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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). 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, which - according to him - would confirm the existence of the provincial assembly of the province in this Roman municipium on the eastern border of Moesia Superior. His suggestion was further reinforced by the discovery of two other inscriptions from Remesiana dedicated in 202 to Septimius Severus and Iulia Domna by the town of Ulpiana. A third inscription with the same dedication and also dating to 202 was found at Remesiana in 1934, 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, but, on the other hand, sceptical views have also been expressed which consider the existing evidence as far from satisfactory or even decisive.

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. The inscription has been
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). 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. The interpolation between individual words appears several times on the inscription; therefore it seems almost certain that the use of the interpolation between P, I and M implies the abbreviation of three words rather than two as suggested by Mirković. 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, but could simply be connected to the imperial cult in a broader sense. 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 Remesiana that the concilium provinciae of Moesia Superior would most probably have assembled in Ulpiana (Gračanica in Serbia), a municipium since the period of Trajan.

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. These coins were struck by the koina only occasionally, usually in connection with the imperial cult or at the period of the assembly of the concilium provinciae.

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

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10 Mirković (n.5) 89.
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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.
19 Regling, RE XXI, 1921,1054.
The Provincia Moesia Superior in Viminacium

instance, ΚΟΙΝΟΝ ΠΟΝΤΟΥ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΕΩΣ ΝΕΟΚΑΙΣΑΡ(Ε)ΙΑΣ,²⁰ or in the nominative (for instance, ΚΟΙΝΟΝ ΦΡΥΤΙΑΣ ΑΠΑΜΕΙΚ),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, ΚΟΙΝΟΝ ΠΟΝΤΟΥ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΕΩΣ ΝΕΟΚΑΙΣΑΡΙΑΚ ΕΤ ΡΜΒ).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 PROVINCI A 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

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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.
²⁷ Pick (n.26) 1.
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.
³² For the mint see Pick (n.26) 21.
³³ For the medallions, see P.Kos, 'Medallions of the local mint of Viminacium', forthcoming.
typology were minted during the 16 years from Gordian III to Valerian. The year of the local era is always noted in the exergue of the coins (AN I - XVI). 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, this complex problem in 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.

It has usually been suggested that bronze coins were minted in Viminacium either under the jurisdiction of the province of Moesia Superior, 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. 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. 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

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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 mozgalom 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).
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 254/255\(^{42}\) 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 located\(^{44}\) 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 Britannia\(^{46}\) 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 Numismatiae 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, 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.

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? 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 century 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). 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.

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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
53 W.Dittenberger, Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae, Leipzig 1905,493.