

KNOWN HOARD, UNKNOWN SETTLEMENT: A DACIAN HOARD WITH ROMAN COINS DISCOVERED IN MIHĂEȘTI COMMUNE, VÂLCEA COUNTY*

Silviu Istrate Purece**

*Cuvinte cheie: tezaur, monede romane republicane, monede romane imperiale, așezare dacică, monede arse, Oltenia.
Keywords: hoard, Roman Republican coins, Roman Imperial coins, Dacian settlement, burned coins, Oltenia.*

(Abstract)

In 2022, a hoard containing 20 Roman Republican and Imperial denarii was discovered in Mihăești Commune, Vâlcea County, using a metal detector. The coins date from the period situated between 90 BC and 80 AD, with nearly half – nine coins – issued during the reigns of Vespasianus and Titus. The latest coins in the hoard were minted during the reign of Titus for Domitian. It is highly likely that the hoard originated from a Dacian settlement, as a ceramic fragment and a piece of burnt clay from a dwelling wall were also recovered with the coins. The coins were likely burned either as a result of a fire that consumed the structure they were stored in or during a ritual context.

In December 2022, a hoard containing 20 silver coins was discovered with the help of a metal detector “in the vicinity of Mihăești commune”, “in a forested area”. The hoard was handed over to the Vâlcea County Museum at the beginning of February 2023. Along with the coins, a piece of burnt clay and a coarse, gray ceramic fragment were also found. Unfortunately, the ceramic fragment does not permit precise typological classification.

CATALOG

1. Q. TITI

Obv. – / Rev. [Q·TI]T[I]

Wreathed head of young Bacchus (or Liber) right / Pegasus springing right on tablet inscribed.

D, RRC 341/2, 90 BC, Rome, weight 3.10 g, axis 9, dimensions 17.6 × 16.5 mm (11).

Circular incision behind the head on the obverse, possibly in the shape of a horseshoe – the right edges are thickened. “Sc” engraved mark behind the head on the obverse.

2. M. CATO

Obv. [RO]MA / [M CATO] / Rev. VICTRIX

Female bust (Rome?), right, draped, hair tied with

band / Victory, seated right; holding patera in right hand and palm-branch in left hand, over left shoulder.

D, RRC 343/1b, 89 BC, Rome, weight 3.07 g, axis 12, dimensions 16,2 × 13,8 mm (9).

3. L. TITURIUS L. F. SABINUS

Obv. SABIN / Rev. L. TITVRI

Bearded head of King Tatius, right, palm-branch / Two soldiers left and right, each carrying off a Sabine woman.

D, RRC 344/1b, 89 BC, Rome, weight 3.26 g, axis 5, dimensions 18.6 × 17.6 mm (4).

4. L. CENSOR

Obv. – / Rev. L• CENSOR

Laureate head of Apollo, right / Marsyas, bald-headed, walking left, with right arm raised and holding wine-skin over left shoulder; behind, column bearing statue of Victory.

Countermark in the shape of a horseshoe placed behind Apollo's head.

D, RRC 363/1d, 82 BC, Rome, weight 3.10 g, axis 9, dimensions 16.5 × 16.2 mm (15).

5. L. CORNELIUS SULLA FELIX

Obv. – / Rev. Q

* Project financed by Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu (Knowledge Transfer Center) & Hasso Plattner Foundation research grants LBUS-HPI-ERG–2023-07.

** Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, B-dul Victoriei, nr. 5–7, Sibiu; silviu.purece@ulbsibiu.ro.

Head of Venus, right, wearing diadem / Double *cornucopiae*.

D, RRC 375/2, 81 BC, Rome, weight 3.43 g, axis 12, dimensions 17.1 × 16.1 mm (10).

6. L. LUCRETI TRIO

Obv. XXV / Rev. L.LVCRETI / TRIO

Laureate head of Neptune, right, with trident over shoulder / Winged boy on dolphin speeding right. D, RRC 390/2, 76 BC, Rome, weight 3.07 g, axis 3, dimensions 18.5 × 17.9 mm (17).

7. P. CLODIUS

Obv. – / Rev. [P. C]LODIVS / M.F

Laureate head of Apollo, right; lyre behind the head / Diana standing facing, with bow and quiver over shoulder, holding lighted torch in each hand; the bow and quiver on the shoulder on the reverse are missing due to the break.

Broken coin, D, RRC 494/23, 42 BC, Rome, weight 2.80 g, axis 12, dimensions 17.8 × ? fragment (16).

8. L. MUSSIDIUS T. F. LONGUS

Obv. CONCORDIA / Rev. L•MVSSIDIUS•LONGVS/CLOACIN

Head of Concordia, right, wearing veil / Shrine of Venus Cloacina, inscribed.

D, RRC 494/42, 42 BC, Rome, weight 3.13 g, axis 10, dimensions 20.8 × 18.4 mm (13).

9. MARCVS ANTONIVS

Obv. [ANT AVG] / III VIR•R•P•C / Rev. LEG-IV Ship, right, with sceptre tied with fillet on prow / Aquila between two standards.

D, RRC 544/17, 32–31 BC, Patras?, weight 2.86 g, axis 9, dimensions 17 × 16.8 mm (6).

10. TIBERIVS

Obv. TI CAESAR DIVI / AVG F AVGVSTVS / Rev. PONTIF – MAXIM

Head of Tiberius, laureate, right / Female figure, draped, right, seated, right on chair with plain legs, holding branch and long sceptre.

D, RIC I/26, 14–37, Lugdunum, weight 3.45 g, axis 6, dimensions 18 × 17.9 mm (2).

Behind the head is a circular countermark.

11. TIBERIVS

Obv. TI CAESAR DIVI / AVG F AVGVSTVS / Rev. PONTIF – [M]AXIM

Head of Tiberius, laureate, right / Female figure, draped, right, seated, right on chair with plain legs, holding branch and long sceptre.

D, RIC I/26, 14–37, Lugdunum, weight 3.39 g, axis 12, dimensions 18 × 17.9 mm (8).

12. VESPASIANVS

Obv. IMP CAESA[R VESPASIANVS] AVG / Rev. COS ITE-R-T-R POT

Head of Vespasian, laureate, right / Pax, draped, standing left, holding branch in right hand and winged caduceus in left.

D, RIC II/9, 69–71 and RIC II.1 (second edition)/27, 70, Rome, weight 2.22 g, axis 6, dimensions 18.1 × 16.5 mm (5).

13. VESPASIANVS

Obv. IMP CAES VESP-AVG P M / Rev. TRI-POT Head of Vespasian, laureate, right / Vesta, draped, seated left, holding *simpulum* in extended right hand, left hand at side.

D, RIC II/37, 70–72 and RIC II.1 (second edition)/46, 71, Rome, weight 2.14 g, axis 6, dimensions 17.1 × 16.4 mm (18).

Coin with a broken edge.

14. VESPASIANVS

Obv. IMP CAES VESP AVG P M COS IIII / Rev. AVGVR / TRI POT

Head of Vespasian, laureate, right / *Simpulum*, sprinkler, jug, and *lituus*.

D, RIC II/42 and RIC II.1 (second edition)/356, 72–73, Rome, weight 2.38 g, axis 6, dimensions 18.4 × 16.5 mm (1).

15. VESPASIANVS

Obv. IMP CAES VESP AVG P M COS IIII CEN / Rev. SALVS AVG

Head of Vespasian, laureate, right / Salus seated left, holding patera.

D, RIC II/58 and RIC II.1 (second edition)/522, 73, Rome, weight 2.62 g, axis 6, dimensions 20.2 × 18.8 mm (3).

16. VESPASIANVS

Obv. IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG / Rev. PON MAX TP COS VI

Head of Vespasian, laureate, right / Pax, naked to waist, seated left, holding branch in right hand, left hand in lap.

D, RIC II/91 and RIC II.1 (second edition)/772, 75, Rome, weight 2.34 g, axis 6, dimensions 18,6 × 18 mm (7).

17. VESPASIANVS

Obv. IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG / Rev. COS VIII

Head of Vespasian, laureate, left / Prow right; above, star with eight rays.

D, RIC II / 108 and RIC II.1 (second edition) / 941, 77–78, Rome, weight 2.38 g, axis 6, dimensions 17,6x16,9 mm (19).

18. VESPASIANVS: TITVS

Obv. T CAESAR VESPASIANVS / Rev. ANNONA-AVG

Head of Titus, laureate, right / Annona, draped, seated left on throne, feet on stool, holding on her lap a sack of corn-ears open, holding the ties in her hands.

D, RIC II/218, 78–79 and RIC II.1 (second edition)/972, 77–78, Rome, weight 2.37 g, axis 6, dimensions 17.7 × 17.2 mm (20).

Coin broken in half.

19. TITVS:

DOMITIANVS

Obv. CAESAR AVG F DOMITIANVS COS VII / Rev. PRINCEPS-IVVENTVTIS

Head of Domitian, laureate, right / Salus standing right, leaning on column, feeding snake with patera.

D, RIC II/40 and RIC II.1 (second edition)/97, 80, Rome, weight 2.69 g, axis 6, dimensions 18.7 × 17.9 mm (14).

20. TITVS: DOMITIANVS

Obv. CAESAR DIVI F DOMITIANVS COS VII / Rev. PRINCEPS IVV[ENTVTIS]

Head of Domitian, laureate, right / Altar garlanded and lighted, horns left and right.

D, RIC II/50, 80 and RIC II.1 (second edition)/266, 80–81, Rome, weight 2.81 g, axis 6, dimensions 16.6 × 15.1 mm (12).

The coins in the hoard span a chronological range of nearly 100 years (90 BC – 80 AD), with 9 of them being Roman Republican denarii and 11 Roman Imperial denarii. The Roman Republican denarii show intense signs of wear. The group is dominated by coins dated to the chronological interval 90–81 BC, representing over half of it.

For the imperial coins, it can be observed that only monetary issues from the reigns of three emperors are present: Tiberius – 2 coins, Vespasianus – 7 coins (with 1 issued for Titus), and Titus – 2 coins (with 2 issued for Domitianus). As can be seen, Vespasianus's coins dominate the hoard. From Titus's reign, only coins minted for Domitianus are included in the hoard. It is clear that Tiberius's coins are more closely associated with the Republican group, appearing to continue it, as there is a considerable chronological gap between his issues and those of Vespasianus. It seems that the coins issued by Vespasianus and Titus were added to an already established older group, now forming nearly half of the hoard.

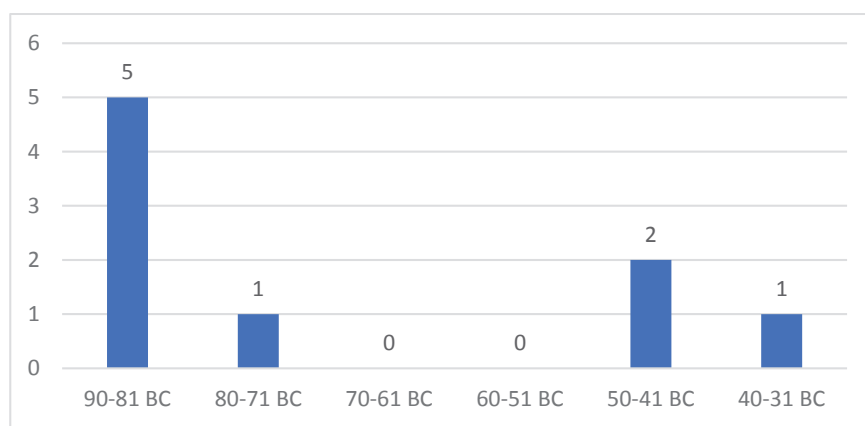


Fig. 1 Chronological distribution of the Roman Republican denarii

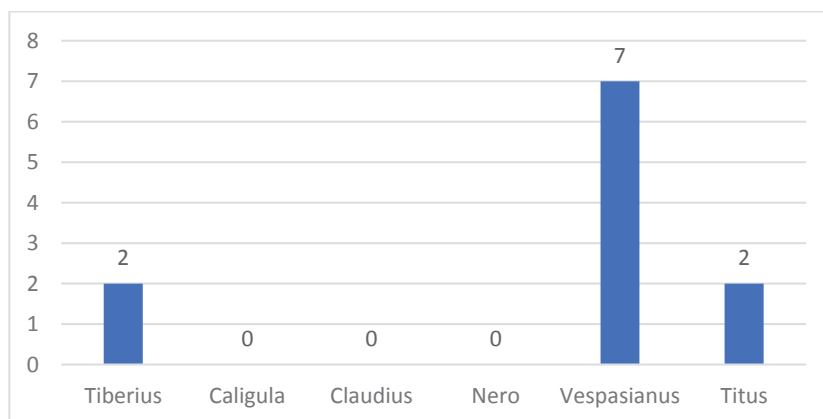


Fig. 2 Repartition by emperor of Roman Imperial denarii

Few hoards ending with coin issues from Titus are found in the Dacian territory, and those containing coins from Domitianus are also relatively rare¹. Unfortunately, many hoards containing both Republican and Imperial coins are fragmentary, making it difficult to determine their exact composition. An example is the Hațeg hoard, from which

¹ Moasil-Depeyrot 2003, 192–193; Părpăuță 2006, 140.

only 10 coins are known, the group ending with coins from Titus and including two pieces issued by him for Domitianus².

All the coins in the hoard show traces of burning, having been affected by fire. The coins likely came into contact with fire due to being in a structure that caught fire, though we cannot rule out the possibility that they may have been used in certain religious rituals. Coins affected by fire frequently appear in Dacian settlements; a relevant case near the area where the hoard was found is the Dacian site at Ocnița-Cosota³ (Buridava⁴), where isolated coins⁵ and a hoard⁶ show signs of contact with fire.

Considering that the coins were recovered along with a piece of burned clay, likely part of a dwelling wall, and a ceramic fragment, it is very probable that the hoard originated from a settlement. It is unlikely that the ceramic fragment was part of a container that held the hoard, as the discoverers would likely have noticed any such vessel. The ceramic fragment most likely came from a habitation layer disrupted by the finders' intervention.

Given that many Dacian artifact spots⁷ have been identified on the territory of Mihăești Commune, some designated as sites and included in the list of historical monuments, it is highly likely that the hoard originated from a settlement. The presence of Roman Republican and Imperial coins in the area is also known⁸, closely linked to Dacian habitation sites in the region.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Berciu 1981
Dumitru Berciu, *Buridava dacică*, București (1981).
- Berciu *et alii* 1987
Dumitru Berciu, Bucur Mitrea, Sergiu Purice, Mariana Iosifaru, Gheorghe Andreescu, Descoperiri și însemnări de la Buridava dacică. V, *Thraco-Dacica* 8, 1–2 (1987), 154–161.
- Iosifaru 2011
Mariana Iosifaru, Situri arheologice din orașul Ocnele Mari, județul Vâlcea, *Buridava* 31 (2011), 82–94.
- Moisil-Depeyrot 2003
Delia Moisil, Georges Depeyrot, *Les trésors de deniers antérieurs à Trajan en Roumanie*, Wetteren (2003).
- Părpăuță 2006
Tiberius Părpăuță, *Moneda în Dacia preromană. Secolele IV a. Chr. – I p. Chr.*, Iași (2023).
- Pătroi 2020
Cătălin Nicolae Pătroi, *Dacii din Oltenia. Repertoriul de așezări și descoperiri înainte de cucerirea romană*, Drobeta Turnu Severin (2020).
- Petre-Govora 1970
Gheorghe Petre-Govora, Descoperiri arheologice din epoca fierului în județul Vâlcea, *Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice* 9 (1970), 467–489.
- Poenaru Bordea, Chițu 1976–1980
Gheorghe Poenaru Bordea, Ștefan Chițu, Denarii romani din vechi descoperiri monetare, *Buletinul Societății Numismatice Române* 70–74 (1976–1980), 161–169.
- Preda 1998
Constantin Preda, *Istoria monedei în Dacia preromană*, București (1998).
- Purece 2023
Silviu Istrate Purece, Between Archaeology and Metal Detecting. Ancient Coins from Ocnița-Buridava, *Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology* 10.4 (2023), 142–160.
- Winkler 1980
Iudita Winkler, Contribuții numismatice la istoria Daciei în secolul I e.n., *Cercetări Numismatice* 3 (1980), 33–50.

² Winkler 1980, 38, 40; Moisil-Depeyrot 2003, 192–193.

³ Iosifaru 2011, 83–86.

⁴ Berciu 1981, 8.

⁵ Purece 2023, 143, 150, 151.

⁶ Purece 2023, 144–151; Berciu *et alii* 1987, 158–160.

⁷ Pătroi 2020, 421, 491; Petre-Govora 1970, 474–480.

⁸ Poenaru Bordea – Chițu 1976–1980, 161–169; Preda 1998, 305.



Pl. I. The Dacian Hoard with Roman Coins Discovered in Mihăești Commune (Vâlcea County)

