

A PORTION OF THE RÁKÓCZI *POLTURA* HOARD DISCOVERED IN NĂDĂȘTIA DE JOS (HUNEDOARA COUNTY) AND ASSOCIATED DISCUSSION OF COIN MINTING DURING THE TIME OF FRANCIS II RÁKÓCZI

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The authors present here a portion of a hoard containing 10 poltura coins made during the time of the Rákóczi Uprising, between 1704 and 1706. The coins were part of a discovery made in the area of the Nădăștia de Jos village, Călan town, Hunedoara County under unknown circumstances. As such discoveries are relatively rare, it is important that they be included in the scientific circuit. In addition to their rarity, their significance from a historical and numismatic perspective must be emphasized. As has previously been stated in other studies and articles dedicated to the items minted during this period, although poltura were not high-denomination coins the political context in which they were made and the area of their distribution gives them substantial research value. The discussion presented here also provides context through an exploration of the nuances of coin minting during the time of Francis II Rákóczi.

Introduction

Throughout the years, much has been written about the coinage system during the Rákóczi Uprising¹. Most of the contributions have been made by Hungarian numismatists², though few coin hoards have been discovered. Even fewer publications exist concerning Romanian archaeological material, and those that do largely discuss smaller hoards³, isolated discoveries⁴ and museum collections⁵.

The first article to describe a hoard of Rákóczi-issued coins was published in 1872. The cache was discovered in Berettyóújfalu (Hungary), and although it contained 845 coins in denominations of X and XX *poltura* the coins were merely noted, with only their mint and number indicated⁶. At the beginning of the 20th century, these same

¹ For the Rákóczi Uprising, see Egyed 1998, p. 169-172 and the bibliography.

² We used the main contributions regarding the Rákóczi coins: Rómer 1872, p. 133-135; Rohde 1907, p. 85-91; Zimmerman 1911, p. 17-18; Huszár 1934, p. 391-412; Esze 1949-1950a, p. 29-34; Akoshegyi 1975, p. 9-19.

³ Chirilă, Lakó 1970, p. 93-94; Chirilă, Muscă 1986, p. 232; Pap 1995, p. 211-218.

⁴ Luca *et al.* 2007, p. 331; Bărbat 2008, p. 300, no. 1.

⁵ Mureșan 1995, p. 283, no. 138-143.

⁶ Rómer 1872, p. 134.

items were the subject of a study in which a classification was proposed⁷, resulting in the publication of a general presentation dedicated to this type of currency a few years later⁸. In 1934, Lajos Huszár published an important study dedicated to the coins issued by Francis II Rákóczi, based on the objects and documentations known at that time. This was followed by an account of the first *PRO LIBERTATE* coin hoard discovered in Romania in 1970 – although only 172 items were preserved⁹ – and in 1986 a description of another partial hoard containing 21 coins was added to the scholarly literature¹⁰. Perhaps the most detailed study of Rákóczi coinage was published by Ferenc Akoshegyi in 1975; Akoshegyi proposed a new classification dependent on the images present on the faces¹¹. Later, as there had been no further significant discoveries, Francisc Pap argued for a return to the classification proposed by Tivadar Rohde in 1907 and published a description of an important earlier discovery containing 398 Rákóczi *poltura*¹².

The Circumstances of the Discovery

In our short contribution we shall present a possible partial coin hoard preserved in the collection of the Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilisation in Deva¹³. The hoard is comprised of eight 10-*poltura* coins issued between 1704 and 1706, and – according to the data collected from the Inventory – discovered in “Nădăștia Village, no. 13, Strei Commune, Rain Gheorghe”. Though incomplete, the information recorded for this hoard can still offer clues regarding the place in which it was discovered.

In the Hunedoara County region today there are two villages that bear the name Nădăștia: Nădăștia de Jos and Nădăștia de Sus, both of which are under the administration of the town of Călan. During the first decades of the 20th century, Nădăștia de Jos was known as Nădăștia Inferioară, and Nădăștia de Sus was named Nădăștia Superioară, both of which were under the administration of the Strei Commune. The two villages’ recorded affiliation with the Strei Commune assured us that the discovery of the hoard could have not have been made after the latter half of the 20th century.

Through research into publications from the period as well as several more recent historiographical sources, we found that Gheorghe Rain¹⁴, who was mentioned in the Deva museum Inventory, was the Orthodox parish priest in Nădăștia de Jos (formerly Nădăștia Inferioară) at the beginning of the 20th century; this detail helped us to accurately establish the hoard’s place of origin and possibly the identity of the individual responsible for the find as well¹⁵ (Pl. I/1-2). With this information, a field

⁷ Rohde 1907, p. 85-91.

⁸ Zimmerman 1911, p. 17-18.

⁹ Chirilă, Lakó 1970, p. 93-96.

¹⁰ Chirilă, Muscă 1986, p. 232-233.

¹¹ Akoshegyi 1975, p. 9-19.

¹² Pap 1995, p. 211-218.

¹³ The collections of the Deva museum still preserve eight coins of the same category (seven items of X *poltura* and one of XX *poltura*), for all of which the place of discovery is unknown. Thirty similar objects were also retrieved from a unique hoard held in the collections of the National Union Museum of Alba Iulia (currently in the process of publication).

¹⁴ Also known as Georgiu Rain, during his studies in Theology at Sibiu, years 1895-1896 (see Roșca 1911, p. 171).

¹⁵ Without going into too much detail regarding the biography of an influential, yet somewhat unknown historical figure of Hunedoara County, we must briefly mention that between 1918 and 1919, under the administration of priest Gheorghe Rain, the new Orthodox church of Nădăștia de Jos was built;

survey was conducted on the location of a property that bore the number 13, near the village cemetery and the Orthodox church; this was recorded as the location of the discovery of the hoard according to the data collected from the museum inventory. The researchers learned from the local people that a property matching this description had been the home of the parish priest Gheorghe Rain¹⁶. As an interesting side note, upon further inquiry it was noted that local documents mention the existence of other places of worship from the 17th and 18th centuries on the grounds of the current Orthodox church, a detail that is certainly not irrelevant in the context of a hidden coin hoard that can chronologically be placed at the beginning of the 18th century¹⁷.

According to the data above, even if some aspects of the story cannot be established with certainty – such as the author of the discovery, (whom we assume to be father Rain Gheorghe), the year, the archaeological context of the *poltura*, and the moment in which the coins became part of the Deva museum collections we can confidently assert that the hoard was discovered in the village of Nădăștia de Jos at no. 13, the personal property of priest Gheorghe Rain, likely during the first two or three decades of the 20th century.

Regarding the issues raised by the hoard's composition, it is imperative to mention that we cannot assess the initial number of coins, or indeed whether the hoard included other items minted in that period; however, it is reasonable to assume that the hoard was originally much larger, since it is known that such coins were “of an extremely low value”¹⁸ and it is therefore unlikely that anyone would have found it worthwhile to expend any significant effort in order to conceal only eight coins. Furthermore, all other hoards known to date from this period contained large quantities of such coins.

Catalogue¹⁹

1. 10 *poltura* 1704 (Pl. I/1a-1b)

Mint: unknown

8.02 g; 31.57 × 29.33 mm

Inv. No.: 8.106.

Bibliography: CNA 1975, p. 125-h-12.

2. 10 *poltura* 1705 (Pl. I/2a-2b)

Mint: Kremnica (K-B)

furthermore, father Rain was also the teacher in the village and, starting in 1902, he held an important role in the activities of the Hunedoara Department of the ASTRA Association (see: *Transilvania*, XLVI, no. 7-12, 1 Decembrie 1915, p. 193; *Transilvania*, XLVII, no. 7-12, 1 Decembrie 1916, p. 148; *Telegraful Român*, LXVI, no. 59, 2/15 June 1918, p. 235; *Transilvania*, XLIX, no. 1-12, 1 Decembrie 1918, p. 52; *Transilvania*, LII, no. 7-8, July-August 1921, p. 559-560; Dobrescu 2006, p. 138, 217; Dobrei 2011, p. 220; Lăcătuș 2019, p. 13, 29-30, 54).

¹⁶ The GPS coordinates for property no. 13 from Nădăștia de Jos: 45°43'14.8" Lat. N, 22°57'31.0" Long. E, 275 m Alt.

¹⁷ Dobrei 2011, p. 220-221.

¹⁸ Pap 1995, p. 213.

¹⁹ In the case of the objects for which the mints are known, we chose to refer to the 1907 work of Rohde as it is the most complete. In the case of the items for which the mints are unknown, we referred to the work CNA 1975, since these are not present in Rohde.

8.12 g; 31.56×30.68 mm

Inv. No.: 8.102.

Bibliography: Rohde 1907, p. 87, no. 12.

3. 10 *poltura* 1705 (Pl. I/3a-3b)

Mint: unknown

9.22 g; 31.57×30.70 mm

Inv. No.: 8.103.

Bibliography: CNA 1975, p. 126-d-12.

4. 10 *poltura* 1705 (Pl. I/4a-4b)

Mint: Košice (C-M)

8.53 g; 32.28×30.64 mm

Inv. No.: 8.104.

Bibliography: Rohde 1907, p. 87, no. 14.

5. 10 *poltura* 1705 (Pl. I/5a-5b)

Mint: unknown

8.62 g; 31.52×30.70 mm

Inv. No.: 8.105.

Bibliography: CNA 1975, p. 126-d-12.

6. 10 *poltura* 1705 (Pl. I/6a-6b)

Mint: Baia Mare (N-B)

7.27 g; 32.11×30.24 mm

Inv. No.: 8.108.

Bibliography: Rohde 1907, p. 88, no. 16.

7. 10 *poltura* 1705 (Pl. I/7a-7b)

Mint: unknown

8.39 g; 32.41×30.85 mm

Inv. No.: 8.109.

Bibliography: CNA 1975, p. 126-d-12.

8. 10 *poltura* 1706 (Pl. I/8a-8b)

Mint: Munkačovo (M-M)

7.22 g; 31.53×30.05 mm

Inv. No.: 8.107.

Bibliography: Rohde 1907, p. 87, no. 15.

Discussion

The distribution of the items based on their mints is as follows: one of was issued by each of the mints from Kremnica, Košice, Nagy Bánya (Baia Mare), and Munkačovo, and four coins originated from an unknown mint which, according to the

scholarly literature, was located in the region of Hungary²⁰. We cannot present a further analysis of the hoard as we do not know the total number of coins it originally contained.

A possible explanation for the small number of Rákóczi coins known from hoards or from isolated discoveries was offered by Francisc Pap, who believed that their minting “led to the general depreciation of prices on the Transylvanian market” and to an increase in inflation, as a result of which the coin stock in circulation was either sold at the price of the metal or melted “in order for it to be used in manufacturing cannons or bells”²¹. It would appear that in 1706 many coins of X and XX *poltura* were withdrawn from circulation, while the ones that remained in circulation were decreased in value by 60% and countermarked²². The complete cessation of minting of the *Pro Libertate* items occurred in 1708, after the defeat suffered by the rebels in Trenčín on 3 August of that year²³.

A specialised catalogue notes *PRO LIBERTATE* coins of X and XX *poltura*, bearing the emblems P-H (*Patrona Hungariae*), C-M (Košice), M-M (Munkács) and N-B (Nagy Bánya/Baia Mare)²⁴. Several countermarked items are also present²⁵, items that are not known from discoveries noted so far. It is obvious that this catalogue is incomplete, since coins from the same category also bore the emblems K-B (Körmöcbánya/Kremnica)²⁶.

It is also worth mentioning that during the archaeological surveys conducted in the region of the Alba Iulia mint, several remains of slates offcuts from coin cutting were uncovered²⁷, and an item with the *PRO LIBER[tate]* inscription was among these discoveries²⁸. During the manufacturing process, the Alba Iulia mint did not hold coin issuing rights. It was reopened in 1713, with several known gold coins dated to that year²⁹. According to Volker Wollmann, who studied the documents from the mint archives, the new buildings were constructed between 1714-1717³⁰. Therefore, these offcuts could be considered evidence of forgeries³¹, or alternatively they could have been brought to Alba Iulia later, after the mint was opened, in order to be melted this interpretation supports Francisc Pap’s aforementioned assertion. Furthermore, it must be taken into account that some items from the same category were not stamped with the mint’s emblem and these could have been made in a workshop in Alba Iulia rather than in Kremnica, as an article published almost five decades ago suggests³², or alternatively in an “unknown mint from Hungary”, as is presented in a catalogue dedicated to Austrian coins³³; this idea is later supported by Angela Mureşan³⁴.

²⁰ CNA 1975, p. 125-128; Mureşan 1995, p. 291.

²¹ Pap 1995, p. 213.

²² Chirilă, Lakó 1970, p. 94.

²³ Pap 1995, p. 213.

²⁴ Huszár 1979, no. 1529-1545.

²⁵ Huszár 1979, no. 1530-1531, 1533-1534, 1536-1537, 1539, 1541-1542, 1544-1545.

²⁶ Rohde 1907, p. 85; CNA 1975, p. 124-128; Mureşan 1995, p. 291.

²⁷ Ciulavu 2015, p. 356.

²⁸ Moga 1999, p. 38, pl. 4; Ciulavu 2015, p. 356, fig. 2/2.

²⁹ Resch 1901, no. 6A-7; Resch 1925, no. 6B-6C; Buzdugan, Luchian, Oprescu 1977, no. 2792-2794, 2797.

³⁰ Wollmann 2012, p. 20.

³¹ Ciulavu 2015, p. 356.

³² Chirilă, Lakó 1970, p. 93.

³³ CNA 1975, p. 125-128.

³⁴ Mureşan 1995, p. 291.

Finally, we shall present several considerations regarding the other categories of coins issued by Francis II Rákóczi. It must first be mentioned that Rákóczi II (1704-1711) was named Prince of Transylvania in 1704 in Alba Iulia and his reign was characterised by his wars against the Habsburgs³⁵. After suffering numerous defeats at the hands of the imperial armies, he took refuge in Poland³⁶. Numismatically, his reign was notable for the issuance of gold coins from the Cluj mint between 1704-1707³⁷, a second denomination in silver³⁸, “local bronze coins” minted in Lipova in 1705, in Oradea in 1705-1710³⁹ (or, according to a different opinion, in 1706-1710⁴⁰), and *PRO LIBERTATE* items⁴¹. In addition to coinage, several medals are known to have been issued for the prince; these objects are extraordinarily rare⁴².

During the Kuruk uprising, large quantities of coins were issued, with the total value of the copper issues alone estimated at 6.000.000 gold florins. It would appear that 1 gold florin was officially equal to 223 *poltura*, and 1 taler to 80 *poltura*, but their real value is estimated to have been much lower⁴³. However, it would appear that many coins of X and XX *poltura* were forged in Slovakia (Bánska Stiavnica) and in Poland, according to Lajos Huszár⁴⁴, an assertion was later supported by Eugen Chirilă and Eva Lakó⁴⁵.

New discoveries of such coins could, in the future, contribute substantially to the current knowledge base and aid in the compilation of a complete catalogue of *PRO LIBERTATE* coinage based on detailed analyses of coin imagery.

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³⁵ Magyari 2003, p. 375-383.

³⁶ Hötte 2016, p. 8.

³⁷ Hess 1880, no. 1259-1260; Resch 1901, no. 1-5; Buzdugan, Luchian, Oprescu 1977, no. 2738-2741. Some information collected from documents on the issuing of coins in Cluj, in Bánkúti 1975-1976, p. 57-59.

³⁸ Resch 1901, no. 5; Buzdugan, Luchian, Oprescu 1977, no. 2742.

³⁹ Esze 1949-1950b, p. 44-46.

⁴⁰ Iliescu 1970, p. 45.

⁴¹ For the coins issued by Francis II Rákóczi and the years during which coins were issued in each mint, see Huszár 1934, p. 411-412.

⁴² Hess 1880, no. 1261-1271; Resch 1901, no. 89-104.

⁴³ Chirilă, Lakó 1970, p. 94.

⁴⁴ Huszár 1934, p. 395-396.

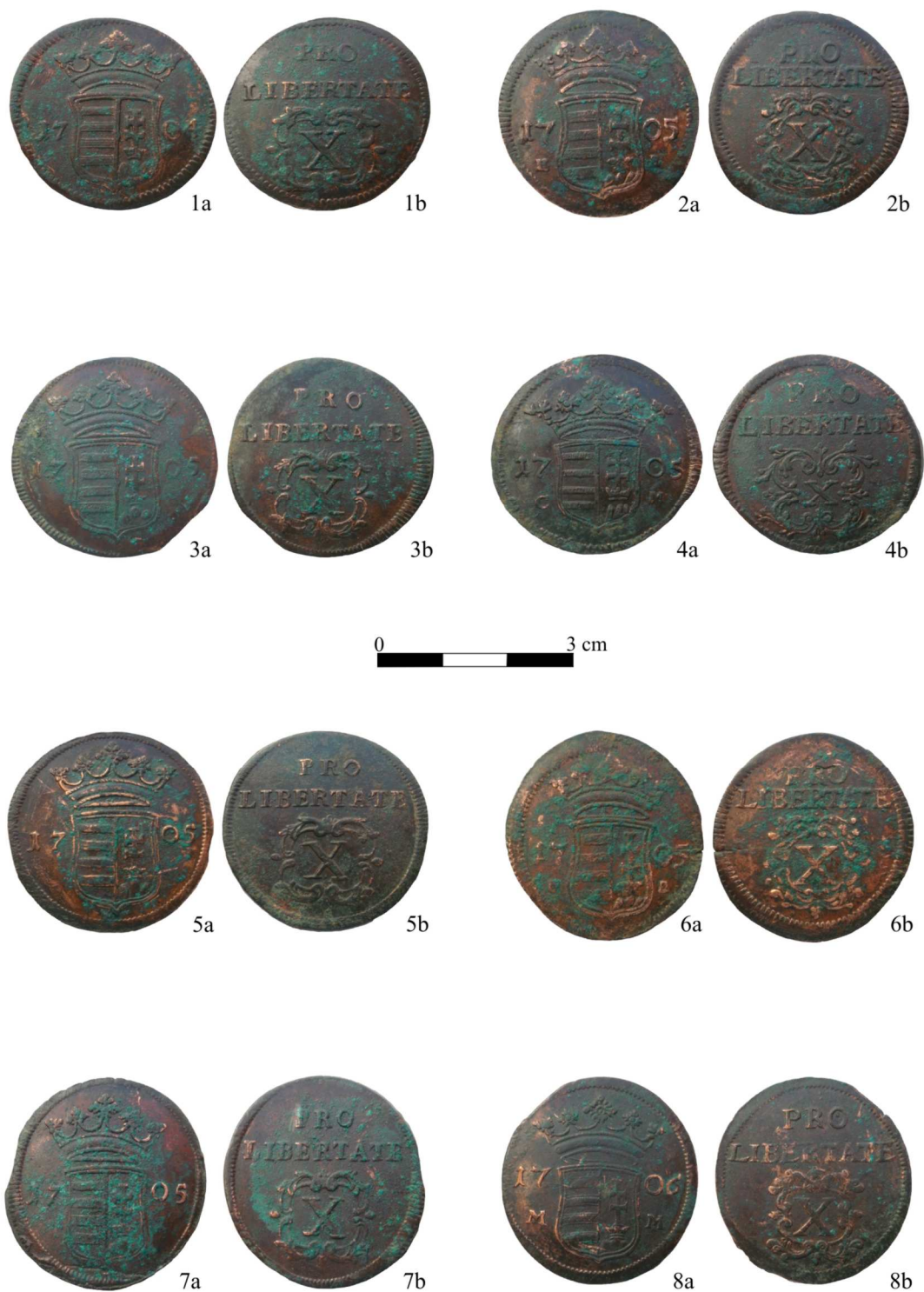
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Pl. I. 1. A map of Romania showing the location of the discovery of the hoard (after Google Earth) (Accessed: 15.05.2019); 2. Photograph of the area in which the hoard from Nădăștia de Jos was discovered; the red arrow indicates the probable location of the discovery (Photo: I. A. Bărbat)



Pl. II. 1-8. Coins of *X poltura* from the hoard from Nădăștia de Jos, Hunedoara County
(Photo: F. Ciulavu)

Un fragment de tezaur de polturi rákócziene descoperit la Nădăștia de Jos (jud. Hunedoara) și câteva considerații privind baterea de monede în timpul lui Francisc Rákóczi al II-lea
Rezumat

Autorii prezintă un fragment dintr-un tezaur de monede de 10 polturi (**Pl. II/1-8**) realizate în perioada răcoalei rákócziene, în anii 1704-1706, piesele provenind dintr-o descoperire efectuată în condiții necunoscute pe teritoriul localității Nădăștia de Jos (**Pl. I/1-2**), orașul Călan, jud. Hunedoara. Având în vedere faptul că astfel de descoperiri sunt relativ rare, ele merită incluse în circuitul științific. Pe lângă raritatea lor, trebuie subliniată și importanța din punct de vedere istoric și numismatic. Așa cum s-a subliniat în studiile și articolele dedicate pieselor bătute în această perioadă, ele nu aveau o valoare mare, însă contextul politic în care au fost realizate și aria de răspândire le transformă în monede interesante din mai multe puncte de vedere. Discuția continuă cu unele considerații generale referitoare la baterea monedelor în timpul lui Francisc Rákóczi al II-lea.

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Pl. II. 1-8. Monede de X polturi din tezaurul de la Nădăștia de Jos, jud. Hunedoara (Foto: F. Ciulavu)