carpato-dunăreană și Bizanțul*, Iassy, 1981, pp. 22 și 38-39.

<sup>184</sup> C. Chiriac, in *Pontica*, 24, 1991, pp. 375-376.

<sup>185</sup> Al. Madgearu, *CDCDJ.*, p. 132.

<sup>186</sup> Nicephore, in *FHDR*, vol. II, p. 627

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Y. Youroukova, in *Nesebăr*, vol. II, Sofia, 1980, pp. 186-190.

<sup>188</sup> Eadem, in *Byzbulg.*, 3, 1969, p. 255.

attack against the Byzantine stronghold at Serdika aimed at the settling of the newcomers in the centre of the Balkans, and in a key position of the great trans-Balkan. On the other hand, the concealment of a series of numerous hoards from South-eastern and Central Europe ended with coins from Constans II to Constantinus IV occurring over a huge territory from southern Slovakia to northern Serbia<sup>189</sup> and in Macedonia<sup>190</sup> and from the Maritime Danube to the western seacoast of the Black Sea and to the Balkans could have been also a result of the turmoil generated by the movements of the populations, especially the Slav ones, that were shifted from their old settlements, situated in the north - Pontic territories, from the Lower Danube and the Balkans, following the advance of the Bulgarians south-westwards and their settling in the north - eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula.

Until now we have no account of any coin from de la Constantinus IV in Banat. The solidi from the German Sânpetru (Sucusigiu comm., Arad county)<sup>191</sup> and Șeitin (Șeitin comm., Arad county)<sup>192</sup> assigned by V. Butnariu to this emperor are in fact issues from Heraclius and Heraclius Constantinus. As a matter of fact, in Avar areas in Hungary we know a single certain find from Constantinus IV, that from Tótipusza (Fejér county)<sup>193</sup>, in fact one from the last Byzantine issues known from the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Pannonian basin.

As proven by a bronze coin from Tiberius III Apsimaros (698-705), uncovered during the archaeological excavations from 1928 in the camp at Drobeta, the serious events that took place in the territory between the Olt, the Danube and the Carpathians after the settling of the Bulgarians in the Balkans did not completely cut the relations established between the inhabitants of these regions and the Byzantine Empire during the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The piece mentioned is a Constantinople follis issued in 700-701<sup>194</sup>. North of the Danube, besides the coin from Tiberius III at Drobeta, issues from this emperor are known only at Berezeni (Berezeni comm., Vaslui county)<sup>195</sup>. It is also a follis, but struck at Ravenna. In older literature there is an account of a find from Tiberius III, in Transylvania, at Mediaș (Sibiu county)<sup>196</sup>. The coin was assigned by Ir. Dimian to this sovereign, but

<sup>189</sup> The hoard of silver jewellery continued and one hexagrammon from Constans II, cf. D. Minić, in *Sirmium*, 4, 1982, p. 45.

<sup>190</sup> See the hoard from Valandovo, published by Vesna Radic, in *Numizmati čar*, 17, 1994, pp. 78-80.

<sup>191</sup> E. Dörner, in *SCIV*, 11, 1960, 2, p. 425; B. Mitrea, in *Dacia*, N. S., 6, 1962, p. 541; C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 408 and V. Butnariu, in *BSNR*, 77-79, 1983-1985, 131-133, p. 223, n° 144.

<sup>192</sup> B. Mitrea, in *Dacia*, N.S., 16, 1972, p. 373.

<sup>193</sup> L. Huszár, in *Acta Arch Hung.*, 5, 1954, 1-2, p. 101, n° CCLXXXVI, 484. The coin belongs to the type of *MIB*, III, 4 C, CON, a. 669-674.

<sup>194</sup> Unpublished coin preserved in the collections of MPF, inv. n° I 5268 (*MIB*, III, 73).

<sup>195</sup> Ir. Dimian, in *SCN*, 1, 1957, p. 197.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 197. These data were used by C. Preda, in *SCIV*, 23, 1972, 3, p. 403.

unfortunately, it is there a few incongruities occurring in the description of the piece and the reference to the catalogue render this assignment very unlikely. Without the deciphering of the legend, certain peculiarities of the type are not enough for assigning the piece to Tiberius III, as similar representations can be found on the issues of more emperors who reigned between 668 and 741, more exactly by the end of the reign of Constantinus IV and the beginning of the reign of Leon III. Some authors mentioned the discovery of a solidus from Theodosius II (715-717), at Govora (Vâlcea county)<sup>197</sup>. In reality, as already mentioned, it is nothing but a gross confusion. The piece in question is an issue from the 5<sup>th</sup> century from Theodosius II (408-450).

In the areas more or less close to Oltenia are mentioned a few finds of Byzantine coins from the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century known at the Middle Danube, in the areas under the rule of the Avars in Pannonia and in Banat. In the case of Pannonia, it is a solidus from Anastasius II (713-715), uncovered at Ószöny (Komárom county.)<sup>198</sup>. This find is important, as it closes the series of finds of Byzantine coins in the late Avaric discoveries in Hungary. In Banat, a solidus from Theodosius III (715-717) belongs to the hoard at Veliki Gaj<sup>199</sup>. The last find of Byzantine coins in Oltenia from the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century is represented by a follis from Leon III and Constantine (720-741), issued at Constantinople. Also this piece comes from Drobeta - Turnu Severin<sup>200</sup>. Although rare, separated by long time spans with no coin finds from Tiberius III and Leon III and Constantine they have an outstanding historical importance. They shed light on the fact that like Dobrudja, also some areas in Oltenia continued to maintain certain relations with the Byzantine territories also after the settling of the Bulgarians in the Balkans. These contacts were undoubtedly favoured by the fact that for two centuries the territory belonged to the Byzantine Empire, while in the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century they resumed political relations with the Byzantium. The strong point of these relations was ensured by the existence of an important Christian Romanic population that considered itself linked culturally and religiously to the Empire and the strategic position of the area. In Oltenia we have the evidence of a continuing existence of more advanced forms of political and military organization of the Romania population endowed in the 7<sup>th</sup> century also with some fortifications, even under the conditions of temporary Avar or Slav hegemonies. The area of the Iron Gates, as well as the valley of the Olt, as a buffer zone situated at the periphery of the Byzantine Empire, the "Avaria" and "Bulgaria" played an important role in the balance of forces between the great

<sup>197</sup> O. Toropu and O. Stoica, in *Drobeta*, 2, 1976, p. 114.

<sup>198</sup> Katalin Bironé Sey, in *M Num TĚ.*, 1972, p. 135 and Ana-Maria Velter, in *SCIVA*, 39, 1988, 3, p. 267, n° 75.

<sup>199</sup> On the finding place and the structure of the hoard see E. Oberländer-Târnoaveanu and Al. Săşianu, *Un trésor de monnaies byzantines du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle trouvé en Transylvanie*, in *SCN*, 10, 1990, pp. 98-99.

<sup>200</sup> Unpublished coin preserved in the collections of MPF, inv. n° I 5408 (DOC, II, 2, n° 29 a-d.)

regional powers. Oltenia had the great advantage that it was situated close to Serdika, a key position of the Byzantine defensive system at the north - western border and a strategic point in the centre of the communication system of the Balkans. The area of the Iron Gates and the valley of the Olt used to be ideal communication paths to the Avar world turned into a possible counter - weight against an ever more dangerous neighbour, like Bulgaria at the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The presence of the coins from Tiberius III, Anastasius II, Theodosius III and Leon III and Constantine in Oltenia, Banat and Pannonia might constitute the proof of the attempt at closer relations between the two powers, during the Byzantine - Bulgarian conflict from the time of Terbel. Recent researches showed that the extension of the Bulgarian rule north of the Lower Danube and to the Middle Danube occurred rather late, by early 9<sup>th</sup> century<sup>201</sup>.

After the follis from Leon III and Constantine uncovered at Drobeta, for the moment, for almost a century we do not know any other monetary find in the area of the Iron Gates of the Danube. The series of monetary finds from this province was resumed during the last part of the reign of Theophilos (829–842), more exactly with the issues of folles by this emperor struck between 835 and 842.

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<sup>201</sup> See more recently Șt. Brezeanu, *La "Bulgarie d'au delà de l'Ister" à la lumière des sources médiévales*, in *Ét. Balk.*, 1984, 4, pp. 121-135 and N. Ș., Tanașoca and T. Teoteoi, *L'extension from domination bulgare au nord du Danube aux VIII<sup>e</sup>-X<sup>e</sup> siècles (L'historiographie roumaine du problème)*, in *Ét. Balk.*, 1984, 4, pp. 110-120.