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A FEW REMARKS ON THE CHRONOLOGY OF DACIAN COINAGE*

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The coinage is one of the main elements of Getic and Dacian history and civilization (STROBEL 1998, 61-89). Though studies on this topic have been made for more than one hundred years some controversies are still persisting. These controversies refer to the moment of its birth, duration, the prototype used, or the initiators of this process.

I am not going to do a general analysis of the autochthonous coinage, which has already been done by C. Preda (1973). I shall present only some remarks about the chronology of this coinage, hoping to contribute to the progress of the research.

Generally speaking, the La Tène numismatics presents some uncertainties regarding the dating of its first issues. In order to solve this problem, for lack of clear and indisputable arguments, the stylistic analysis and the general historical considerations have been used. Thus, the beginning of La Tène coinage north of the Danube was dated in the second half of the 4th c. B. C. by E. A. Bielz (1874) and C. Moisil (1920, 69), in the last quarter of the same century by R. Forrer (1908, 182) and between 280 and 200 B. C. by V. Pârvan (1926, 601-602); in the 3rd c. B. C. by B. Mitrea (1945, 43-44); in the second half of the 3rd c. B. C. by C. Daicoviciu (1945, 57-59; 1960, 271) and I. Winkler (1968, 112); the middle of the 3rd c. B. C. by R. Vulpe (1960, 241); at the end of the 4th c. and the beginning of the 3rd c. B. C. by C. Preda (1973, 402-403; 1976, 172; 1998, 136).

It is well known that the most frequently used prototype by the local coinage was Philip II's tetradrachm. The presence of this monetary type in Dacia is essential for understanding the birth of autochthonous coins. However, the research regarding this problem will not advance as long as

* This paper was published some years ago having many errors and omissions that do not belong to me (*A Few Remarks about the Chronology of Geto-Dacian Coinage*, in: *130 Years Since the establishment of the Modern Romanian Monetary System*, Ed. Enciclopedică, Bucharest, p. 71-75). That is I take the opportunity to pay homage to my colleague and friend professor Dan Gh. Teodor, distinguished archaeologist, to publish it again in a better version.

we do not know the volume and spreading of the original coins and posthumous ones as well. It is difficult to tell the difference between these two kinds of issues. It is also difficult to separate the posthumous coins from those that represent imitations of good quality from the first two series. Up to the present, with few exceptions, the discoveries from north of the Danube have been considered to be authentic coins Philip II or local issues. Therefore, it is necessary to be studied again all the old discoveries. Thus, some researchers have even considered that most of the tetradrachms Philip II or most of the imitations of the first series belong to the posthumous category (MITREA 1971, 170). Actually, before any speculations, we have to wait new researches of old discoveries (MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1990, 56-57). It is possible that the genuine tetradrachms Philip II should come to north of the Danube together with the posthumous ones. The same thing happened with Alexander the Great's issues belonging to Bătășani hoard, whose dating covers a period of 60 years (332/331 – 275/270 B. C.) (POENARU-BORDEA, DUMITRAȘCU 1996; POENARU- BORDEA 1996-1998, 430). More than that, I think that the Macedonian coins could come in the north of the Danube only after the wars between Dromichaites and Lysimachos. But a great amount of Philip II's coins could come after the Celts' invasion in Greece and Asia Minor (279-278 B. C.). Otherwise, in Central and Western Europe the coins Philip II and Alexander III came in great number only after 280 B. C., but also due to the plunders taken by the Romans after the battles from Kynoskephalai (197 B. C.) and Pydna (168 B. C.).

Even if we take into account the remarks I have already mentioned, there are situations that are difficult to be satisfactorily explained by means of the methods used until now. For example in Eastern Dacia (between the Carpathians and the Dniester) only 12 Macedonian silver coins have been found, 3 of them being of Philip II type (MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1990, 63). The most numerous Dacian monetary type in this region (Huși-Vovriești) belongs to the first stage of the local coinage (MOISIL 1920, 68-69; SEVEREANU 1935; PINK 1939, 33-36; PREDA 1966a, 143; 1966b). More than 400 coins of this category have been discovered so far (MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1990, 69). Then I could ask the following question: How could Philip's tetradrachms be the prototype for the coins of Huși-Vovriești type ?

On the other hand, I have to mention that as far as the Celtic coins are concerned, there is not a positive chronology. The Celtic coins of Gaul were dated from the end of the 4th c. or the beginning of the 3rd c. B. C. to the middle of the 2nd c. B. C. (SCHEERS 1979, 131). But, in the last

decades, the best researchers of the Celtic coinage accepted a lower chronology: K. Pink (1939, 123-124; 1960, 31) dated the first imitations in the middle of the 2nd c. B. C. and K. Castelin (1978) in the first quarter of the 2nd c. B. C.; J. Lallemand (1965) assigned the beginning of the silver imitations at the end of the 2nd c. B. C.; finally, J.-B. Colbert de Beaulieu (1973, 174; 1975) considered that the local coins from Gaul appeared in large and varied quantities only after 121 B. C.

If I compare these data with the chronology of Getic and Dacian coins, I can notice that the Romanian numismatists have accepted only a higher chronology, as they have done in some cases (MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1960, 85-88). But as I tried to explain, such an approach cannot be convincing because there are more and more questions to which satisfactory answers must be given. Thus, I have already mentioned the problem of presence and spreading of Philip II's genuines tetradrachms and posthumous ones in Dacia. Other two remarks can also be added:

1. It is difficult to demonstrate that the first local imitations existed before the period 300 – 280 B. C. But if such coins appeared after the settlement of the Celts around and on the territory of Dacia, then we have to accept the chronology assigned for the Celtic coins.

2. It is well known the lack or the small number of local coins from the first series in the pre-Roman sites. This situation was explained through the replacement of Dacian coins of Philip II type with autochthonous issues of Roman Republican type (MACREA 1936, 162 ff. MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1990, 95-96). I am not going to insist on this matter now. But in this case one cannot explain why the Dacian coins do not appear in the older levels from the 4th – 2nd c. B. C. Anyway, these levels have very few archaeological materials and that proves a low standard of the local civilization, which could not be favourable for the production of coins. On the other hand, the local sites or the last levels dated in the 1st c. B. C. – 1st c. A. D., contain late Dacian issues, besides different foreign coins, like drachms from Dyrrachium and Apollonia, tetradrachms from Thasos and Roman Republican denarii (URSACHI, MIHĂILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1992; TEODOR, MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1993). They are struck of a low quality silver alloy or even of bronze. They are very different from the Macedonian prototype and seem to be issued because of some economic necessities. Therefore, we have to admit that there are two categories of Getic and Dacian coins: the first category is closer to the original coins due to its representations, its weight and fineness; this type of coin does not usually appear in the sites. The second category consists of bad quality coins: an unidentified or very difficult to be identified iconography,

low weight and very bad fineness. This monetary type does not appear in hoards, but only in the local sites. Both monetary categories can have different chronologies, or the same ones.

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