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THE PROVINCIA MOESIA SUPERIOR IN VIMINACIUM

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C.Patsch suggested in 1898 that the seat of the provincial assembly (*concilium provinciae*) of the province Moesia Superior was at Remesiana (Bela Palanka in Serbia).¹ He based his hypothesis on a fragmentary inscription found at Remesiana, probably a dedication to Severus Alexander erected by ... *splendidissima et devotissima numini eorum provincia Moesia Superior*,² which - according to him - would confirm the existence of the provincial assembly of the province in this Roman municipium³ on the eastern border of Moesia Superior. His suggestion was further reinforced by the discovery of two other inscriptions from Remesiana⁴ dedicated in 202 to Septimius Severus and Iulia Domna by the town of Ulpiana.⁵ A third inscription with the same dedication and also dating to 202 was found at Remesiana in 1934,⁶ but most probably all three dedications had been erected only on the occasion of the journey of the Emperor through Remesiana in that year. Since CIL III 8257 remains the only inscription explicitly mentioning *provincia Moesia Superior* in the province, modern scholars have mostly adopted the proposal of Patsch,⁷ but, on the other hand, sceptical views have also been expressed which consider the existing evidence as far from satisfactory or even decisive.⁸

The only other inscription in the province of Moesia Superior that could be connected with the imperial cult is dated to 221 and mentions *sacerdos PIM*.⁹ The inscription has been

¹ C.Patsch, 'Der Landtag von Moesia Superior', in: *Festschrift für Otto Benndorf*, Wien 1898,287.

² CIL III 8257. P.Petrović, *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure*. Vol. IV. Naissus-Remesiana-Horreum Margi (= IMS IV), Beograd 1979, no. 72.

³ Probably a municipium since Trajan; see P.Petrović in: *Tabula Imperii Romani*. Naissus-Dyrrhachion-Scupi-Serdica-Thessalonike, Ljubljana 1976,108. Since the foundation of a provincial cult in Danube provinces should mainly be attributed to Trajan (D.Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*. Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire, Vol. I/2, Leiden 1987,301) this fact, indeed, could support the suggestion of Patsch.

⁴ CIL III 1685, 1686.

⁵ M.Mirković, 'Der Landtag von Moesia Superior', *Zbornik Filozofskog fakulteta u Beogradu* 11/1,1970,85 suggested, however, that Ulpiana is probably a part of the name of Remesiana.

⁶ N.Vulić, *Spomenik* 98,1948,213, no.4.

⁷ E.Kornemann, 'Zur Geschichte der antiken Herrscherkulte', *Klio* 1,1901,132. N.Vulić, *RE* II 1,1914,595. J.Deininger, *Die Provinziallandtage der römischen Kaiserzeit*, München 1965,119. P.Petrović, *IMS* IV, 102. A.Mócsy, *Pannonia and Upper Moesia*, London 1974,214. P.Petrović (n.3) 108. D.Fishwick (n. 3) 302 n.11. Cf. also F.Papazoglou, 'Septimia Aurelia Heraclea', *BCH* 85,1961,174.

⁸ N.Vulić, *Remesiana. Some Questions Connected with the Ancient History of our Country and Roman Antiquities*, Beograd 1961,24, completely rejected the hypothesis of Patsch. A.Mócsy, *Gesellschaft und Romanisation in der römischen Provinz Moesia Superior*, Budapest 1970,11 and 92, is more careful in interpreting the inscriptions and rather connects them to the adventus of the emperor than with the seat of the provincial assembly. The evidence is also insufficient for M.Mirković (n.5) 83-90 and J.Fitz, 'Geschichtliche Probleme des Forums von Gorsium', *Oikumene* 5,1986,367.

⁹ CIL III 14562 = Petrović, *IMS* IV, 69, no.4.

lost since 1901 and its text was published by Mommsen in CIL on the basis of a drawing. M.Mirković rather unconvincingly proposed the reading of the last line of this damaged inscription as *sacerdos pr(ovinciae) M(oesiae Superioris)*.¹⁰ Since the inscription was found in Naissus, this led her to propose that the *concilium provinciae* assembled during the first half of the third century in Naissus.¹¹ The interpunction between individual words appears several times on the inscription; therefore it seems almost certain that the use of the interpunction between P, I and M implies the abbreviation of three words rather than two as suggested by Mirković.¹² But even assuming her amendment to be correct, the mention of the *sacerdos provinciae* on an inscription does not necessarily confirm the existence of the provincial assembly at the site of the find,¹³ but could simply be connected to the imperial cult in a broader sense.¹⁴ Her arguments therefore seem insufficiently solid and, significantly, her suggestion remained isolated. J.Fitz, however, believes on the basis of dedications erected in the name of Ulpiana on the inscriptions from Remesiana¹⁵ that the *concilium provinciae* of Moesia Superior would most probably have assembled in Ulpiana (Gračanica in Serbia), a *municipium* since the period of Trajan.¹⁶

On the other hand, more suggestive and clear facts for a study of the location of the provincial assembly in Moesia Superior may be offered - it appears - by numismatic evidence.

One of the main differences between the provincial assemblies of the provinces in the West (*concilium provinciae*) and the East (*koinon*) concerned the minting of their own coinage (mostly *aes* but also silver coins) which was characteristic almost exclusively for the eastern provinces.¹⁷ These coins were struck by the *koina* only occasionally, usually in connection with the imperial cult¹⁸ or at the period of the assembly of the *concilium provinciae*.¹⁹

Such minting was always in the jurisdiction of the *koinon* which is mentioned on the reverse legend of the coins. To the word *koinon* in the nominative the name of the province in the genitive is usually added. If the name of the town also appears in the genitive (for

¹⁰ Mirković (n.5) 89.

¹¹ Mirković (n.5) 89.

¹² Petrović, IMS IV, 69, solved the formula in the last line of the inscription as *p(osuit) l(ibens) m(erito)*.

¹³ As argued by Th.Mommsen, CIL III, p.432.

¹⁴ Fishwick (n.3) 302, argues that the seat of the provincial assembly of the province of Moesia Inferior was Oescus rather than Troesmis in spite of two inscriptions mentioning *sacerdos provinciae* found in the latter town. See also Deininger (n.7) 120 n.5. Cf. also Fishwick (n.3) 303 n.19 for Pannonia Inferior.

¹⁵ See notes 5 and 6 above.

¹⁶ Fitz (n.8) 368.

¹⁷ Deininger (n.7) 170. See also P.R.Franke, *Kleinasien zur Römerzeit*, München 1968, 11.

¹⁸ K.W.Harl, *Civic Coins and Civic Politics in the Roman East AD 180-275*, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1987, 13.

¹⁹ Regling, RE XXI, 1921, 1054.

instance, KOINON ΠONTOΥ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΕΩΣ ΝΕΟΚΑΙCΑΡ(Ε)ΙΑC),²⁰ or in the nominative (for instance, KOINON ΦΡΥΓΙΑC ΑΠΑΜΕΙC),²¹ it means that the town was minting coins in the name of the koinon which, in that case, appears in the accusative.²² On the reverse of the coins of koina the annotation of the year of the local era is also not unusual (for instance, KOINON ΠONTOΥ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΕΩC ΝΕΟΚΑΙCΑΡΙΑC ΕΤ PMB).²³

Evidence collected by Deininger and his arguments indicate that the Latin term provincia (besides concilium) for provincial assembly in the Roman West directly corresponds to the Greek term koinon in the East.²⁴ However, it has been argued that the provincial assemblies of the western provinces did not have the right to mint their own coins.²⁵ Contrary to such suggestions, it has been vaguely hinted that the provincia of the province of Dacia could be the only one in the Latin West striking its own bronze coins during the period from Philip I to Gallien,²⁶ as could be implied by the reverse legend PROVINCIA DACIA. This legend appears on all bronze coins of this mint,²⁷ operating most probably in Sarmizegetusa,²⁸ where the seat of the provincial assembly was also located.²⁹ This would be in perfect accordance with the epigraphical evidence from this site.³⁰

On the other hand, there is an interesting group of bronze coins minted in Viminacium (today Kostolac in Serbien), the capital of the province Moesia Superior,³¹ which should be mentioned in this context. The reverse legend on bronze coins of all denominations³² as well as on medallions³³ of this mint reads P M S COL VIM, which might represent P(rovincia) M(oesia) S(uperior) Col(onia) Vim(inacium). The coins with their varied local reverse

²⁰ SNG Deutschland (Slg. v. Aulock) nos.99-104, 112, 6762 (first half of the third century).

²¹ SNG Deutschland (Slg. v. Aulock) no.3491 (Vespasian).

²² K.Regling, RE XXI, 1921,1054.

²³ SNG Deutschland (Slg. v. Aulock) nos. 99, 102, 103; cf. also no. 6760 (first half of the third century).

²⁴ Deininger (n.7) 140.

²⁵ E.Kornemann, RE IV, 1901,817.

²⁶ B.Pick, Die antiken Münzen Nordgriechenlands, Bd. I. Die antiken Münzen von Dacien und Moesien, Berlin 1898, 2. W.Wruck, 'Zu den Provinzialprägungen der römischen Kaiserzeit', BNZ 1,1952,258. Deininger (n.7) 119 and 170.

²⁷ Pick (n.26) 1.

²⁸ J.Winkler, 'Moneda Provincia Dacia', Studii si cercetari de Numismatica 5,1971,145-161. Contra: J.Fitz, Der Geldumlauf der römischen Provinzen im Donaugebiet Mitte des 3. Jahrhunderts, Bonn/Budapest 1978,636, who suggests that PROVINCIA DACIA coins were also minted in Viminacium. K.Butcher, Roman Provincial Coins: An Introduction to the Greek Imperials, London 1988,65, holds the same opinion.

²⁹ Kornemann, RE IV, 1901,808. Deininger (n.7) 118.

³⁰ For further evidence see Deininger (n.7) 118 and Fishwick (n.3) 302 n.9.

³¹ For the site, see M.Mirković, Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure. Vol. II. Viminacium et Margum, Beograd 1986.

³² For the mint see Pick (n.26) 21.

³³ For the medallions, see P.Kos, 'Medallions of the local mint of Viminacium', forthcoming.

typology³⁴ were minted during the 16 years from Gordian III to Valerian.³⁵ The year of the local era is always noted in the exergue of the coins (AN I - XVI).³⁶ However, the local era was very controversially argued to begin on various dates ranging from July 239 to November 240. Since the coinage of this mint for various emperors and members of the imperial family during different local years denoted in the coins quite often displays a sharp disagreement and incompatibility between the official chronology and the suggested beginning of the local era,³⁷ this complex problem is far from being solved satisfactorily. The exact analysis of the coinage of this mint further indicates a possible operation of the mint only for shorter period(s) during the local year rather than uninterrupted production of bronze coins over the whole year.³⁸

It has usually been suggested that bronze coins were minted in Viminacium either under the jurisdiction of the province of Moesia Superior,³⁹ i.e. under the authority of the provincial governor, or, more commonly, under the control of the town, i.e. the administration of the Roman colony Viminacium.⁴⁰ Surprisingly enough, this coinage has never been considered in connection with the provincial assembly (*concilium provinciae*) of Moesia Superior.

It is significant that on the colonial and civic coinage of the Latin West the Latin term for the province and its name never appears concomitantly with the name of the Roman colony and town.⁴¹ Nor is there any other mention of the province on the non-imperial coinage of the western provinces. The relevant question is, then, why the *PROVINCIA DACIA* and

³⁴ For the reverse types, see B.Borić-Brešković, 'The Reverse Types of the Colonial Coinage of Viminacium', *Zbornik Narodnog muzeja u Beogradu* 12,1986,123-197.

³⁵ With the exception of the local year X.

³⁶ It is not entirely certain if the numbers denoted on the coins should be regarded as representing the colonial or provincial era; cf. D.Kienast, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, Darmstadt 1990,14 n.55. See also S.Dušanić, 'The Era of Viminacium', in: *Frappe et ateliers monétaires dans l'antiquité et moyen âge*, Beograd 1976,53-58.

³⁷ For details, see Kos (n.33).

³⁸ A.Alföldi, 'A gót mozzalom és Dácia feladása', *Archivum Philologicum* 1929-1930,35, argues that the mint operated each year only for a short period of some weeks in July and August. Cf. also Fitz (n.28) 615 n.25. See Kos (n.33).

³⁹ B.V.Head, *Historia Numorum*, Oxford 1911,273. G.Elmer, 'Die Münzprägung von Viminacium und die Zeitrechnung der Provinz Ober-Moesien', *NZ* 68,1935,35-43. B.Saria, *RE* 16,1958,2177. Dušanić (n.36) 53. R.Göbl, *Antike Numismatik*, München 1978,85. K.Butcher, *Roman Provincial Coins: An Introduction to the Greek Imperials*, London 1988,65.

⁴⁰ Wruck (n.26) 258. S.Dušanić, 'The coins of colonia Viminacium and the dates from the Roman history of the middle third century', *Starinar* 12,1961,141-154. B.Borić Brešković, 'Coins of Viminacium in the Collection of Svetozar St.Dušanić', Beograd 1976,11. Borić(n.34) 123. M.Mirković, *Römische Städte an der Donau in Obermoesien*, Beograd 1968,65 n.77. Mirković, *IMS* II, 48 and 50, even incorrectly reads the reverse legend of the coins as *COL VIM P M S*.

⁴¹ The only other mention of the province is found on the mid.third century bronze coins of the mint of Caesarea in Samaria abbreviated as *PR S PAL* (= *Pr(ovinciae) S(yriae) Pal(aestinae)*; *SNG Cop.* no.13; *SNG ANS* 6, New York 1981, no.853). However, it always appears in the genitive, following the name of the colonia Caesarea, thus clearly indicating that the coins were minted under the authority of the town administration.

P(rovincia) M(oesia) S(uperior) are explicitly mentioned only on the reverse legends of the bronze coinage of both Balkan mints?

Curiously enough, little thought has ever been devoted to the fact that two mints were operating simultaneously in Viminacium. The mint for bronze coinage was operating in Viminacium in the period from 239/240 to 254/255⁴² and the imperial mint of antoniniani was active in the period from 246 (248) to 257.⁴³

The seat of the provincial assembly was very often located in the same town where the residence of the provincial governor was located⁴⁴ but in spite of that fact the provincial assemblies always retained full autonomy vis-a-vis the provincial government, including the right to mint their own coins.⁴⁵ I believe, therefore, that the simultaneous striking of imperial antoniniani and bronze coins in two mints in the same Roman town (Viminacium) reflects exactly such parallel functioning of two institutions of the province of Moesia Superior which were independent of each other.

Additionally, indications that the mint of the bronze coinage in Viminacium did not operate throughout the entire year could further imply that these coins were struck under the jurisdiction of the provincia of the province.

The epigraphic evidence also indicates that the name of the province, following one of the Latin terms for the provincial assembly, provincia, always appears in the nominative case (for instance, provincia Britannia⁴⁶ or provincia Asia).⁴⁷ The reverse legends on the bronze coins of provincia Dacia and provincia Moesia Superior correspond to the evidence in this respect and are therefore very supportive of the suggestion that these coins had been minted under the authority of the provincial assemblies of both provinces. Whereas on the coins of the first group (Dacia) only the Latin term for the provincial assembly and the name of the province are mentioned, the Latin term for the colony and its name additionally appears on the reverse legend of the second group of bronze coins (Viminacium), both in the nominative case, thus indicating the actual minting site of the coins.

I believe, therefore, that in the two Balkan, easternmost provinces of the Latin West, Dacia and Moesia Superior, the provincial assemblies were minting bronze coins during the

⁴² Kos (n.33).

⁴³ Fitz (n.28) 634 and 665-680. According to the argumentation of W.Szaivert, 'Der Beginn der Antoninianprägung in Viminacium', *Litterae Numismaticae Vindobonenses* 2,1983,61-67, it was Pacatianus who opened the antoniniani mint.

⁴⁴ There are also, however, exceptions such as can be seen in Pannonia Superior where the seat of the provincial assembly was located in Savaria and not in the provincial capital of Carnuntum (Deininger (n.7) 144), or in Pannonia Inferior where it was excavated in Gorsium (Fitz (n.8) 329-369) and hence had not been assembled at Aquincum as had been suggested earlier (A.Alföldi, *Epigraphica*, AÉrt. 3,1940,214. Cp. also Deininger (n.7) 117). Fitz (n.8) 368, argues that in the Danubian provinces the seat of the concilium provinciae was never in the same town as the seat of the provincial administration.

⁴⁵ Deininger (n.7) 52.

⁴⁶ CIL XI 383.

⁴⁷ CIL VI 3835.

mid third century, undoubtedly under the influence of the neighbouring Roman eastern provinces.

The minting of coins in Viminacium under the authority of the provincial assembly, therefore, weighs heavily in favour of the view that the *concilium provinciae* of the province of Moesia Superior in mid third century did not convene either in Remesiana, Naissus nor in Ulpiana,⁴⁸ all rather unimportant towns on the eastern outskirts of the province, but rather in Viminacium, the capital of the province, although it had been awarded municipal rights only under Hadrian. This should perhaps be emphasized as the provincial assemblies of all other Danubian provinces were established on the territories of *municipium* or *colonia* under Trajan.⁴⁹

There are, however, many questions connected with the coinage of the provincial assemblies during the Roman Empire which have not yet been properly dealt with, such as what was the reason and purpose of the production of these coins?⁵⁰ A pattern of issues of variable size separated by variable intervals is typical for the production of the eastern koina coinage. Whereas the coinage of many eastern provincial assemblies had already ended during the second century there were nonetheless provincial assemblies that minted coins until the mid-third century⁵¹ when the imperial cult was already declining. One of the latter ones was the provincial assembly of the province Moesia Superior for which the production of bronze coinage of a considerable extent is documented. It seems that coins were minted for financing the activities of *concilium provinciae* but also on the occasion of various festivals prescribed for observance in connection with the imperial cult (birthdays of members of the imperial family, *dies imperii*, various victories).⁵² They were probably meant to finance such festivities but it can well be imagined that the bronze coins were also distributed on such occasions among the inhabitants, as the case of Ephesus, documenting a *donativum* of one denarius per inhabitant on the birthday of Antoninus Pius in 138, could clearly imply.⁵³

Coin Cabinet, Narodni muzej, Ljubljana

Peter Kos

⁴⁸ For both towns see Petrović (n.3) 89 (Naissus), 108 (Remesiana) and 129 (Ulpiana).

⁴⁹ Cp. Fitz (n.8) 368.

⁵⁰ Deininger (n.7) 170-172. For various ideas on provincial coinage in general, see C.J.Howgego, *Greek Imperial Countermarks. Studies in the Provincial Coinage of the Roman Empire*, London 1985, especially for its context and function 83-99.

⁵¹ Deininger (n.7) 170.

⁵² D.Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West. Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire*, Vol. II/1, Leiden 1991,475.

⁵³ W.Dittenberger, *Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae*, Leipzig 1905,493.