

SOME DATA ABOUT A POSSIBLE FRAGMENT OF A ROMAN HOARD IN THE “ALEXANDRU BORZA” NUMISMATIC COLLECTION

Abstract: In May, 1971, the museum in Alba Iulia acquired the numismatic collection of Professor Alexandru Borza. Analyzing the Roman Imperial coins from this collection, we noticed certain characteristics of some of the parts that caught our attention such as their gilding and the fact that they were used in a necklace, as on each piece, one, two or three lugs were glued. These things have shown us that the coins came from a greater hoard. This monetary fragment consisting of 23 silver parts (17 denarii and 6 antoniniani) of which 3 denarii emitted by Septimius Severus, one coin emitted by Septimius Severus: Caracalla (Caesar), 1 coin by Septimius Severus: Caracalla (Augustus), 3 denarii emitted by Elagabalus, one coin by Elagabalus - Iulia Soaemias, 6 denarii by Severus Alexander, 2 denarii by Severus Alexander: Iulia Mamaea, 4 antoniniani by Gordian III and two antoniniani by Philip I. Thus, we can say that this money fragment falls into the second group of completed hoard of coin from Philip and hidden, perhaps during the reign of Trajan Decius.

Keywords: coins, Alexandru Borza, monetary fragment, hoard, denarii, antoniniani, Philip I, numismatic collection, Gothic invasion.

Ovidiu-Maxim Oargă

National Museum of Union Alba Iulia
ovidiu_maxim_oarga@yahoo.com

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In May 1971, the museum in Alba Iulia acquired the numismatic collection of Professor Alexandru Borza. It consists of 1661 numismatic pieces of which 47 are Greek coins, 6 Dacian coins, 112 Roman Republican coins, 740 Roman Imperial coins, 122 Byzantine coins, 124 medieval coins, 496 modern coins and 4 medals.

Unfortunately, for the most of these coins the place where they had been discovered or the way they had been discovered is unknown. The little information about this aspect is provided in articles such as Judith Winkler's article, *The Monetary Circulation in Apulum*¹, where we can learn that some of the numismatic material found in the city entered the collection of Professor Al. Borza or Michael Blăjan *The Monetary circulation in Alba county, an argument for the Roman continuity in post-Roman Dacia (270 A.D. – the 7th century AD)*² which states that in the last decade, many of the coins discovered in Alba county went to various museums (Cluj-Napoca, Târnăveni, Constanța) or in private collections (Feher, Al. Borza).

Finally, Borza, in his *Memoirs of a Botanist in Alba Iulia - autobiographical notes*³, relates that during his adolescence, he also enriched, among other collections, the numismatic collection which comprised nearly 60 Roman coins and hundreds of modern Austrian and foreign coins. In particular, he loved the Roman coins gathered occasionally in Alba Iulia, to their purchase being helped by two of the boys in his father's warehouse, Avram Oargă and Nicolae Stanciu, who were considered as family members.

¹ WINKLER, 1965, 217.

² BLĂJAN, 1985, 95.

³ BORZA, 1963, 2.



Alexandru Borza (1887-1971)

Sursa foto: <https://editiadedimineata.ro/pe-urmele-unui-iubit-ai-naturii-alexandru-borza-de-la-gradina-botanica-din-cluj-napoca-la-primul-parc-national-din-romania/>

We only know the source of a few coins in this collection, respectively by purchasing from the different antique dealers in the country or abroad (Bucharest, Oradea, Milan, Alba Iulia).

Analyzing the Roman Imperial coins from this collection, we noticed certain characteristics of some of the parts that caught our attention such as their gilding and the fact that they were used in a necklace, as on each piece, one, two or three lugs were glued. These things have shown us that the coins came from a greater hoard (see catalogue and

plates 1-3).

This monetary fragment consisting of 23 silver parts, 17 denarii and 6 antoniniani, (see graph 1) of which 3 denarii emitted by Septimius Severus, one coin emitted by Septimius Severus: Caracalla (Caesar), 1 coin by Septimius Severus: Caracalla (Augustus), 3 denarii emitted by Elagabalus, one coin by Elagabalus for Julia Soaemias, 6 denarii by Severus Alexander, 2 denarii by Severus Alexander: Iulia Mamaea, 4 antoniniani by Gordian III and two antoniniani by Philip I (see graph 2).

CATALOGUE

SEPTIMVS SEVERVS



1.

Nominal: denarius;

Axis: 12. *D:* 18,1 mm. *W:* 2,99 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 195-196;

Obverse: **L SEPT SEV PERT [a] VG IMP VII**

Head of Septimius Severus, laureate, to the right;

Reverse: **P M TR [p] [i] II COS II PP**

Mars, nude, with a helmet, with a jacket attached to the waist, advancing to the right, holding spear in right hand and trophy in left hand;

Catalogue: RIC IV/1, no. 67;

Inv. no. 5378;

**2.**

Nominal: denarius;

Axis: 1. *D:*18.1 mm. *W:* 3.08 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 195-196;

Obverse: **[I s]EPT SEV PER[t] AVG IMP VII**

Head of Septimius Severus, laureate, to the right;

Reverse: **P M [trp] [iii] COS II PP**

Mars, nude, with a helmet, with a jacket attached to the waist, advancing to the right, holding spear in right hand and trophy in left hand;

Catalogue: RIC IV/1, no. 67;

Inv. no. 5380;

**3.**

Nominal: denarius;

Axis: 6. *D:* 17.1 mm. *W:* 3.34 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 197-198;

Obverse: **L SEPT SEV PERT [avg imp x]**

Head of Septimius Severus, laureate, to the right;

Reverse: **PACI AE-T[ernae]**

Pax draped, seated to the left, holding branch in right hand and sceptre in left hand;

Catalogue: RIC IV/1, no. 118;

Inv. no. 5379;

SEPTIMIUS SEVERVS: Caracalla (Caesar)



4.

Nominal: denarius;

Axis: 6. *D:* 17.6 mm. *W:* 3.33 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 196;

Obverse: **M AVR ANTO-NINVS CAES**

Bust of Caracalla, draped, cuirassed, to the right;

Reverse: **[secvri]TAS PE-RPETVA**

Minerva, with aegis on breast, standing to the left, resting right hand on shield and holding spear in left hand;

Catalogue: RIC IV/1, no. 2;

Inv. no. 5394;

SEPTIMIUS SEVERVS: Caracalla (Augustus)



5.

Nominal: denarius;

Axis: 6. *D:* 17 mm. *W:* 3,27 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 198 ;

Obverse: **[imp] CAE M AVR ANT AVG P TR P**

Bust of Caracalla, draped, cuirassed, to the right;

Reverse: **FIDES P-V-BLICA**

Fides, draped, standing to the right, holding corn-ears in right hand and basket of fruit in left hand;

Catalogue: RIC IV/1, no. 24a;

Inv. no. 5395;

ELAGABALVS



6.

Nominal: denarius;

Axis: 6. *D:* 18.8 mm. *W:* 2.83 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 222;

Obverse: **IMP ANTONINVS PIVS AVG**

Bust of Elagabalus, laureate, draped, to the right;

Reverse: **P M TR P V COS III P P**

Elagabalus, standing to the right, sacrificing left over lighted altar, holding patera in right hand and club in left hand; in field, star;

Catalogue: RIC IV/2, no. 52;

Inv. no. 5428;



7.

Nominal: denarius;

Axis: 12. *D:* 20.8 mm. *W:* 2.92 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 222;

Obverse: **IMP ANTONINVS [pivs] AVG**

Bust of Elagabalus, laureate, draped, to the right;

Reverse: **P M TR P V COS III P P**

Elagabalus, standing to the right, sacrificing left over lighted altar, holding patera in right hand and club in left hand; in field, star;

Catalogue: RIC IV/2, no. 52;

Inv. no. 5429;



8.

Nominal: denarius;

Axis: 12. *D:* 18.8 mm. *W:* 3.09 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 218-222;

Obverse: **[i]MP ANTONINVS PIVS AVG**

Bust of Elagabalus, laureate, draped, to the right;;

Reverse: **SVMVVS SACERDO[s avg]**

Elagabalus, standing to the left, sacrificing over tripod, holding patera in right hand and branch in left hand; in field, star;

Catalogue: RIC IV/2, no. 146;

Inv. no. 5427;

ELAGABALVS: Julia Soaemias



9.

Nominal: denarius;

Axis: 6. *D:* 17 mm. *W:* 3.88 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 218-222;

Obverse: **IVLIA SOAEMIAS AVG**

Bust of Julia Soaemias, draped, to the right, hair drawn back;

Reverse: **VENVS C[a-elestis]**

Venus, diademed, standing to the left, holding apple in right hand (and sceptre in left hand; in field, star);

Catalogue: RIC IV/2, no. 241;

Inv. no. 5432;

SEVERUS ALEXANDER



10.

Nominal: denarius;

Axis: 6. *D:* 19 mm. *W:* 3,38 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 223;

Obverse: **IMP C M AVR SEV ALEX[and a]VG**

Bust of Severus Alexander, laureate, draped, to the right;

Reverse: **P M TR P-I-I-COS PP**

Pax draped, standing to the left, holding olive-branch in right hand and sceptre in left hand;

Catalogue: RIC IV/2, no. 27;

Inv. no. 5456;



11.

Nominal: denarius;

Axis: 12. *D:* 19.4 mm. *W:* 2.29 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 223;

Obverse: **IMP C M AVR SEV ALEX[and avg]**

Bust of Severus Alexander, laureate, draped, to the right;

Reverse: **P M TR P-I-I-COS PP**

Pax draped, standing to the left, holding olive-branch in right hand and sceptre in left hand;

Catalogue: RIC IV/2, no. 27;

Inv. no. 5457;



12.

Nominal: denarius;

Axis: 12. *D:* 18.5 mm. *W:* 3.55 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 224;

Obverse: **IMP C M AVR SE[v] [alexand] AVG**

Bust of Severus Alexander, laureate, draped, to the right;

Reverse: **P M TR P III-COS PP**

Jupiter standing to the left, cloak behind and over right arm, holding thunderbolt in right hand and sceptre in left hand;

Catalogue: RIC IV/2, no. 35;

Inv. no. 5459;



13.

Nominal: denarius;

Axis: 12. *D:* 18.7 mm. *W:* 2.93 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 227;

Obverse: **IMP C M AVR SEV ALEXAND AVG**

Bust of Severus Alexander, laureate, draped, to the right;

Reverse: **P M TR P VI COS II PP**

Pax, draped, running to the right, holding olive-branch in right hand and sceptre in left hand;

Catalogue: RIC IV/2, no. 67;

Inv. no. 5458;

**14.**

Nominal: denarius;

Axis: 6. *D:* 19.2 mm. *W:* 2.72 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 222-228;

Obverse: **IMP C M AVR SEV ALEXAND AVG**

Bust of Severus Alexander, laureate, draped, to the right;

Reverse: **PROVIDENTIA AVG**

Providentia, draped, standing to the right, holding wand in right hand and sceptre in left hand; at her feet, a globe;

Catalogue: RIC IV/2, no. 173;

Inv. no. 5454;

**15.**

Nominal: denarius;

Axis: 12. *D:* 18.3 mm. *W:* 3.36 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 233;

Obverse: **IMP ALEXANDER PIVS AVG**

Bust of Severus Alexander, laureate, draped, to the right;

Reverse: **P M TR P X-II- C-OS III PP**

Sol radiate, walking to the left, holding whip in left hand;

Catalogue: RIC IV/2, no. 120;

Inv. no. 5455;

SEVERUS ALEXANDER: Julia Mamaea



16.

Nominal: denarius;

Axis: 6. *D:* 18.8 mm. *W:* 2.08 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 225-235;

Obverse: **IVLIA MA-MAEA AVG**

Bust of Julia Mamaea, diademed, draped, to the right;

Reverse: **FECVND AVGVSTAE**

Fecunditas, draped, seated to the left, holding hand of child and resting her left arm on seat;

Catalogue: RIC IV/2, no. 332;

Inv. no. 5482;



17.

Nominal: denarius;

Axis: 1. *D:* 18.1 mm. *W:* 2.82 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 225-235;

Obverse: **[iv]LIA MA-MAEA AVG**

Bust of Julia Mamaea, diademed, draped, to the right;

Reverse: **VE-S-TA**

Vesta veiled, draped, standing to the left, holding palladium in right hand and sceptre in left hand;

Catalogue: RIC IV/2, no. 360;

Inv. no. 5481;

GORDIANVS III

**18.**

Nominal: antoninianus;

Axis: 6. *D:* 21.6 mm. *W:* 5.36 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 239;

Obverse: **IMP CAES M ANT GORDIANVS AVG**

Bust of Gordianus III, radiate, draped, cuirassed, to the right;

Reverse: **PM TRP II-COS PP**

Jupiter, nude, standing front, head to the left, holding thunderbolt in right hand over Gordian standing left and holding vertical sceptre in left hand;

Catalogue: RIC IV/3, no. 16;

Inv. no. 5522;

**19.**

Nominal: antoninianus;

Axis: 6. *D:* 22.9 mm. *W:* 4.54 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 241-243;

Obverse: **IMP GORDIANVS PIVS FEL AVG**

Bust of Gordianus III, radiate, draped, cuirassed, to the right;

Reverse: **LAETITIA AVG N**

Laetitia standing to the left, holding wreath in right hand and anchor in left hand;

Catalogue: RIC IV/3, no. 86;

Inv. no. 5523;



20.

Nominal: antoninianus;

Axis: 6. D: 20.5 mm. W: 4.97 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 241-243;

Obverse: **IMP GORDIANVS PIVS FEL AVG**

Bust of Gordianus III, radiate, draped, cuirassed, to the right;

Reverse: **PM TRP V COS PP**

Gordian III, in military dress, standing to the right, holding a globe in left hand and transverse spear in right hand;

Catalogue: RIC IV/3, no. 93;

Inv. no. 5521;



21.

Nominal: antoninianus;

Axis: 6. D: 21.6 mm. W: 4.24 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 243-244;

Obverse: **IMP GORDIANVS PIVS FEL AVG**

Bust of Gordianus III, radiate, draped, cuirassed, to the right;

Reverse: **PROVIDE-NT AVG**

Providentia standing to the left, holding wand in right hand over globe and sceptre in left;

Catalogue: RIC IV/3, no. 149;

Inv. no. 5524;

PHILIPPVS I

**22.**

Nominal: antoninianus;

Axis: 8. *D:* 22.5 mm. *W:* 3.47 g.

Mint: Rome;

Dating: 244-247;

Obverse: **IMP M IVL PHILIPPVS AVG**

Bust of Philip I, radiate, draped, cuirassed, to the right;

Reverse: **ADVENTVS AVGG**

Philip, on horse pacing to the left, raising right hand and holding spear in left hand;

Catalogue: RIC IV/3, no. 26b;

Inv. no. 5535;

**23.**

Nominal: antoninianus;

Axis: 12. *D:* 23 mm. *W:* 4.47 g.

Mint: Antiochia;

Dating: 247-249;

Obverse: **IMP C M IVL PHILIPPVS P F AVG P M**

Bust of Philip I, radiate, draped, cuirassed, to the right;

Reverse: **[v]IRTVS E-XERCITVS**

Virtus with helmeted, in military dress, standing to the right, holding spear in right hand and resting left hand on shield;

Catalogue: RIC IV/3, no. 71;

Inv. no. 5536;

Finally, even if, due to the missing information about the context of discovery or the purchasing process, the description of the composition of this possible fragment of the hoard seems impossible, based on data gathered we can issue some conclusions. After analyzing these parts of hoard we can admit that these coins come from a much larger treasury which were found in a particular context (unknown to us) and shared between their discoverers or alienated to others immediately after they were unearthed. These 23 coins came from a person who gilded them in order to garnish their appearance and who wore them as a necklace and then they were bought by professor Alexandru Borza (see plates 1-3).

Another reason to consider that this monetary batch is part of a hoard is the presence of a large number of coins issued by the same kings (ex. Severus Alexander 6 denarii or Gordian III 4 antoniniani, see graph 2).

Among these coins some pieces that contain errors or defects were observed, such as non-uniform embossment, most likely due to failure of its sliding punch at the time of minting (catalogue nos. 1, 4, 7, 11, 12, 19, 20) (see plates). However, after a close examination of these pieces it was found that some coins were plated, this being noticed where they have fractures / cracks (catalogue nos. 9, 14, 16, 18, 23). It is possible that this batch of coins, the number of pieces that are represented by a silver foil (in this case, gold) to be bigger. Their presence in hoards is a common phenomenon, due to monetary policy allowed by the Roman Empire, especially during the reign of Septimius Severus;⁴

If we cannot admit that the first coin found in this thesaurus is from Septimius Severus, we can assume that the latter is issued by Philip I and, if we accept this version, then the reason for the concealment of this hoard and the impossibility of its recovering can be considered, from a military point of view, the invasion from the first half of the year 248.⁵ This happened at the end of Philip reign and it was initiated by the Gothic people led by Argaithus and Gunthericus and their allies the Carps, the Taifals, the Peucini and the Vandals.⁶

Thus, we can say that this money fragment falls into the second group of completed hoard of coin from Philip and hidden, perhaps during the reign of Trajan Decius.⁷

We could say that in this horizon can be integrated among other hoards of the same type in Dacia, precisely in Slăveni I⁸ (Olt County), 1967, Slăveni II⁹ (Olt County), 1974, Tunarii Vechi¹⁰ (Dolj County), 1964. At the same time, other hoards such as Galicea Marealso¹¹ (Dolj County), 1961, Moțaței¹² (Dolj County), Ciineni-Călinești¹³ (Vâlcea County), Brădiceni¹⁴ (Gorj County), 1886, might be considered in the same group of hoards (at the end of Philip I reign), but we do

not know which was the reason of their burial¹⁵ (see map).

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⁴ GĂZDAC/NEAGOE 2018, 11.

⁵ PETAC 1998, .33.

⁶ HUSAR 2002, 422.

⁷ PURECE 2008, 102.

⁸ GĂZDAC 2010, 18-19.

⁹ GĂZDAC 2010, 19.

¹⁰ GĂZDAC 2010, 18.

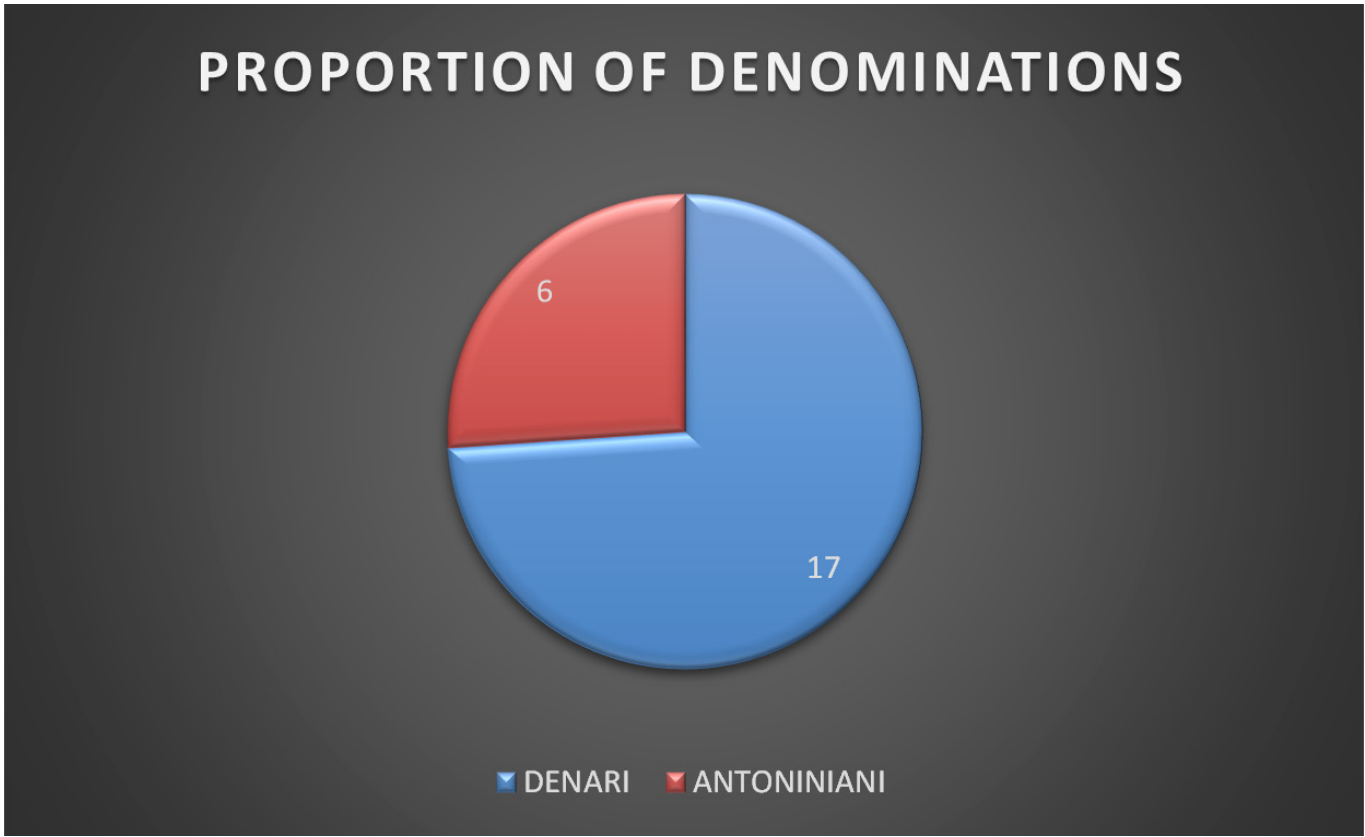
¹¹ GĂZDAC 2010, 16.

¹² GĂZDAC 2010, 20.

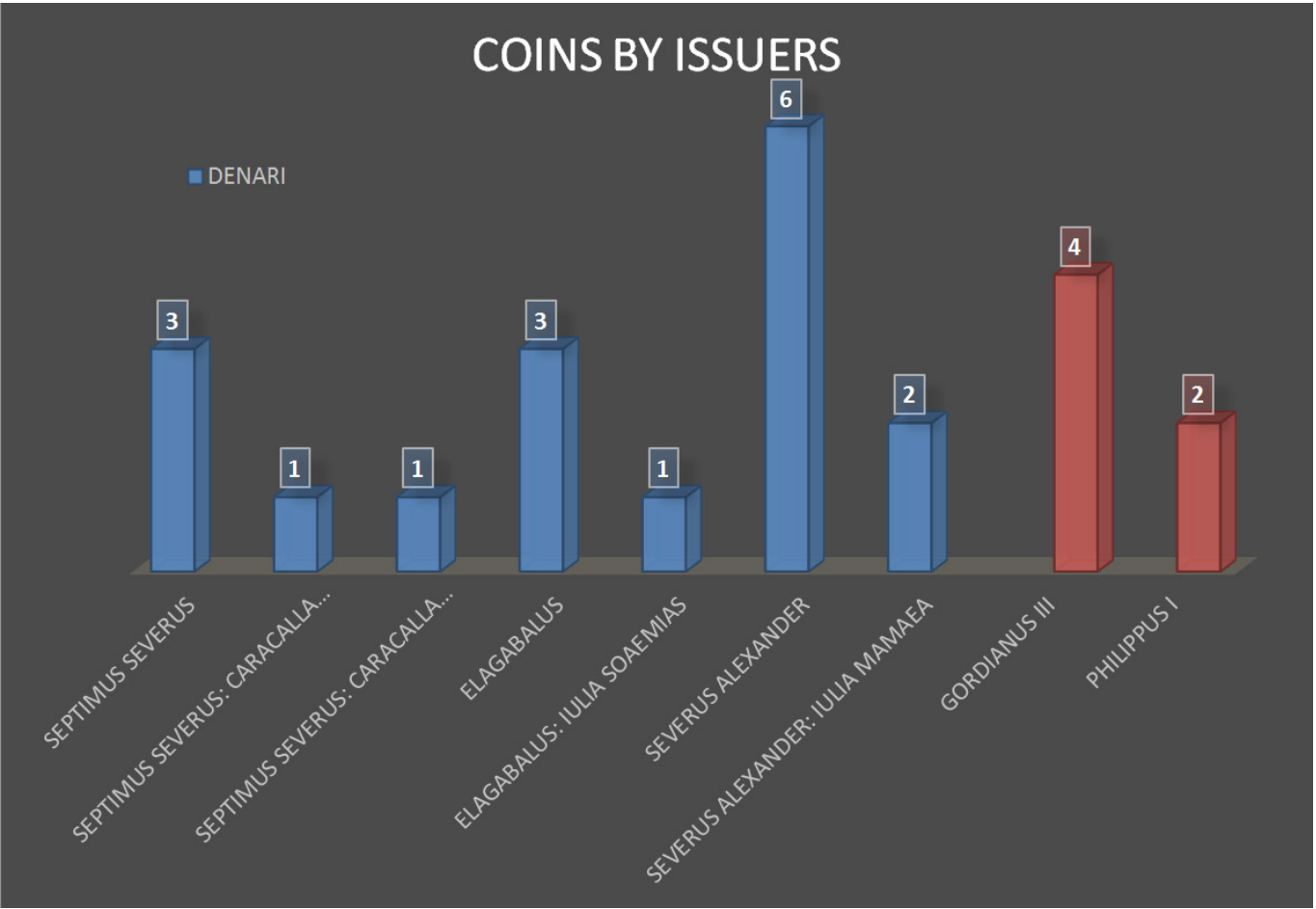
¹³ GĂZDAC 2010, 20.

¹⁴ GĂZDAC 2010, 21.

¹⁵ GĂZDAC 2010, 142.



GRAPH. 1



GRAPH. 2



Map of hoards from the former territory of Dacia (broadly, nowadays, Romania) ending with coins from Philip I.

ELAGABALVS



**SEPTIMIVS SEVERVS:
C.A.R.A.C.A.L.L.A (Caesar)**



**SEPTIMIVS SEVERVS:
C.A.R.A.C.A.L.L.A (.Augustus)**



SEPTIMIVS SEVERVS



ELAGABALVS: Iulia Soaemias



SEVERUS ALEXANDER



Pl. 2.

SEVERUS ALEXANDER: Julia Mamaea



GORDIANVS III



PHILIPPVS I

