

Coin Hoards Dated to the Time of Maximinus I from the Territory of Present-Day Serbia

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Abstract: There are three known hoards from the territory of present-day Serbia which end with coins of Maximinus I: the Supska II, Ravna and Mehovine hoards. Taking into account the Roman division of the provinces, the hoards from Ravna and Supska (II) originated from the territory of Upper Moesia, while the Mehovine hoard represents a find from this period, deposited in Lower Pannonia. Since the latest pieces in all three hoards are dated broadly from January/autumn AD 236 to the first quarter of AD 238, the reasons for burying the finds may be different: the terror spread by Maximinus' agents when collecting taxes; the violence of the troops and of the local administration; or a reaction to the news of the rebellions in Africa and in Rome.

Key words: Roman Empire, coin hoards, Maximinus I, Upper Moesia, Lower Pannonia.

INTRODUCTION

Roman coin hoards represent important sources in the study of the political, economic, and social history of a certain period and territory, especially the periods about which historical sources offer little information.

The analyses of these finds require caution in their interpretation, primarily because the circumstances of discovery are often insufficiently reliable. A large number of coin hoards from the territory of present-day Serbia¹ originate from the 3rd century AD, with their numbers gradually increasing from the time of Severus Alexander and Gordian III, reaching a peak in 252-253 AD, during the reigns of Trebonianus Gallus and Aemilianus. A significant number of hoards from 254 AD, during the reign of Valerian I and Gallienus and from the reign of Aurelian, have also been registered (**fig. 1**).

There are three known hoards (**fig. 2**) from the territory of the present-day Serbia that end with the coins of Maximinus I: Supska II, in the vicinity of Čuprija (Borić-Brešković / Vojvoda 2013, 9-153; Vojvoda / Redžić 2020, 533, #12), Ravna, *Timacum Minus* (Кондић 1983, 51-73; Borić-Brešković / Vojvoda 2013, 10, 18, Table 4; Vojvoda / Redžić 2020, 533, #11) and Mehovine, in the vicinity of Šabac (Карапанџић 1914, 160-164; Borić-Brešković / Vojvoda 2013, 21-113; Vojvoda / Redžić 2020, 533, #10)². Taking into consideration the Roman division of provinces, the hoards from Ravna and Supska (II) originated in the territory of Upper Moesia, while Mehovine was the only find from this period deposited in Pannonia Inferior (**fig. 3**). There are also remarkably few known hoards from the time of Maximinus I in the neighbouring provinces (**fig. 4**), except in Lower Moesia, where six have been found: Sanadinovo, Golyama Brestnitsa II, Mikre V, Bisertsi, Constanța (*Tomii* II) and Dunavatul de Jos (Върбанов 2017, 19, # 133, 20, # 148, 24, # 180, 38, # 285, 70, # 540, 70, # 545; Теодосиев 2017, 418, 291-292, 308-309). Three finds originate from the neighbouring Thracia: Sofia (*Serdica* III), Shanovo I (Oryahovo) and Shanovo II (Върбанов 2017, 75, # 585; 93, # 720; 93, # 72; Теодосиев

¹ The present-day Serbia covers parts of the Roman provinces of Upper Moesia, the south-eastern part of Lower Pannonia, the north-eastern part of Dalmatia and a part of the Barbaricum between Lower Pannonia and Dacia.

² In literature, the hoard from *Sirmium* is also attributed to this horizon of hoards (cf. Даутова-Рушевљанин 1981, 65, # 11). It transpired that the published data is incorrect and that the hoard from site 56 was deposited in the 4th century AD. Kind thanks are due to our colleague Miroslav Jesretić from the Museum of Srem for the information provided.

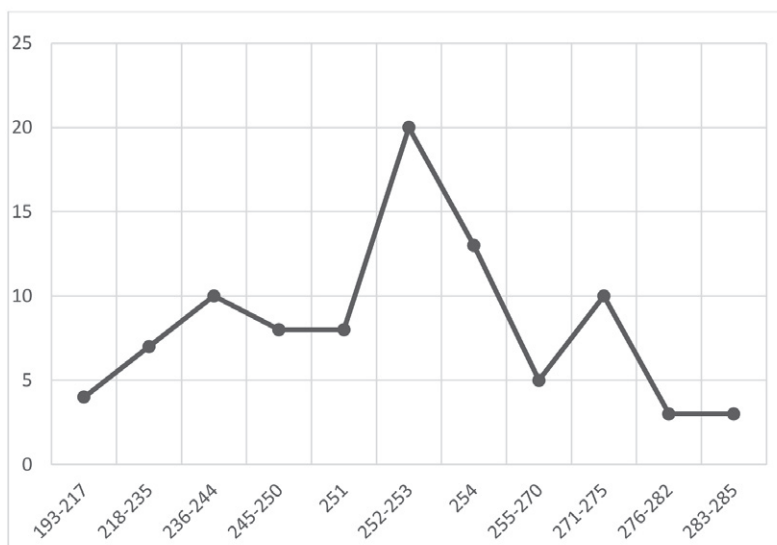


Fig. 1. Thrid century coin hoards from the territory of present-day Serbia

Authority	Supska II	Ravna	Mehovine
Marcus Antonius	1		
Nero			1
Galba	1		
Otho	2		
Vitellius	1		
Vespasian	29	1	19
Titus	3		2
Domitian	3		2
Trajan	29		5
Hadrian	18	1	7
Antoninus Pius	85	2	11
Marcus Aurelius	52	5	6
Commodus	69	6	15
Clodius Albinus	4	2	4
Septimius Severus	414	37	130
Caracalla	75	30	77
Macrinus	3	3	2
Elagabalus	88	48	76
Severus Alexander	56	47	114
Maximinus I	1	5	18
Undetermined	1		
TOTAL	935	187	489

Fig. 2. Content of the coin hoards from the time of Maximinus I from the territory of present-day Serbia

2017, 602, 645), while only one hoard was discovered in the territory of Roman Dacia: Mojgrád, Szilágy vármegye.³ Additionally, one coin hoard originates from the territory of the Macedonia province: Larissa (Touratsoglou 2006, 175, # 12). No larger number of finds have been recorded in the nearby western provinces. From Upper Pannonia, only the Csapon hoard (Zala komitat) is known, from present-day Hungary (Gohl 1914, 70; Găzdac 2010, *Pannonia Superior* 7), while the Leskovec find, from present-day Slovenia, originates from Noricum, from the area located at the border with Upper Pannonia (Mirnik 1981, 65, # 186; Kos 1986, 112-113, # 5). A find from the vicinity of Postojna originates from the territory of Slovenia, but from the area that belonged to Italy in

³ Mojgrád, Szilágy vármegye, today Moigrád (Roman *Porolissum*). Unpublished (Ét. 496/1880). We express our deepest gratitude to our colleague Vida István from the Hungarian National Museum for providing us with data about these unpublished monetary finds.

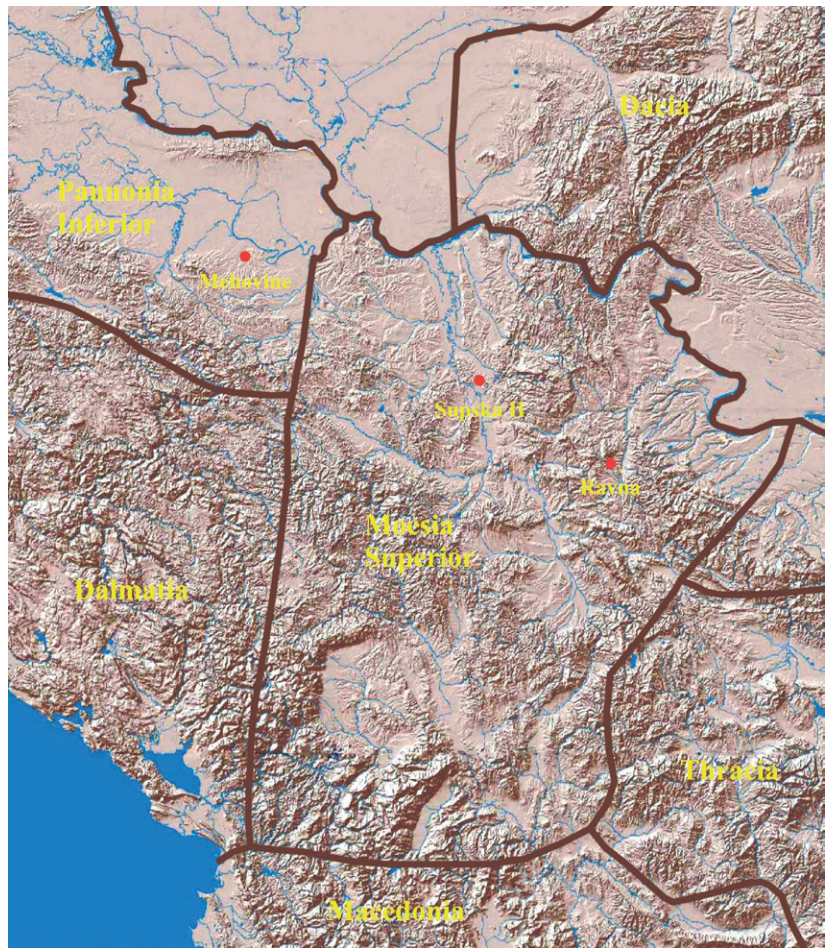


Fig. 3. Map of hoards stored in the time of Maximinus I from the territory of present-day Serbia



Fig. 4. Map hoards stored in the time of Maximinus I from the neighbouring provinces (Dacia: Mojgrád; Moesia Inferior: Sanadinovo, Golyama Brestnitsa II, Mikre V, Bisertsi, Constanța (*Tomii* II) and Dunavatul de Jos; Thracia: Sofia (*Serdica* III), Shanovo I (Oryahovo) and Shanovo II; Macedonia: Larissa; Pannonia Superior: Csapon; Noricum: Leskovec; Italia: Postojina, Monrupino)

Roman times (Mirnik 1981, 68, # 209; Kos 1986, 113, # 7), and there is also another from Italy, Monrupino from the hinterland of Trieste (Kos 1986, 113, # 6).

The Supska II and Mehovine hoards represent chance finds, so we must consider the possibility that they have not yet been collected in

their entirety. The Ravna hoard is one of the few that were discovered during archaeological excavations and which preserved its original composition in its entirety.

COMPARISON OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE HOARDS

The find from Supska II contains coins of 32 rulers and members of their families, from the triumvirate of Marcus Antonius (32-31 BC) and Galba (AD 68/69) to Maximinus I (AD 236-238), covering a period of 270 years. The largest percentages, by far, apply to the coinages of Septimius Severus (44.30%), followed by the issues of Elagabalus (9.41%) and Caracalla (8.10%). Viewed altogether, the largest percentage in the hoard falls into the third century AD, i.e., to the time from Septimius Severus to Maximinus I, totalling 68.24%. The collecting began in the time of Antoninus Pius, and continued in the time of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, whilst its intensity was highest in the time of Septimius Severus (**fig. 5**) (Borić-Brešković / Vojvoda 2013, 15-17, Table 2, Graph 1).

The Ravna hoard was discovered in its entirety and comprised coins of 21 rulers and members of their families, from Vespasian (AD 76) to Maximinus I (AD 236-238), spanning a time frame of 192 years. Until the reign of Septimius Severus, the rulers are represented by fewer specimens. The coins from the reign of Septimius Severus, Caracalla, Elagabalus and Severus Alexander make up 80% of the find (**fig. 5**) (Konđić 1983, 55).

The Mehovine hoard consists of coins belonging to 16 rulers and members of their families, covering a span of 171 years, from Nero (AD 67/68) to Maximinus I (AD 236-238). The highest percentage is that of the coinage of Septimius Severus and his family (37.63%), and then of Severus Alexander (23.31%) and Elagabalus (15.55%). Generally, the largest part of the find belongs to the 3rd century AD, i.e., the period from Septimius Severus to Maximinus I, which accounts for 85.28%. It emerges from this that collection began at the time of Septimius Severus and that it continued, to a greater or lesser extent, during the reign of Elagabalus and Severus Alexander (**fig. 5**) (Borić-Brešković / Vojvoda 2012, 28-29).

While comparing the composition the Supska II, Ravna and Mehovine hoards, we observed certain similarities, but also some deviations. Namely, the hoard from Ravna, apart from the one specimen of Vespasian, does not contain other pieces from the 1st century AD, but shows great similarity with the find from Mehovine in the incidence of rulers and family members of the 2nd and 3rd century AD. The only notable deviation was observed with the pieces of Elagabalus (Mehovine 15.55% – Ravna 25.67%), while the most frequent are pieces belonging to Septimius Severus and his family, as in the find from Mehovine. The Supska II hoard contains one piece of the triumvir Marcus Antonius, whose coinage is present in the Danubian and Balkan provinces in hoards deposited in the 2nd century AD and, sporadically, in those buried during the 3rd century AD (Borić-Brešković / Vojvoda 2013, 18, note 24). Although it contains coins from as many as six rulers of the 1st century AD, excluding the specimen of M. Antonius (Mehovine has four pieces), the 1st century AD is represented with fewer pieces in the Supska II hoard than in the hoard from Mehovine (**fig. 6**). It is clearly visible from **fig. 2** that the highest percentage in Supska II is that of

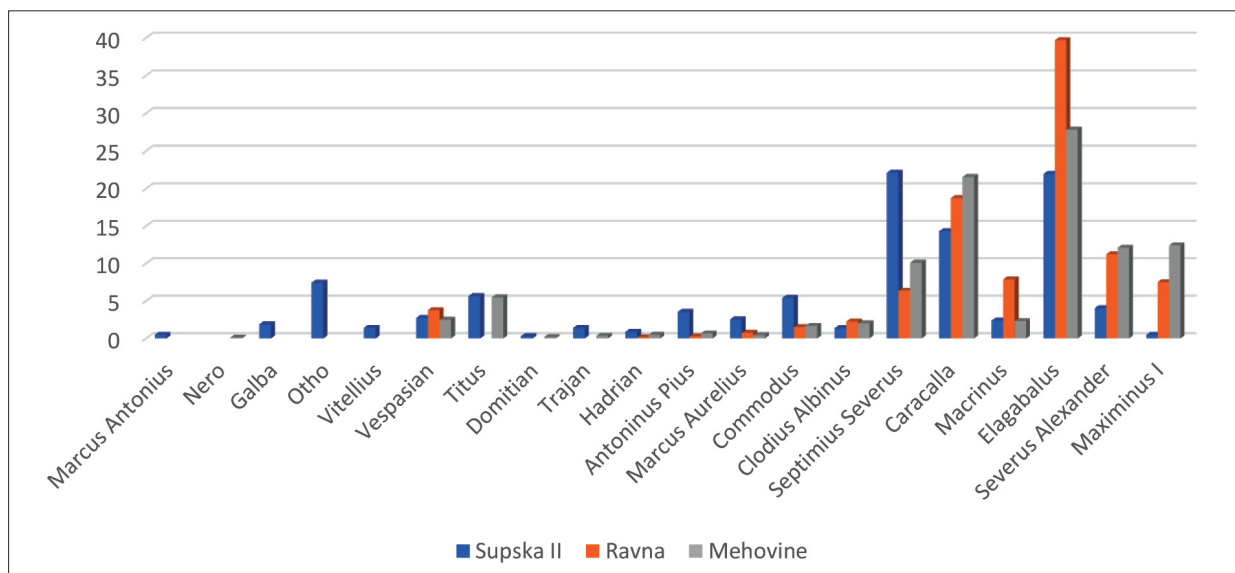


Fig. 5. Annual percentage in hoards Supska II, Ravna and Mehovine

coins of the 3rd century AD. However, this percentage is far lower than is the case in the finds from Mehovine and Ravna. Consequently, the rulers of the 2nd century are present in a much higher percentage in the Supska II hoard – up to three times higher than in the other two hoards. This indicates a longer period of collection for the Supska II hoard compared with Mehovine and Ravna, which probably started at the time of Antoninus Pius and was the most intense under Septimius Severus. In the Mehovine and Ravna hoards, this process most probably started at the time of Septimius Severus, while earlier specimens represent the residue of previous collections. The context of the Ravna hoard is undoubtedly preserved in its entirety. On the other hand, we should not exclude the likelihood that a part of the Supska II and Mehovine hoards were scattered and that a certain number of coins were missing. It is possible that this is the reason for the much higher annual percent in the time of Septimius Severus in the Supska II hoard (fig. 5).

HOARD OWNERS

It stems from this analysis that the largest part of the find from Mehovine was collected over a period of 45 years and, by all accounts, comprises the savings of the owner of the villa⁴. In addition, the hoard was discovered in the locality of Vračevac, where a *villa rustica* from the 2nd century AD, was discovered (Bacih 1985, 128). As far as the Supska II hoard is concerned, despite the lack of archaeological evidence in the field, one can assume that there were agricultural estates in the immediate neighbourhood of Supska village, which several factors indicate. The position in the direct vicinity of *Horreum Margi*, in an important farming region, next to a highway, the find of another hoard of coins (Supska I) in the same village, as well as the successive collecting that was noticed in the Supska II find, which is the topic of this contribution, suggests that this find constituted the savings of the owner of the villa (Borić-Brešković / Vojvoda 2013, 12-13). In terms of the hoard from Ravna, opinions with regard to the owner of the

⁴ In ancient times, Mačva was an agricultural region full of estates (*villae rusticae*), where centuriation was undoubtedly carried out. The remains of 22 *villae rusticae*, two *vici*, one fortification, one necropolis, a road, hoards of tools and two coin hoards (Mehovine and Vladimirci) were discovered in the territory of the municipality of Vladimirci only (cf. Bacih 1985, 139-140, # 154-184).

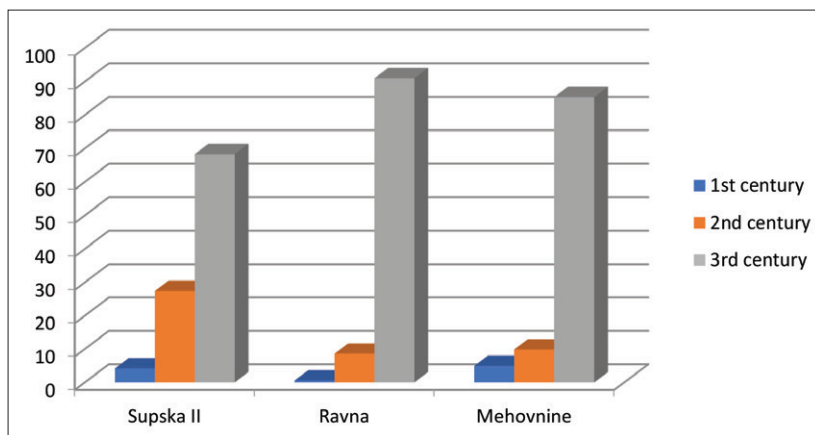


Fig. 6. Percentages of the representation of specimens in the hoards, according to centuries (after Borić-Brešković / Vojvoda 2012, 30, Table 3)

savings are divided. This hoard belongs to rare, completely preserved finds, discovered during archaeological investigations. It was found under the floor of a building within the military fortification, which led most researchers to the conclusion that it represented the property of a soldier (Кондић 1983, 51; Crnobrnja 2008, 19-20; Găzduc 2012, 174). In his more recent study on land property and 3rd century AD coin hoards in Upper Moesia, M. Vasić presents substantiated evidence regarding the identification of most owners of coin hoards as private individuals, owners of *villae rusticae* (Vasić 2015, 97-130). He interprets the find from Ravna in the same way. Considering the specifics of Upper Moesia as a mining and agricultural province, we agree with Vasić's view that a large number of hoards can really be connected with the remains of *villae rusticae*, which would point to the identity of the owner. However, we are also of the opinion that there are certainly exceptions to this rule. Here, we are primarily thinking of the hoard from Ravna, as well as a somewhat later one from Kalemegdan (Crnobrnja 2008, 19-20), and consider them both to be the property of soldiers (Vojvoda / Redžić 2020, 543). In addition, what should also be mentioned are a number of hoards discovered within military fortifications in the area of Dacia (Dudău 2006, 62-74).

HOARD DATING

The Supska II and Mehovine hoards end with the denarii of Maximinus I, with the obverse legend MAXIMINVS PIVS AVG GERM and three different reverse types: PAX AVGVSTI (*RIC* IV/2 1962, 141, # 19; Borić-Brešković / Vojvoda 2012, 97, # 458; Borić-Brešković / Vojvoda 2013, 104, # 934), PROVIDENTIA AVG (*RIC* IV/2 1962, 142, # 20; Borić-Brešković / Vojvoda 2012, 97-98, # 486-488) and VICTORIA GERM (*RIC* IV/2 1962, 142, # 23; Borić-Brešković / Vojvoda 2012, 98, # 489). According to Herodian and *Historia Augusta* (Herodian VII.2.1-9; *HA, Vita Maximini*, XII.1-6), a punitive expedition against the Germanic tribes across the Rhine started almost immediately after the proclamation of Maximinus as emperor and lasted until the autumn/winter of AD 235. After the successful campaign, Maximinus set up winter quarters in *Sirmium*⁵, which became his headquarters until the very end of his rule. The success of the Germanic expedition is marked by the appearance of the *cognomen devictarum gentium Germanicus maximus* (on coins only as *Germanicus*) in Maximinus' titulature, the earliest of which was at the beginning of 236 AD⁶.

⁵ Maximinus was already in *Sirmium* by the winter of AD 235 and he planned his new campaign for the next spring of AD 236 (cf. Herodian VII.2.9; Szabó 2013, 56, note 16).

⁶ Szabó 2013, 55; *RIC* IV/2 1962, 130, 133-134, cites the beginning of AD 236 as the date of receiving the title; while Kienast (Kienast 2010, 184) cites the summer (?) of AD 236.

According to *RIC* IV/2, the reverse legends of the last three types in the Supska II and Mehovine hoards belong to the group of undated coins (Group II) and are broadly dated to c. January AD 236 to March/April AD 238 (*RIC* IV/2 1962, 141-142). According to *BMC* VI, these pieces belong to Issue 3 and are dated in c. January AD 236 to (late) AD 237 (*BMC* VI 1962, 236-238). According to A. Robertson in the body of *HCC* III, which quotes Carson's division into two issues and six officinae, these three types would belong to the second issue and the second officina, dating from late AD 236 AD to early AD 238 (*HCC* III 1977, lxxviii-lxxix). According to Alram, the last three types, regardless of the portrait style characteristics, would belong to the fourth to sixth issue and would be dated from autumn AD 236 to March/April AD 238 (Alram 1989, 66-69).

On the other hand, the hoard from Ravna ends with the denarii of Maximinus I with the obverse legend IMP MAXIMINVS PIVS AVG and three different reverse types (*RIC* IV/2 1962, 139, # 3, 4; 141, # 13; Кондић 1983, 73, # 184-187). Two of them belong to the group of dated coins (P M TR P II COS P P) and are dated into AD 236 (*RIC* IV/2 1962, 133). The third reverse type (PROVIDENTIA AVG) belongs to the group of undated coins (Group I) and was dated from around March AD 235 to January AD 236, possibly even later (*RIC* IV/2 1962, 134). However, the hoard from Ravna was dated by the denarius of Maximus with the obverse legend MAXIMVS CAES GERM (Group II) (*RIC* IV/2 1962, 154, # 2; Кондић 1983, 73, # 183). Maximus obtained the title *Germanicus* at the same time as his father (*RIC* IV/2 1962, 136-137; Ensslin 1971, 74), which also corresponds with the *terminus post quem* from January/autumn (?) of AD 236 to the start of AD 238. In this way, all three hoards are dated into the same chronological span.

CONCLUSION

Maximinus' brief reign began with military acclamation in Mainz, in February/March AD 235⁷. He doubled the troops' salaries, promised them lavish gifts and abolished their penalties and convictions (Herodian VI.8.8; *RIC* IV/2 1962, 130; Ensslin 1971, 72). The first task he ventured into was to continue the German campaign and, after sacking large parts of the barbarians' territory, he returned to Pannonia and spent the winter of AD 235/236 in *Sirmium* (Herodian VII.2.1-9; Ensslin 1971, 73-74; Kienast 2010, 183). Although Herodian did not mention the operations against the Sarmatians and the Dacians, the chronology of Maximinus' Sarmatian war is relatively clear from the epigraphic sources and from archaeological sources⁸. It is known that he took the honorary titles *Sarmaticus Maximus* and *Dacicus Maximus*, which are confirmed on inscriptions, but not on coins (*HA, Vita Maximini*, XIII.3; Dessau 1892, 488-490; 2308-2309). The increase in the number of the imperial acclamations also marked the success of the Sarmatian expedition. The cognomina *Sarmaticus Maximus* and *Dacicus Maximus* appear together first with the third imperial acclamation and were received by the autumn/winter of AD 236. The fourth, fifth and sixth imperial acclamation (*imperator* III, V and VI) can be dated to AD 237, while the seventh is usually linked to the emperor's Italian campaign of AD 238 (Szabó 2013, 56, note 20-28).

⁷ February/March AD 235 (cf. Lorient 1975, 669-670; Kienast 2010, 177, 181, 183). The Roman Senate also recognised Maximinus as ruler with some reluctance, even though there is no record of this, other than that on the 25th March in AD 235, he was included in the collegium of the priesthood – *sodales Antoniniani* (cf. Lorient 1975, 670-671; Ensslin 1971, 72). Maximinus' extreme anti-senatorial policy aroused great anxiety in Rome. It is recorded that people offered prayers, both in public and in private, and even women prayed with their children that Maximinus would never come to Rome (*HA, Vita Maximini*, VIII.6).

⁸ The emperor never left Pannonia between AD 236-238 AD and his campaigns took place only in the Great Hungarian Plain, in the area between Lower Pannonia and Dacia (cf. Szabó 2013, 59-60, 63, Plate 1).

In order to cover the expense of paying the army, the emperor imposed stricter control in the collection of taxes and exacted other, extraordinary payments. He first directed his attention to the aristocracy and to seizing private property but, when it turned out that this was not enough, he began looting public property. All the funds of the provincial cities, which were collected for the well-being of their population or for gifts, all the money for shows and festivals, gifts to temples, statues of the gods, and decorations on public buildings, were seized and used for minting coins and for financing the army. This particular kind of terror soon exploded into rebellion at the beginning of AD 238, first of all in Africa, then in Rome, where the Senate declared him and his son enemies of the state (*hostes publici*)⁹.

Maximinus was still in *Sirmium*, in early AD 238, when he received news about the rebellions. After distributing large *donativa*, he moved towards Rome with his army. Upon entering Italy, he first arrived in the evacuated Emona and continued his march to Aquileia. However, this significant location in northern Italy was prepared for defence and all Maximinus' efforts to capture it were in vain. Great losses and fear of hunger due to the lack of food, and the emperor's cruel treatment of his officers, undermined discipline in Maximinus' army. The first soldiers' emperor was killed by his troops in mid-April AD 238 (Herodian VIII.1.1-6-9; *HA, Vita Maximini*, XXI.1-6, XXII.1-7, XXIII.1-6; Ensslin 1971, 79-80; Kienast 2010, 183).

Since the latest pieces in the Supska II, Ravna and Mehovine hoards are dated, broadly, from January/autumn AD 236 to the start or the first quarter of AD 238, the reasons for burying the finds may be different. Besides that, we must take into consideration that the Supska II and Mehovine hoards were the property of one family or the owners of the villas, while the Ravna hoard was undoubtedly owned by a soldier. Until the end of AD 237, the burying of hoards may have been due to the terror tactics Maximinus' agents used when collecting taxes (De Callataj 2017, 327, 335)¹⁰ or the expeditions against the Sarmatians and the Dacians, which required amassing troops and resources from the provinces closest to the war zones. As for the later date – the first months of the year 238 – besides the fiscal demands that had thoroughly exhausted the population, hoard burying may have been a reaction to the news of the rebellions in Africa and in Rome, and the preparations to march on Italy (Borić-Brešković / Vojvoda 2012, 34; Borić-Brešković / Vojvoda 2013, 32-33). Due to the inability to date Maximinus' latest issues more exactly, the reason for the burial of the hoard remains undefined.

Translated by Dave Calcutt

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⁹ The rebellion in Africa was started by a group of young aristocrats, probably on 1st January AD 238, when they were pledging allegiance to the emperor. They conferred the title of Augustus on the 80-year-old governor Gordian and his son at the beginning of (?) January in the same year, but their rule ended very quickly – on 20th (?) January, after they were defeated by the governor of Numidia, who remained loyal to Maximinus. On the other hand, the Senate recognised the two Gordiani, and declared Maximinus and his son enemies of the state (*hostes publici*) establishing the *XXviri reipublicae curandae* from the ranks of the senators, in order to defend Italy. Subsequently, on receiving news of the death of the two Gordiani from the members of this body (at the end of January or beginning of February), it elected Balbinus and Pupienus as joint rulers, conferring on them the title Augustus (cf. Kienast 2010, 188-193; *RIC* IV.2 1962, 131; Ensslin 1971, 76-79; Lorient 1975, 688-710).

¹⁰ On the basis of extensive research regarding the reasons for storing hoards and why coin hoards were not recovered by their owners, François de Callataj concluded that there is 'the link between hoarding and general fear, mostly generated by political trouble and civil wars but also including financial violence caused by unfavourable monetary reforms.' According to the evidence gathered by De Callataj, such a link could be made for about two thirds of the total (cf. De Callataj 2017, 333-335, Graphs 18-20).

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Монетни съкровища от времето на Максимин I от територията на днешна Сърбия

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(резюме)

Известни са три такива съкровища. Най-младите монети в тях датират от периода януари – есента на 236 до първата четвърт на 238 година. Причините за укриването им остават неясни поради невъзможност за по-точна датировка. А те биха могли да бъдат: терорът, който императорски пратеници извършвали при събиране на данъци; насилие от страна на военни части или от местна администрация; реакция на новините за бунтове в Африка и Рим.

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