

SOME REMARKS ON THE CHRONOLOGY OF DENARII HOARDS FROM THE EASTERN CARPATHIAN BARBARICUM*

Abstract: Over 100 denarii hoards dated in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD were discovered in the Eastern Carpathian Barbaricum. Our paper aims to pinpoint a few aspects related to the chronology of these hoards, such as estimating the moment they arrived in the territory east of the Carpathians and for how long they were used in this particular area. In our research we analyse the available numismatic, archaeological and historical information. Thus, the composition and chronological structure of the coin hoards, the dating of their most recent monetary issues and the presence of barbarian imitations are taken into account. In some cases, the coins are associated in hoards with other categories of archaeological artifacts having their own dating, such as brooches, bracelets, silver and bronze vessels. Particularly important for establishing the chronology of coin hoards could be the ceramic pots and mugs in which they were housed and buried. Unfortunately, we have little information about the archaeological context of the hoards. Only in few cases they were found within the local settlements, or in their vicinity. Our attempt to date these hoards must also take into account the specific evolution of the relations between the Empire and barbarian populations located East of the Carpathians, as well as the political transformations that took place within this part of Barbaricum during the 2nd-3rd centuries AD.

Keywords: *Moldavia, Eastern Barbaricum, coin hoards, 2nd-3rd centuries AD, barbarian imitations.*

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On the territory of Moldavia is attested one of the most important concentration of Roman imperial silver coins from the entire European Barbaricum. Up to the present, over 100 hoards were discovered in this small area, to the best of our knowledge, containing more than 25,000 denarii. This large database increases

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regularly, by adding new recent discoveries, made especially with the help of metal detectors.

Different series of hoards can be identified¹, concluded in the same periods and having similar chronological structures. The first group of deposits, ending with coins of Hadrian, are small in size (8 hoards/over 150 pcs.)². They retain a substantial percentage of Republican issues, but the majority of coins are dated after Nero's reform. The most numerous are denarii of the Flavian emperors (especially Vespasian), and they are followed, at a short distance, by those of the emperors from the Antonine dynasty. The number of hoards with the latest issues of Antoninus Pius increases in Moldavia (14 hoards/over 1,600 pcs.)³. For the most part, they preserve their small dimensions and they are composed of two consistent cores, of almost equal size, of Flavian and Antonine denarii. The next series, dated in the time of Marcus Aurelius, contains the most part of discoveries (30 hoards/over 5,600 pcs.)⁴. Generally, there are medium-sized deposits, which comprise between 100 and 200 denarii. Only some have in their composition Republican coins, especially Marcus Antonius' legionary series.

¹ Only the hoards dated after the foundation of the province of Dacia, in AD 106, were taken into consideration.

² MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1980, 76-81; DEPEYROT/MOISIL 2008a, 7-17; MUNTEANU 2017a, 925, 928, Fig. 1b; DYMOWSKI *et alii* 2019, nos. 263-264, 279, 286, 333 (to these should be added the hoards from Berzunți, Dămieniști and Dângeni).

³ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1980, 76-81; DEPEYROT/MOISIL 2008a, 18-73; MUNTEANU 2017a, 925, 928, Fig. 1c; DYMOWSKI *et alii* 2019, nos. 105, 107, 111, 235, 244, 256, 262, 275, 280, 285, 299 (plus Berești-Bistrița, Stolniceni-Prăjescu and Târgu Ocna).

⁴ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1980, 81-87; DEPEYROT/MOISIL 2008a, 74-138; MUNTEANU 2017a, 925, 928, Fig. 1d; MUNTEANU/MIHAILESCU/DUMITROAIA 2017, 97-100, 123-125, 130-132; MUNTEANU/MIHAILESCU 2018, 219-221, 244-245, 257-258; DYMOWSKI *et alii* 2019, nos. 113, 234, 240, 248, 252, 261, 265, 268, 277, 281, 289, 295, 298, 302-303, 309, 311, 323, 326, 328-330 (plus Bistrița, Benești, Brehuiști, Olăreni, Tăcuta, Tansa and Tăvădărești). The most recent discovery from this series was made in 2016, at Hârtoș (Neamț County) (167 denarii), with the help of metal detectors. The hoard is under study.

The amount of the Antonine emperors' coin issues exceeds that of the Flavian ones.

The hoards concluded in the time of Commodus continue to be in a great amount (21 hoards/over 7,800 pcs.)⁵. In their composition, the core of the coins belonging to the Antonine emperors develops considerably, reaching over 80% of all discoveries. This percentage is relatively evenly divided by the emperors of this dynasty, beginning with Trajan. The largest number of denarii may be found in the deposits with terminal coins of Septimius Severus (22 hoards/over 10,800 pcs.)⁶. Some of them are quite large, exceeding 1,000 coins. Generally, they share a quite similar chronological structure to those from Commodus, therefore, when a partial discovery that could be assigned to this period is recovered, it is very difficult to attribute it accurately. In most of the deposits from this series, the latest recorded issue is dated before the significant reduction in the silver content suffered by denarii (AD 194)⁷, but, in a few cases, the hoards contain issues struck after this event as well.

Furthermore, only two horizons of hoards concluded after the reign of Septimius Severus are represented in the Eastern Carpathian area. Unfortunately, there are missing precise information on the deposits from the time of Caracalla (2 hoards/over 160 pcs.)⁸. But those from the following period (Elagabalus - Severus Alexander) (4 hoards/

⁵ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1980, 87-93, 97; DEPEYROT/MOISIL 2008a, 139-193; MUNTEANU 2017a, 925, 928, Fig. 1e; DYMOWSKI *et alii* 2019, nos. 109, 238-239, 255, 257, 267, 269, 304-305, 308, 310, 315, 320, 322, 325, 327, 331, 334, 337 (plus Galați-Barboși and Schineni).

⁶ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1980, 94-100; DEPEYROT/MOISIL 2008a, 194-283; MUNTEANU 2017a, 925, 928, Fig. 1f; DYMOWSKI *et alii* 2019, nos. 106, 108, 110, 112, 233, 236-237, 242, 260, 266, 270, 276, 284, 290, 292-294, 301, 312-313, 317. In 2015, another hoard (200 pcs.) was discovered inside the site of Ruginoasa (Neamț County), also with the help of metal detectors (HONCU/GAFINCU 2018, 219). The hoard is under study.

⁷ BUTCHER/PONTING 2012, 77.

⁸ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1980, 100-103; MUNTEANU 2017a, 925, 928, Fig. 1f; DYMOWSKI *et alii* 2019, nos. 282, 335.

over 1,200 pcs.)⁹ are well studied, therefore their chronological structure is known. They contain a small group of Flavian denarii, a consistent core of coins from the time of the Antonines, whose peak reaches the time of Antoninus Pius, and very few recent issues. Thereafter, only a few denarii still appear in the composition of two antoninianii hoards, concluded in the time of Trebonianus Gallus¹⁰ and Aemilian¹¹.

In general, the various issues related to denarii hoards discovered on the territory of Moldavia - the chronology, ways of penetration and functions - have been thoroughly studied, especially in the works of V. Mihailescu-Bîrliba¹². The results he has achieved are well known, so we do not aim to resume the whole discussion. Our intention is to reconsider some aspects which refer to the chronology of these hoards. More precisely, we will try to presume when the imperial denarii arrived in the territory East of the Carpathians and for how long they were used in this particular area.

There are numerous hypotheses seeking to date the influx of denarii into different parts of the European Barbaricum, situated close to the limes or far from the Empire's borders¹³. In the case of Moldavia, it is assumed that silver coins entered the region only after the monetary reform of Septimius Severus, till the reign of Elagabalus or maybe later, up to the time of Trajan Decius/Gallienus. As an effect of this debasement, the pre-Severan denarii of good quality were taken out of circulation and amassed inside the Empire, according to Gresham's law. From this existing monetary

fund ("trésor unique de l'Empire Romain"), they were sent outside the limes¹⁴. The research of the hoards, both in terms of chronological structure and composition, and the analysis of historical events in the barbarian territory East of the Carpathians could lead to different conclusions. The chronological structures of the denarii hoards discovered in Moldavia, concluded in various times, is almost similar to the ones of the majority of the contemporary deposits discovered in the neighbouring Roman provinces (Dacia and Moesia Inferior)¹⁵. Both types of hoards were formed within the Roman borders and reflect the monetary circulation in the Empire at a certain time. The removal of the denarii from the coinage pool was made gradually, in various periods (not all of a sudden), generating hoards with distinct chronological structures. They were carried over the limes as already collected amounts, set up in different times.

In most of the cases directly observed by ourselves the latest coins from the Moldavian hoards, especially those from the earlier series (ended in the time of Hadrian - Marcus Aurelius) were preserved in very good condition. The absence of visible traces of wear on their surface would suggest that these denarii circulated only for a short while inside the Empire, being withdrawn by the authorities at a time close to their issuance. In this kind of situations, it is possible that the most recent coins from a hoard discovered in the East Carpathian Barbaricum to virtually indicate the moment when it reached beyond the limes¹⁶.

⁹ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1980, 103-106; DEPEYROT/MOISIL 2008a, 284-352; MUNTEANU 2017a, 925, 928, Fig. 1g-h; MUNTEANU/POPUȘOI 2014, 12-14, 28, 34; DYMOWSKI *et alii* 2019, nos. 241, 249, 283, 296.

¹⁰ DEPEYROT/MOISIL 2008b, 171-172; MUNTEANU 2017a, 925, 928, Fig. 1j.

¹¹ DEPEYROT/MOISIL 2008b, 173; MUNTEANU 2017a, 925, 928, Fig. 1j; DYMOWSKI *et alii* 2019, no. 297.

¹² See, in particular, MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1980, and more recently, MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2012.

¹³ A summary of these opinions can be found at: BURSCHE 1993; LUCHELLI 1998, 130-163; DYMOWSKI/MYZGIN 2014, 42-44, 48-56; VOß/WIGG-WOLF 2017, 114-119.

¹⁴ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1980, 109, 201-202; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1981; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1983-1985; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1994, 69-70; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2012, 508-509.

¹⁵ For the hoards from Dacia and Moesia Inferior see: DEPEYROT/MOISIL 2008a; GĂZDAC 2010, 67-77, 126-137 and Catalogues (Hoards from Dacia; Hoards from Moesia Inferior); PETAC 2011, 224-262. An exhaustive comparative analysis of the denarii hoards from Moldavia and the Empire was conducted by V. Mihailescu-Bîrliba (MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1980, 75-176; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1981; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1983-1985).

¹⁶ MUNTEANU/MIHAILESCU/DUMITROAIA 2017, 95, 100; MUNTEANU/MIHAILESCU 2018, 215, 222.

In the composition of the imperial hoards from Moldavia sometimes occur particular monetary issues, such as the provincial coinage and the plated denarii, which may reveal useful chronological indications. So far, we have knowledge of 20 civic and provincial silver coins that were hoarded together with the denarii in this area. They are all dated during Vespasian - Hadrian and were struck in various mints from the Oriental part of the Empire (Lycia - 11 pcs., Caesarea Cappadociae - 5 pcs., Amisos Ponti - 3 pcs.)¹⁷ and even from outside (1 pc. - Parthian Empire)¹⁸. Characterised by a satisfactory weight and a high title, these drachmas were accepted in the monetary circulation inside the Empire along with denarii, and probably equated with them on a certain tariff¹⁹. Similar provincial issues turned up in the composition of the hoards from the province of Dacia, the nearest Roman territory and a potential source for the Roman coins from Moldavia. It may be noted that all these hoards are ended, at the latest, during Commodus²⁰.

Denarii subaerati are frequently encountered in the composition of the hoards discovered in the Eastern Carpathian territory. We managed to record at least 32 such issues, found in 14 hoards²¹. They were made by striking and, exceptionally, by casting and most of them belong to the Antonine emperors (27 pcs.)²². The origin of these particular coins

must be sought in the two Roman provinces located in the vicinity: Moesia Inferior and Dacia. In the province South of the Danube, the sporadic reporting of counterfeit denarii is probably due to the inadequate publication of monetary discoveries²³. By comparison, a different situation is attested in Dacia. Massive amounts of silver plated coins, manufactured, especially by striking, were found isolated, both in the civilian settlements and military sites of the province. They occur in all periods, but the greatest part bears the effigies of the Severan emperors²⁴. The number of counterfeit coins in the composition of Dacian hoards is smaller and the majority are Severan denarii²⁵. The emergence of a deposit of cast coins at Apulum (VI) seems to be an exceptional case²⁶. All the denarii subaerati, made by striking, from the Moldavian hoards, are dated prior to the reign of Septimius Severus. We can assume that most of these deposits were constituted in the Roman world and reached this part of Barbaricum before the phenomenon of copying escalated in the Empire²⁷. In a later period, when the silvered copies became widely available, they were included in the composition of the hoards, together with the genuine coins. It is the case of the deposit from Iezer (Vaslui County), concluded in the time of Severus Alexander, which contains three cast forgeries in Cu-Sn-Pb alloys²⁸, very similar to those from the hoard of Apulum VI²⁹.

At last, the chronology of the main

¹⁷ MUNTEANU/POPUȘOI 2014, 10; MUNTEANU/MIHĂILESCU/DUMITROAIA 2017, 96, 113-114, nos. 59-60; MARINESCU-BÎLCU/CHIȚESCU/MIHĂILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1989, 49, no. 34; DIMA/VASILE 2003, 95, no. 36; DUMITROAIA 2013-2014, 458, no. 3; BUTNARIU 2016, 46, no. 76.

¹⁸ DIMA/VASILE 2003, 95, no. 37.

¹⁹ MARINESCU-BÎLCU/CHIȚESCU/MIHĂILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1989, 45.

²⁰ GĂZDAC 2010, 159 and Catalogues (Hoards from Dacia).

²¹ MUNTEANU/POPUȘOI 2014, 5-6, 18, no. 21, 24; 19, nos. 25; 22, nos. 44-45. In reality, it is possible that the number of plated coins in the composition of the Moldavian hoards be much higher, these being difficult to detect with the naked eye, in the absence of any physical and chemical analyses.

²² MUNTEANU/POPUȘOI 2014, 3-6; MUNTEANU 2017a, 925.

²³ GATTORNO 1940; DIMA/ELEFTERESCU 2009, 20-25, 142-147; GĂZDAC 2010, 177.

²⁴ GĂZDAC 2009; GĂZDAC 2010, 150-151, 177; MUNTEANU 2017b, 87-92, 135-136, 156; MUNTEANU/HONCU 2019, 174-181.

²⁵ GĂZDAC 2010, 136 and Catalogues (Hoards from Dacia).

²⁶ GĂZDAC/OARGĂ/ALFÖLDY-GĂZDAC 2015.

²⁷ At the beginning of the 3rd century, the copying of main bronze and silver denominations would have been widely done, especially in the Danubian and Rhenanian provinces (see GĂZDAC 2010, 177-178; MUNTEANU/HONCU 2019, 179-180, with the bibliography).

²⁸ MUNTEANU/POPUȘOI 2014, 3-4; 18-19, nos. 21, 24-25.

²⁹ GĂZDAC/OARGĂ/ALFÖLDY-GĂZDAC 2015, 8-15, 38-45, Tab. 2.

political and military events that would explain the presence of Roman silver in the territory East of the Carpathians should be considered. Immediately after the establishment of the Romans North and South of the Danube, barbarians from this area were attracted by the territories of the Empire. At the beginning of the reign of Antoninus Pius, in AD 143 - 144, the "Dacians" from Moldavia attacked both Moesiae, moving by boats along the Danube³⁰. Only a few years later (AD 155 - 157/158), probably the same tribes were raiding in the Eastern part of Dacia Superior³¹. About these barbarians one can only assume that they originate from central and Northern Moldavia³². We believe that their possible identification with the Costoboci should be considered. This tribe was manifested quite active in relations with the Empire during this period. Recent research has shown that "Lipița" archaeological culture cannot be ascribed to them with certainty, so it is impossible to specify where their home territory was located³³. During Marcomannic wars, the Costoboci are listed by Historia Augusta among the enemies of the Empire (M. Ant. Phil., 22, 1). In AD 170 or 172 they ran a violent expedition to the South of the Danube, crossing the provinces of Moesia Inferior, Thracia, Macedonia and reaching the centre of Greece, where they were defeated (Pausanias, X, 34, 5)³⁴. At the same time, an inscription in Rome mentions Pieporus, rex Coisstobocensis (CIL, VI, 1801), a client king of the Empire and probably an important barbarian ruler.

Carpi were probably the most important tribe living in this barbarian territory. Their archaeological culture, named "Poienеști - Vârteșcoiu", developed especially in the sub-Carpathian area and central Moldavia, reaching its peak in the second half of the 2nd century and the first part of the 3rd century³⁵.

³⁰ BENEА 2010, 157-159; BENEА 2013, 62-63.

³¹ BENEА 2010, 162-168; BENEА 2013, 64-65.

³² BENEА 2010, 155, 158, 163; BENEА 2013, 63, 65.

³³ POPA 2015, 18-24; POPA 2016.

³⁴ POPA 2015, 21-22; POPA 2016, 139-141.

³⁵ For the "Poienеști-Vârteșcoiu" archaeological culture/

This tribe became noticeable only after the Costoboci's defeat. During Caracalla's reign, the Carpi may have raided the territory of Tyras³⁶. In AD 238, they attacked the province of Moesia Inferior (SHA, Max. et Balb., 16, 3) and asked the governor, Tullius Menophilus, to give them subsidies, believing themselves "more worthy than the Goths" (Petrus Patricius, 8). An important event for the Empire was represented by the war of Philippus Arabs with the Carpi (c. AD 245 - 247). The emperor repelled the barbarians who had attacked Dacia and besieged them in a fortress (φρούριον) (Zosimos, I, 20)³⁷. Subsequently, the Carpi, alone or together with the Goths, made frequent raids in the Roman territories; at the end of century, this tribe was moved en masse South of the Danube³⁸.

Following this brief analysis, it is more likely to consider that the imperial denarii hoards have reached this part of Barbaricum gradually, in different periods. They arrived here already formed and their composition and chronological structure reflect the coinage pool from the Empire at that particular moment when their constitution took place. Their flow beyond the eastern limes (as robberies, military payments or stipendia)³⁹ probably started during Antoninus Pius (or even earlier), when the first attacks of the barbarians from Moldavia (Costoboci ?) occurred. The influx of silver coins increased during the Marcomannic wars, in which the Costoboci considerably engaged. In connection with them, may be interpreted the majority of the hoards concluded in the time of Marcus Aurelius and, perhaps, some of those in the later period (Commodus). From the end of the 2nd century until the middle of the 3rd, the warrior tribe of Carpi represented

group (identified with the "Carpic" culture - BICHIR 1973, 158-159) see, more recently, POPA 2015, 30-35.

³⁶ PETOLESCU 1988; PETOLESCU 2010, 300-301.

³⁷ TUDOR 1976; PETOLESCU 2010, 302-303; this fortress (castellum Carporum) is also mentioned on an inscription from Intercisa (ÁE 1965, 223).

³⁸ DIACONU 1986; PETOLESCU 2010, 303-305.

³⁹ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2012, 509; MUNTEANU 2017a, 926.

a significant threat for the Empire. They asked for and received stipendia, being probably more important than the Goths at that time. Most of the sizeable deposits with terminal coins of Septimius Severus and those of a later date (Elagabalus - Severus Alexander) might be attributed to them. In all likelihood denarii continued to arrive in the Eastern Carpathian territory even after Septimius Severus' changes in his politics towards barbarians⁴⁰. During this period, the silver received from the Romans was perhaps concentrated in the hands of some local leaders⁴¹, subsequently being redistributed, in a sort of "secondary exchange".

Another issue related to the chronology of the denarii hoards discovered in Moldavia refers to the length of time they have been used in this barbarian territory. Estimating the moment when these deposits were buried, in an environment where they were no longer used as money, but invested with other functions, is very difficult to achieve. Some relative chronological support we might obtain from the analysis of objects that were added to the coins coming from the Empire (like barbarian imitations and various precious metal artefacts), the study of the ceramic pots and mugs in which they were housed, and the archaeological contexts in which they were dug.

The barbarian imitations of imperial denarii occurred in the Moldavian hoards, usually one-two pieces in each discovery. Up to the present, we have knowledge of 42 such particular issues. Half of them were published, only in a few cases being illustrated⁴². Other 21 counterfeit coins are still unpublished and they belong to the hoard of Muncelu de Sus (Iași County)⁴³. We consider it necessary to

briefly refer to these coins, because among them are the only barbarian imitations attested so far in Moldavia, which were struck with the same dies. In this hoard, four groups of imitative coins were identified, sharing identical dies for the obverse and/or the reverse. It is remarkable that one of these groups is die-linked to an imitation known from the hoard of Târpești (Neamț County)⁴⁴. In the composition of the same discovery, from Muncelu de Sus, there is also a silver coin that copies a rare bronze issue of Plautilla, minted at Nicaea Bithyniae.

The imitative issues are found in 14 hoards from Moldavia, concluded at different times. A significant concentration of this coinage (32 pcs.) is noticeable within the deposits ended with genuine denarii of Marcus Aurelius. The most commonly used prototypes are the coins of the Antonine emperors, especially of Antoninus Pius (9 pcs.), Marcus Aurelius (10 pcs.) and Faustina II (6 pcs.). Some of these counterfeits are hybrids. The weights of imitative coins vary a lot; most are below 3 grams, but there is also a small group of pieces that exceed 5 grams. Depending on the degree of barbarisation, they belong to all the three known groups, but, in utmost situations, the imperial portrait can be fairly easy to distinguish. The legends contain both Latin and Greek characters and sometimes graphic symbols trying to imitate the letters. For the most part they are combined⁴⁵. To our knowledge there are no direct die-links between the imitations found in Moldavia and similar coins from other parts of Barbaricum⁴⁶. Only in very few cases

⁴⁰ VOß/WIGG-WOLF 2017, 117-119.

⁴¹ Presumptive barbarian power centres were archaeologically identified in Moldavia (OPREANU 1994, 213-215).

⁴² MUNTEANU/POPUȘOI 2014, 8-9; MUNTEANU/MIHĂILESCU 2018, 217, 235, no. 84.

⁴³ This exceptional hoard was recovered in several batches: I. year 1963; 371 coins (unpublished); II. year 1972; 7 silver vessels; III. year 1974; 819 coins, a fragment from a silver vessel and a fibula; IV. year 1976; 669 coins and a bronze vessel (a summary for these four

batches see at: MITREA/MIHĂILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2001, 66-67, 70); V. 9 coins (MOISIL 2010); VI. 54 coins; private collection (unpublished). The 21 imitative coins belong to the batches nos. III and VI. Unfortunately, we do not have yet the permission to use the pictures of these coins.

⁴⁴ MARINESCU-BÎLCU/CHIȚESCU/MIHĂILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1989, 51, no. 135.

⁴⁵ MUNTEANU 2017a, 925; MUNTEANU/POPUȘOI 2014, 8-9; MUNTEANU/MIHĂILESCU 2018, 217.

⁴⁶ STRIBRNY 2003; LIND 2007; LIND 2018; SERGEEV 2012, 73-75, 89-140; CZERNEK 2013; HORSNÆS 2013, 55-56; ANOHIN 2015; DYMOWSKI 2017;

the same Roman prototypes have been used, although imitated in a different manner⁴⁷.

The origin of barbarian imitations found in Moldavia was searched especially in the Greek cities from the Northern or Southern coast of the Black Sea⁴⁸. The hypothesis of manufacturing these coins even in the territory East of the Carpathians, in the period before the arrival of the Goths, seems more plausible⁴⁹. The occurrence of imitative issues struck with the same pairs of dies, and the existence of die-links between imitations from different hoards might suggest the operation of local workshops, as in other parts of Barbaricum (Pannonian Basin, Denmark, Poland or Ukraine). It is difficult to presume when exactly this coinage was produced, but it may most likely be attributed to the local population, of Geto-Dacian origin. The counterfeit denarii were added to the hoards afterwards, while they were already outside the limes. Their presence indicates that some deposits continued to survive for a while in the barbarian territory East of the Carpathians. It is the case of the hoard from Muncelu de Sus, which concludes with genuine denarii of Marcus Aurelius, but contains an imitation of a civic coin of Plautilla as well.

There are only few situations in Moldavia when the coins are associated in hoards with other categories of archaeological artefacts such as brooches, bracelets, silver and bronze vessels. Most of them are of Roman origin and have their own dating. Some of these are broken from ancient times, so we believe that they were added to the coins later on, even in the barbarian territory.

The oldest such hoard, found in Dersca (Botoşani County), contains a silver bracelet characterised by a lower quality metal core⁵⁰.

DYMOWSKI 2018; SIDAROVICH 2017, 131-141.

⁴⁷ MUNTEANU/MIHĂILESCU 2018, 216-217.

⁴⁸ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA/MITREA 1975, 18; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1980, 220; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1991, 60. MITREA/MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2000-2001, 201.

⁴⁹ MUNTEANU 2017a, 925; MUNTEANU/POPUŞOI 2014, 10; MUNTEANU/MIHĂILESCU 2018, 218.

⁵⁰ SANIE/ŞADURSCHI 1976, 87-88, Fig. 3; BUTNARIU 2010, 18; OANŢĂ-MARGHITU 2013, 530-531, no.

Such bracelets are broadly dated between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD. The find from Dersca pertains rather to the upper limit of that time frame⁵¹, as the latest coins in this hoard are denarii of Hadrian⁵². The most important discovery in this category is the hoard complex of Muncelu de Sus. Here, in a confined area of several tens of square meters, in the 1960s and 1970s, three coin hoards were uncovered (over 1,900 pcs.) containing various artifacts (a fibula a fragment from a silver vessel, which were lost, and perhaps two bronze vessels)⁵³, as well as a deposit of seven silver vessels⁵⁴. Preserved in pieces, the bronze vessels are represented by jugs with a human foot decorated handle (of type Tassinari II) and fitted within a fairly large chronology. They were produced at the end of the 1st century AD and the beginning of the next one, but found in discoveries dated during the first three centuries AD⁵⁵. The silver deposit contained seven vessels, but only six were recovered: four cups (two cylindrical and two hemispherical) forming a wine vessel set, an Eggers type casserole and a fragment from an unidentified vessel. The treasure was dated between the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd century AD, having compelling analogies with the discoveries of Manching and Lauriacum⁵⁶.

Another coin hoard of considerable size (735 pcs.), found at Oboroceni (Iaşi County), contains a broken “T-shaped” type fibula, made of inferior quality silver. Such brooches appear frequently in Roman forts on the Rhine and Danube limes, and date back to

143.1.

⁵¹ RUSTOIU 1996, 47, Fig. 1.7.

⁵² SANIE/ŞADURSCHI 1976, 85; BUTNARIU 2010, 18 (AD 119-122).

⁵³ SANIE/SANIE/COJOCARU 1980; BUTNARIU 2001, 10-20; MITREA/MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2001, 66-67.

⁵⁴ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA/MITREA 1978; OANŢĂ-MARGHITU 2013, 521-524; POPA 2015, 120-127.

⁵⁵ SANIE/SANIE/COJOCARU 1980, 249-250, Pl. I; SANIE 1981, 178-179, Pl. 52/1, 5, 8; BUTNARIU 2001, 20; POPA 2015, 135, Ab. 102.1; SPÂNU/DIMA/FRÂNCULEASA 2016, 243-245.

⁵⁶ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA/MITREA 1978; OANŢĂ-MARGHITU 2013, 521-524; POPA 2015, 120-127.

the end of the 2nd century and the first half of the 3rd AD⁵⁷. In the same category could be included also one of the biggest coin hoards in the entire European Barbaricum, the one discovered within the settlement of Măgura (Bacău County) (over 3,099 pcs.)⁵⁸. A fragment of gold thread was identified among the coins, which first led to the assumption that it might come from the section of a fabric⁵⁹. After studying the minute item (21 mm), we have noticed that there were traces of processing, by beating, on its surface, which would argue for its provenance in a piece of jewellery⁶⁰.

Most of the denarii hoards from Moldavia were housed and buried in ceramic pots and mugs. We have information about 44 such containers, but only 22 of them have been preserved, being available for study⁶¹. As a result, we have managed to identify two categories of pots that date back to different times. The first class is represented by small pots that were hand-made⁶². They date back between the 2nd century BC and the 2nd century AD. The end dates of the hoards they contain do not exceed the limits of the 2nd century AD. Similar vessels were specifically discovered in the sites of the classical "Geto-Dacian" culture, dated before the Roman conquest⁶³. The second category of ceramic containers is represented by mugs of different sizes that are worked on the pottery wheel. Chronologically, they belong to the 2nd - 3rd centuries AD and share numerous analogies among the discoveries made in the settlements and necropolises belonging to the "Poienеști-Vârteșcoiu" archaeological culture⁶⁴. We believe that the

mugs in this category can be divided into two different groups, based on their size and particular morphological traits (especially the shape of the lip)⁶⁵. It is interesting to note that the two distinct groups of mugs were storing hoards from successive periods: those ending with coins of Antoninus Pius - Marcus Aurelius and Commodus - Septimius Severus, respectively⁶⁶.

What it is certain is that none of the ceramic vessels that have housed denarii deposits on the Moldavian territory exceeds the chronological limit of the first half of the 3rd century AD. They belong exclusively to the native pottery and have relevant analogies in the discoveries undertaken in the classical "Geto-Dacian" culture settlements and later on, in the "Poienеști-Vârteșcoiu" sites⁶⁷.

The archaeological contexts in which the imperial coin hoards were found could provide important chronological information. Only for about one third of the denarii deposits from this part of Barbaricum the conditions of discovery are known. Each time they relate to the local settlements of "Poienеști-Vârteșcoiu" type. Several specific situations within the relation between settlements and hoards can be identified. Extremely rare are the cases in which the deposits were found during excavations, in the archaeological cultural layer of the settlement. Most often the coins were found first, accidentally, and only after, specialized investigations were carried out in the very same place, thus allowing the identification of the sites. In happier cases, rescue excavations have been performed to allow a rigorous documentation of the anthropogenic activities (dwellings, pits, etc.) or the archaeological levels in these points. In most cases, the existence of these alleged sites was recorded on the basis of simple reconnaissance surveys, which resulted in

⁵⁷ MITREA/ZAHARIA 1967 (the latest coin is dated in AD 195); HONCU/MUNTEANU 2018.

⁵⁸ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA/MITREA 1977 (t.p.q. AD 194-195); MOISIL 2012, 302-303.

⁵⁹ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA/MITREA 1977, 16, 20.

⁶⁰ HONCU/MUNTEANU 2018, 161 (Inv. no. 17382).

⁶¹ IGNAT 1986-1987; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1998, 472-479, nos. 1-18; 480-482, Taf. I-III; BUTNARIU 2001, 110; DUMITROAIA 2013-2014, 472, Pl. VI/2; MUNTEANU/MIHĂILESCU 2018, 218-219, 248, Pl. III/2; MUNTEANU/MIHĂILESCU/DUMITROAIA 2017, 101-102, 128, Fig. 4.

⁶² MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1998, 469-470.

⁶³ URSACHI 1995, type I, pl. 52/11 and 53/2, 3.

⁶⁴ BICHIR 1973, 63-88; IONIȚĂ/URSACHI 1988, 69-

71, MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1998, 470. MUNTEANU/MIHĂILESCU/DUMITROAIA 2017, 101-102; MUNTEANU/MIHĂILESCU 2018, 218-219.

⁶⁵ BICHIR 1973, 81-85.

⁶⁶ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1998, 471-472.

⁶⁷ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1998, 472; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2012, 509.

the collection of various artefacts (especially ceramic materials). Finally, a fairly frequent situation is the appearance of the coin hoards in the vicinity of sites already reported in the literature (on average, at distance of 1-2 km)⁶⁸.

Interesting observations may also come from tracking the geographic distribution of the imperial hoards found in Moldavia. One can notice their concentration in the sub-Carpathian area and in the middle of the province, along the valley of Siret river⁶⁹. This territory corresponds broadly to the spread of the "Poienеști-Vârteșcoiu" archaeological culture, attributed to the Geto-Dacian population of Carpi⁷⁰. For a later period, there is no documented situation in which the coin deposits might be related to the vestiges of the "Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov" culture⁷¹.

In all the situations we have analyzed, denarii hoards discovered in the Eastern Carpathian Barbaricum can only be linked to local populations, of Geto-Dacian origin (Costoboci, Carpi), and their archaeological remains. These tribes received or took by themselves, used and buried impressive quantities of Roman silver in the form of coins, which were associated with various precious metal artefacts in a later period.

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⁶⁸ A detailed investigation of the contexts in which the hoards concluded in the time of Marcus Aurelius were discovered, see at: MUNTEANU/MIHĂILESCU 2018, 222. Broadly, this pattern applies to all the series of denarii deposits found in Moldavia.

⁶⁹ MIHĂILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1980, 119, 131; MIHĂILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1994, 70; MUNTEANU 2017a, Fig. 1.

⁷⁰ POPA 2015, Taf. 3; unfortunately, the territory inhabited by Costoboci cannot be identified with certainty (vide infra).

⁷¹ On the chronology of this culture, see, more recently, MAGOMEDOV 2001, 139-147, 287-290, Figs. 88-91 (it is assumed that the western territorial limit of this culture exceeds the Prut river only in phase C2 and at the beginning of phase C3 - AD c. 270-330).

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ABBREVIATIONS:

AÉ

L'Année épigraphique, Paris.

CIL

Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, Berlin, I, 1863 sqq.