
SMALL COIN HOARDS LIKE EVIDENCE FOR UNREST. THE CASE OF PHILIPPOPOLIS, ROMAN PROVINCE OF THRACE

Abstract: The coin hoards from the Roman Age are divided by different characters. They can be divided on the following types: 1) accidental losses; 2) emergency hoards; 3) savings hoards; 4) abandoned ones and 5) purse hoards/ daily money.

There is no precise definition of the small hoards and the number of coins in them. The data for the small coin hoards on the territory of Lower Moesia and Thrace that were most probably lost, have been recently summarized. To the group assigned are from 6 to 8% of all known hoards in the period I-III century. To determine the reasons why the daily money / purse hoard remain in the ground, their archaeological context of discovery plays a significant role. In the most of our known hoards from the territory of the present-day Bulgaria, it remains unknown. This is slightly different for the hoards from Plovdiv - the ancient Philippopolis. While in other major military or urban centers in Lower Moesia and Thrace there are a few known roman coin hoards, for the territory of Philippopolis they are 15. Of them, only one can be considered to the savings hoards group. The rest contain a relatively small number of coins and can be considered to the daily money category. They are associated with the Gothic invasion of 250-251 AD.

Keywords: *small coin hoards; Lower Moesia and Thrace; Philippopolis; Gothic invasion.*

The coin hoards from the Roman Age are divided by different characters. A part of them are votive deposits related to the religion. Their division depends completely on the knowledge of the archeological context of the finding¹. The rest are related to the daily profane human activity. Philip Grierson distinguishes four types of hoards: 1) accidental losses; 2) emergency hoards; 3) savings hoards and 4) abandoned ones. While in the saving hoards the coin emissions cover a long period of time and are usually higher

¹ AITCHISON 1988, 270-284; GUEST 2015, 112.

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DOI: 10.14795/j.v7i1_SI.499

ISSN 2360 – 266X

ISSN-L 2360 – 266X

in value (and better in physical condition), those in the emergency hoards are removed from circulation when hidden and reflect the proportions of the types of coins circulating at that moment². Such a division is also adopted by Anne Robertson, Richard Duncan-Jones and others³. Basically, this division is adopted by the present researchers⁴. Richard Abdy includes one more group: purse hoards - a small amount that has not been collected for a long time⁵.

There is no precise definition of the small hoards and the number of coins in them. A conditional limit of up to 100 coins for personal funds is suggested⁶. According to Cristian Gazdac the *daily money* contain less than 20 coins that are not placed in clay or metal container⁷. The data for the small coin hoards on the territory of Lower Moesia and Thrace that were most probably lost, have been recently summarized. To the group assigned are from 6 to 8% of all known hoards in the period I-III century. It is supposed that one part of them remained in the ground due to barbarian invasions from the middle of the 3rd century⁸.

The above examples apply to the *daily money*, but the so-called "purse hoards" may contain a larger number of coins. A classic example of their content is the 66 hoards from Pompeii found next to the bodies of their owners or in homes and public buildings - a situation sealed by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79AD⁹.

To determine the reasons why the daily money / purse hoard remain in the ground, their archaeological context of discovery plays a significant role. In the most of our known hoards from the territory of the present-day

² GRIERSON 1975, 130-135.

³ ROBERTSON 1974, 13-15; DUNCAN-JONES 1994, 67.

⁴ SCHUBERT 1992, 259-280; MIHĂILESCU-BIRLIBA 1995, 316; MIŠKEC 2012, 380; GĂZDAC 2012, 167 etc.).

⁵ ABDY 2002, 9-10.

⁶ MIŠKEC 2012, 380.

⁷ GĂZDAC 2012, 167.

⁸ ВЪРБАНОВ 2017a, 26-34.

⁹ DUNCAN-JONES 1994, 69.

Bulgaria, it remains unknown. This is slightly different for the hoards from Plovdiv - the ancient Philippopolis. While in other major military or urban centers in Lower Moesia and Thrace there are a few known Roman coin hoards, for the territory of Philippopolis they are 15¹⁰.

The modern city of Plovdiv is located onto the ancient Philippopolis. The fact that a part of the old town is being built up in modern times gives the chance to explore both Philippopolis and its immediate surroundings. The results of the excavations up to 2011 are summarized in the monograph of Ivo Topalilov. It contains 88 excavated sites, 32 of them are buildings or other structures, with registered burnt layers and destructions, accurately dated stratigraphically and by findings from 250-251¹¹. In the years after that, a several dozens of sites with stratigraphically proven destructions from the middle of the 3rd century have been excavated. Precisely in some of them there were found some small coin hoards, discussed here.

As stated above, 15 hoards are known from Philippopolis or its surroundings. The earliest (Philippopolis I) is of unknown volume, from which 17 provincial bronze coins of the Severan dynasty were registered in the Plovdiv Museum in 1931 (*inv. № 1701-1718*¹²).

The second hoard (Philippopolis II) was found in 1955 in the locality Bozukovata mandra. 56 coins were placed in a clay pot (21 silver and 35 bronze), with chronological limits Septimius Severus - Philip the Arab (*inv. № 2070*¹³).

The only one published hoard from Plovdiv (Philippopol III) was discovered in

¹⁰ For the territory of Ratiaria there are 4 known; for Almus are 3; for Dimum are 3; for Escus 9; for Storgosia are 6; for Sostra are 5; Nove 9; for Sexaginta Prista are 5; for Abritus are 5; for Durostorum are 5; for Dionisiopolis are 2; for Marcianopolis are 3; for Tomis are 3; for Callatis 6; for Serdica 6; for Pautalia 3; for Debelt 2 and for Anhialo 6 (ВЪРБАНОВ 2017, Каталог на колективните монетни находки I-III век).

¹¹ ТОПАЛИЛОВ 2012, 28-105.

¹² ГУЩЕРАКЛИЕВ 2014, 67-68.

¹³ ЦОНЧЕВ 1960, 209.

1964, on Lilyana Dimitrova Street. It was in a small clay pot and contained the following 21 coins - denarii: Severus Alexander 1, Gordian III 1; Antoniniani - Gordian III 4, Philip the Arab 4, Otacilia 2, Philip son 3, Trajan Decius 5; bronze: Gordian III 1 (*Deultum*) and 4 bronze medallions, minted in Philippopolis (1 Caracalla, 3 Elagabalus) (*inv. № 2328*¹⁴).

In 1967, five Antoniniani of Trajan Decius were discovered on Kocho Chestimenski Street (Philippopolis IV) (*inv. № 2475*¹⁵).

In the same year, on one of the hills in Plovdiv - Dzhendem tepe, there were found one denarius of Maximinus and 16 bronze coins (Philippopolis V), minted in *Augusta Trajana*: Caracalla 1; *Deultum*: Maximinus 1, Gordian III 1; *Pautalia*: Caracalla 2, Geta 1; *Serdica*: Septimius Severus 1, Caracalla 3, Geta 1, *Philippopolis*: Commodus 1, Geta 1, Elagabalus 1 and 2 undefined. According to Kamen Kolev, they were placed in a leather pouch (*inv. № 2491*¹⁶).

In 1971, two hoards were discovered (Philippopolis VI and VII). The first one contained four denarii (Sabina 1, Marcus Aurelius 1, Faustina the Younger 1, Commodus 1) and it was discovered on Chirpan Street (*inv. № 2562*¹⁷). The second one was found on Smolni Street, during the construction of apartment building 140. About 30 bronze coins were in a three-handled pot, but only three of them were registered: Septimius Severus (*Pautalia*), Caracalla (*Hadrianopolis*), Caracalla (*Philippopolis*)¹⁸.

In 1972, on the same street (Smolni), during the construction of apartment building 130 it was found a small clay pot with six coins (Philippopolis VIII) - denarii: Septimius Severus 1, Caracalla 1; Antoniniani: Caracalla 1, Gordian III 2, Trajan Decius 1 (*inv. № 2601*¹⁹).

In 1975 in the locality Matincevi gradini, in the outlines of a settlement, a

small pot with 18 bronze coins was discovered (Philippopolis IX): *Augusta Trajana*: Caracalla 3; *Pautalia*: Commodus 1, Caracalla 2, Plautilla 1; *Serdica*: Geta 1, Caracalla 4; *Philippopolis*: Faustina 1, Commodus 2, Septimius Severus 1 (there are now 16 coins in Regional Archaeological Museu - Plovdiv *inv. № 2677*²⁰).

In 1975 during excavation for water supply the southern outskirts of the city, a clay cup with silver coins was found (Philippopolis X): Septimius Severus 3, Caracalla 1, Macrinus 1, Severus Alexander 2, Maximinus 1, Gordian III 2; antoniniani: Caracalla 2, Gordian III 6, Philip the Arab 4, Otacilia 1. There are now 23 coins preserved in the Regional Archaeological Museu - Plovdiv (*inv. № 2678*²¹).

In 1990 during archaeological excavations on Mali Bogdan Street, 1141 denarii and antoniniani were found (Philippopolis XI): Antoninus Pius 7, Faustina the Elder 3, Marcus Aurelius 2, Faustina the Younger 4, Commodus 42, Pertinax 1, Clodius Albinus 2, Septimius Severus 204, Julia Domna 75, Caracalla 99, Plautilla 6, Geta 18, Elagabalus 14, Julia Soaemias 1, Julia Maesa 7, Severus Alexander 29, Julia Avita Mamaea 7, Maximinus 11, Balbinus 1, Gordian III 13; antoniniani: Julia Domna 1, Caracalla 9, Elagabalus 2, Gordian III 358, Philip the Arab 123, Philip Son 33, Otacilia 32, Trajan Decius 33, Herennia Etruscilla 4. At the moment they are in the Regional Archaeological Museu - Plovdiv (*inv. № 5771*²²).

During the archaeological excavations, two hoards of 87 and 40 coins were discovered. The first one was discovered in 2009 at the Ancient Theater site and has a chronological limits Septimius Severus - Trajan Decius (Philippopolis XII). The second one (Philippopolis XIII) was discovered during the excavation of the Forum North site. 40 coins were found in a crack in the wall of the building, with last ones of Philip the Arab²³.

¹⁴ КОЛЕВ 1972, 195-202.

¹⁵ КОЛЕВ 1968, 164.

¹⁶ КОЛЕВ 1968, 164-165.

¹⁷ КОЛЕВ 1977, 126.

¹⁸ КОЛЕВ 1977, 126.

¹⁹ КОЛЕВ 1977, 126-127.

²⁰ КОЛЕВ 1977, 129.

²¹ КОЛЕВ 1977, 129.

²² I owe this information to the numismatist of the RAM-Plovdiv, D. Davidova, for which I thank her.

²³ МАРТИНОВА-КЮТОВА/РАЙЧЕВА 2013, 318-319.

Unfortunately, both hoards are unpublished and with imprecise composition.

In 2017 during archaeological excavations on 11 Osam Str., a significant amount of coins from different periods were discovered. Among them, there were found glued and burned denarii and antoninianii (38 coins), among which are those of Caracalla, Gordian III, and Philip the Arab²⁴. The coins were in canvas or leather purse. The excavated site is located within the fortified territory of Philippopolis. Despite the many destructions of modern times, two periods of antiquity are distinguished - from the second half of the 2nd century - the middle of the 3rd century and from the 4th century. From the first period three rooms from a building destroyed by fire, with a chain plan and stone-brick construction were excavated. Their walls have been almost completely dismantled in ancient times for construction material and are registered by the filled trenches. Partially preserved are clay and brick floor levels. In one of the rooms the hoard in question was discovered, in a layer of destructions dating from the middle of the 3rd century²⁵.

In 2018, again in the fortified part of Philippopolis (16 Dr. Valkovich Str.) a part of a building with several rooms was excavated. In the north room it was discovered a clay floor and a layer of burned destructions above it. On the floor *in situ* many iron objects have been found, a votive plate and three burned skeletons – of a young man, a young woman and a child. On the child's chest a spearhead was found, and a bronze bracelets on the woman's hands. The woman also had a bronze statuette of Venus with a golden torc. The destructions layer is dated from the middle 3rd century, according to the discovered coins and other finds in the building²⁶. Four provincial bronze coins of large denomination, from the Severan dynasty, minted in Philippopolis and Pautalia, were found by the man's skeleton²⁷.

²⁴ The coins were left glued by the restorer of RAM-Plovdiv.

²⁵ БОЖИНОВА/СТАНЕВ/СЛАВКОВА/ 2018, 281-284.

²⁶ БОЖИНОВА/СТАНЕВ 2019, 281-284.

²⁷ I had the opportunity to see the coins before their

Of the 15 known hoards from Philippopolis, only one consists of a large number of coins (1141) and can be considered to the savings hoards group – Philippopolis XI. The rest contain a relatively small number of coins (only two are over 50) and can be considered to the daily money category. The last six were placed in different containers and seven were probably in purses. Five of the hoards end with coins of Trajan Decius, four – with coins of Philip the Arab, one of Gordian III, four are from bronze emissions of the Severan dynasty and one ends with a denarius of Commodus. While the last one (Philippopolis VI) is probably an accidental loss, the rest are associated with the Gothic invasion of 250-251²⁸.

The comparison between the known coin hoards from other major urban centers in Thrace - Pautalia and Augusta Trajana with those from Philippopolis is significant. Three hoards from Roman times are known for the territory of Pautalia, two from the middle of the 3rd century, and for the territory of Augusta Trajana there are none²⁹. It is also missing data for the destructions from the 3rd century in this cities from the archaeological excavations so far³⁰.

The situation with the discovered family which remained buried, probably under the ruins of their own house in the outline of Philippopolis, is very telling. This means that the destruction was so big that the subsequent construction was only leveled onto the destructions from the middle of the 3rd century. Unfortunately, even the deities (the votive plate of the Thracian horseman and the statuette of Venus held by the woman) could not help the family neither to many other inhabitants of Philippopolis.

cleaning and conservation, for which I thank to the head of the excavations E. Bozhinova. The results of the study of this site are about to be fully published.

²⁸ VARBANOV 2012, 296.

²⁹ ВЪРБАНОВ 2007, 195-206; МИНКОВА 2012.

³⁰ КАЦАРОВА 2005, 59-91; ИВАНОВ 2002, 218-230.

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