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## DISTRIBUTION RATIO OF ISSUES FROM THE MINTS OF VIMINACIUM AND DACIA: THE EXAMPLE OF THE SOUTHERN NECROPOLES OF VIMINACIUM

### ABSTRACT

*Data on coin finds from the southern necropoles of Viminacium represent precious material for analysing the monetary circulation of provincial mints of Viminacium and Dacia, in the territory of Moesia Superior. A large sample of processed coins (6233), originating from archaeological research activities on these necropoles, provides the possibility for various kinds of comparisons. As shown by comparative analyses of monetary finds from these two mints on the territory of Moesia Superior and Dacia, issues from Viminacium had the goal of a wider circulation range, while issues from the province of Dacia, it would seem, were minted only for the needs of that particular province. In any case, production of both mints from the Balkans, in Dacia and Viminacium, represented a manner of handling the monetary crisis in the middle of the 3rd century and providing the money necessary for the army.*

**KEYWORDS: ROMAN EMPIRE, PROVINCIAL MINTS, VIMINACIUM, DACIA.**

A lack of imperial bronze coinage in circulation in the Danube Valley and the Balkans provinces was especially prominent at the beginning of the 3rd century and probably represented the main reason for opening a provincial coins mint in Viminacium in 239, and then another one in Dacia, in 246. This lack of small bronze coins was especially notable in Moesia Superior (Upper Moesia) and both Pannonias (Борић-Брешковић 1976: 8, ref. 2; Црнобрња 1993: 17-19; Găzdac and Alföldy-Găzdac 2008: 136, ref. 14; Војвода и Петровић 2011: 288-289; Војвода и Јесретић 2012: 121-122; Војвода 2013: 159-160; Vojvoda i Mrđić 2015: 14-17, ref. 10-13; Vojvoda i Mrđić 2017: 15-16; Borić-Brešković and Vojvoda 2018: 74, ref. 3; Vojvoda and Crnobrnja 2018: 133, ref. 10). The provincial coins mint in Viminacium was opened in October 239, which was also the

starting year of the provincial era (AN I – AN XVI).<sup>1</sup> It was active for 16 years, from 239/240 up to 254/255, with two intermission periods, in 248/249 (AN X) and in 253/254 (AN XV).<sup>2</sup> Viminacium obtained the right to mint provincial coins at the same time as it got the status of a colony, at the beginning of the reign of Gordian III.<sup>3</sup> On

<sup>1</sup> The period between October 19th and October 21st 239 is taken as the beginning of the monetary era of Viminacium; cf. Dušanić 1976: 58.

<sup>2</sup> It is most likely that the interruption in the work during AN X was caused by Pacatianus' usurpation, who was minting antoniniani in Viminacium at that time, in order to pay the army. Similarly, the interruption during AN XV in the time of Valerian I is interpreted by the minting of antoniniani for military needs in the war with the Sassanians; cf. Pegan 1984: 213; Vasić 2012: 14-15; Găzdac and Alföldy-Găzdac 2008: 141, ref. 43-46.

<sup>3</sup> A secondary imperial mint was also operating in Viminacium, opened at a later time, during the reign of Philip I; cf. Kondić 1969: 47-65; Vasić 2005: 19; Vasić 2012: 39-41

the other hand, it would seem that the beginning of minting in Dacia was linked to the sojourn of Philip I in this province, and operations against the Carpi.<sup>4</sup> The mint in Dacia produced coin issues during a period of ten years, with the mark of the local era from AN I – X (246/247–254/256).<sup>5</sup>

Data on coinage findings from the southern necropoles of Viminacium represent precious material for an analysis of monetary circulation in the territory of Moesia Superior in the period 192–238 AD, i.e. the period before the opening of the provincial coins mint in Viminacium, and then the subsequent mint in Dacia. A large sample of processed coins (6233) originating from archaeological research activities on these necropoles provides the possibility for various kinds of comparisons. Out of the total number of registered examples of imperial and provincial coins (6228),<sup>6</sup> 5128 pieces belong to the imperial type (82.33%), while 1100 pieces belong to the provincial type (17.67%).<sup>7</sup> If we exclude the coins from the 4th and the 5th century (Pećine – 544 pieces and Više Grobalja – 42 pieces), we get the following ratio for the imperial and provincial coins during the first three centuries: 80.50% (4542 pieces) versus 19.50% (1100 pieces).

The analysis of monetary circulation in this period (192–238), on the basis of the sample from Viminacium, has shown a domination of issues

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with references therein.

4 Găzdac, Alföldy-Găzdac 2008: 140. According to Fitz, these events were also the cause for a secondary imperial mint to be opened in Viminacium; cf. Fitz 1978: 642.

5 The period of July–August 246 is taken as the beginning of the Dacian monetary era. Thus, the monetary eras of Viminacium and Dacia mostly overlap, with the difference of roughly three months; cf. Vasić 2012: 15.

6 The total number of processed examples of coins originating from the necropoles of Više Grobalja and Pećine is 6233. The total of 6228 comprehends examples of imperial (1st–5th century) and provincial mints (1st–3rd century). The five examples which haven't been included in our analysis belong to Republican mints (2), Greek mints from the 2nd century BC (1) and imitations (2); cf. Vojvoda i Mrđić 2015: 10, Table 1, ref. 6; Vojvoda i Mrđić 2017: 10, Table 1, ref. 5.

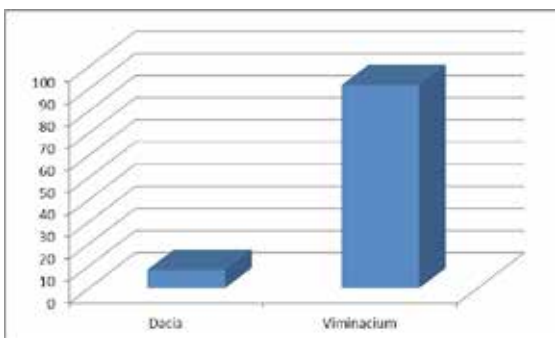
7 This calculation also includes the coins from the 4th and the 5th century, originating from the most recent of the three necropoles from the site of Pećine (Vojvoda i Mrđić 2017: 14–16, ref. 16, Table 4).

of provincial coins compared to the imperial ones (65% to 35%) (Borić-Brešković and Vojvoda 2018: 76–77, Table 1, Graph 1). By observing just the provincial mints, it has been noted that issues from the Stobi mint prevailed from the reign of Septimius Severus up to the reign of Elagabalus, while issues from the Bithynian mint in Nicaea can almost exclusively be registered during the time of Alexander Severus. Other mints from Asia Minor and Thrace are present in smaller percentages (Borić-Brešković and Vojvoda 2018: 76). From the opening of the provincial mint in Viminacium, and its issues entering circulation, right until it was closed (between 238 and 255), a lack of imperial issues became even more prominent (they are present in only 11%) (Borić-Brešković and Vojvoda 2018: 78, Graph 2). When it comes to provincial issues, the mint from Viminacium dominates with ca 50%, followed by the mint from Nicaea with 42%, while issues from the mints in Dacia and Thrace are present with only 2.27% each.

Findings of coinage from the province of Dacia, produced in considerably smaller numbers than coinage from the mint of Viminacium, had a certain role in the monetary circulation in the area of Moesia Superior. Thus, 155 examples of coins from the southern necropoles of Viminacium originated from the mint of Viminacium (93.40%) and 11 from the mint in Dacia (6.60%). Coin hoards also provide possibilities of gaining insight into the monetary flows of a given period. In 10 hoards on the territory of today's Serbia, coinage from both of these provincial mints are present, with a similar ratio (on average 8.70%): Bošnjane 61:2; Brežane 25:2; Bujkovac 120:2; Vlajića Brdo I 101:14; vicinity of Vranje 19:3; Popovac 15:2; vicinity of Ćuprija 73:7; Izvore 26:2; Vrkašice 106:10; and Sremska Mitrovica 128:8.<sup>8</sup>

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8 Bošnjane: Borić-Brešković 1988: 89–96; Brežane: Vuilić 1905: 92–93; Bujkovac: Borić-Brešković i Mitrović 2014: 87–134; Vlajića Brdo I: Arsenijević 1997: 43–108; Vranje vicinity: Borić-Brešković 1988: 89–96; Popovac: Borić-Brešković 1979: 39–54; Ćuprija vicinity: Borić-Brešković 1983: 69–84; Izvore: Stamenković i Samarčić 2013: 163–181; Vrkašice: Орлов 1970: 153–161; Sremska Mitrovica: Орлов 1972: 153–161.



Graph 1 – Distribution of coins from the mints in Dacia and Viminacium in the area of today's Serbia

Unlike the finds of coins discovered during archaeological research and those from coin hoards, the presence of a certain type of coins in systematic museum collections does not provide equally reliable data on monetary circulation. In such cases, those are usually coins which came to museums from older private collections, and, therefore, their finding location is questionable. Nevertheless, in publishing certain museum collections, researchers have often stressed that those previous owners used to collect coins in given areas.<sup>9</sup> Taken with a certain amount of caution, data from museum collections regarding the presence of provincial coins from Viminacium and Dacia certainly contribute to creating an image on the monetary circulation in Moesia Superior. Thus the numismatic cabinet of the National Museum in Belgrade contains 4770 examples of issues from Viminacium and only 105 from the mint in Dacia (Borić-Brešković, Vojvoda 2018: 79; Vojvoda, Crnobrnja *in print*). At the Belgrade City Museum, this ratio is 1700 examples from Viminacium to 183 examples from Dacian issues (Борић-Брешковић 1976; Borić-Brešković, Vojvoda 2018: 79; Црнобрња 1993); at the National Museum in Požarevac, it is 1335 to 34 (Borić-Brešković, Vojvoda 2018: 80; Бенцаревић, Бранковић 2016: 143-167); at the National Museum in Šabac, it is 59 to 4 (Борић-Брешковић,

<sup>9</sup> For example, coins from the numismatic collection of the National Museum in Požarevac are mostly linked to Viminacium and its surroundings; cf. Бенцаревић и Бранковић 2016: 144, ref. 8, 150, ref. 46; Вojвода и Бранковић 2016: 104; Borić-Brešković and Vojvoda 2018: 78, ref. 12.

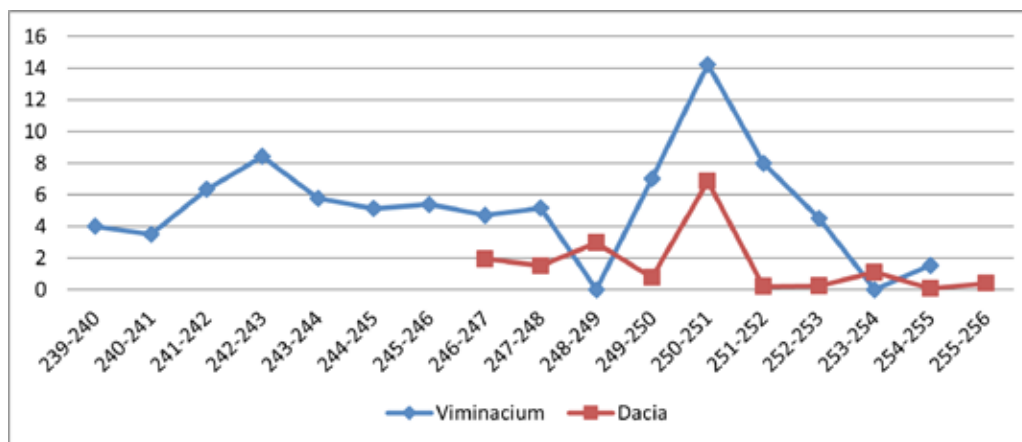
Петровић 2012: 135, ref. 1; Vojvoda, Crnobrnja *in print*).<sup>10</sup> In total, finds from archaeological excavations, from hoards, and parts of previous private collections which are in several museums in Serbia today, provide us with 8072 examples of issues from the mint in Viminacium and 416 coins from the mint in Dacia (Graph 1).

Aside from production itself, other differences have also been noted in the work of the two provincial mints. The mint of Viminacium stands out in regard to the one from Dacia due to its considerably wider circulation area. After Moesia Superior, coinage from the mint of Viminacium is most numerous in Pannonia Inferior, followed by Dalmatia, Pannonia Superior and Dacia, with a smaller number of its issues even registered in Italy itself (Regio X, Venetia et Histria), in Noricum, then in Thrace and Moesia Inferior, as well as in barbaricum (part of the barbaricum in Banat), Ukraine, Belorussia, Poland, Germany, Slovakia (Borić-Brešković, Vojvoda 2018: 81-89, Graph 3, Map 1-2). Issues from the mint of Dacia had a different role in the circulation within the province of origin and in the area of Moesia Superior and both Pannonias, where they also occur, but on a considerably lower scale than in Dacia itself. Also, the influx of coins from the mint of Dacia was almost identical in Moesia Superior and both Pannonias (Gäzdac and Alföldy-Gäzdac 2008: 146, Fig. 4; Vojvoda and Crnobrnja *in print*, Graph 6).

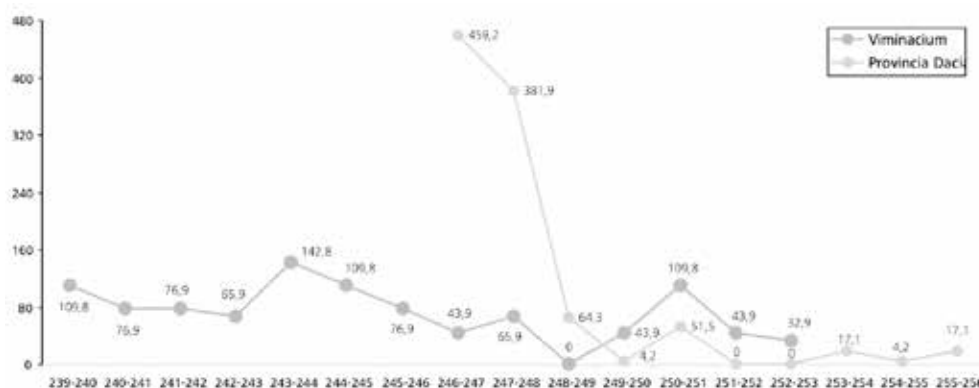
A comparative analysis of monetary finds from these two mints on the territory of Moesia Superior and Dacia yielded the results shown in the following charts (Graph 2 and 3):

If we observe the ratios in Moesia Superior (Graph 2), we can note that the mint from Viminacium had an increase from the second to the fourth year of minting (AN II – IV VIM or 240/241–242/243), a decrease in the fifth year (AN V or 243–244), and a relatively uniform influx until the end of the ninth year. The opening of the mint in Dacia and the first two years of its minting

<sup>10</sup> The mentioned examples from both mints come from the site of Banovo Polje.



Graph 2 – Presence of provincial coinage from mints in Viminacium and Dacia in Moesia Superior, according to the minting year (AN I-XVI VIM and AN I-X DAC).



Graph 3 – Coin index of the Viminacium and Dacia provincial mints in Dacia (according to Găzdac, Alföldy-Găzdac 2008: 152, Fig. 10).

(AN I–II DAC or 246/247–247/248) left traces in the circulation in Moesia Superior, though certainly on a smaller scale than issues from the mint of Viminacium. The coinage from the first two years of the mint in Dacia was present in an almost identical percentage in Moesia Superior (AN I–II or 246/247–247/248). The first interruption of the operation of the mint from Viminacium (AN X VIM or 248/249) was followed by a certain increase in parallel Dacian issues from the third year (AN III DAC). As we have already mentioned, this was linked to the usurpation by Pacatianus, who used the mint of Viminacium for minting *antoniniani* at that time.<sup>11</sup> According to M. Vasić, the mint of Dacia was also not active for several months, from the beginning of its fourth year (July/August 249) up to the moment that the Senate acknowledged

Trajan Decius (October 249) (Vasić 2012: 15). In any case, the mint of Viminacium noted a considerable increase with Trajan Decius coming to power, from 249/250 (AN XI VIM), and achieved its peak of production in 250/251 (AN XII VIM). In parallel to the twelfth year of the Viminacium mint, ran the fifth year of the Dacian mint (AN V DAC), which also reached its highest influx in Moesia Superior. Events which caused the exceptional production of both mints were linked to the intrusion of Goths in Moesia Inferior and Thrace, the sojourn of Decius in the Balkans and his passing through Viminacium (Vasić 2012: 17).

The mint of Viminacium then noted a decrease in the following two years (AN XIII–XIV VIM), while the Dacian issues almost died away during its sixth and seventh year of minting (AN VI–VII DAC or 251/252–252/253). After a second inter-

<sup>11</sup> Cf. supra ref. 1.

ruption in operation during the fifteenth year (AN XV VIM or 253/254), the mint of Viminacium operated for just one more year (AN XVI VIM or 254/255), and on a very small scale, after which it was closed. Graph 2 clearly shows that both mints reached their production peak in 250/251, while minting issues of Trajan Decius, Trebonianus Gallus and members of their families.

The picture is somewhat different when it comes to issues from the mint of Dacia in its province of origin (Graph 3). This relates, most prominently, to the first two years of minting (AN I–II DAC or 246/247–247/248), with its production continuing merely to decrease and be almost identical to the one noted in Moesia Superior. This massive production in the mint of Dacia is probably linked to the increased concentration of troops in this province because of the invasion of Carpi (Găzdac and Alföldy-Găzdac 2008: 141, ref. 42). Furthermore, issues from the mint of Dacia represent 40% of all the coins of Philip I found in Dacia (Găzdac and Alföldy-Găzdac 2008: 141, ref. 41). Also, these monetary finds are concentrated almost solely in the southern parts of the province, which is another fact that supports the newly defined location of this provincial mint in Apulum, and not in Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, as was traditionally believed. Apulum was the seat of *Legio XIII Gemina*, and there were also western Carpathian areas rich in ores in its vicinity (Găzdac-Alfoldy and Găzdac 2005: 651; Găzdac and Găzdac-Alfoldy 2008: 145). As for the issues of the mint of Viminacium, the dynamics of their influx into Dacia, by year, is similar to the that in Moesia Superior, although its issues are more numerous than those from the Dacian mint, with the exception of the first two years of minting in Dacia.

The founding of the mint in Viminacium and another one later in Dacia represented an official manner of temporarily solving a problem in the functioning of the monetary system of the Empire. However, it would seem that the roles of those two newly founded mints in the Balkans were different. As shown by the comparative analyses of finds from these two mints from the area of the province

of Dacia, the issues from Viminacium had the goal of a wider circulation range, while issues from the province of Dacia, it would seem, were minted solely for the needs of that particular province. Namely, the mint of Dacia had a high production, and exceeded the number of issues from Viminacium in Dacia itself only in 246–249, and afterwards, from the rule of Philip I up to the rule of Valerian I, the issues of Viminacium were more numerous (Găzdac 2008: 275, 277, Fig. 9; Găzdac and Alföldy-Găzdac 2008: 152, Fig. 10; Borić-Brešković, Vojvoda 2018: 84). The production of both mints from the Balkans, that from Dacia and that from Viminacium, represented a manner of dealing with the monetary crisis in the middle of the 3rd century and providing the necessary money for the army.

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**REZIME**  
**ODNOS ZASTUPLJENOSTI**  
**EMISIJA KOVNICE**  
**VIMINACIJUM I DAKIJA: PRIMER**  
**VIMINACIJUMSKIH JUŽNIH**  
**NEKROPOLA**

**KLJUČNE REČI: RIMSKO CARSTVO, PROVINCIJALNE KOVNICE, VIMINACIUM, DACIA.**

Nedostatak imperijalnog bronзаног novca u optičaju podunavskih i balkanskih provincija početkom 3. v. bio je posebno izražen i verovatno je predstavljao glavni razlog za otvaranje kovnice provincijalnog novca u Viminacijumu 239. g., a potom i u Dakiji 246.g. Kovnica provincijalnog novca u Viminacijumu otvorena je oktobra 239. godine što je bio i početak računanja provincijalne ere (AN I – AN XVI). Radila je 16 godina, od 239/240. godine do 254/255. godine sa dva prekida tokom 248/249 (AN X) i 253/254 (AN XV). Kovnica provincijalnog novca u Dakiji emitovala je novac deset godina uz oznaku lokalne ere od AN I – X (246/247-254/256).

Za analizu monetarne cirkulacije na teritoriji Gornje Mezije u periodu 192-238 AD, odnosno periodu koje prethodi otvaranju kovnice provincijalnog novca u Viminacijumu, a potom i kovnice u Dakiji, dragoceni su podaci o nalazima novca sa viminacijumskih južnih nekropola. Nalazi novca provincije Dakije, srazmerno daleko manjoj pro-

dukciji u odnosu na kovnicu Viminacijum, imali su izvesnu ulogu u monetarnoj cirkulaciji na prostoru Gornje Mezije. Tako sa viminacijumskih južnih nekropola potiče 155 primeraka novca kovnice Viminacijum (93,40%) i 11 iz kovnice Dakija (6,60%). Izvestan broj dačkih izdanja potiče i iz 10 ostava novca, u kojima je zabeležen sličan odnos zastupljenosti viminacijumske u odnosu na dačku kovnicu. Ukupno uzevši, nalazi sa arheoloških istraživanja, iz ostava, kao i delovi ranijih privatnih kolekcija koje se danas nalaze u više muzeja u Srbiji, iznose 8072 primeraka emisija viminacijumske kovnice i 416 moneta kovnice Dakija (Grafikon 1).

Osim same produkcije, do sada su uočene i druge razlike u radu dve provincijalne kovnice. Viminacijumska se ističe u odnosu na kovnicu Dakija, izuzetno širim arealom cirkulacije. Kako su pokazale komparativne analize monetarnih nalaza ove dve kovnice na području provincije Dakije, emisije Viminacijuma imale su za cilj širu cirkulaciju, dok su emisije provincije Dakije izgleda kovane samo za potrebe matične provincije. Produkcija obe balkanske kovnice, u Dakiji i Viminacijumu, predstavljala je način upravljanja monetarnom krizom iz sredine 3. veka i snabdevanja vojske neophodnim novcem.

\* \* \*

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