

Ovidiu Maxim OARGĂ, *Alexandru Borza Numismatic Collection: Ancient and Byzantine coins*, Bibliotheca Musei Apulensis, XXXVIII, Alba Iulia: Editura Muzeului Național al Unirii; Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2021, 604 p. il. ISBN 978-606-95337-3-4 / 978-606-020-397-1

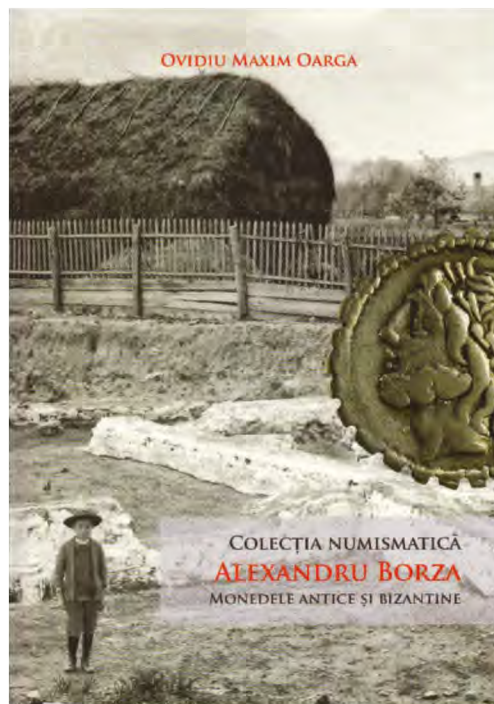
The book is based on the doctoral thesis entitled *History through currency. "Alexandru Borza" numismatic collection*, presented by the author in 2019, at Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, the doctoral coordinator being Cristian Găzdac, PhD, who wrote the preface of this work.

In order to prepare the paper, the author endeavoured intensively, a large number of coins from the collection of the National Union Museum of Alba Iulia being studied.

Coins from the numismatic collection of professor Alexandru Borza were introduced in the specialized literature, for the first time in 1972, on which occasion the republican Roman pieces were published¹. In 1977, Roman² and Byzantine³ gold coins were published. Later, in 2003, a study dedicated to Dacian coins, from the collection of the museum, appeared in Alba Iulia, on which occasion the pieces from the Borza collection were also analysed⁴. In 2013, all Byzantine coins were included in the scientific circuit⁵, which were later republished in a study dedicated to their metallographic composition⁶. Relatively recently, in 2019, the author of this book published several imperial Roman coins that he believes could represent a fragment of monetary treasure⁷. In addition to the abovementioned information, part of which was published by Ovidiu Oargă, before the public presentation of his doctoral thesis, all the others were thoroughly studied by the author of the book.

It is to be praised the effort made to study all the ancient (Greek, Dacian, Roman, republican and imperial) and Byzantine pieces. The assiduous research of Professor Borza's numismatic collection resulted in the public presentation of his doctoral thesis in 2019⁸, the publication of the book, in 2021, and the realization of an interesting exhibition at the opening of which the book was launched in December 2021⁹. The presentation of all ancient and Byzantine coins is a very useful endeavour, which should be followed in the future for medieval and modern coins (over 500 pieces), among which there are some very important pieces.

The work totals 604 pages, being studied 1032 Greek, Dacian, Roman republican, imperial and Byzantine coins, most of them being unpublished.



¹ Popa *et alii* 1972, p. 79–106.

² Paul 1977, p. 663–665, no. 2–6.

³ Paul 1977, p. 665–667, no. 9–13.

⁴ Suciu 2003, p. 140–143.

⁵ Oargă 2013, p. 103–111.

⁶ Anghel *et alii* 2015, pp. 177–193.

⁷ Oargă 2019a, p. 81–99.

⁸ Oargă 2019b.

⁹ <https://mnuai.ro/expozitia-istoria-prin-moneda-colectia-numismatica-alexandru-borza/> (accessed 5/13/2022).

After the *Introduction* (p. 9–10) Chapter I is presented, dedicated to the biography of the collector, *Alexandru Borza – biographical aspects mirrored in various documentary and bibliographic sources* (p. 11–27). The author makes an exhaustive analysis of his entire life. In Chapter II, *The formation of the numismatic collection* (p. 28–40), the author presents the passion of the child Borza for archaeology and numismatics and his involvement, as a volunteer, in the archaeological investigations carried out by Adalbert Cserni in Alba Iulia. Some information on the formation of the collection is presented in detail. Furthermore, we find out that some pieces were found in Alba Iulia, and others were purchased (from the country, and abroad). He had coins from all eras and from many geographical areas, but the most important for the collector were the Roman ones. Although Alexandru Borza was known for the acrimony which he worked with, it seems that he did not put much emphasis on noting the information regarding the place of discovery of the coins, which is generally common among collectors, who are especially interested in the “market” value of the pieces, but this aspect decreases much of the numismatic and historical “value” of the collection.

In chapters III–VI, *Greek coins* (p. 41–66), *Dacian coins* (p. 67–75), *Roman republican coins* (p. 76–133) and *Imperial Roman coins* (p. 134–479), brief considerations are presented regarding the categories of ancient coins in the researched collection. As expected, the most consistent of these is the chapter dedicated to imperial Roman coins, which are also the most in the collection. The author also managed to identify a possible fragment of monetary treasure, published relatively recently¹⁰, composed of 23 pieces, which increases the value of this chapter. Interestingly, in 1972, 111 republican Roman coins were published, and, at present, the author presents 112 pieces. Each chapter begins with a brief overview and is followed by an appendix, which constitutes the catalogue of coins for each era.

In Chapter VII, *Byzantine Coins* (p. 480–546), the author makes a foray into the study of Byzantine coins. A great advantage is XRF metallographic analyses made on a series of Byzantine coins (48 pieces) from the MNUAI collection, part of which came from the Borza collection, published in 2015, together with a team of specialists from the National Union Museum of Alba Iulia and the Research Institute for Analytical Instrumentation Cluj-Napoca¹¹. The discussions were happily resumed in the doctoral thesis as well. Metallographic analysis is a very important and “future” stage in the study of coins of all eras. Depending on their composition, the place of provenance of the metal, it can be determined if the coins were not made of remelted metal. And if they were made of remelted metal, it is still important information. As in previous chapters, an overview is followed by the catalogue of coins in the form of an appendix.

The text of the paper ends with Chapter VIII, *Conclusions* (p. 546–549), which are to sum-up a strenuous effort, which totals 604 pages in A4 format. The author of the book also makes an evaluation of the presented coins, and informs the reader that they would be worth approximately 35000 euros (in 2021).

This is followed by an abstract, in English (p. 550–552), in which the information is summarized. The bibliographic list (p. 553–557) includes catalogues, books, articles and catalogues of online auctions, which show once again the scientific effort made during the realization of the doctoral thesis. Finally, 48 plates (p. 561–604) are presented, illustrating the analysed coins.

Going through the work, it can be seen that its author made a colossal effort for its accomplishment. It should be noted that a lot of unpublished information stands out about the collection, in general and about some pieces, in particular. The publication of the book at the MEGA Press, in Cluj, under special graphic conditions, represents an advantage. Finally, we would like to congratulate the author for his work and the National Union Museum of Alba Iulia for financing the publication of the book.

¹⁰ Oargă 2019a, p. 81–99.

¹¹ Anghel *et alii* 2015, p. 177–193.

Bibliographic abbreviations

- Anghel *et alii* 2015 Dan Anghel, Ovidiu Oargă, Monica Ursu, Claudiu Tănăselia, Mircea Chintoanu, Maria Șenilă, *Studiu privind compoziția metalografică a unor monede bizantine din colecția Muzeului Național al Unirii Alba Iulia*, în *TS*, 7, 2015, p. 177–193.
- Oargă 2013 Ovidiu Oargă, *Monedele bizantine din Evul Mediu timpuriu păstrate în colecțiile Muzeului Național al Unirii Alba Iulia*, în Călin Cosma, Doboș Alpár, Gabriel T. Rustoiu, Aurel Rustoiu, Ovidiu Oargă (coord.), *Războinici în Transilvania din epoca avară. Catalogul expoziției*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Mega, 2013, p. 103–111.
- Oargă 2019a Ovidiu-Maxim Oargă, *Some data about a possible fragment of a roman hoard in the „Alexandru Borza” Numismatic Collection*, în *JAHA*, 6.1, 2019, p. 81–99.
- Oargă 2019b Ovidiu-Maxim Oargă, *Istoria prin monedă. Colecția numismatică „Alexandru Borza” – Rezumatul tezei de doctorat*, Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai” din Cluj-Napoca, 2019.
- Pavel 1977 Viorica Pavel, *Monede de aur romane imperiale și bizantine în colecțiile muzeului din Alba Iulia*, în *Apulum*, XV, 1977, p. 663–670.
- Popa *et alii* 1972 Alexandru Popa, Viorica Sângeorzan, Angela Mureșan, *Monedele republicane din colecția Al. Borza*, în *Apulum*, X, 1972, p. 79–106.
- Suciu 2003 Viorica Suciu, *Monedele dacice din colecția Muzeului Național al Unirii Alba Iulia*, în *Apulum*, XL, 2003, p. 139–154.

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