



**Bulgarian
Numismatic
Journal**

PUBLISHED COIN HOARDS FROM THE TERRITORY OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

SANJA BITRAK

ПУБЛИКУВАНИ МОНЕТНИ СЪКРОВИЩА ОТ
ТЕРИТОРИЯТА НА РЕПУБЛИКА СЕВЕРНА
МАКЕДОНИЈА

САНЈА БИТРАК

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14552225



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<https://bulgnj.com>
ISSN: 2815-4827

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Публикувани монетни съкровища от територията на Република Северна Македонија

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Abstract: This study provides an overview of the published collective finds from the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia. Numerous hoards, containing coins from the 1st to the 5th centuries have been found there. Most of Roman coins found in the region belong to collective finds, i.e. hoards. These hoards can be linked to certain military conditions or barbarian invasions from the north.

Keywords: Coin hoards, Republic of North Macedonia, Roman Empire, Goths.



During the period of the Roman Empire in Macedonia, several mints served the intensive developing trade and fulfilled the need to pay for the Roman army. Over the period from the 2nd up to the 5th centuries, there were a number of invasions of barbarian tribes coming from the north into the Roman Empire, as evidenced by the written sources. These invasions can be traced through the discovery of collective finds – coin hoards.¹

¹ This text presents the collective finds that have been published and are known to scholarship; they belong to the period between the 2nd and 5th centuries AD.



Fig. 1. Coin hoards from the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia, discussed in the text.

During the 2nd century AD, the Roman Empire experienced a relatively calm period without many interior or exterior disturbances, beginning during the Flavian dynasty and lasting until the reign of Commodus (Mirnik 1981, 52). From this period, only one hoard has been discovered and published in North Macedonia so far – the in Kičevo hoard. This find was uncovered in 1952 and consisted of 20 denarii dating to the end of the reign of the Flavian dynasty and part of the Antonine dynasty, i.e., between AD 81 and 180. The hoard contains one Republican denarius and coins from the reigns of Domitian, Nerva, Trajan, and Hadrian in the most significant quantities and a smaller number that represents Sabina, Antonius Pius, Faustina I, and Marcus Aurelius. According to the author of the published hoard, it was buried in the period between AD 161 and 180 (Keramitčiev 1973, 2–31; Mirnik 1981, p. 55, n. 125). Almost all of the discovered hoards from the 2nd century AD were treasured during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (Kremydi-Sicilianou 2004, 136–138). These collective finds are most likely related to the Germanic wars of this period and the attack of the Dacian tribe of Costoboci on the Balkans in AD 170–171 (Touratoglou 1993, 41; Kremydi-Sicilianou 2004, 136–137). This argument is supported by epigraphic evidence found in Scupi, namely a monument that mentions the arrival of this tribe in the territory of today's Skopje region (Jovanova 2015, 255–275).

Table 1. Hoard from the 2nd century (number of coins and deposition date).

HOARD	CONTENTS	DEPOSIT	REFERENCE
Kičevo	20	Marcus Aurelius	Keramitčiev 1973, 28–31; Mirnik 1981, 55, no. 125.

The middle of the 3rd century was a period of relative instability at the economic, political, and military level. The constant change of emperors reflected the inner unrest of the Roman Empire. The threat and attacks from the barbarian tribes contributed to the empire's problems, which meant sustaining a larger army and investing more money into its material support. The barbarian incursions disturbed the peaceful life of the provincial populations (Touratoglou 2006,

144–148). During the second half of the 3rd century, AD 268/69, the Goths entered from the north and devastated these areas of the Empire. Many cities and settlements in Macedonia that were utterly destroyed during the 3rd century were rebuilt and renewed, only to be destroyed again in a new wave of attacks, such as those during the reign of Gordian III (AD 238–244), the Gothic attack to Thessaloniki in AD 254, and the Germanic incursions in AD 267 (Kremmydi-Sicilianou 2004, 137). The turbulent times of previous years continued in the period from AD 254 to 260, as evidenced also by the numerous buried hoards of money and jewellery found throughout the Balkans (Pannonia, Upper and Lower Moesia, Thrace, Dacia, Macedonia) (Touratsoglou 2006, 135–136, 156). In the territory of North Macedonia, there are a number of hoards found and published that date to this period.

In the village of Šopur, near Štip, a small hoard was found in 1952 with 23 denarii dated to the Severan dynasty. The coins represented were issued for Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, Caracalla, Geta, Elagabalus, and Severus Alexander (i.e., covering the span AD 193 – 235) (Керамитчиев, Алексова 1966, 13; Keramitčiev 1973, 25–28; Mirnik 1981, 72, n. 236). In this period, there are recorded clashes with the Alamanni in their territories in Germany, including a campaign led by Maximus Thrax (Touratsoglou 2006, 175); however, there are no records of their movements into the southern parts of the Empire.

In 1908, a coin hoard with more than 1,000 denarii and antoniniani was discovered in Skopje. It contains coins from the Republican period, followed by the Flavian dynasty and the reigns of Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Commodus; the Severan dynasty; the emperor Gordian; and the emperor Philip II (AD 244–249?) (Kubitschek 1908, 37–54; Mirnik 1981, 70, n. 219; Touratsoglou 2006, 183, n. 124). During the later period, Dacia suffered terribly from the Goths invasion (Touratsoglou 2006, 182–183).

In 2007, a scattered hoard was discovered in the northeast corner of the cistern and north of the polyconchal basilica in Plaošnik, Ohrid. The hoard, which contained six coins, included five sestertii and one as. All the coins were minted at the Imperial Mint in Rome. The earliest coin is a sestertius from the reign of Commodus. Two of the sestertii are from the reign of Severus Alexander, minted between AD 222 and 235; one is from the reign of Maximinus and dated to AD 235/6; one dates to the time of Gordian III, AD 241–243. The last specimen is an as from the reign of Philip I, minted for Philip II, during the period of AD 244–249. Since the find came from a closed deposit near the cistern floor, they point to a possible terminating date of the functioning of the cistern, which could be dated up to the middle of the 3rd century (Bitrak 2016, 76–77).

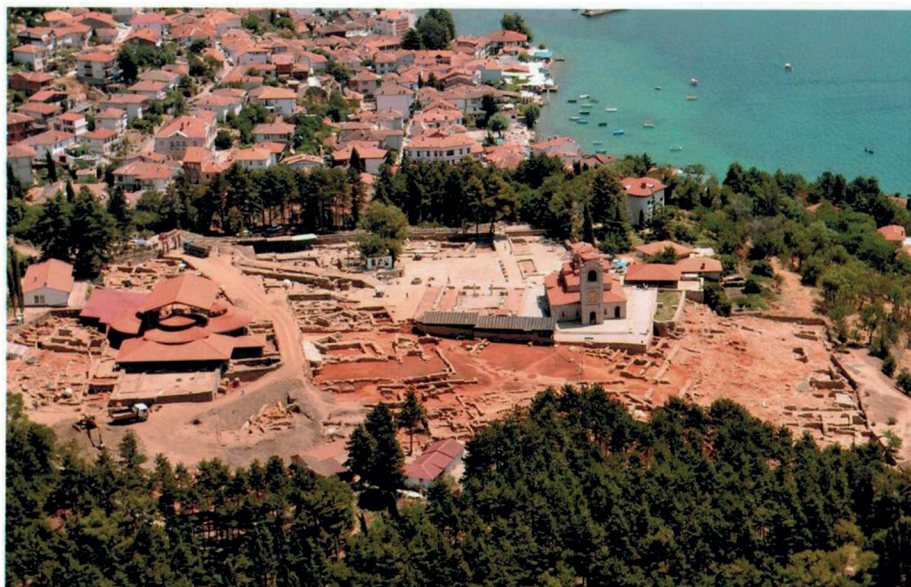


Fig. 2. General view to the site of Plaošnik.
Photo: NI Institute for protection of monuments
of culture and Museum – Ohrid.

During the rescue excavations in 1983 at the hill of Bedem (ancient Styberra), near the village of Čepigovo, Prilep, 16 silver coins, denarii and antoniniani, were discovered in the temple of the goddess Tyche. Traces of textiles suggest that the coins were placed in a pouch. The earliest coin dates to reign of Emperor Elagabalus, followed by issues of Severus Alexander, Gordian III, Philip the Arab, Trajan Decius, Herennius, and Trebonianus Gallus, up until the latest specimen of the hoard, dated to the reign of Valerian (AD 258) (Кепески 1993, 183–190). The coins were minted in Rome, Milan, Antioch, and one uncertain mint. Kepeski assumes that a Gothic raid through Pelagonija was responsible for the destruction of Styberra around the time of the latest coin in this hoard issued by Valerian (Кепески 1993, 183–184).

The 2005 excavations of the “Roman Forum” in Stobi revealed a hoard of 306 coins, comprising one sestertius, 55 denarii, and 255 antoniniani.² The hoard was discovered in a layer of debris into which late Roman graves were dug. The coins and jewellery were placed in a leather bag, as is visible by the shape in which the coins were fused together.³ In the “Roman Forum” hoard, the coins were issued by a total of 29 emperors and members of their families. This figure demonstrates wide-ranging issues covering a span of 122 years between AD 138 and 260. The oldest coin in the hoard is a sestertius of Antonius Pius (AD 138–161), while the latest is an antoninianus dating to the period of joint rule by Valerian and Gallienus (AD 253–260). In this collective find, three mints are represented: Rome, with 88.53% of the total finds (271 pieces); the eastern mint in Antioch, with 5.88% (18 pieces); and Milan, with 5.55% (17 pieces). The date of deposition is AD 257/8 or later (Bitrak, Josifovski 2020, 67–117).



Fig. 3–4. Coins from the Roman Forum in Stobi, before and after conservation. Photos: Mila Shurbanoska (Fig. 3), Vlado Kiprijanovski (Fig. 4).

² The primary processing and review of this hoard was done by Pero Josifovski, published in Shurbanoska, Jakimovski 2010 (cf. Josifovski 2010, 82–89).

³ Shurbanoska, Jakimovski 2007, 44–47; Josifovski 2010, 82; Bitrak, Josifovski 2020, 67–69. The collective find of denarii and antoniniani was discovered alongside two pairs of children’s gold earrings, a silver ring with a gem, and a male silver serpent-shaped ring.

In the village of Budur Čiflik, Demir Kapija, a small hoard with 16 silver coins, was found in 1932, including denarii and antoniniani. The earliest-dated coin from this find is from the reign of the emperor Vespasian, followed by coins of Domitian, Antonius Pius, Faustina I, Commodus, Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, Caracalla, Severus Alexander, Maximinus, and Gallienus. This hoard, according to Keramitčiev, was deposited between AD 254 and 268 (Keramitčiev 1973, 31–33; Mrnik 1981, 61, n. 158). During this period, Germanic incursions occurred from the north into the Balkan Peninsula, the Heruli besieged Athens, and the Goths attacked Heraclea Pontica (Touratsoglou 2006, 198–203).

In the publication of the Kuzmanovič-Stobi collection, Josifovski lists a hoard discovered in the vicinity of Kavadarci. It consists of 20 coins, 16 of which were minted in Stobi. This find represents a unique discovery on the territory of North Macedonia with coins produced by the mint in Stobi. The coins are dated to the time of Vespasian, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, and Caracalla – the last emperor whose coins were minted in Stobi. There are also two sestertii issued by Marcus Aurelius, a bronze coin of Septimius Severus minted in Thessaloniki, and an antoninianus of Claudius II Gothicus (AD 268–270). The date of deposition of this hoard is during the reign of Claudius II Gothicus or later (Josifovski 2010a, 21).

In 2006, six coins and pottery fragments were found on agricultural land at the site of Lokubija near Kočani, which could be considered as a scattered hoard. The coins are antoniniani. Three are from the reign of Gallienus, two date to the time of Claudius II Gothicus, and one is a posthumous issue of Claudius II Gothicus (AD 253–275) (Atanasova 2010, 271–273). During this period, the Goths intended to settle permanently in the Balkans. They faced the Roman army of the Emperor Claudius II Gothicus near the city of Naissus (Nish, Serbia) (Touratsoglou 2006, 209).

At the site of Rača, near the village of Velestovo (Ohrid), a hoard of silver coins (denarii and antoniniani) dating from the 2nd and 3rd centuries has been discovered (Керамитчиев, Алексова 1966, 13; Keramitčiev 1972, 71; Mirnik 1981, 73, n. 242). It contains coins belonging to the Severan dynasty (Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and other members of their family) and coins issued by Gordian III, Philip the Arab, Trajan Decius, Volusianus, Aemilianus, Trebonianus Gallus, Valerian, Gallienus, Claudius II, Quintilius, Aurelian, etc.⁴

Table 2. Hoards from the 3rd century (number of coins and deposition date).

HOARD	CONTENTS	DEPOSIT	REFERENCE
v. Šopur, Štip	23	Severus Alexander	Keramitčiev 1973, 25–28; Mirnik 1981, 72, no. 236.
Unknown location I	84	Severus Alexander	Ohridska banka coll., p. 253.
Skopje (1908)	1000+	Philip I	Kubitschek 1908 37–54; Mirnik 1981, 70, no. 219; Touratsoglou 2006, 183, no. 124.
Site “Plaošnik”, Ohrid	6	Philip I	Bitrak 2016, p. 76–77.
Unknown location II	15	Volusian	Ohridskabanka coll., p. 253–254.
v. Čepigovo, Prilep	16	Valerian I	Kepeski 1992, p.183–190.
Site Stobi, “Forum”, Gradsko	306	Gallienus (joint reign)	Josifovski 2010, 82–89; Bitrak, Josifovski 2020, 67–117.

⁴ According to Keramidchiev, the hoard contains 298 coins (Керамитчиев, Алексова 1966, 13); to Mirnik that hoard number is 298 specimens (Mirnik 1981, 73, No. 242); according to Razmovska Bačevska there are 322 coins (?), but according to the list of the rulers represented there, this hoard contains 287 specimens! (Размоска Бачева 2002, 32–33). A new review of coins is needed.

v. Budur Čiflik, D. Kapija	16	Gallienus	Keramitčiev 1973, 31–33; Mirnik 1981, 73, no. 242; Touratsoglou 1993, pl. II, β
Kavadarci	20	Claudius II	Josifovski 2010a, 21.
Site “Lokubija”, Kočani	6	Claudius II	Atanasova 2010, 269–280.
Site “Rača”, v. Velestovo, Ohrid	287(?)	Florianus(?)	Keramitčiev 1972, 71; Mirnik 1981, 73, no. 242; Размоска Бачева 2002, 32–33

After the reign of Diocletian, the Empire entered a period of turmoil, which also affected these areas. The second half of the 4th century was a period of significant instability in this part of the Empire, with religious conflicts on the one hand and the movement of peoples on the other bringing about significant changes.

In 1950, in the village of Petralica near Kriva Palanka, a ceramic pot was discovered with 377 bronze folles.⁵ The coins are dated to the period between AD 294 and 310. This collective find contains coins issued in the reigns of Diocletian, Maximianus, Constantius I, Galerius Maximianus, Severus, Licinius, Maximinus, and Galeria Valeria. The coins were issued in several mints throughout the empire, with the majority having been minted in Cyzicus, Serdica, and Thessaloniki and smaller numbers at Aquileia, Heraclea, Alexandria, Siscia, Rome, Carthage, Nicomedia, and Alexandria. The established *terminus post quem* for the deposition of this hoard is AD 310 (Josifovska 1953, 4–5; Mirnik 1981, 81, n. 298; Josifovska 1990, 125–144). This find cannot be placed in close connection to a specific historical event.



Fig. 5. Coins from the coin hoard from Petralica, Kriva Palanka.

Photo: Vlado Kiprijanovski.

In 1959, another collective find was discovered near Kriva Palanka in the village of Dubrovni-
ca. This hoard contains 202 bronze coins (nummi) from the reigns of the emperors Constantine I, Dalmatian, Constantine II, Constantius II, Constans, and Constantius Gallus. They were minted in Siscia, Thessaloniki, Constantinople, Cyzicus, Nicomedia, and Antioch, among others (Keramitčiev 1967, 9–15; Mirnik 1981, 78, n. 277).

In 1988, during the archaeological and conservation works at the ancient theatre in Stobi, a collective find was uncovered consisting of 206 bronze coins from the reigns of four Roman emperors: Constantius II, Constans, Constantius Gallus, and Julian II. These coins were issued

⁵According to Josifovska, in 1953 the hoards contained around 400 specimens (Јосифовска 1953, 4–6), while in 1990 the author mentions that the hoard contains 377 specimens (Драгојевић-Јосифовска 1990, 125–144).

between AD 347 and 361. The largest quantity belongs to the reign of Constantius II (174 coins), while Constans, Constantius Gallus, and Julian II are represented with one coin each (Vinčić, Hadži-Maneva 2000, 56–57). These coins were produced at different mints, with that of Thessaloniki having the most frequent coins in circulation due to the geographical and administrative proximity. Other mints include Cyzicus, Sirmium, Siscia, and Constantinople, while Rome, Aquileia, Heraclea, and Antioch are represented with smaller quantities (Vinčić, Hadži-Maneva 2000, 59–60). According to the authors who published this hoard, the latest coins are from the issue between AD 355 and 361, which sets the *terminus post quem* for their deposition (Vinčić, Hadži-Maneva 2000, 62).

In 1997, at the site of Golema Pešt near the village Matka, 308 coins were discovered. The coins were found at the acropolis as a surface find; ninety-two of them were clustered, which indicates a hoard of a scattered type. The hoard contains coins from Constantine I and his successors, concluding with those of Constantius II from AD 361 (Lilčik, Miloševski 1997, 81–96).

From a historical point of view, the year 361 is significant because of the death of Constantius II and Julian's accession to the throne. Constantius II had asked Julian, a part of the army from Gaul to join him in the East in the war against Persia. However, the troops rebelled and proclaimed Julian emperor in August 360; he subsequently took the army from Gaul and, through the Balkans, headed towards Constantinople. This hoard should be connected to these historical events (RIC VIII, 13–17; Vinčić, Hadži-Maneva 2000, 62).

Another hoard was found at the site of Batulica, near the village of Crvulevo, Štip, at the beginning of 2000. The 87 coins were uncovered alongside other finds such as bracelets, earrings, and rings. The coins are dated to the reigns of Philip the Arab, Diocletian, Licinius I, Constantius I, Crispus, Constantius II, Constans, Constantius Gallus, up to Valens. The most represented mints are Thessaloniki, Siscia, and Heraclea, while a smaller number of coins come from the mints at Constantinople, Nicomedia, and Cyzicus (Sandeva 2000, 49–54).

The excavations at Scupi in 2015 uncovered three late antique hoards at the upper part of the cavea (Miloševski, Lilčić 2017, 433–434). One of the collective finds contains 30 coins, with the earliest dating to Constantius II and Constantius Gallus (351–354). The latest is an issue of Valens, minted in the period between AD 364–378. The second hoard contains 60 coins, with the earliest coin issued by Trajan (AD 98–117) and the latest by Valens (AD 367–376). Both hoards were found in the same room, and according to the researchers, the finds are connected (Miloševski, Lilčić 2017, 434). The events in this time frame are connected to the Goths invading and taking over these lands.

The third hoard found at the theatre in Scupi was discovered in the northwestern area of the upper construction of the cavea. The hoard is of an open type, since the coins were scattered on the floor. It contains 266 coins, with Honorius issuing the latest during the period between AD 404–406, which can indicate the date for the hoard deposition (Miloševski, Lilčić 2017, 435–436). From a historical standpoint, this is a period of Gothic military activities in these areas, before their charge to Italy under the leadership of Alaric (Gibon 2007, 361–376).

In 1974, during the excavation of the temple of Nemesis in Stobi, a collective find of 74 coins was uncovered, with four solidi and 70 siliquae. The coins were issued under the emperors Valentinian I, Valens, Gratian, and Valentinian II. The dates of issuing are between AD 364 and 378. In this find, coins issued by Valens from the Antioch mint are predominant (Хаџи-Манева 2001, 71–83). The latest coins date from the 375–378 issue period, which sets the *terminus post quem* for the hoard deposition (Хаџи-Манева 2001, 76).

Table 3. Hoards from the 4th and 5th centuries (number of coins and deposition date).

HOARD	CONTENTS	DEPOSIT	REFERENCE
v. Petralica, Kriva Palanka	377	Time of the Tetrarchy	Јосифовска 1953, 4–6; Mirnik 1981, 81, no. 298; Драгојевић-Јосифовска 1990, 125–144;
v. Dubrovica, Kriva Palanka	202	Constantius II	Keramitčiev 1967, 9–15; Keramitčiev 1972, 71; Mirnik 1981, 78, no. 277.
site Stobi, "Theatre," Gradsko	206	Constantius II	Vinčić and Hadži-Maneva 2000, 55–73.
Site Golema Pešt, Matka, Skopje	92	Constantius II	Lilčić, Miloševski 1997, 81–96.
v. Crvulevo, Štip	87	Valens	Sandeva 2000, 49–54.
Scupi I	30	Valens	Miloševski, Lilčić 2017, 433–435.
Scupi II	60	Valens	Miloševski, Lilčić 2017, 433–435.
Scupi III	266	Honorius	Miloševski, Lilčić 2017, 433–436.
Site Stobi, "Temple," Gradsko	74	Valentinianus II	Хаџи-Манева 2001, 71–83.

Other hoards of uncertain provenance have been found in the territory of North Macedonia and are owned by the Collection of Ohridska Banka:

A hoard with 84 Roman imperial coins with issues ranging from Nerva to Septimius Severus contains specimens of the following persons: Nerva, Domitian, Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, Julia Maesa, Geta, Julia Soemias, Caracalla (with the largest quantity of 26 coins), and lastly 21 coins issued by Severus Alexander (Ohridska banka coll., 253).

Another hoard from an unknown location contains coins minted at Viminacium. It comprises 15 coins minted between AD 242/43 and 251/52. The earliest coin is from the reign of Gordian III, followed by eight coins from the reign of Phillip I, which are the most numerous. Other coins were issued for Herennia Etruscilla, Herennius Etruscus, Hostilian, Trebonianus Gallus, and the last represented emperor is Volusianus with a single coin dating to AD 253 (Ohridska banka coll., 253–254). This is the period of the Goths raiding the Balkans and Asia Minor.

Table 4. Hoards from the 2nd to 5th centuries (Presence of denarii, antoniniani, bronze coins, solidi and siliquae).

HOARD	DEN.	ANT.	SEST	AS	Æ	Solidus	Siliqua
Kičevo	20						
v. Šopur, Štip	23						
Unknown location I	84						
site "Plaošnik," Ohrid			5	1			
Unknown location II					15		
v. Čepigovo, Prilep	2	14					
Site Stobi, "Forum," Gradsko	50	255	1				
v. Budur Čiflik, D. Kapija	15	1					
Kavadarci		1	2		17		
site "Lokumrija," Kočani		6					

HOARD	DEN.	ANT.	SEST	AS	Æ	Solidus	Siliqua
site "Rača," v. Velestovo, Ohrid	30(?)	257(?)					
Skopje (1908)	746(?)	274(?)					
v. Petralica, Kriva Palanka					377		
v. Dubrovica, Kriva Palanka					202		
site Stobi, "Theatre," Gradsko					206		
site Golema Pešt, Matka, Skopje					92		
v. Crvulevo, Štip					68		
Scupi I					60		
Scupi II					30		
Scupi III					266		
Site Stobi, "Temple," Gradsko						4	70
TOTAL	970(?)	808(?)	8	1	1333	4	70

These finds from the territory of North Macedonia illustrate a small part of the historical development of these areas. Some of the collective finds can be placed in connection to specific military events or barbarian incursions from the North, such as the Costoboci, while the most numerous finds date to the period of Gothic invasions during the 3rd and 4th up to the 5th centuries. Further studies on the deposited collective finds will contribute to these interpretations and shed more light on the reasons for their deposition and the economic circumstances of the cities during this period.

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