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CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE PRESENCE OF 'GETO-DACIAN' COINS IN THE ISTRO-PONTIC TERRITORY. DISCOVERIES, CONTEXTS, ROLES (3RD – 1ST CENTURIES BC)

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Considerations regarding the Presence of 'Geto-Dacian' Coins in the Istro-Pontic Territory. Discoveries, Contexts, Roles (3rd – 1st Centuries BC)

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Abstract: The accumulation of information regarding the significant addition of monetary finds specific to the Geto-Dacian (and partially Celtic) mint in the territory between the Danube and the Black Sea, located in the extreme northeastern area of Thrace, gives rise to a reassessment of the finds, their contexts, and the role they played within local communities specific to the 3rd–1st centuries BC. Although the number of discoveries is not comparable to that known north of the Danube, they are a well-individualised presence within the open and fortified settlements of the territory in question, both in isolation and in hoards. Especially those present (in general) along the right bank of the Danube and, in particular, in the southwestern area of the Istro-Pontic territory. Most of them appear in fortuitous contexts, one reason being the rarity of archaeological research carried out in settlements specific to the local population. An important part of them was hoarded by the local noble elite in the 3rd–1st centuries BC, few were used in trade, and others were kept in the possession of some people until the early Roman period as reserves of noble metal.

Keywords: Geto-Dacian coins, Dobrudja, 3rd–1st centuries BC.



The geographic area considered in our study belongs to the Istro-Pontic region (Dobrudja), a territory that, until the 1st century AD, represented the northeastern extremity of the Thracian space. Chronologically, the period of our focus covers approximately 250–300 years of the tumultuous evolution of the Dobrudjan region, which represents a relatively narrow temporal unit within the predefined boundaries. The lower limit corresponds to the moment when we witness the spread of coins from the second stage of development of the North-Pontic Geto-Dacian coinage, while the upper limit coincides with the increasing influence of the Romans, beginning in the late 1st century BC and the early 1st century AD.

In general, the Geto-Dacian coins found in Dobrudja belong to the category of local imitations specific to the second final stage of coinage development in the northern Danube region, typical of the period between the 2nd and 1st centuries BC. They include types such as Dumbrăveni, Adâncata-Mânăstirea, Vârteju-București, Inotești-Răcoasa, Medieșu-Aurit, Rădulești-Hunedoara, Toc-Chereluș, as well as the so-called Alexander III-Philip III Arrhidæus type. In our analysis, we also include the Niculițel/Parcheș or Măcin type, the only one from this stage of Dobrudjan origin. These used, in particular, as a prototype the tetradrachm of Philip II, and, in general, other Macedonian-type pieces, which knew a good presence among the local tribes, located north and

south of the Danube (Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 1997, 72; Preda 1998, 220).

The second phase of Geto-Dacian coinage is characterised by a significant reduction in the number of coin types (including weights and silver content), along with the expansion of the discovery area. Among the coins from the second phase of Geto-Dacian coinage, we also find a few examples belonging to the Agriş, Huşi-Vovrieşti, and Ocniţa-Cărbuneşti coin types (**Fig. 1**) from the first stage, which were discovered in the northwestern and southwestern extremities of the Istro-Pontic territory. Their presence should be linked to the circulation of people and goods along the Danube and throughout the Lower Danube region, often used as valuable commodities due to their silver content. The moment of their accidental introduction should belong to the beginning of the second phase, coinciding with the penetration of certain categories of Geto-Dacian coins specific to this period, generally moving from the north to the south of the Danube.



Fig. 1. Isolated monetary discoveries of the Agriş, Huşi-Vovrieşti, and Ocniţa-Cărbuneşti types in the Istro-Pontic territory.

Focusing only on the principles of economic aspects, it was considered normal a few decades ago that there was a lack of issuance or non-circulation of Geto-Dacian coins in Dobrudja. This fact was explained, on one hand, by the presence of Greek coins from the autonomous period and the maintenance of a flourishing trade with the Pontic colonies (Preda 1980, 339; Preda 1998, 175). On the other hand, Macedonian coins or coins of Macedonian type were used to cover the needs for precious metals (Preda 1975, 65). Thus, the firm stance that expressed the idea that 'the monetary process of the Greco-Macedonian type in the Carpathian-Danubian region is not specific to the Getae between the Danube and the Black Sea' (Preda 1985, 317–318) has become outdated today.

During the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, in the contact area on both sides of the Danube, Geto-Dacian coinage found a crossing point where, theoretically, coins from other issuing authorities (such as Istros, Kallatis, Tomis, Dionysopolis, etc.) covered the needs reflected by local trade (Conovici 1979, 87–93).

The political and military changes during the 2nd and 1st centuries BC had significant implications for the relationships between Greek and Getic communities. It is already known and demonstrated that the most prosperous period in terms of quantity and quality, with intense habitation for the *davae* located in the area of Eastern Dacia, belongs to the end of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 1st century BC, until the Dacian-Roman conflicts in the late 1st and the early 2nd centuries AD. (Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 1993, 291–296; Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 1998, 117).

It should be noted that strong connections existed between the communities on both sides of the Danube, with the left bank being heavily populated and benefiting from significant economic and trade activities.

The territory of Dobrudja is part of the resonance area of Geto-Dacian coinage, partly due to the presence of a functional workshop within indigenous communities and partly due to the presence of silver pieces specific to several coin types, especially in Wallachia, Moldavia, and the northern part of Thrace. All Geto-Dacian coins that entered Dobrudja are characterised by their highly stylised representations compared to the Greco-Macedonian prototypes.

Although it has been suggested that these coins were in circulation, we remain cautious because we believe that we are witnessing their presence. This presence is complemented by the symbolic and political adoption by the local elite of a trend evident north of the river, namely the issuance of silver coins. It is purely hypothetical, but there has been the possibility of continuity between the political entity of Moskonos and the one that issued the coins of the Niculițel/Parcheș or Măcin type, despite a difference of several decades between the two coin types (Oberländer-Târnoaveanu 1980, 148). Also, it seems that both types belong to the 'main phase of development of Geto-Dacian coinage, being closely related to the Prundu-Jiblea type and its adjacent series (Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 2015, 270).'

The desire to mint coins, just like the Getae north of the river, manifested itself in the Istro-Pontic territory, even among the locals. Based on numismatic evidence, we have the unique mention of Basileos Moskonos, considered the 'Thracian-Getic king (Preda 1973, 181)'. The title of Basileos that he attributed to himself seems to be related to the influence exerted by numerous Macedonian sovereigns and generals, as well as Scythians, with whom the local communities came into contact starting from the 4th century BC. Regarding his ethnic origin, in addition to a Geto-Dacian component (Pippidi, Berciu 1965, 128), we cannot exclude the Celtic hypothesis as a working theory. In the specialised bibliography possible analogies were noted between the iconographic representations on the coins of the Basileos Moskonos and those appearing on a category of bronze coins of King Kavaros (Dimitrov 2010, 56–57; Lazarov 2010, 102–104, **Fig. 1/3**; Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 2015, 269).

His name, in the genitive form, appears on silver emissions, didrachms, and hemidrachms (Preda 1964, 401–402; Ocheșeanu 1970, 125–126, no. 2) which, in terms of craftsmanship, show a pronounced Greek influence, but with a limited possibility of their issuance in a West-Pontic workshop (Preda 1998, 177; Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 2015, 269). In the bibliography there is the suggestion, considering some execution clumsiness, both in iconography and epigraphy (Pippidi, Berciu 1965, 128), that the didrachms and hemidrachms known were minted in a 'local North Dobrudja mint (Ocheșeanu 1970, 126)'. However, the number of known specimens is limited (Dimitrova 2019–2020, 115; Dimitrova 2021, 82). The barbaric style can be identified in didrachms, but it seems even more pronounced in the case of hemidrachms. There might be at least three die-cutting stamps and, quite evidently, three separate engravers who probably minted in a local workshop (Ocheșeanu 1970, 126). From the existing bibliography, only 'more' than four specimens are known from isolated discoveries coming from the Istro-Pontic territory, from Mihai Vitezau, Revărsarea (in the current neighbourhood of the city of Isaccea), Somova, and Tulcea. Also, in the vicinity of this locality (10 km away), at Trestenic (Tulcea County), three silver coins of the Moskonos type were found by chance, sticking together lightly (all of them are didrachms, unpublished).

Basileos Moskonos was considered a ruler who held territory in the northern part of the Dobrudja region (Preda 1973, 181), perhaps even in the vicinity of the present-day city of Tulcea (Tulcea County). It has also been suggested that the Getae in northern Dobrudja did not manage to achieve the same economic and political capabilities as those north of the Danube (Preda 1973, 270; Preda 1985, 317). We express some reservations about this theory, especially from an economic perspective. Perhaps politically, they were chronologically out of sync, but the desire to mint silver coins like those on the left bank of the Danube could have been steps taken to reduce some of the disparities. Examining the locations of these coin discoveries, we observe their alignment along the right bank of the Danube, heading north in the region from Isaccea (Tulcea

County) to Tulcea , descending towards Trestenic. Therefore, the discoveries do not extend beyond northern Dobrudja. It is possible that this sovereign directly controlled only the mentioned segment, and the broader area of the Măcin Mountains was probably only supervised. This may have begun as early as the mid-3rd century BC. The silver emissions of the Moskonos type have been considered ‘an isolated and limited occurrence in space and time (Preda 1980, 339),’ even though the intention to minimise and exclude the relevance of a Geto-Dacian monetary process and the presence of various types of Geto-Dacian coins from north of the Danube in the Istro-Pontic territory has not proven to be auspicious for any specialised research, as always.

Regarding the dating of coins of the Moskonos type, four clear chronological moments have been proposed up to this point, which also overlap: the last quarter of the 4th century BC (Jordanov 2014, 129), the end of the 4th century to the beginning of the 3rd century BC (Preda 1964, 406), the 3rd century BC (Preda 1980, 339; Preda 1998, 177; Lazarenko 2004, 134-135), the mid-3rd century BC (Ocheșeanu 1970, 128; Preda 1998, 181; Jordanov 2011, 202; Jordanov 2014, 140), and the 2nd century BC (Poenaru Bordea 1978, 19; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1980, 148) (this last dating was done considering the weight standard that underlay their issuance). Starting from the association of coins of the Moskonos type with specific Geto-Dacian pieces from the second stage of operation of the mint north of the Danube, we are tempted to attribute their issuance to the 3rd century BC or the end of the 3rd century and the beginning of the 2nd century BC, probably over the course of several decades.

We do not end our small discussion regarding the presence of Geto-Dacian or Celtic types from the first phase of the coinage without mentioning an interesting hypothesis regarding the possibility that Rasa-type imitations (struck in the middle and the second part of the 3rd century BC) to have been made in today’s area of Silistra, considering the discoveries that appeared on both sides of the river in the area of the Lower Danube (Preda 1973, 53; Mihăilescu-Bîrliaba 2015, 264). Based on a relatively recent study, two distinct series are known within this type: an earlier one struck after 294 BC, and respectively a later one, struck before the middle of the 3rd century, around 270–260 BC (Vîlcu, Neagu 2012, 605, 612). Archaeological and monetary discoveries in these geographical areas would indicate a ‘non-homogeneous and by no means static demographic complex circulating, at different times and for different reasons, various monetary categories (Isvoranu, Vîlcu 2010, 796).’ However, there is an important probability of their production south of the Danube, either closer to the river, in the centre of Sboryanovo (Vîlcu, Neagu 2012, 612), or in the area of Lovech where a mint for the reverse was discovered (Șerbănescu 2017, 32). Among the monetary finds from Sboryanovo and the surroundings/the Danube area, the following pieces are worth mentioning: tetradrachms of the Adâncata-Mănăstirea type, the Vârteju-București type (?), the Inotești-Răcoasa type, the Philip III tetradrachms and imitation drachms of the Alexander III–Philip III Arrhidaeus type (hoards and isolated), Odessos and Mesambria tetradrachms (hoards and isolated), Thasos tetradrachms, Republican Roman denarii (hoards and isolated), and Dyrrhachium drachms (Dimitrov 2005, 137–150; Dimitrov 2007, 371–382; Prokopov et al. 2007, 18–27, 73, 86–87, 94–103; Dimitrov 2013, 764–766). The presence of these coins indicates the persistence over time of the connection of this centre through inter-tribal relations with the north and south of the Danube.

In general, for the isolated discoveries in the Istro-Pontic territory, the number of pieces from the first main phase of the North-Danube mint totals three, to which, if we add those produced in Dobrudja (Moskonos), we reach seven pieces. Most specimens from the isolated finds belong to the Moskonos type (four specimens), and there is only one specimen each from the Agriș, Ocnița-Cărbunești, and Huși-Vovriești types. The number of pieces from the second main phase of the North Danube mint totals over 121 pieces, to which, if we add those produced in Dobrudja, we reach over 131 pieces. Most specimens from the isolated discoveries belong to the Alexander III-Philip III Arrhidaeus type (38 pieces), followed by Vârteju-București (over 34 pieces), Inotești-Răcoasa (with 22 pieces), Adâncata-Mănăstirea (with 13 pieces), Dumbrăveni (with eight pieces), Medieșu-Aurit (with three pieces), Toc-Chereluș (with two pieces), and Rădulești-Hunedoara (with one piece).

The Niculițel/Parcheș or Măcin type can be considered either as a derivative of the Prundu-

Jiblea type and its adjacent series „a” and „b” (Preda 1998, 170–171), or it can be noted as a distinct type (Iliescu 1987, 261). Regardless of the chosen solution, it seems to be a coin type that generally belongs to the Geto-Dacian coinage (Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 2015, 270). This type exhibits stylistic similarities with the Adâncata-Mânăstirea type, both originating from Prundu-Jiblea. Additionally, it should be noted that the specimens called Niculițel/Parcheș or Măcin show differences compared to the coins of the Prundu-Jiblea type, both stylistically and in terms of the nominal features.

Chronologically, it has been suggested that they were issued from the middle of the 2nd century BC until the end of the same century or the beginning of the 1st century BC (Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1980, 145–147). According to other opinions, which question the association with the Thasian tetradrachms, this type should be stylistically situated between the Prundu-Jiblea and Adâncata-Mânăstirea types and accordingly dated to the second half of the 2nd century BC (Preda 1998, 176). The distribution of isolated discoveries in Dobrudja indicates a concentration of these pieces in the northern part of the territory, even in its northernmost extremity. The local production of Niculițel/Parcheș or Măcin-type coins would not be a technological surprise if we consider other possibly similar situations. For instance, the possibility is known from discoveries of imitations of Histrian silver coins in large indigenous centres or by itinerant minters. From our point of view, this is possible for certain spaces of the indigenous communities in Dobrudja, unfortunately few of which have been archaeologically investigated, and specifically some so-called centres of power. Tribal residences or political-administrative centres — as seems to be the complex at Floriile with points Adâncata I and II — (Irimia 2004–2005, 319–384; Irimia 2007, 152) served as places of refuge and security, including for the noble elite. And the major tribal centres (such as settlement-tribal centres) in Wallachia 'played the role of political, religious, and economic cores for the surrounding rural settlements (Conovici 1986, 79).'

The Geto-Dacian Dumbrăveni type corresponds to the category of coins issued in the area of Extra-Carpathian Dacia and is known from the hoard discovered in 1966 in the eponymous locality (Preda, Constantinescu 1968, 21–45). It is a new creation without any direct affiliation to a previous coin type, although there has been a suggestion of its possible connection to a transitional stage, with stylistic elements associated with the Prundu-Jiblea, Vârteju-București, and Inotești-Răcoasa types (Preda 1998, 179). Additionally, it appears to have been minted in a centre (considered a 'tribal political entity or tribal union') located in the area between the lower Siret and Buzău Rivers (based on the density of coin discoveries), around the middle of the 2nd century BC (Preda, Constantinescu 1968, 37; Preda 1973, 197; Preda 1980, 336). There are also opinions that suggest its issuance until around the middle of the 1st century BC (Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 1990, 118; Părpăuță 2006, 88). We should also note a recent proposal that dates this coin type much earlier (Isvoranu, Matei 2018, 161). The discovery areas of Dumbrăveni-type coins in southern Moldavia and northeastern Wallachia could belong to the kingdoms of Zalmodegikos and Rhemaxos (considering the presence of *davae* like those at Poiana, Barboși, Căndești, and Cărlomănești), a speculation that seems to be confirmed by other opinions as well (Preda 1973, 197–198, 268–270; Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 1990, 76). The Geto-Dacian Dumbrăveni coin type is contemporaneous with the Adâncata-Mânăstirea type. The type is present in discoveries in Dobrudja in eight locations. Four specimens (50% of the total) were found on the right bank of the Danube, and two specimens (25% of the total) on the coast.

The Adâncata-Mânăstirea type received its name from two hoards discovered in Adâncata and Mânăstirea (Preda 1973, 199–203, 378). Like the previous type, it appears to have stylistically borrowed elements from the Prundu-Jiblea type (Iliescu et al. 1965, 6–12). It was issued by a native political centre (a large tribal union) which, based on the density of coin discoveries, was located in the western half of the Wallachia territory, near the Olt Valley, with possible extensions towards the Jiu Valley (Preda 1973, 212–213; Preda 1998, 183–184). Chronologically, the coins belonging to this type are dated between the mid and the second part (decades two to three) of the 2nd century BC (Preda 1973, 213). Some opinions suggest that this coin type could have been issued between the mid-2nd century BC and the end of the 1st century BC (Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 1990, 118; Părpăuță 2006, 90). Their presence in a wide area of discoveries has made

them the 'most reliable and common emissions in the local coinage of Dacia (Preda 1973, 214).' There are a total of thirteen pieces from this coin type present in isolated findings in Dobrudja, found in nine locations. Four examples (61.53 % of the total) were discovered on the right bank of the Danube. There are no pieces in the coastal area.

The Vârteju-București type received its name based on the hoard discovered in the village of Vârteju — now a former village integrated into the town of Măgurele, Ilfov County during the year 1953 — consisting of 280 specimens (Mitrea 1954, 290–302). Characterised by a pronounced schematic style, the silver pieces are found in numerous Getic settlements that appear to be contemporary from a chronological point of view (Preda 1973, 215). Within the hoards, we only note two settlements: Tinosu (Prahova County) and Cârломănești (Buzău County) (Isvoranu et al. 2010, 7–34). Stylistically, they continue the iconographic execution traits of the Adâncata-Mânăstirea type (Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 1990, 77).

Their minting, including the several dozen cast pieces (Isvoranu et al. 2010, 10–11), seems to have been carried out in a single large official mint with a lower silver content, probably due to the need to mint a large number of coins to meet existing demands (Preda 1973, 233–234). This mint should be directly located in a local Geto-Dacian centre, possibly in the central region of Wallachia, with two concentrations of coin discoveries located in the lower course of the Argeș River and the upper courses of the Prahova and Ialomița Rivers (Preda 1973, 188, 192, 233, 242–243). Also, in the specialised bibliography, the density of discoveries of Vârteju-București type coins was considered to be 'especially remarkable in the north-east of Bulgaria (Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 2015, 264).' There is also the opinion that the density of their discovery south of the Danube and in the territories between the Danube and the Carpathians is either the result of commercial contacts between both banks of the Danube in the state of King Kavaros, or prizes offered by the same king for 'distinguished commanders or warriors in battles, who later returned to their native places (Manov 2018, 253–254, 260).'

The dating of the coins of the Vârteju-București type begins around the middle or the next three decades of the second half of the 2nd century BC and ends around the second or third decades of the 1st century BC (Preda 1973, 245). According to other opinions, it is very possible that these pieces continued to be used until around the middle of the 1st century BC (Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 1990, 79) or even in the second half of the same century (Părpăuță 2006, 94), remaining in 'circulation' even after their specified date of issue (Preda 1973, 245).

A particular aspect of some specimens of coins of this type discovered in Dobrudja is their presentation form known as 'fourrées.' However, they are not very numerous, and the observed situation is not an exception. To the east and south of the Carpathians, such pieces appear in the settlements of the indigenous population, such as those in Poiana (Galați County), Popești (Giurgiu County), and Zimnicea (Teleorman County) (Preda 1973, 234; Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 1990, 77–78). Metallographic analyses conducted for specimens of the Vârteju type have revealed a possible silver content of 50% or even less (Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 1990, 80).

A total of over 34 pieces of this monetary type are present in the isolated discoveries in Dobrudja (**Fig. 2**), found in 18 locations. A number of 22 specimens (64.71% of their total) are discovered on the right bank of the Danube or in the immediate vicinity, six specimens in the central and southern area (17.65%), and three specimens (8.82% of their total) on the littoral coast.

The Inotești-Răcoasa type is named after two significant hoard discoveries in Inotești and Răcoasa (Severeanu 1926, 7–10; Preda, Dragomir 1975, 27–40). Stylistically, the emissions of the Inotești-Răcoasa type used the model of coins from the Adâncata-Mânăstirea and Vârteju-București types (Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 1990, 79; Preda 1998, 194), bringing original elements with technological influences from other sources (Isvoranu et al. 2010, 26, 30). The majority of coin discoveries are concentrated between the lower courses of the Siret and Buzău Rivers (Preda 1973, 248), specifically in two centres around the city of Buzău and between the Argeș and Ialomița Rivers (Preda 1973, 266; Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 1990, 80). In other words, the political entity (a possible tribal union) that minted such coins should be sought in the southern half of

TALMAȚCHI

Considerations regarding the Presence of 'Geto-Dacian' Coins in the Istro-Pontic Territory. Discoveries, Contexts, Roles (3rd – 1st Centuries BC)

Moldova and the eastern part of Wallachia, without significantly ascending into the mountainous area (Preda 1973, 268). The mentioned geographical area (possibly more towards northeastern Wallachia) has been proposed as belonging to the formation led by Zalmodegikos and then by Rhemaxos. Recently, it has been emphasised that these coins appear particularly isolated in *davae*-type settlements (Isvoranu et al. 2010, 30). Their dating falls within the range delimited by the end of the 2nd century and the first half of the 1st century BC (the first two decades) (Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 1990, 81; Preda 1998, 187), in the context of the unification of all the Geto-Dacian elements under the leadership of Burebista (Preda 1960, 71; Preda 1971, 75–76; Preda 1973, 404–406; Preda, Dragomir 1975, 38). There are also different opinions regarding their issuance, possibly extending until the mid-1st century BC or 'even more recently,' at the end of the 1st century BC and even the beginning of the 1st century AD (Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 1990, 81, 118).



Fig. 2. Isolated monetary discoveries of the Vârteju-București type in the Istro-Pontic territory.



Fig. 3. Isolated monetary discoveries of the Inotești-Răcoasa type in the Istro-Pontic territory.

A total of 22 pieces of this monetary type are present in the isolated discoveries from the Istro-Pontic territory (**Fig. 3**). The type is present in the discoveries from the Istro-Pontic territory in 16 locations. A number of 14 specimens (63.64% of their total) come from the area of the right Danube bank and its surroundings, and from the central and southern area we retain only five specimens (22.73%). Two other specimens come from the coastal area (9.09 %).

The only specimens that do not constitute imitations of the tetradrachms of Philip II are those from the monetary type of Alexander III-Philip III Arrhidaeus. They copy the obverse and reverse of the coins of Alexander III and Philip III Arrhidaeus (most likely the prototype is Philip III Arrhidaeus). They are known in two variants, by mode and weight, tetradrachms and drachms.

Their presence is felt in discoveries on both banks of the Danube, almost equally (Preda 1998, 215–216). The coins from the Alexander III-Philip III Arrhidaeus type were produced by the Thracians in the area of Ruse-Razgrad-Tarnovo (Dragoev 2013, 99–103; Dimitrov 2007, 371; Prokopov et al. 2007, 18–27, 73, 94–103; Dimitrov 2013, 712–721, 764; Prokopov 2021, 213–214) or perhaps even north of the Danube through itinerant workshops for the Getic population in the lower Argeş area (PREDA 1998, 216). Their circulation north of the Danube reflects the good relations between various Getic tribes or tribal unions (Preda 1980, 337). Such coins were issued starting from the mid-2nd century BC until the end of the same century (Preda 1973, 343). Additionally, in certain contexts, it is possible that such specimens circulated in the 1st century BC, citing inter-tribal exchanges during its early period (Preda 1973, 343; Preda 1998, 216). Furthermore, the possibility of even more recent issuance and circulation has not been ruled out. Of interest to our research are the drachms that extend into the first decades of the 1st century BC; their significant presence in the North Danubian market would suggest an 'evolution in the currency-based transaction system in North Danubian communities.' (Iliescu 1983, 15) The drachms/imitations from the Alexander III-Philip III Arrhidaeus type have been found north of the Danube in association with Thasian, Apollonian, and Dyrrhachian emissions, Thasian imitations, Roman Republican denarii, and early imperial Roman bronze coins from the first half of the 1st century AD (Părpăuță 2006, 111).

A total of 38 pieces (nine tetradrachms and 29 drachmas) are present in the isolated discoveries from the Istro-Pontic territory of this monetary type, found in 15 locations. A quantity of 17 specimens (44.74% of their total) was discovered on the right bank of the Danube or in the surroundings, 11 specimens in the central and southern area (28.94%), and four specimens (10.53% of their total) on the littoral coast. As can be readily observed, most of the specimens from this coin type are drachms.

As sites with finds, we identify the presence of coins in important autochthonous open and fortified settlements located on the banks of the Danube or in the immediate vicinity. We note here a quantity of 46 specimens, which represent 34.35% of the total of those discovered of all types present in Stage II. For each fortified settlement in the analysed Danube area, we record the following situations: Floriile (Constanța County) with 16 specimens (34.78% of the total of those discovered in the settlements), Izvoarele (Constanța County) with eight specimens (17.39% of the total of those found in the settlements), Satu Nou (Constanța County) with seven specimens (15.22% of the total of those discovered in the settlements), Silistra (Bulgaria) and Ostrov (Constanța County) with seven specimens each (15.22%), Dunăreni (Constanța County) with six specimens (13.05% of the total of those discovered in the settlements), and Coslugea (Constanța County) with two specimens (4.34 %).

As observed in the specialised literature, 'the low number of isolated coin discoveries belonging to North and South Danubian types on the coast or in its immediate vicinity does not represent a significant monetary phenomenon, as these can only be considered residual manifestations in the monetary circulation of the studied area (Mihăilescu-Bîrliaba 2015, 267).' The new findings confirm this situation, with their numbers being very small in relation to the Danube's banks and the central zone. Similar to the interior of the Carpathian arch, it is noteworthy that the discovered pieces in Dobrudja are generally small denominations.

It's not just the accumulation of isolated Geto-Dacian coin discoveries on the right bank of the

TALMAȚCHI

Considerations regarding the Presence of 'Geto-Dacian' Coins in the Istro-Pontic Territory. Discoveries, Contexts, Roles (3rd – 1st Centuries BC)

Danube that needs to be emphasised. The central and southwestern region of Dobrudja preserves numerous archaeological remains specific to all known historical epochs in the evolution of human communities. The chronological interval analysed in this work is quite rich in terms of historical and cultural context. This situation can be explained by the presence, on the one hand, of Greek or strongly Hellenised populations and, on the other hand, of the local population – predominantly the Getae – in fortified and open settlements. The presence of communication routes from the Greek cities on the Pontic coast towards those in the central zone of Dobrudja (land routes) and the connection with the Danube waterway (fluvial navigation) favoured the development of rural settlements in the area.

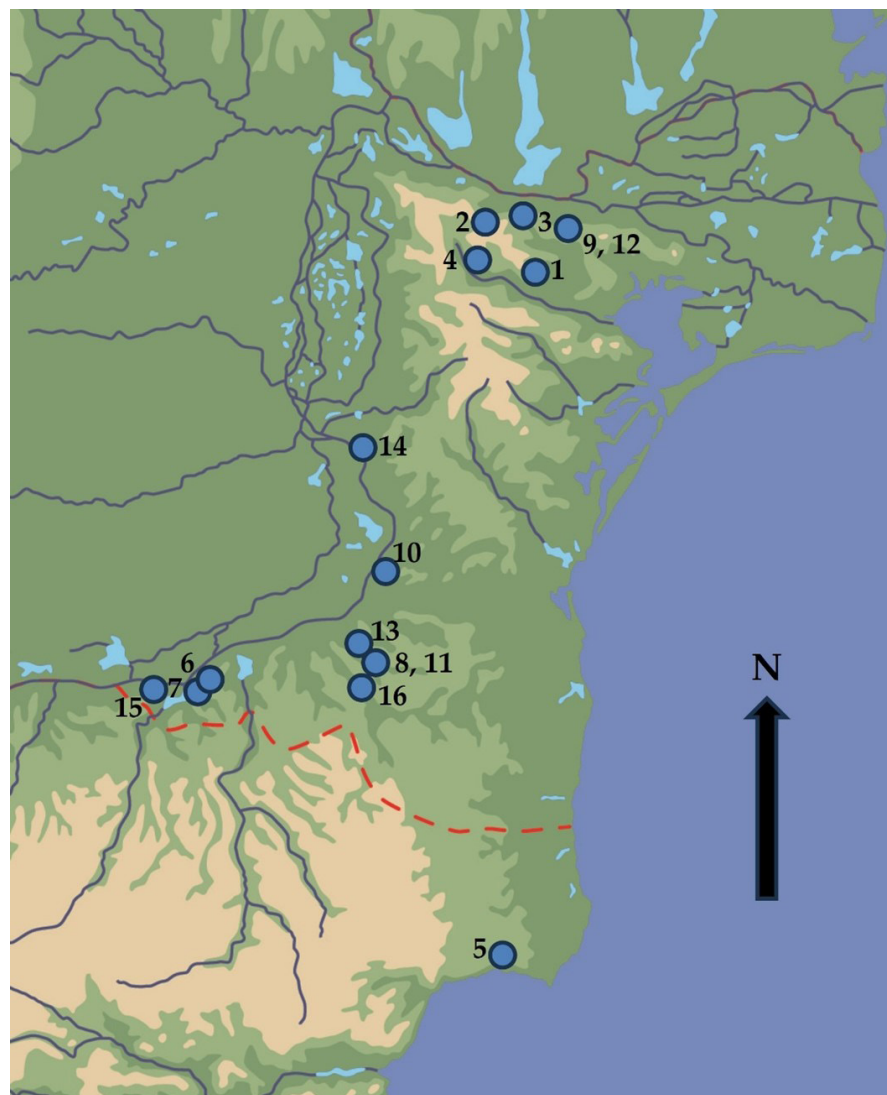


Fig. 3. Map of Celtic and Geto-Dacian monetary hoards discovered in the Istro-Pontic territory in the 3rd–1st centuries BC. (1. Trestenic – Moskonos type; 2. Niculițel, 3. Parcheș, 4. Valea Teilor – Niculițel-Parcheș or Măcin type; 5. Caverna, 6. Izvoarele – Adâncata-Mănăstirea type; 7. Canlia, 8. Hațeg, 9. Somova - Vârteju Bucharest type; 10. Cochirleni, 11. Hațeg, 12. Somova - Inotești-Răcoasa type; 13. Floriile, 14. Hârșova, 15. Ostrov and 16. Urluia - Alexander III - Philip III Arrhidaeus type.

For the first stage of the Geto-Dacian North-Danubian or Celtic mint, we initially retain a single monetary hoard composed of tetradrachms of the Agriș type (**Fig. 4**). From the vicinity of the city of Silistra, namely in the outskirts of the village of Kalipetrovo, a hoard was discovered under random conditions during maintenance work in the industrial area to the north. This hoard, contained in a domestic vessel, comprised 12 pieces of the Agriș type (Agriș B-Șilindia), of which only two were recovered. Additionally, a hoard from Trestenic, discovered by chance before 2002, contained three coins of the Moskonos type (two didrachms and a hemidrachm).

The hoards from the second stage of the Geto-Dacian mint are much more numerous, and we can add the Getic ones produced in the Istro-Pontic territory (**Fig. 4**). We refer to those containing coins of the Niculițel/Parcheș or Măcin type – four in number – that were discovered at Niculițel (Tulcea County), Parcheș (Tulcea County), and Valea Teilor (Tulcea County). The first one from

Niculitel was discovered before 1970, and the number of specimens is unknown (Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1980, 144). The second one from Niculitel was discovered at the 'Sarica' locality, being made up of Măcin type coins associated with Thasian coins and their imitations (Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1980, 144). The one from Parcheş consisted of about 70 silver coins, of which only one Măcin type coin was recovered. A total of 16 coins of the Măcin type were discovered in the area of Valea Teilor between the years 2003–2005, without any other usable landmark. However, there is information that the specimens belong to the two phases (1 and 2), with ten specimens from the first phase and six from the second (Talmaţchi 2008, 478–479, nos. 1–16).

Regarding the rest of the hoards composed of silver pieces made in the Geto-Dacian space from (or also from) the north of the Danube, information exists for a total number of 15 – namely Somova (Tulcea County, two hoards), Canlia (Constanţa County), Caverna (Dobrici Region), Cochirleni (Constanţa County), Floriile, Haţeg (two hoards), Hârşova (Constanţa County), Izvoarele, Ostrov, the Silistra area (two hoards), Urluia (Constanţa County), and Dobrudja (Constanţa County). The Adâncata-Mănăstirea type occurs in Caverna, Izvoarele, and Dobrudja; the Vârteju-Bucureşti type occurs in Canlia, Haţeg, and Somova; the Inoteşti-Răcoasa type occurs in Cochirleni, Haţeg (Constanţa County), and Somova; the Medieşu-Aurit type occurs in the Silistra area (Popkralevo); and the Alexander III-Philip III type appears at Floriile, Hârşova, Ostrov, and Urluia, etc. There are no hoards containing Dumbrăveni coins.

Regarding the one discovered in Somova and published in 2008, several substantial changes need to be made compared to the initial publication, especially concerning the number and adjacent composition. Initially, primary data supported the discovery in 2006, in the vicinity of Somova (Tulcea County), near the 'La Batace' locality, where a settlement and a necropolis dating back to the Latène period are attested (LMI III, 2281, no 405–406). The respective hoard consisted of several dozen Geto-Dacian silver coins. Initially, 24 coins of the Vârteju-Bucureşti type, 13 coins of the Inoteşti-Răcoasa type, 16 specimens of the Niculitel/Parcheş or Măcin type, and last but not least, three silver pieces of the Moskonos type (two drachms and a half drachm) were primarily identified. In total, 57 silver coins of the mentioned types were recorded. Subsequently, based on new information, a total reevaluation of this discovery was conducted. The hoard discovered in 2006 remains certain, but its composition was found to consist either solely of silver coins of the Vârteju-Bucureşti types or solely of iron coins of the Inoteşti-Răcoasa type. All of these – a total of 37 observed by us for a very short time in 2007 – would actually have amounted to around 120–130 specimens. Under these circumstances, the content of the accidental discovery is limited to the previously mentioned 37 specimens, and even these are only partially known. The three silver coins of the Moskonos type were also discovered accidentally together (but this information is not certain) not far from the locality of Somova, in the vicinity of Trestenic. However, due to their dating to the 3rd century BC, they are not currently the subject of our study. In conclusion, compared to the previous publication, the former hoard from Somova can actually be divided into four hoards. The first one contains only coins of the Vârteju-Bucureşti type (late variant, at Somova), the second one contains only coins of the Inoteşti-Răcoasa type (at Somova, **Fig. 5**), the third one contains only specimens of the Măcin type (at Valea Teilor), and the last one is a small hoard composed only of silver coins of the Moskonos type (at Trestenic). Based solely on the observations and notes made in 2007, we were able to make limited observations about the general appearance of the specimens and their numismatic and historical importance. Perhaps over time, more useful information will emerge.

In Kavarna, in 1910, a hoard composed of 42 silver coins of the Adâncata-Mănăstirea type was discovered (Muşmov 1911, 281–282). At Izvoarele on the Danube bank, 3 km downstream from the town and south of the high terrace at Dealul Nichita near Gura Bala, four Geto-Dacian tetradrachms of the Adâncata-Mănăstirea type were discovered over several years (1999–2001). These findings remain unpublished. In 1903, a hoard composed of 240 Geto-Dacian coins was found in Constanţa County. Based on the described image, they could be coins of the Adâncata-Mănăstirea type (**Fig. 3-7**).¹

¹The discovery was integrated into Dobrudja, see Moisil 1914, 55; Moisil 1916, 122, 141.

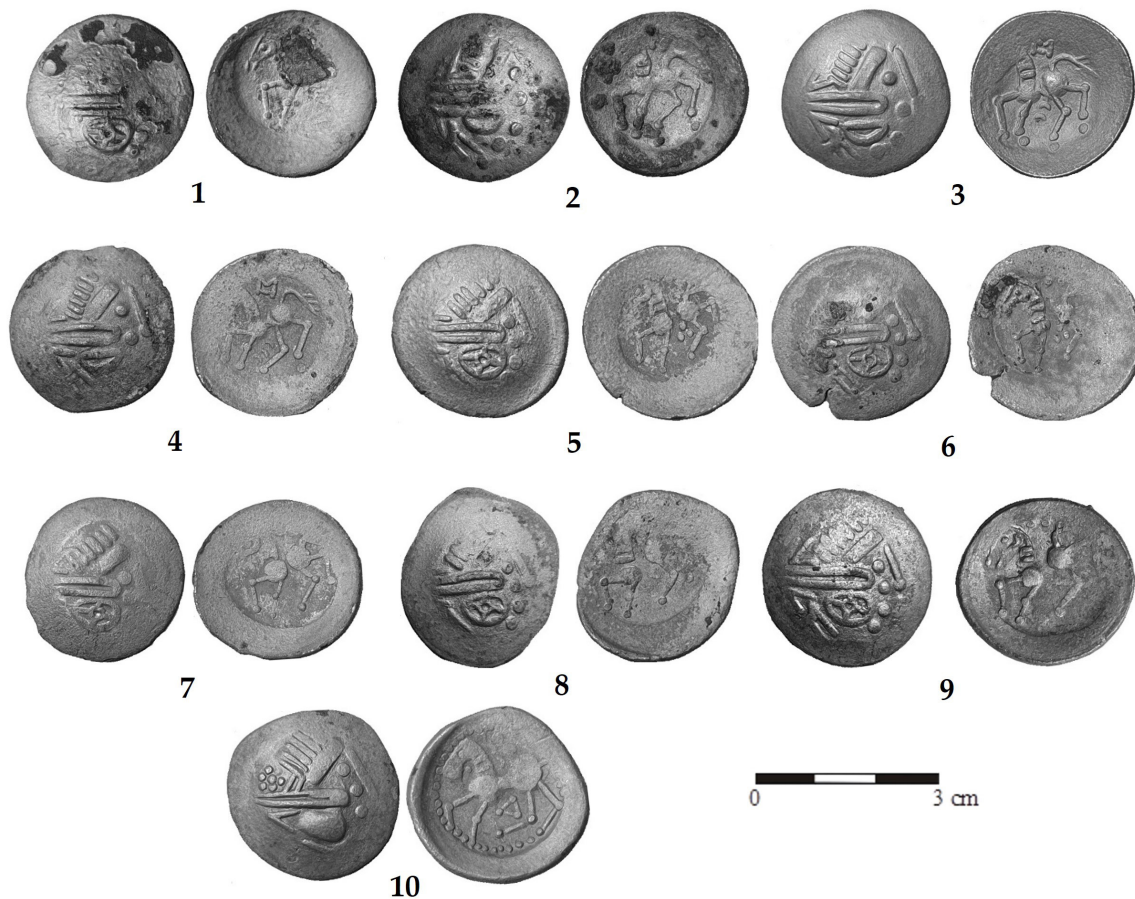


Fig. 5. The monetary hoard composed of pieces of the Inotești-Răcoasa type discovered in Somova.

At Canlia, in the area known as Gura Canliei, on the opposite side of a slope facing the Danube, where a Roman-era fortified settlement is attested, three tetradrachms of the Vârteju-București type were accidentally discovered over several years before 1990. These findings possibly originated from a Latène-type necropolis and remain unpublished. It is highly possible that they belonged to a burial inventory and, consequently, can be considered a small burial hoard. Approximately four decades ago, in the northwest outskirts of the village of Hațeg, a small hoard composed of five Geto-Dacian specimens of the Vârteju-București type was discovered (unpublished).

In the hoard from Cochirleni, a large number of Geto-Dacian coins were present, from which 'four Geto-Dacian silver pieces were recovered, originating from a hoard discovered in 1940, in a black pot, at a depth of 6 m on the banks of the Danube' (Grămăticu 2015, 152–162). The rest have scattered over time. All four silver coins belong to the Inotești-Răcoasa type.

In Hațeg, near the village at the site Baciului Valley-Dealul lui Văleanu, a hoard of six silver coins of the Inotești-Răcoasa type was discovered under unclear conditions before 2011, excluding archaeological excavations. (Talmațchi 2023, 259–263). On the occasion of the discovery of the hoard, different fragments of Latène-type Getic ceramics of varying size, dispersed on the surface of the ground, would have been collected from the site. Near the village of Popkralevo, to the north-northeast and also in the Silistra region, a hoard composed of five silver coins of the

Medieșu-Aurit type was discovered (unpublished).

At Floriile, between the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, a hoard consisting of seven Geto-Dacian drachms of the Alexander III-Philip III Arrhidaeus type was discovered on a slope bordering the Polucci Valley, approximately 2 km from the Adâncata I and II sites (unpublished). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a small hoard of 16 drachms/imitations of the Alexander III-Philip III Arrhidaeus type was found by chance in the terraced hills planted with vineyards, approximately 4 km east of the border with Bulgaria and the entrance to Silistra, in the territory of Ostrov (**Fig. 6**, unpublished).

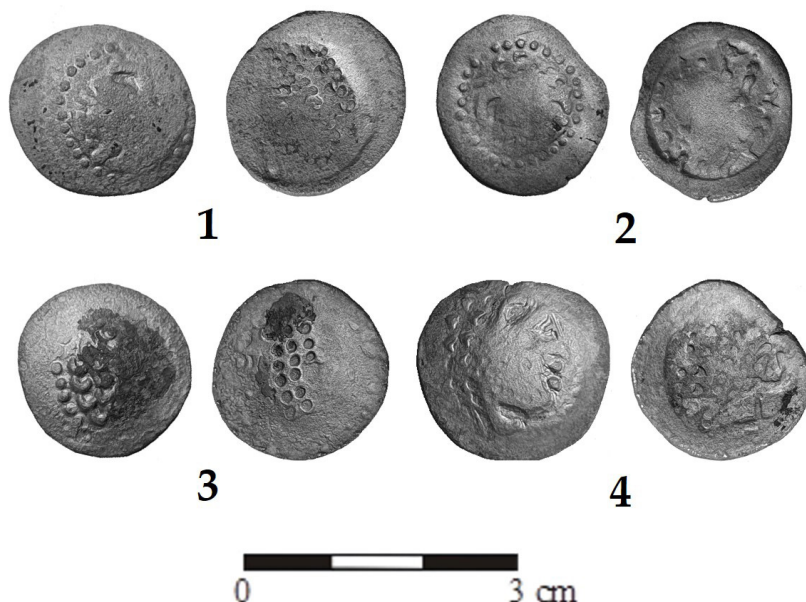


Fig. 6. The monetary hoard composed of drachmas of the Alexander III-Philip III Arrhidaeustype discovered in Ostrov/Silistra.



Fig. 7. The monetary hoard composed of drachmas of the Alexander III-Philip III Arrhidaeus type discovered in Hârșova.

TALMAȚCHI

Considerations regarding the Presence of 'Geto-Dacian' Coins in the Istro-Pontic Territory. Discoveries, Contexts, Roles (3rd – 1st Centuries BC)

About 3–3.5 km from the northern edge of the village of Urluia, a small hoard was fortuitously discovered, consisting of five silver pieces, including four drachms and one tetradrachm of the Alexander III-Philip III Arrhidaeus type (unpublished).

The hoard from Hârșova was accidentally discovered in the years 1993–1994. It consisted of six drachms/imitations of the coin type Alexander III-Philip III Arrhidaeus and appeared towards the upper part of the hill at Celea Mică, on the edge of a slope after several heavy rains (**Fig. 7**). Given the accidental nature of the hoard's discovery and the impossibility of knowing any archaeological context, it is believed that the hoard was hidden or lost in the second half of the 1st century BC or at the beginning of the 1st century AD (Talmațchi 2008, 483–484).

A final hoard was reportedly discovered in Garvăn (Silistra Region) in 1912, on the outskirts of the town. It consisted of Roman Republican denarii (approximately 100 specimens), a few unspecified Geto-Dacian imitations, and a silver bracelet. This hoard is probably dated to the years 20–10 BC, during the period of Augustus. Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, the specific Geto-Dacian imitations are not detailed, so they cannot be connected to a distinct coin type specific to the second final stage of the coinage development north of the Danube (Paunov, Prokopov 2002, 50, no. 77).

In total, among the hoards from the second stage of the Geto-Dacian mint, approximately 382 silver coins of the Adâncata-Mănăstirea, Vârteju-București, Inotești-Răcoasa, Medieșu-Aurit, and Alexander III-Philip III Arrhidaeus types produced outside the Dobrudjan area are to be catalogued. For each monetary type, the situation is as follows: 286 pieces of the Adâncata-Mănăstirea type (74.87% of the total), 32 pieces of the Vârteju-București type (8.37% of the total), 23 pieces of the Inotești-Răcoasa type (6.02% of the total), five pieces of the Medieșu-Aurit type (1.31%), and 36 pieces of the Alexander III-Philip III Arrhidaeus type (9.42% of the total).

All known Geto-Dacian coin hoards discovered in Dobrudja, except perhaps the one in Garvăn, are exclusively composed of Geto-Dacian coins, minted or cast in the second half of the 2nd century BC and found in contexts typical of the 1st century BC. As found in discoveries in other geographical areas, Geto-Dacian or 'barbarian' monetary hoards contain a small number of component pieces, perhaps perhaps a few dozen. Their number is rarely greater.

Conclusions

The Geto-Dacian coins reached the northeasternmost extreme of Thrace, likely following patterns established north of the Danube. The coins found in hoards seem to represent sums or valuable goods that were already assembled in distant environments and appear to have entered at least some tribal noble residences with similar coagulation, in the context of the existence of a military force.

It was generally known in the specialised literature, based on data provided by Constantin Preda, that in the second phase of Geto-Dacian coinage, the silver content gradually and significantly decreased. Additionally, the same researcher proposed a hypothesis regarding the source of the silver used in Geto-Dacian coinage, namely the Apuseni Mountains region, as 'some of the major hoards are concentrated around or not far from the same geographical area (Preda 1985, 325).' More recent analyses have provided a new metallographic characteristic of interest for the study of these coin types. Specifically, variable concentrations of the main compositional elements were observed, which would likely indicate 'a lack of homogeneity likely due to a rudimentary technique of creating the alloy for coinage (Isvoranu et al. 2010, 27).'

Unfortunately, a significant portion of the Geto-Dacian coin finds in the Istro-Pontic region appear in fortuitous or even unclear contexts. One intriguing observation is that Geto-Dacian pieces discovered during archaeological excavations appear in irrelevant contexts or have no connection with the actual period of the coins' circulation or presence (Talmațchi 2006, 62). Could this be a mere coincidence or an expression of a concrete reality? It's possible that during the Roman era, especially in its early stages and given the shortage of currency, such coins were used primarily as 'silver coins' in transactions, especially in rural regions. Alternatively, they might have been retained as a form of silver wealth, a small silver reserve that could be realised

in certain contexts. These coins are often heavily worn, with minimal iconographic details or legends on both the obverse and reverse sides, making them useful in a later era due to the lack of identifying elements.

For the indigenous population, coins represented a genuine revolution in their daily lives, introducing the concept of a potential medium of exchange within their communities, albeit in the few areas where they actually functioned in this manner. Although not always, the coins played a role consistent with their theoretical value and function. Through hoarding, coins represented an accumulation of resources significant to the local society. These hoards allowed the development of stable organisational forms around nuclei, ultimately leading to the creation of political and military forces (or the certification of the supremacy of the noble caste), led by tribal chiefs or tribal unions. Gradually, due to their military strength, these leaders began to assert claims over the agricultural and financial resources of Greek cities, already understanding the true importance of currency.

Furthermore, the influx of goods through various trade routes led indigenous people, or at least a portion of their elite, to adopt the Greek way of life and the characteristics of the Hellenistic world. These economic and trade relationships evolved depending on the irreversible changes occurring within local communities, changes that these relationships often accelerated, and that had a strong local impact. However, these relationships were binary, involving the exchange of local products through barter, traded for luxury Greek goods, or through payment with fixed metal means. These coins bore symbols, ethnic markers, and the preferred deities of the respective Greek city-states on their obverse and reverse sides. Greek coins, beyond their financial and economic role, served as instruments of propaganda and power in local environments. In any case, a well-established trade has been identified through the presence of Greek imports and the creation of a market sensitive to quality products. Starting in the 4th century BC and continuing in the following centuries, Greek imports can be detected in virtually all settlements and funerary inventories of local necropolises in Dobrudja.

In general, the presence of Geto-Dacian coins in the Istro-Pontic territory is the most accurate term to define the nature of these monetary discoveries. However, we consider such a position slightly exaggerated, given the nature of the local environment in the Istro-Pontic region and the coexistence – including economic and commercial interactions – between the Getic population and the Greek population. The observed penetration of coins in various instances in the chora and throughout the Dobrudja region during the pre-Roman period does not rule out the existence of sporadic, localised (as seen, for example, in the massive fortified centre identified at Floriile, with the Adâncata I and II sites) forms of possible monetary circulation. Without claiming this as an infallible theory, the diverse coin discoveries, including many in bronze and impressively numerous, contribute to the realisation of a possible circulation that, due to objective causes, did not develop in a favourable environment. This non-development coincided with the local political and military decline and the inevitable establishment of Roman authority in the region and the entire Istro-Pontic territory. We're not only analysing coins made of noble metals, since many specimens found in the local Dobrudja environment are made of bronze. Bronze is a durable alloy that supported retail trade in Western Pontic Greek cities, in the corresponding chora, and also in more distant geographic locations, occasionally on trade routes sustained and travelled by Greek merchants, in peripheral fortified centres.

The Danube River played a significant role in the movement of products, coins, and Hellenistic influences, serving as the primary economic and commercial communication route for both the Getic and Greek populations. The introduction of Greek coins into the indigenous environment, especially in the Hellenistic period, led to their relatively common use on a case-by-case basis. Against the backdrop of the presence of coins from Istros, Tomis, Callatis, and Macedonia in the region, emissions of North Danubian Geto-Dacian types also appeared. We don't know how important their role was at the local level (especially given their relatively small numbers), but we know that they were introduced into contexts where there were susceptibilities regarding the existence of embryonic monetary exchanges. They also reached clearly non-circulatory spaces, where their role seems shrouded in political and even religious aspects. Once removed

from an actual monetary context, these coins were lost forever in hoards. Taken out of context and placed in a completely different environment oriented towards storage and hoarding (and perhaps exchange), the coins lost their characteristics for which they were minted (the Greek coin). In such a situation, the coin has no connection to the dynamics of monetary economics or actual monetary circulation. Regardless of their origin, the term 'monetary circulation' is rarely specific to the monetary realities within local communities for the analysed chronological interval, as numerous characteristics of the phenomenon are not met when considered as such. We emphasise once again that the silver coins specific to the late stage of the Geto-Dacian coinage experienced local distribution within the territories north of the Danube, between different communities, mainly to regulate political rather than commercial relations.

Furthermore, the increase in the number of monetary discoveries through archaeological excavations, surface research, and chance finds will complete the picture of the diffusion of these emissions in the studied areas. It must be noted that we probably do not have certainty regarding the reception of all existing discoveries, but in the given context, we believe we have a quasi-complete and relevant inventory, with conclusions and observations based on a stable monetary population. One difficulty in our endeavour is due to the incomplete publication of many of these discoveries, sometimes with mere mentions and no further details. The relevant recording of various materials and their publication is expected to provide, over time, a richer platform for future discussions and interpretations regarding the role, place, and importance of Geto-Dacian coins that penetrated the local Dobrudja environment, as well as coins of the same Dobrujan type, in politically and commercially significant spaces during the 2nd to 1st centuries BC.

Geto-Dacian coins ceased to penetrate the Istro-Pontic region only when Burebista achieved the economic and political unification of the territory north of the Danube, putting an end to the variety of Geto-Dacian, political, and ethnic coinage, coinciding with the end of traditional Geto-Dacian coinage. However, some coins continued to be used as possible silver reserves, without a specific course, during the early days of Roman imperial authority.

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