

Reviews

Cristian Găzdac, Marin Neagoe, *Wealthy or not in the time of turmoil?* The Roman Imperial Hoard from Gruia in Roman Dacia (Romania), Archaeopress, Oxford, ISBN 978-1-78491

A new step towards the study of Roman silver coins and another fresh paper on numismatics by C. Găzdac, “Wealthy or not in the time of turmoil?” presents the Roman pieces discovered in a hoard in modern Gruia, Romania, located in former Roman Dacia.

As an introduction the paper presents when the hoard was first mentioned in 1980 and later in 2000 (p. 1) and the reasons why it was best after all those years to recheck and publish the new results.

Follows the conditions of discovery, the village of Gruia being located about 50 km SW from modern town of Drobeta-Turnu Severin, former colonia Septimia Drobeta in Roman Dacia (p. 2), while the hoard itself was located in a brownish colour pot, consisting of 1,509 pieces.

After looking at all coins it has been established that this hoard ends at the beginning of Gordian III (238-244) reign, the last pieces are dated between 238-240 AD (p. 2). Also from the total amount of silver pieces 1,486 are denarii, 17 antoniniani and 6 plated pieces.

Regarding the last type of coins, those 6 were only uncovered because the silver cover cracked and popped up revealing the copper core underneath. In this case, even the author suggests that without further non-invasive techniques being used on the coins, there is no certain way of uncovering the real amount of silver plated pieces (p. 2).

In the case of origin for the coins, the paper shows that 95.16% of the total amount bear the minting signs of Rome while the rest of 4.44% come from eastern mints (p. 5). When it comes to the actual quantity of the hoard, this is one of the largest found on the territory of Roman Dacia among a few others (p. 5).

In the case of value, the only close measurement available for this area are some examples of prices that survived on a list for a banquet, found on wax tablets in the gold mines to the north from Drobeta in Alburnus Maior (p. 5). Even if the ending of the hoard was dated 240 AD while the wax tablets were dated between 131 – 167 AD, with a 80-100 years gap between the two as the author points it out, this is the only close measurement available for now.

Also, knowing from historical sources that military payments were raised during the Severian period or even doubled (p. 6) and a legionary soldier may have received close to 900 denarii per year, the hoard of 1,509 pieces represents quite a nice fortune. Being hidden in a ceramic vessel, the sum was intended for safe keeping until the owner could safely retrieve it.

The reason for the non-recovery of the hoard, as suggested by C. Găzdac is based on the historical events that took place during the period of Gordian III and Philip I, other similar hoards dated during the same time frame being discovered in Moesia Inferior and Dacia.

A major reason is that of the Carpic war of 245-247 AD which affected

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WEALTHY OR NOT IN A TIME OF TURMOIL?

THE ROMAN IMPERIAL HOARD FROM
GRUIA IN ROMAN DACIA (ROMANIA)

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the region, the emperor Philip I had to intervene personal in the provinces in order to stop the barbarian attacks, other hoards were discovered in the area underneath layers of burning and dated for the same period as this one (p. 6).

Another reason that the authors suggest for the abandonment of the hoard could be the robbery activity on roads, a fact that is even suggested in the number of discovered hoards in the area of Drobeta and epigraphic evidence that suggests so (p. 7).

Among the discovered coins there are a few odd ones which show striking errors, plated pieces, hybrid coins and mismatched images. Looking at the structure of the hoard (p. 16) and (p. 17) we can easily see that up to 92.86% of the discovered coins were dated for the Severian period, representing the majority pieces on the market that were available for somebody who was trying to collect them around 240 AD.

Next follows the table and a few graphs made in order to better represent the available information that can be extracted from the hoard (p. 15-17), and a comparison regarding the monetary index between this hoard and other

discovered hoards in the area (p. 18).

Alongside the tables, the paper also has different maps that show the location of the modern village and the findspot of the hoard (p. 20), with other maps showing the same regions during the II and III centuries AD and known discoveries in the area (p. 21-23).

Finally, but not least, we have the catalogue with all pieces (p. 24-130), where each coin is described in great details in chronological order and the plates (p.131-181) where each piece is shown in very good details.

We have to recognize the huge task that was done in order to examine and thoroughly document each coin with the correct information regarding it, a job well done by those that helped produce this paper.

Furthermore, besides reanalysing older information, correcting it and extracting newer details regarding the same discovery, this paper compares it with present known discoveries and information that we have for the II-III centuries in the Roman Empire thus adding an improved piece to the puzzle of history and Roman economy.