

NOTAE NUMISMATICAE

ZAPISKI NUMIZMATYCZNE



Tom XVI

MUZEUM NARODOWE W KRAKOWIE
SEKCJA NUMIZMATYCZNA
KOMISJI ARCHEOLOGICZNEJ PAN
ODDZIAŁ W KRAKOWIE

Kraków 2021

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SPIS TREŚCI / CONTENTS

- 9 Od redakcji
10 From the Editors

ARTYKUŁY / ARTICLES

- SŁAWOMIR SPRAWSKI
13 *The Temenidae, Who Came Out of Argos. Literary Sources and Numismatic Evidence on the Macedonian Dynastic Traditions*
Temenidzi, którzy przybyli z Argos. Macedońskie tradycje dynastyczne w źródłach literackich i świadectwach numizmatycznych
- CATHARINE C. LORBER
43 *A Die Study of the Silver Staters (Didrachms) of Thessalian Larissa*
Studium powiązań stempli srebrnych staterów (didrachm) tesalskiej Larissy
- JAROSŁAW BODZEK
77 *The Sabakes' "Owl" from the Collection of the District Museum in Toruń and Some Notes on the Coinage of the Penultimate Achaemenid Satrap of Egypt*
„Sówka” Sabakesa ze zbiorów Muzeum Okręgowego w Toruniu i kilka uwag na temat mennictwa przedostatniego achemenidzkiego satrapy Egiptu
- ÖMER TATAR
97 *Two Rare Shield/Helmet Type Macedonian Regal Bronze Coins from the Collection of the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara*
Dwie rzadkie królewskie monety macedońskie typu „tarcza/helm” z kolekcji Muzeum Anatolijskich Cywilizacji w Ankarze
- ANNA ANZORGE-POTRZEBOWSKA
107 *On the Search for *Damnatio Memoriae* on Ancient Roman Numismatic Artefacts. Research Assumptions*
O poszukiwaniach damnatio memoriae na starożytnych rzymskich numizmatach. Postulaty badawcze
- PIOTR JAWORSKI
125 *Reading the History of the Roman Fort in Apsaros (Autonomous Republic of Adjara, Georgia) from a Numismatic Perspective*
Odczytując historię rzymskiego fortu w Apsaros (Adżarska Republika Autonomiczna, Gruzja) z perspektywy numizmatycznej

- 143 PRZEMYSŁAW DULĘBA, ANDRZEJ ROMANOWSKI
New Finds of Roman Coins from the Przeworsk Culture Settlements
in the Nidzica and Szreniawa River Basins
*Nowe znaleziska monet rzymskich na osadach kultury przeworskiej w dorzeczu
Nidzicy i Szreniawy*
- 177 DAGMAR GROSSMANNOVÁ
Finds of Byzantine Coins in the Collection of the Moravian Museum.
A Contribution to the Completion of the Register of Byzantine Coins in Moravia
*Znaleziska monet bizantyńskich w kolekcji Morawskiego Muzeum Krajowego.
Przyczynek do uzupełnienia rejestru monet bizantyńskich na Morawach*
- 201 DOROTA MALARCZYK, ŁUKASZ MIECHOWICZ, SYLWIA WAJDA
Dirham Imitations and Glass Beads from the 10th Century Discovered
in an Early Medieval Building in Kłodnica, Municipality of Wilków, Lublin
Voivodeship
*Naśladownictwa dirhamów i szklane paciorki z X w. odkryte we wczesno-
średniowiecznym budynku w Kłodnicy, gm. Wilków, woj. lubelskie*
- 225 ANNA BOCHNAK
Drohiczyn-type Small Lead Seals with the Image of a Bird from the Collection
of the National Museum in Krakow. Old Ruthenian Sigillography Versus Early
Piast Numismatics
*Plomby typu drohiczyńskiego z wyobrażeniem ptaka w kolekcji Muzeum
Narodowego w Krakowie. Staroruska sfragistyka versus wczesnopiastowska
numizmatyka*
- 243 LILIA DERGACIOVA, IRINA STANKIEWICZ
Coin Hoard of Moldovan Copper Coins Found in the Belgorod Fortress
on the Dniester River (Ukraine)
*Skarb miedzianych monet moldawskich znaleziony na terenie twierdzy Białogród
nad Dniestrem (Ukraina)*
- 261 ELŻBIETA M. KŁOSIŃSKA, BORYS PASZKIEWICZ
A Coin Hoard from the 16th Century Found During Archaeological Excavations
at Perespa, and Its Context
*Zbiór monet z XVI w. znalezione podczas wykopalisk archeologicznych
w Perespie i jego kontekst*

RECENZJE / REVIEWS

- 301 JAROSŁAW BODZEK
HAIM GITLER, OREN TAL, *The Nablus 1968 Hoard. A Study of Monetary
Circulation in the Late Fourth and Early Third Centuries BCE. Southern Levant,*

with contribution of ARNOLD SPEAR and SYLVIA HURTER, DANA ASHKENAZI and ADIN STERN, *Numismatic Notes and Monographs* 171, The American Numismatic Society, New York 2019, 209 pages, 41 plates; ISBN 978-0-89722-360-7; ISSN 0078-2718

JAROSŁAW BODZEK

- 307 CATHARINE C. LORBER, *Coins of the Ptolemaic Empire. Part I: Ptolemy I through Ptolemy IV. Volume 1: Precious Metal, Volume 2: Bronze*, The American Numismatic Society, New York 2018, 625 and 205 pages, 76 and 46 plates; ISBN 978-0-89722-332-4

BARBARA ZAJĄC

- 312 RENATA CIOŁEK, ROKSANA CHOWANIEC (eds.), *Aleksandria. Studies on Items, Ideas and History Dedicated to Professor Aleksander Bursche on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2021, 446 pages; ISBN 978-3-447-11554-4; DOI: 10.2307/j.ctv1h9djth

ALESSANDRA MAGNI

- 322 PAWEŁ GOŁYŻNIAK, *Engraved Gems and Propaganda in the Roman Republic and under Augustus*, Archaeopress Roman Archaeology 65, Archaeopress, Oxford 2020, 618 pages, 1015 figures; ISBN 978-1-78969-539-7

KATARZYNA BALBUZA

- 328 RICHARD ANTHONY ABDY and PETER FRANZ MITTAG, *The Roman Imperial Coinage, Volume II, Part 3: From AD 117–138, Hadrian*, Spink, London 2019, 332 pages, 218 plates, indices; ISBN 978-1-912667-18-5

BARBARA ZAJĄC

- 333 MATEUSZ BOGUCKI, ARKADIUSZ DYMOWSKI, GRZEGORZ ŚNIEŻKO (eds.) *Slivers of Antiquity. The Use of Ancient Coins in Central, Eastern and Northern Europe in the Medieval and Modern Periods / Okruchy starożytności. Użytkowanie monet antycznych w Europie Środkowej, Wschodniej i Północnej w średniowieczu i okresie nowożytnym*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2020, 444 pages, 1 map; ISBN 978-83-235-4697-9; DOI: 10.31338/uw.9788323547051

KRONIKA / CHRONICLE

MATEUSZ WOŹNIAK

- 341 Kronika Gabinetu Numizmatycznego Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie (2020)
345 The Chronicle of the Numismatic Cabinet of the National Museum
in Krakow (2020)

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Reading the History of the Roman Fort in Apsaros (Autonomous Republic of Adjara, Georgia) from a Numismatic Perspective*

ABSTRACT: An analysis of coin finds recovered in recent years from the area of the former Roman fort in Apsaros (Gonio, Georgia), allows us to look at the periodization of the history of the Roman military presence in this place from a new perspective. The chronological structure of silver and bronze coins, including those found individually, in hoards and in small foundation deposits, clearly indicates the existence of only a few stages of increased coin inflow in the almost two-hundred-year history of the presence of Roman army units in Apsaros. All of them coincide with important military events in the East and seem to be a testimony to the periodic concentration of Roman troops in the fort. Between the waves of monetary inflow, one can easily observe periods in which coins only reached Apsaros to a limited extent. The aim of the paper is an attempt to interpret the main waves of coins entering the fort in Apsaros in a historical context.

KEY WORDS: Colchis, Apsaros, Trapezus, Caesarea in Cappadocia

ABSTRAKT: *Odczytując historię rzymskiego fortu w Apsaros (Adżarska Republika Autonomiczna, Gruzja) z perspektywy numizmatycznej*

Analiza monet znalezionych w ostatnich latach na terenie dawnego rzymskiego fortu w Apsaros (Gonio, Gruzja) pozwala spojrzeć na periodyzację dziejów rzymskiej obecności wojskowej w tym miejscu z nowej perspektywy. Struktura chronologiczna srebrnych i brązowych monet, zarówno znalezisk pojedynczych,

* The research on which this article is based was made possible through financial support from the National Science Centre in Poland UMO-2017/26/M/HS3/00758.

jak i wchodzących w skład kilku skarbów i depozytów fundacyjnych, wskazuje wyraźnie na istnienie zaledwie kilku fal wzmożonego napływu monet w blisko dwustuletniej historii stacjonowania rzymskiego garnizonu w Apsaros. Wszystkie one odpowiadają ważnym wydarzeniom militarnym na Wschodzie i wydają się być świadectwem okresowej koncentracji oddziałów rzymskiej armii w forcie. Pomiedzy falami napływu monet można wyróżnić okresy, w których trafiały one do Apsaros jedynie w ograniczonym zakresie. Celem artykułu jest próba interpretacji głównych etapów napływu monet do fortu w Apsaros w kontekście historycznym.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Kolchida, Apsaros, Trapezunt, Cezarea w Kapadocji

The Roman fort in Apsaros was an outpost situated on the extreme fringe of the northeastern sector of the Roman frontier, on the Colchian coast of the Black Sea, in the territory of modern Georgia (now known as Gonio). An analysis of more than two hundred coin finds from recent excavations in the area of the former Roman settlement in Apsaros provides an insight into the almost two-hundred-year history of the Roman military presence here and its phasing from a new perspective.¹ The chronological structure of silver and bronze coins, found individually as well as in hoards and small foundation deposits, clearly shows just a few peaks in the flow of coins to Apsaros during this period (Pl. 1, Chart 1). They seem to coincide with important military events in the east of the Empire and apparently testify to periodic concentrations of Roman troops in the fort. Between the waves of monetary inflow, one can easily observe periods during which coins only reached Apsaros to a limited extent. My focus in this paper is to interpret the main waves of coin entering the fort of Apsaros in a historical context.

The oldest mention of the Apsaros fort in the written sources is by Pliny the Elder from AD 77.² It obviously post-dates the building of the fort. Thus, the first question to be asked of the monetary evidence is: does it reflect the date and circumstances of the first military foundation, the first spade in the ground so to speak.

The oldest bronze coin discovered at Apsaros was struck for Alexander III in the end of the 4th century BC in Macedonia.³ Thus, it would support the ancient legend of the place quoted by Arrian in his *periplus*,⁴ namely, that it was here that the mythical Apsyrtos was killed by Medea and his tomb still stood there in the

¹ Polish-Georgian archaeological excavations in Apsaros have been carried out since 2014 in the central part of the Roman fort under the supervision of Shota Mamuladze and Radosław Karasiewicz-Szczypiorski, to whom I would like to express my gratitude for making the coins available and for their constant support for numismatic research.

² Plin. *HN* 6, 12.

³ Specimen in the collection of the Gonio-Apsaros Archaeological-Architectural Museum Reserve: VARSHALOMIDZE 2009: 8 (as Antigonos II Gonatas).

⁴ Arr. *Peripl.* 6.iii.

times of Hadrian. Regardless of the nature of the settlement in this spot, the singular character of this coin find does not allow any further conclusions to be drawn about the monetarization of the local economy in pre-Roman times.

The first significant peak in the flow of coins to Apsaros falls to the rule of Nero. Three groups of silver coins may be distinguished. The first, represented by singular finds, are drachms and the more frequent hemidrachms from the mint operating in Caesarea in Cappadocia. The latter are dated AD 58–60 and commemorate Corbulo's victory over the Parthians in the war for Armenia (Pl. 2, Figs. 1A–B). The second group are made up of four drachms of Polemo II from the end of the 50s.⁵ All four were part of a hoard discovered at Apsaros in 1998,⁶ a hoard which, as it will be explained below, was deposited around the middle of the 3rd century AD. Interestingly, all of Polemo's coins, already 200 years old when they were hidden, demonstrated no signs of having been in circulation. Their thesaurizing function is thus confirmed, since the coins from hoards having been either very quickly withdrawn from regular circulation or even never having entered it in the first place. Otherwise in the case of two denarii of Tiberius from the mint in Rome, one found in this hoard and the other as a loose find, are hence lost coins. They are both worn from use. It is more than likely that both reached Apsaros at the time of Corbulo's campaign, that is, preceding Nero's monetary reform of AD 64 and its consequences for silver coin circulation in the East.

Of key importance for a discussion of the beginnings of the first fort in Apsaros are the results of recent excavations in the remains of a building phase 1 (Table 1).⁷ Characteristic architectural installations support the interpretation of this building as a *horreum*. Two Neronian hemidrachms of the kind described above, commemorating the victory over the Parthians, were found together in the structure of one of the buttresses.⁸ From an ideological point of view, the image of Victory on the reverse of the two coins emphasizes the intentional character of the deposition of these coins in the wall of the building under construction. With Nero's portrait on the coins, this deposition could not have happened after the emperor's death given that he had suffered *damnatio memoriae*. Therefore, the date of the foundation of the fort in Apsaros can be placed in the early 60s, perhaps closer to AD 64, which is when Rome finally incorporated all of Pontus.⁹

⁵ VARSHALOMIDZE 2009: 29–30.

⁶ *Ibidem*: 28–47, no. 63 (in Georgian) and 87, 88 (summary in English).

⁷ On the Neronian phase of the Apsaros fort: KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI and MAMULADZE 2019. More on the results of earlier excavations, see: KAKHIDZE and MAMULADZE 2016: 159–169; GEYER (ed.) 2003; KAKHIDZE 2003; KAKHIDZE et AL 2002.

⁸ Foundation deposit 1 (see Table 1). In 2019 another Neronian deposit was found by the Georgian team in a sector SO-XII (foundation deposit 2, cf., Table 1), to be published soon.

⁹ BRAUND 1994: 175–176. On the Roman policy in the 1st c. South Caucasus, see i.a.: DĄBROWA 1989; KOLENDO 1982; DĄBROWA 1980.

There are two distinctive peaks in the chart showing the frequency of monetary finds from Apsaros (see Pl. 1, Chart 1). These peaks seem to correspond to the inflow of bronze coins in the second half of the 1st century AD. Without exception, these are loose finds. A few coins were struck in Nero's time, more than 30 under Flavian rule. Making up this group are bronzes having a diameter of 17–20 mm, although some coins also represent larger modules. A few of these coins were struck in Judea, one in the Dekapolis, one in Samaria and the rest, representing the so-called “SC” series, in Antioch on the Orontes (Pl. 2, Figs. 2A–B). The latter group presumably encompasses a few dozen pieces that are illegible but have the same metrological features (these have not been charted in Chart 1). The principal question in the case of this specific group of bronzes imported from distant Levantine centres is when and under what circumstances were they incorporated into local monetary circulation.

Christopher Howgego wrote: “Every major movement of coin outside a natural geographical area of circulation may be tied to a specific military occasion”.¹⁰ The poor monetarization of the local economy in Apsaros at the dawn of the Roman presence would have necessitated presumably the circulation of considerable quantities of foreign bronze issues to meet the army's needs. It seems reasonable to suppose that the soldiers could carry out certain transactions using small change, as a part of a market related to the functioning of the fort, especially during larger military operations, and the supply network for Colchis garrisons, and, to some extent, also the commerce operating around the Black Sea coast. Irine Varshalomidze interpreted finds of bronze coinage of Antioch and Judea in Apsaros in the context of the presence of Roman legions engaged in military action in Judea during the rule of the Flavians.¹¹ Leonid El'nitskij was the first to suggest a unit of the Legion XII Fulminata.¹² Varshalomidze did not exclude the legions XV Apollinaris and X Fretensis. The possibility that the special engineering unit of the last-mentioned legion was present at Apsaros is suggested, according to Shota Mamuladze (with the contribution of M. Khalvashi and L. Aslanishvili),¹³ by fragments of water pipes stamped with an “X”-like shaped numeral. However, recent studies on building ceramics from Apsaros,¹⁴ as well as the comparison of stamped water pipes found within this fort with the actual ceramic bearing material of the Legio X Fretensis,¹⁵ clearly indicate that in this case we are dealing with a form of the “∞” sign rather, which would indicate the *Cohors milliaria equitata civium Romanorum*.¹⁶

¹⁰ HOWGEGO 1985: 30.

¹¹ VARSHALOMIDZE 2009: 85–86.

¹² EL'NITSKIJ 1950: 194.

¹³ MAMULADZE, KHALVASHI and ASLANISHVILI 2002: 38.

¹⁴ KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI et AL 2018: 504.

¹⁵ NENNER-SORIANO 2014; ADLER 2011; BARAG 1967a.

¹⁶ SPEIDEL 2009: 617.

The introduction of Syrian and Judean coins in circulation in Apsaros together with the legions which had come north for military purposes, is evident, but recent finds have contributed data on the time and circumstances of this event. Amongst coin finds from this Colchian fort, at least 12 bronze coins struck in Judea and Antioch, dated from the 1st century BC through the Flavian period, bore countermarks probably related to the X Fretensis legion (Pl. 2, Fig. 3A) and the XII Fulminata (at least two specimens are known to the author). The remaining countermarks, while not related to a legion specifically, were all of Judean or Syrian provenience (Pl. 2, Fig. 3B). Some parallel finds of coins countermarked by Roman legions come from Jerusalem, Palestine and Syria¹⁷ including, most importantly, Dura Europos.¹⁸ They were interpreted as coinage travelling with the Roman legions along the Roman frontier during the Parthian campaign of Trajan in AD 114–117 or, less possibly, Hadrian's Jewish war of AD 132–135.¹⁹ Kevin Butcher has voiced the opinion that much worn city coins, especially the particularly numerous Antiochene coins of the "SC" series were resold by the administration of particular cities, Antioch primarily, to the Roman army.²⁰ Having lost its original character, the bronze coinage was given a legionary countermark to prolong its circulation, conveniently for the purpose of soldiers' pay. According to Nigel Pollard, numerous coins of Antioch and other Levantine centres countermarked by *legio X Fretensis* and *legio XV Apollinaris* that have been found in Dura Europos, seem to be proof of the presence in the city of legionaries taking part in Trajan's military campaign against the Parthians.²¹

The same interpretation holds, in my opinion, for all the average denominations of bronze coins from Antioch and Judea found in Apsaros, including two specimens from the First Jewish War, one of which bears a countermark (Pl. 2, Fig. 4). One could assume that certain quantities of the latter group may have been taken over and reused by the legion X. The youngest coin from the Antiochene "SC" series discovered at Apsaros was issued by Nerva (Pl. 2, Fig. 5), the youngest countermarked one by the Domitian. Among the countermarked pieces from Antioch there are also severely worn coins from pre-imperial times, inflow of which to Apsaros should be also explained by the Trajanic war.²²

The idea that most of the Apsaros bronze coins from the 1st century AD should be linked to Roman troop movements during the Parthian wars of Trajan and the alleged

¹⁷ HOWGEGO 1985: 252; IDEM 1983; BRUNK 1980; BARAG 1967b. Cf. ESHEL and ZISSU 1999: 70–71 – as evidence of a longstanding circulation of the specimens countermarked by the X Fretensis, at least till the end of the Bar Kokhba revolt.

¹⁸ BELLINGER 1949: 74–75 (see Pl. 2, Figs. 3A–B).

¹⁹ Cf. POLLARD 2004: 127; HOWGEGO 1985: 253.

²⁰ BUTCHER 2004: 37–38 and 240–241.

²¹ POLLARD 2004: 126–127.

²² Two specimens of the Zeus head/Zeus seated type are known to me so far, both found in 2018.

stationing of units of legion X, and perhaps XII as well, has found confirmation at the site as the results of archaeological excavations. The second building phase recorded by the Polish-Georgian mission in trenches in the central part of the Roman fort may be dated to this particular period in time.²³ The construction work that was done transformed the *horreum* into a bath with a makeshift latrine added on the northern side. Dating the second architectural phase of the fort to the end of Trajan's rule would also explain the huge quantities of bronze coins from Antioch found in the layers connected with the rebuilding of the granary. Looking at a chart of when bronze coins came to Apsaros, rather than when they were produced, one sees clearly that the first and biggest flow of coins occurred in the times of Trajan (see Pl. 2, Figs. 1A–B). The first phase of the fort saw mostly silver coins struck in Cappadocian Caesarea and only the symbolic presence of bronze coinage. This would suggest a not very intensive, short-lived use of the fort by the Roman army, perhaps linked to Corbulo's Parthian campaign. The situation changed radically during Trajan's Parthian war. The flow of a relatively large mass of foreign bronze coinage to the distant Apsaros, where monetization of the economy had been poor before that date, must have coincided with the arrival of considerable forces receiving their pay in bronze coin in some part and using it for "everyday" transactions. Most likely still during the Parthian wars the denominational structure of the bronze monetary mass was enriched with large-module provincial coins equivalent to the Roman sestertius. These coins had just started to be produced, together with a smaller module, in Trapezus,²⁴ the main naval base of the *classis Pontica*. The circulation of these coins in Apsaros is attested still before the mid-3rd century (Pl. 1, Chart 2).

It is an open issue whether the five cohorts that L. Flavius Arrianus, as governor of Cappadocia, inspected and paid in person in c. AD 131²⁵ represented units stationed here at least from Trajan's time or new units charged with fresh tasks during an inflammation of the situation in the end of Hadrian's rule.²⁶ Studies of a new type of stamped impressions on roof tiles recently discovered at Apsaros in a backfill south of a room with a floor mosaic in the *praetorium* building seem to indicate that the core of the garrison at the time of Arrian's inspection could be

²³ The existence of a second, Trajanic building phase in Apsaros was recently confirmed by a foundation deposit found by the Georgian team in a sector SO-XII (foundation deposit 3, cf., Table 1), consisting of a didrachm and hemidrachm of Vespasian, as well as a didrachm of Nerva, all minted in Caesarea in Cappadocia, to be published soon.

²⁴ On the Trapezus coinage under Trajan, see: WOJAN 2006: 195–197; cf. RPC III: 371–372.

²⁵ Arr. *Peripl.* 6,1–2.

²⁶ An inscription found in Campanian Abella lists N. Marcius Plaetorius Celer as *praepositus numerorum tendentium in Ponto Absaro*, which can be dated a few years before Arrian's visitation, but otherwise does not allow the identification of units: CIL X, 1202 (= ILS 2660). Cf. SPEIDEL 2009: 603; BRAUND 1994: 181; SPEIDEL 1986: 658.

the four cohorts of the *legio V Macedonica*.²⁷ In the context of this discussion one should note an extraordinary find coming from layers connected with the ruined walls of the *praetorium*, representing the third and final building phase identified at the site and dated to the times of Hadrian. The find consists of three cistophoric tetradrachms struck in c. AD 128–130 in the province of Asia.²⁸ Two of them are from the Laodikeia mint, the third one from Ephesus (Pl. 3, Figs. 6A–C). Considering that cistophoric tetradrachms are extremely rare outside of Asia,²⁹ the discovery of three of them together leads to the conclusion that we are dealing with a foundation deposit,³⁰ made during the remodelling of Trajan's bath into the garrison commander's headquarters. A fourth cistophor minted in Sardes (Pl. 3, Fig. 6D) was found at some distance within the fortress of Apsaros by the Georgian archaeological team, but this should probably be considered an individual find.

If we are indeed dealing with a foundation deposit in the case of the three Hadrianic cistophors, it seems appropriate to make an attempt to explain the possible circumstances under which the coins of this unique find made their way to Apsaros, for Arrian's famous inspection of the forts on the Colchian coast around 131 may indeed have been such an occasion.³¹ At any rate, Arrian's periplus as well as a fragmentary Latin building inscription from Sukhumi reveal that he ordered the construction of military (?) buildings on the Colchian coast.³² It is not unlikely, therefore, that the three cistophoric tetradrachms from *provincia Asia* were from the funds that served to finance the conversion of the former bathhouse into a *praetorium*.

During his inspection of Apsaros, the Cappadocian governor not only examined the walls and ditches, the supplies and the soldiers' state of health. He also brought with him the soldiers' pay (μισθοφορα).³³ In light of the currently known coins that were found at Apsaros, this was paid mainly in Cappadocian drachms from the mint in Caesarea and in Roman denarii. However, it cannot be entirely excluded that some soldiers and officers at Apsaros were given cistophors as part of their pay. Be that as it may, a single specimen of a Hadrianic cistophor from the mint of Hierapolis was also found at Pityus (modern Pitsunda).³⁴ Together with the single specimen from Apsaros found by the Georgian archaeologists, it appears to attest to the absorption of a certain amount of Hadrianic cistophoric tetradrachms into the mix of silver

²⁷ JAWORSKI et AL 2021.

²⁸ METCALF 1980: 123; RPC III: 165.

²⁹ METCALF 1980: 73–74.

³⁰ Foundation deposit 4, cf., Table 1.

³¹ Arr. *Peripl.* 6,1–2. Cf. SPEIDEL 2009: 603; MITFORD 2018: 550.

³² Arr. *Peripl.* 9. ROSTOVITZ 1907; cf. BRAUND 1994: 194–195, Fig. 13.

³³ Arr. *Peripl.* 6,2.

³⁴ RPC III, 1395; cf. GOLENKO 1964: 33. It should be mentioned that the Roman fort in Pityus was built several years after Arrian's inspection, under Antoninus Pius: cf. BRAUND 1994: 198.

coinage that circulated along the Colchian coast of the Black Sea.³⁵ The Pontic fleet played an important role in supplying the Roman forts along the eastern coast of the Black Sea with coinage and other supplies.³⁶ The structure of the coin finds from the Colchis coast, from Apsaros to Pityus, demonstrates certain similarities, especially from the second half of the 2nd through to about the mid-3rd century AD.

In the reign of Hadrian and his successors, the stream of bronze coins to Apsaros was reduced to a mere trickle and primarily concerned coinage from a mint operating in Trapezus (Pl. 1, Chart 2). This is quite understandable considering that the demand for bronze coinage in the local economy, which was based mainly on the operations of the fort, was filled by the huge mass of coins which had reached the area in Trajan's rule.

The next wave of silver coins, albeit a small one, most probably reached Apsaros during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (cf. Pl. 1, Chart 1). It may have reflected a certain mobilization of efforts in the fort on the eve of the Parthian campaign of Lucius Verus. A substantial peak in terms of the silver coins in Apsaros only came in the rule of the Severian emperors. The wave of silver currencies, primarily drachms from Caesarea in Cappadocia, which started in the first years of the reign of Septimius Severus and ended with the end of Caracalla's independent rule, suggests that the fort of Apsaros played some role in the Parthian campaigns of the two emperors.

132

The majority of Severan coins comes from two hoards discovered in 1998³⁷ and 2018³⁸ by the Georgian expedition. The hoards were already in the territory of the vicus, in an architectural zone located probably already outside the south defense wall. The first hoard contained 42 silver coins from Tiberius to Caracalla, evidently chosen for their higher silver content. The 1st century was represented by the said Pontic drachms of Polemo II, the 2nd century primarily by Roman denarii and the Severan period by drachms from Cappadocian Caesarea (Table 2). This kind of thesaurization of silver coin sets seems to be reasonable the mid-3rd century AD, when the traditional Roman monetary system suffered a total breakdown. The other hoard was composed of eight silver coins struck in the Caesarea mint, dated from Hadrian to Caracalla, and seven massive bronzes issued in Trapezus and dated from Marcus Aurelius to Alexander Severus. All the coins were burnt, presumably in a conflagration.

³⁵ A silver monetary mass in circulation in Colchis consisted of the following currencies: drachms from the mint of Caesarea in Cappadocia, Roman denarii, and, to a lesser extent, silver coinage of Polemo II. Cf. DUNDUA 1987; SHAMBA 1987; GOLENKO 1964.

³⁶ WHEELER 2011: 129, 142–143.

³⁷ VARSHALOMIDZE 2009: 28–47 (catalogue in Georgian); 87–88 (summary in English).

³⁸ The hoard was found in sector SO-XIII, with results to be published soon.

The structure of the last hoard bears a striking resemblance to the much larger hoard discovered in 1958 in Pityus (see Table 2).³⁹ The chronological range of this deposit in the case of bronze coins minted in Trapezus reaches back to Philip I, that is, even further beyond the dating for the youngest silver coin in the hoard than was the case of the Apsaros hoard. One is justified to think that the Pityus hoard and the two Apsaros hoards were concealed in connection with the second invasion of the Boranoi in c. AD 256, described in Zosimos's work.⁴⁰ They attacked from the sea, Phasis first, then destroying the fort at Pityus (which had withstood the first invasion) and finished off their invasion by plundering Trapezus as well as all the littoral: "They devastated the rest of the territory as well", writes Zosimos.⁴¹ Apsaros presumably, too.⁴² It should be noted that the youngest group of coin finds from the fort dates from the reign of Severus Alexander to Gordian III. Some of them, both silver coins minted at Caesarea and bronzes of Trapezus, were found in layers consisting of ashes and show traces of having been in a fire (Pl. 3, Figs. 7A–B). Apart from two antoniniani of Aurelian,⁴³ it is significant that the fort has not produced any later coins, at least not until Byzantine times.⁴⁴ Had the fort still been garrisoned by Roman army units, the statistics of monetary finds from the second half of the 3rd and the 4th century would have been quite different. The only evidence of coins coming to the area of the fort after it had been abandoned by the army are a few grave inventories found at the Makho necropolis in the valley of the Chorokhi River,⁴⁵ a few dozen kilometers away from Apsaros and dated to the time of Diocletian by the youngest coins.

Summing up the discussion of the chronology of coins found in the Apsaros fort, there are clearly a few peaks in the flow of coins to the site and these seem to be directly related to the ups and downs of the long-lasting armed conflict between the Roman Empire and the Parthian state, reflecting its scale and dynamics on a regional scale restricted to the Pontic frontier, but also to some extent on a supraregional one. On the grounds of an analysis of the coin finds from Apsaros, it seems evident that apart from a few periods of intensive occupation by units of the Roman Army, especially in the "golden age" of the fort during the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian,

³⁹ GOLENKO 1964: 33–34, 64, no. 15, and 75, no 45; ŠAMBA 1987: 71; cf. DUNDUA 2017: 93.

⁴⁰ Zos. *Hist. Nova* I.xxxii,2–I.xxxiv,1. On the invasion of the Boranoi, see i.a.: OLSHAUSEN 1991; SCARDIGLI 1976; SALAMON 1971.

⁴¹ Zos. *Hist. Nova*, I.xxxiii,3.

⁴² Cf. KAKHIDZE 2003: 305.

⁴³ VARSHALOMIDZE 2009: 26–27, nos. 61–62.

⁴⁴ Four Byzantine coins from Apsaros are known so far: folles of Anastasius and Justinian I held in the Gonio-Apsaros Archaeological-Architectural Museum Reserve; follis of Justin I and half follis of Justinian I (?) in the Batumi Archaeological Museum collection.

⁴⁵ KAKHIDZE and SHALIKADZE 2010.

the garrison in other periods must have been extremely small. Moreover, coin circulation would have been restricted to a local market characterized by a low level of monetization. More situations for trade exchange came from cabotage sailing between the other ports along the eastern coast of the Black Sea. One may hope that new finds of coins from Apsaros will help to create a more universal model of the introduction and circulation of coins in the military landscape of Colchis.

ABBREVIATIONS

- CIL X = T. MOMMSEN (ed.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, vol. X: *Bruttiorum, Lucaniae, Campaniae, Siciliae, Sardiniae Latinae*, Berolini 1883.
 ILS = H. DESSAU (ed.), *Inscriptiones Latinae selectae*, vol. I, Berolini 1892.
 RPC I = M. AMANDRY, A. BURNETT and P.P. RIPPOLÉS, *Roman Provincial Coinage*, vol. I: *From the death of Caesar to the death of Vitellius 44 BC–AD 69*, London–Paris 1992.
 RPC III = M. AMANDRY and A. BURNETT (eds.), *Roman Provincial Coinage*, vol. III: *Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian (AD 96–138)*, London–Paris 2015.

ANCIENT SOURCES

- Arr. *Peripl.* = Arrian, *Periplus Ponti Euxini*. A. LIDDLE (ed.), *Arrian: Periplus Ponti Euxini*, London 2012.
 Plin. *HN* = Pliny (the Elder), *Naturalis historia*. K.F.T. MAYHOFF (ed.), *C. Plini Secundi Naturalis historiae libri XXXVII*, Leipzig 1906.
 Zos. *Hist. Nova* = Zosimus, *Historia Nova*. F. PASCHOUD (ed.), *Zosime. Histoire nouvelle. Livres I et II*, Paris 2000.

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PLATE 1	<p>Chart 1. Chronological structure of all identified silver and bronze coins found in Apsaros, according to the date of issue. An arrow marks the time of the inflow of worn and partially countermarked bronze coins of Antioch and Judea into the Apsaros fort during Trajan's Parthian war</p> <p>Chart 2. Chronological structure of bronze coins found in Apsaros, struck in Judea, Syrian Antioch and Trapezus according to their date of issue (vertical line splits Trajanic and post-Trajanic inflows of coins)</p>
PLATE 2	<p>Figs. 1A–B. Hemidrachms of Nero found in the <i>horreum</i> at Apsaros fort (foundation deposit 1): a – Cappadocia, Caesarea mint (RPC I, 3644); B – Cappadocia, Caesarea mint (RPC I, 3646)</p> <p>Figs. 2A–B. Bronze coins found in Apsaros: a – Agrippa II, struck in the Judean Kingdom under Nero (RPC I, 4989); B – Domitian, struck in Antioch mint (uncertain type)</p> <p>Figs. 3A–B. Countermarked bronze coins found in Apsaros: a – Nero, Antioch mint (?), (countermarks: HOWGEGO 1985, Cat. No. 281– variant ?; 735); B – Otho, Antioch mint (RPC I, 4320; countermarks: HOWGEGO 1985, Cat. No. 352 and 355) (Fig. 4B courtesy of the Archaeological Museum in Batumi)</p> <p>Fig. 4. Countermarked bronze coin from the First Jewish War, Year 4 (= AD 69), found in Apsaros (MESHORER 1982: 262– 263, Cat. No. 30 – uncertain variant; countermark: HOWGEGO 1985, Cat. No. 281– variant ?)</p> <p>Fig. 5. Bronze coin (AE 21) of Nerva found in Apsaros, struck in Antioch mint (RPC III, 3495 or 3499)</p>
PLATE 3	<p>Figs. 6A–D. Cistophori of Hadrian found in Apsaros (foundation deposit 4): A, B – Asia, Laodicea mint (RPC III, 1399); C – Asia, Ephesus mint (RPC III, 1332); D – Asia, Sardes mint (RPC III, 1385)</p> <p>Figs. 7A–B. Coins found in a burnt layers dated to c. mid-3rd century AD in Apsaros during the Georgian-Polish excavations (2019): a – Pontus, Trapezus mint, AE coin of Severus Alexander (ante AD 235; uncertain type); B – Cappadocia, Caesarea mint, didrachm of Gordian III (AD 241/2; GANSCHOW 2018, II, 897d)</p>
TABLE 1	Chronology of the Roman fort in Apsaros
TABLE 2	Monetary hoards found in Apsaros and Pityus, possibly related to the Boranoi seaborne incursions in Colchis: P – Kingdom of Pontus, R – Roman Coinage, C – Caesarea in Cappadocia, T – Trapezus

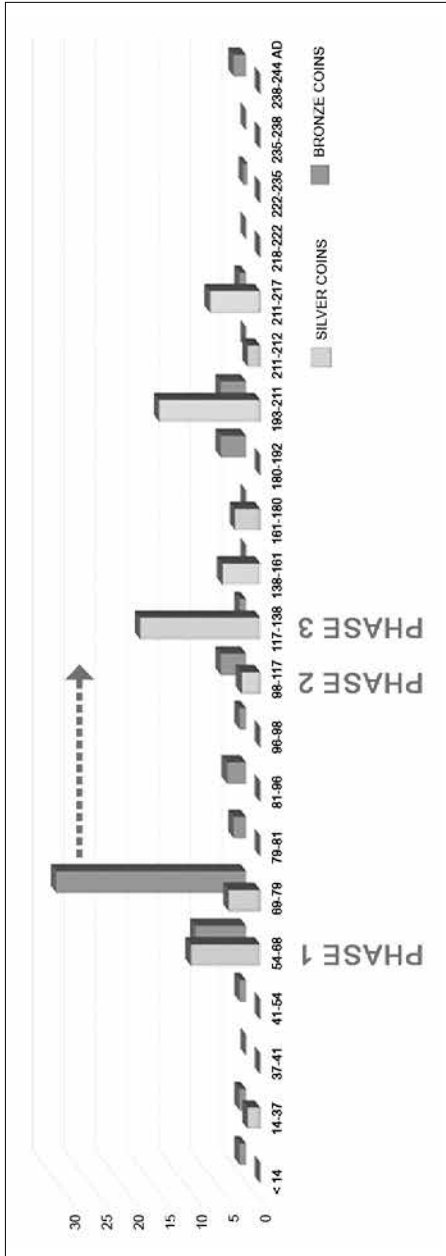


Chart 1

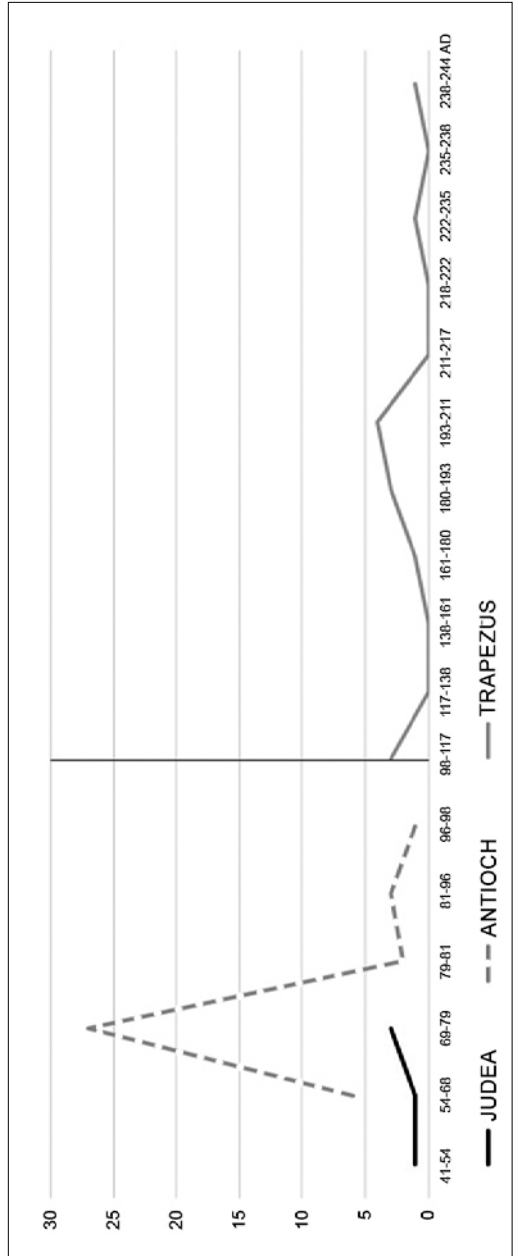


Chart 2



1



2



3



4



5



A



B



C



D



6



A



B



7

TABLE 1

Years AD	Reign	Historical context	Building phases	Apsaros in ancient sources	Coin deposits
58–68	Nero	Corbulo's campaign against Parthia Roman annexation of Pontus Nero's plans of expedition to the 'Caucasian Gates'	Phase 1 – <i>horreum</i>	–	Foundation deposit 1 Foundation deposit 2
69–79	Vespasian	Anicetus' revolt in Colchis legio XII Fulminata in Melitene legio XII expedition to Albania	–	Plin. <i>HN</i> , 6.12 (c. AD 77)	–
79–114	Titus–Trajan	Period of stability	–	–	–
114–117	Trajan	Parthian war	Phase 2 – <i>balneum</i>	–	Foundation deposit 3
117–129	Hadrian	Period of stability	–	–	–
129–135	Hadrian	Tension between Rome and Iberia Arrian's inspection of Colchis (five cohorts in Apsaros) Arrian's campaign against Alans	Phase 3 – <i>praetorium</i>	Arr. <i>Peripl.</i> 6.1-2 CIL X, 1202	Foundation deposit 4
138–161	Antoninus Pius	Period of stability	–	–	–
162–166	M. Aurelius /L. Verus	Parthian war	–	–	–
166–192	M. Aurelius / Commodus	Period of stability	–	–	–
193–199	Septimius Severus	Parthian wars	–	–	–
200–215	S. Severus / Caracalla	Period of stability	–	–	–
216–217	Caracalla	Campaign against Parthia	Phase 4 (?)	–	–
217–230	Macrinus – Severus Alexander	Period of stability	–	–	–
230–257	Sev. Alex. – Valerian I	Sassanian wars Fall of Dura-Europos	–	–	–
255–257	Valerian I	Sea invasions of Boranoi – fall of Pityus and Trapezus Fort in Apsaros burnt and abandoned	–	–	Hoard 1 Hoard 2

TABLE 2

Years AD	Reign	Apsaros hoard 1 (1998) <i>tpq</i> = AD 217			Apsaros hoard 2 (2018) <i>tpq</i> = AD 235		Pityus hoard (1958) <i>tpq</i> = AD 249	
		silver			silver C	bronze T	silver C	bronze T
		P	R	C				
14–37	Tiberius	–	1	–	–	–	–	–
37–41	Gaius	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
41–54	Claudius	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
54–68	Nero Polemo II	– 4	–	–	–	–	–	–
69–79	Vespasian	–	1	–	–	–	–	–
79–81	Titus	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
81–96	Domitian	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
96–98	Nerva	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
98–117	Trajan	–	3	–	–	1	–	–
117–138	Hadrian	–	2	3	5	–	4	–
138–161	Antoninus Pius	–	2	–	1	–	–	–
161–180	Lucius Verus Marcus Aurelius	–	1	–	–	1	1	–
180–192	Commodus	–	1	–	–	1	–	7
193–211	Clodius Albinus Septimius Severus Geta	–	2	14	1	2	4	60
211–217	Caracalla	–	2	5	1	–	1	32
217–235	Macrinus Elagabalus Severus Alexander	–	–	–	–	1	–	
238–244	Gordian III	–	–	–	–	–	–	16
244–249	Philip I	–	–	–	–	–	–	3
<i>ante</i> 250	undetermined	–	–	1	–	–	–	21
Total		4	15	23	8	6	10	139