

The role of coinage “PROVINCIA DACIA” in the supply with bronze coinage on the area of the Lower Danube (AD 246-257)

For those less familiar, this type of coinage was first issued in AD 246, during the reign of Philip I, when the emperor allowed the province of Dacia to strike its own bronze coinage. This coinage respects the standards of imperial issues, so on the obverse appears the emperor's portrait or one of the members of the imperial family with the legend in Latin and in concordance with the official formulas. On the reverse, always appears the legend *PROVINCIA DACIA*, sometimes the words are split following the distribution of the image in the field. In exergue is inscribed the year of minting under the formula *AN I-XI*. The image depicted represents the personification of the province of Dacia, standing or seating between the two symbols of the legions from Dacia: an eagle with a wreath in his beak and a lion. The female can hold either two standards inscribed “V” and “XIII” (the legions 5th *Macedonica* from *Potaissa* –today Turda and 13th *Gemina* from *Apulum* –today Alba Iulia, Romania); a *phalx* (the Dacian sword); or an olive branch and a standard inscribed “DF” (*Dacia felix*)¹ (Fig. 1).

In Dacia such coinage was found at almost all the Roman sites which underwent researches and their existence did not stop before the reign of Philip I. Normally, such coins were also found by chance (Map 1). As it has been demonstrated, the quantity of coins recovered depends on the extent and quality of excavation and the nature of the site². So far, the Roman sites from Dacia make no exception from this rule. The largest quantity of such coinage is coming from the site of *Apulum* (today Alba Iulia) where in the Roman period were two towns (*Colonia Aurelia Apulensis* and *Colonia Nova Apulensis*) and a legionary fortress (the 13th *Gemina*). It is followed by two other big sites *Porolissum* (today Moigrad) and *Potaissa* (today Turda) both Roman towns and military garrisons. They are followed by other sites which underwent systematic excavations. Of course,

unlike the find spots where such a coinage was discovered just by chance, in the case of the sites mentioned above, also this way of finding has to be taken into account³.

The study of the finding frequency of this coinage has revealed some interesting aspects.

A first observation which can be noticed is that the first year of issue of this coinage “AN I” (AD 246-247) seems to be in the same time the most productive one⁴ (Fig. 2).

Unfortunately, in the absence of any possibility to establish the exact quantity of coin-production of this coinage this aspect will remain, at the moment, at a hypothetical level.

Actually, for the reign of Philip I, “*PROVINCIA DACIA*” coinage became the main one in the supply of Dacia with bronze coinage. For the bronze coins minted in the period of AD 249-253, the comparative percentages indicate that the main mint to supply Dacia with bronze

1. For a detailed description about this coinage see Martin F.: *Kolonialprägungen aus Moesia Superior und Dacia*, Budapest-Bonn, 1992, passim; Alföldy-Găzdac, Á and Găzdac, C.: *The coinage “Provincia Dacia”*, Cluj-Napoca, 2004 (forthcoming).
2. Howgego, Ch.: *The Supply and Use of Money in the Roman World 200 BC to AD 300*, *JRS*, 72, 1992, p. 3.
3. The inventory registers from those museums located at the Roman sites prove this way of finding.
4. The number “0” for the year of issue *AN XI* (AD 256-257) indicates that coins of the type “*PROVINCIA DACIA*” minted in that year have not yet been found either at sites from the former province of Dacia or amongst the finds by chance from Romania. They still exist, as they are present in a private collection (F. Kecskés, Bezdan, former Yugoslavia), see Martin, F.: *op.cit.*, p. 106, no. 7.67, pl. viii, no. 7.67.1; and in the collections of the Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum (National Hungarian Museum) in Budapest, see; Bakos, M.: *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum Hungaria. Volume II. Dacia - Moesia Superior*, Milano, 1994, p. 36, no. 116, tav. XI, no. 116. In both cases there is only one piece.

coinage was *Viminacium* (*Moesia Superior* –today Kostolac, Serbia). For the last period of existence of this coin, AD 253-257, the frequency of coin finds suggests again a predominance of coinage *PROVINCIA DACIA* upon the one minted at *Viminacium*⁵.

The relative recent publication of a large quantity of numismatic material with the mention of the find spots allows us to establish some local and regional patterns of this coinage movement.

In the case of the site of *Porolissum* (today Moigrad, Romania) (Map 1) –a very heavy militarized site⁶– 64% of the coins “*PROVINCIA DACIA*” minted during the reign of Philip I were found on the territory of the fort from Pomat Hill while 36% of the coins “*PROVINCIA DACIA*” minted in the same period were found on the territory of the civilian settlement⁷ (Fig. 4).

At the level of the whole province of Dacia regional patterns can be established for the distribution of this coinage⁸.

As it can be noticed from the graph above, the coins “*PROVINCIA DACIA*” minted in the reign of Philip I are more frequently found in the intra-Carpathian territory, while for those coins minted for later reigns they are more often found on the outer-Carpathian territory (Fig. 5). This pattern is not a particular one for this coinage but is related to the similar phenomenon of the entire monetary circulation in Dacia⁹.

Until the period of AD 249-253 the percentage of finds/ year is much higher for the sites in the interior of the province. The explanation of this situation is the location of the majority of towns (6 of 9) as well as the higher concentration of military bases, including the two legions, in the two *Daciae*: *Apulensis* and *Porolissensis* (the intra-Carpathian area, Map 1).

The percentage value of coin finds/ year records a different pattern for the two areas of Dacia, north and south, for the last period of Roman administration and the post-provincial period. Starting with the period of AD 253-268 the percentage of coin finds/ year of the southern sites becomes higher than that of northern sites (Fig. 6). At this stage of research, it can be suggested that the higher value recorded for the period of AD 268-275 at southern sites can be tentatively explained by high traffic in the area of the crossing of the Danube, especially *Drobeta*

(today Turnu Severin, Romania) and *Sucidava* (today Celei, Romania) (Map 1), caused by the abandonment of the province and the foundation of the new provinces south of Danube, *Dacia Ripensis* and *Dacia Mediteranensis*. The proximity of the Empire produces a much higher percentage of coin finds in the southern area in the post-provincial period, than for the northern sites. This situation can be explained though the exchange relationship between the centre (the Roman empire) and the periphery, and later the hinterland (the province of *Dacia*).

The recent publication of coin finds from Roman sites on the territories of the former provinces adjacent to *Dacia*¹⁰ –the two *Pannonia* and the two *Moesia*– allow us to push the research on the coinage “*PROVINCIA DACIA*” circulation beyond the borders of *Dacia*.

The analyze of the bronze coin finds from the most well researched and published sites from these provinces –*Carnuntum* (today Petronell, Austria), *Brigetio* (today Szöny, Hungary), *Poetovio* (Ptuj, Slovenia), *Intercisa* (today Dunaújváros, Hungary), all located in *Pannonia*¹¹– reveal a completely different picture of the percentage of “*PROVINCIA DACIA*” coinage from what we have in *Dacia*. One can easily notice that at the most well researched and published sites from Pannonia the main mint for supply with bronze coinage was *Viminacium*. For the minting period AD 244-253¹², compare to the other mints –Rome, “*PROVINCIA DACIA*” and Civic (Greek) mints– this mint has between 63.1% and 88.8% of the bronze coin finds at those sites (Plate I).

5. It must be mentioned that the results for the period of Valerianus I must be regarded with circumspection as the number of coins studied is very low (12 pieces), as well as the mint from *Viminacium* was closed two years earlier (AD 255) than the mint from *Dacia*, see Martin, F.: *op.cit.*, p. 21.
6. Gudea, N.: *Porolissum, cheia de bolta a apararii Daciei Porolissensis*, *ActaMP*, 12, 195-214.
7. Alföldy-Gazdac, Á.: *Pénzverés a római Dáciában (246-257)*, *Hétköznapi élet a római Dáciában*, Cluj-Napoca, 2003 (forthcoming)
8. Alföldy, Á.: *Circulația monedelor de tip PROVINCIA DACIA în Dacia romană*, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, BA thesis, pl. 3.
9. Gazdac, C.: *op.cit.*, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, pl. Q1.
10. *Ibidem*.
11. It must be mentioned here that the absence of the sites from *Moesia Superior* is the result of the very poor state of publication of the numismatic material provided by the sites located on the territory of this former Roman province (today Serbia mainly and small part of Macedonia). In the case of *Moesia Inferior*, the coins “*PROVINCIA DACIA*” are absent from the sites studied in that work, see n. 14.
12. Although the analyses were carried out for the period of Valerianus I (AD 253-259), as well (see the table with the percentages of bronze mints), the very scarce number of bronze coins found at the sites mentioned (between 1 and 3 pieces) made the results irrelevant.

In the province of *Moesia Inferior*, the absence of coins "PROVINCIA DACIA" can be explained by the large quantity of civic (Greek) coin finds, which probably were destined to cover the shortage of the official bronze coinage¹³.

The province *Moesia Superior* reveals a particular case. Although, no coins "PROVINCIA DACIA" were found as isolated finds at different Roman sites, they appear in the few bronze (between 2I and 8I bronze coins) hoards found on this territory (Map 2). The analysis of these hoards indicates the same huge dominance of the coins minted at *Viminacium* upon the coins "PROVINCIA DACIA" (see the pie-charts of the bronze hoards from *Moesia Superior*). In these hoards the mint of *Viminacium* holds between 84.21% and 90.9% of the coins in the hoards (Plate 2)¹⁴.

At this point, it must be mentioned that at the moment, hoards containing coins "PROVINCIA DACIA" in the other provinces from the Lower Danube region are very scarce found, as well as the bronze hoards itself. So far, 8 coins were found in the hoard *Sirmium I* (today *Sremska Mitrovica*, Serbia) (154 bronze coins *Antoninus Pius-Trajan Decius*)¹⁵, 1 coin "PROVINCIA DACIA" in the hoard *Preajba Mare* (Romania)¹⁶, 1 coin "PROVINCIA DACIA" in the monetary finds (5 coins) from *Porolissum* (today *Moigrad*, Romania)¹⁷.

An illustrative picture about the role of coinage "PROVINCIA DACIA" is the comparative graph "% for the coins minted at *Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa* (PROVINCIA DACIA) and *Viminacium* (P M S COL VIM)" (Fig. 8).

This graph is based on the isolated coin finds only from Roman sites attested for sure. In order to have a picture close to the reality, as much as possible the percentages are calculated from the aggregate of all types of denominations (gold, silver bronze; official, provincial and civic coins).

Comparing *Dacia* with the adjacent provinces indicates that the *PROVINCIA DACIA* coins are mainly found in this province and very scarce in the surrounding ones. While the coins issued during the reign of Philip I reached almost 40% of the all coin finds in *Dacia*, they do not pass more than 4.8% in *Pannonia Inferior*, 2.3% in *Pannonia Superior* and are not found as isolated coins in the provinces of *Moesia*. In the case of *Moesia*, the explanation is provided by the large number of civic coins in circulation, while for *Moesia Superior* it is a matter of very

scarce material available for research. For the provinces of *Pannonia*, the finds of *Viminacium* overwhelmed those of the mint of *Dacia*. The fact that *Pannonia Inferior* was located closer to *Dacia* than *Pannonia Superior* produced a slightly higher percentage of *PROVINCIA DACIA* issues in this province.

On conclusion, it can be suggested that the coinage "PROVINCIA DACIA" it was virtually destined to this province, similar to the neighboring mint of *Viminacium* which was the main mint for the supply with bronze coinage of the provinces *Pannonia* and *Moesia Superior* from the reign of Philip I to that of *Valerianus I*. In fact both here we have a good example of a monetary policy intended to supply bronze coins locally and to neighboring areas from the nearest mint¹⁸. Like the coinage minted at *Viminacium*, the coinage "PROVINCIA DACIA" had to cover up a shortage of imperial bronze coinage.

Although it was minted in a province –*Dacia*–, this coinage it was issued according to the Roman official monetary system of bronze denominations.

It follows the patterns of overall monetary circulation in *Dacia* of the coins issued in the period AD 244-259.

It was a temporary solution, which failed at the end.

Periodical abbreviations:

- BSNR = *Buletinul Societatii Numismatice Române*,
Bucharest, Romania
JRA = *Journal of Roman Archaeology*,
Portsmouth, U.S.A
JRS = *Journal of Roman Studies*,
London, United Kingdom

13. Găzduc, C.: *Circulația monetară în Dacia și provinciile învecinate de la Traian la Constantin I*, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, vol. I, p. 49.

14. The data for these hoards at Găzduc, C.: *Circulația monetară în Dacia și provinciile învecinate de la Traian la Constantin I*, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, vol. II, p. 529-530.

15. Ibidem, vol. II, p. 513.

16. Ibidem, vol. II, p. 481. In the case of the hoard from *Preajba Mare* the number of *PROVINCIA DACIA* coins could have been larger but the hoard was partially recovered, 7 coins out of 30, see Petac, E. and Panoiu, A.: Un fragment dintr-un tezaur de monete romane imperiale descoperit la *Preajba Mare*, Târgu Jiu, județul Gorj, *Litua. Studii și comunicări*, 7, 1997, p. 55.

17. Alföldy, Á.: *Circulația monedelor de tip PROVINCIA DACIA în Dacia romană*, BA thesis, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p. 67.

18. Howgego, Ch.: Coin circulation and the integration of the Roman economy, *JRA*, 7, 1994, p. 10.



Fig. 1. A coin "PROVINCIA DACIA"

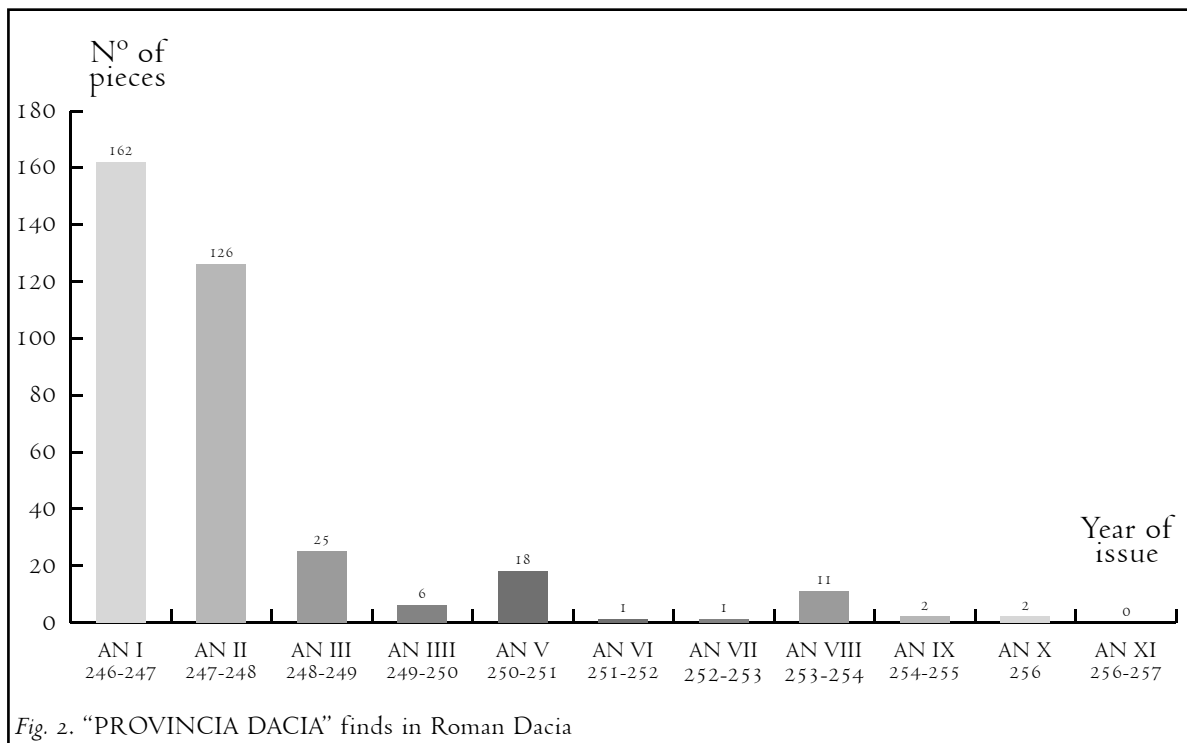


Fig. 2. "PROVINCIA DACIA" finds in Roman Dacia

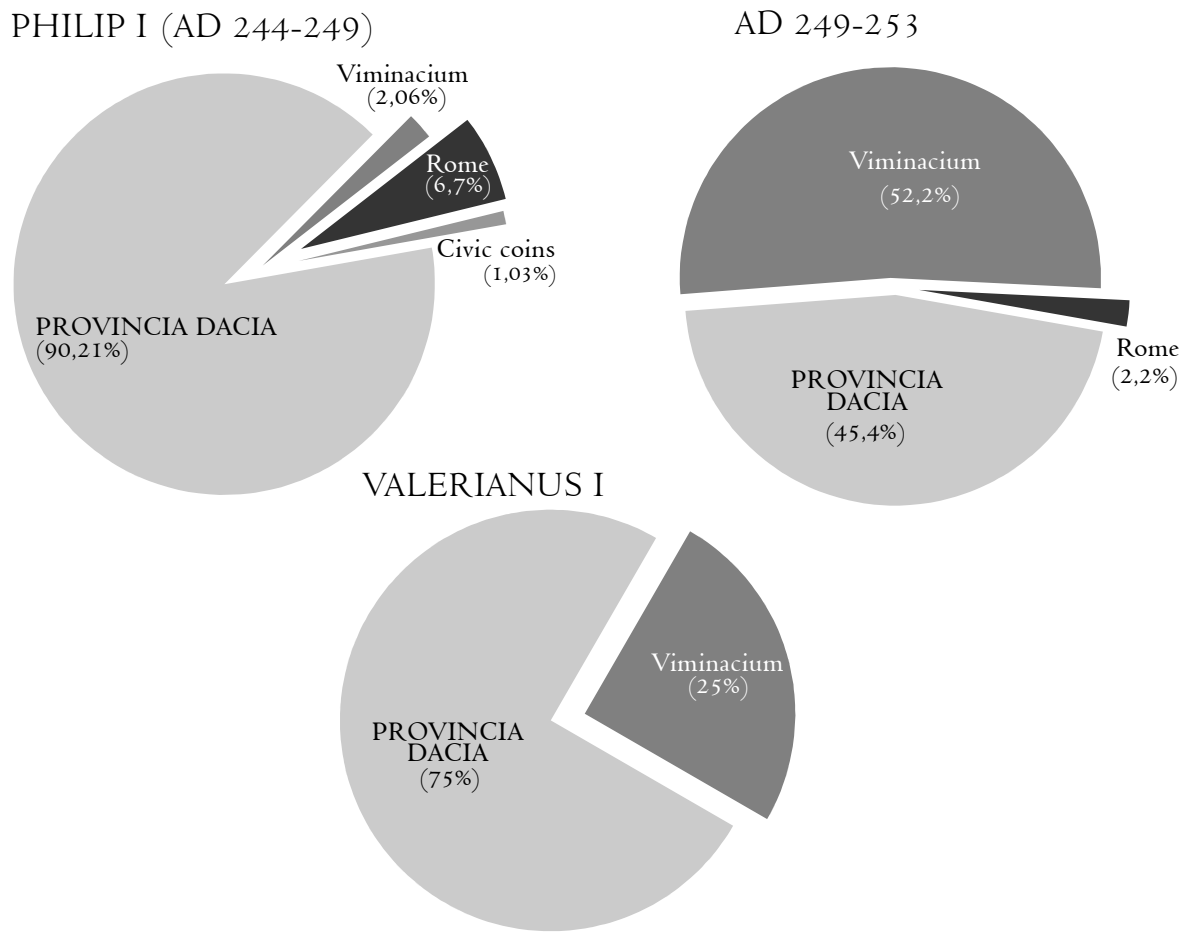


Fig. 3. Percentages of bronze coins from roman sites of Dacia¹⁹

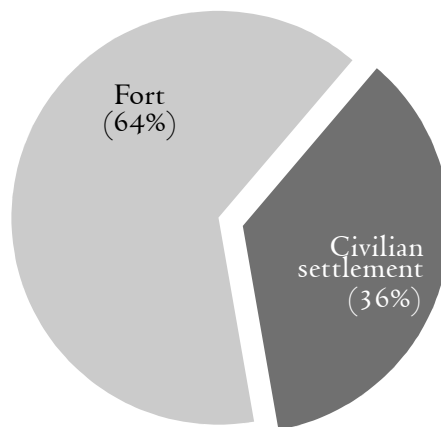


Fig. 4. The percentage of coins "PROVINCIA DACIA" at the site of Porolissum

19. The data for the sites at Gâzdac, C. *Monetary circulation in Dacia and the provinces from Middle and Lower Danube from Trajan to Constantine I* (AD 106-337), Cluj-Napoca, 2002, tab. D 2-3, Philip I- Valerianus I.

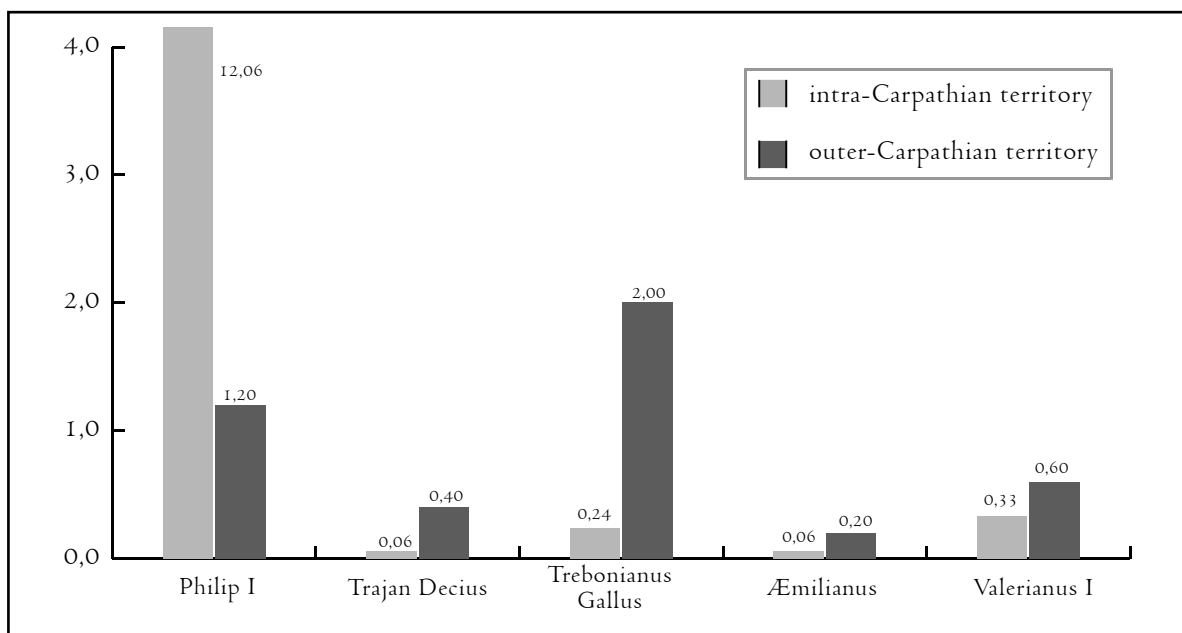


Fig. 5. Regional patterns of coin finds "PROVINCIA DACIA" in Roman Dacia

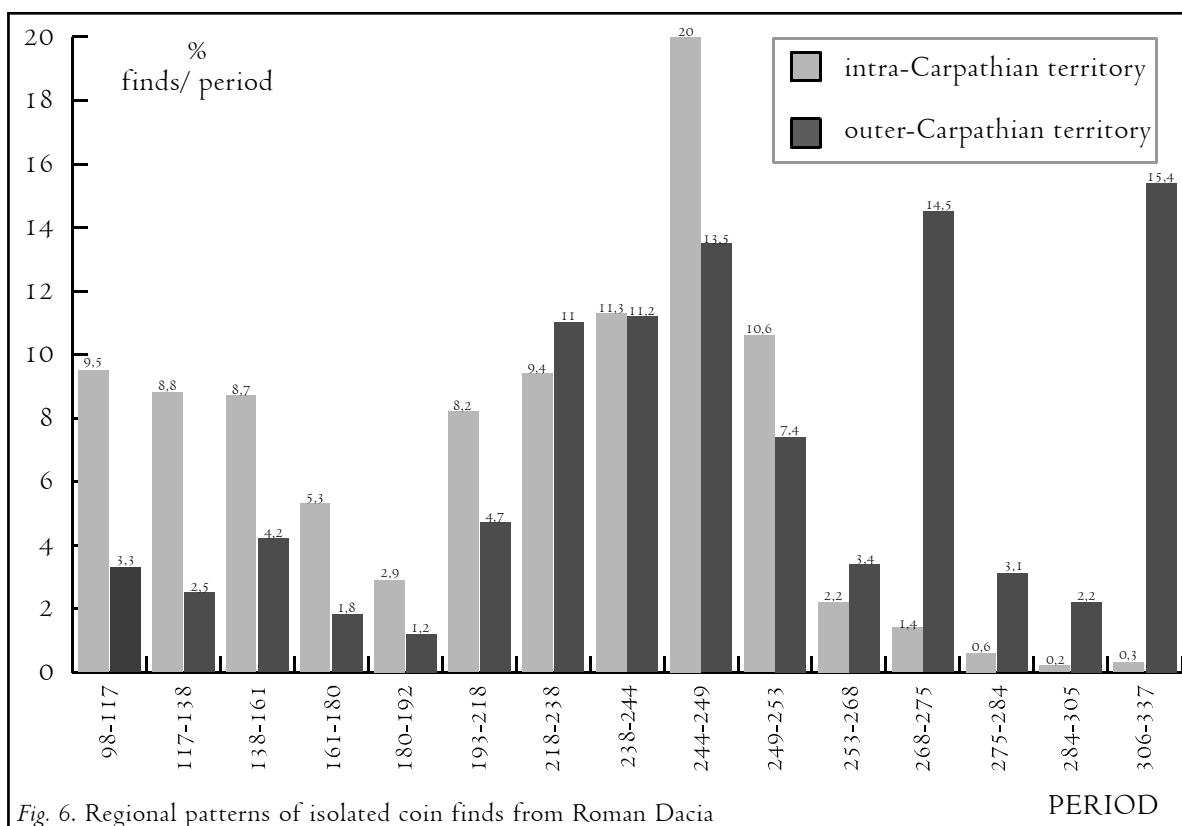


Fig. 6. Regional patterns of isolated coin finds from Roman Dacia

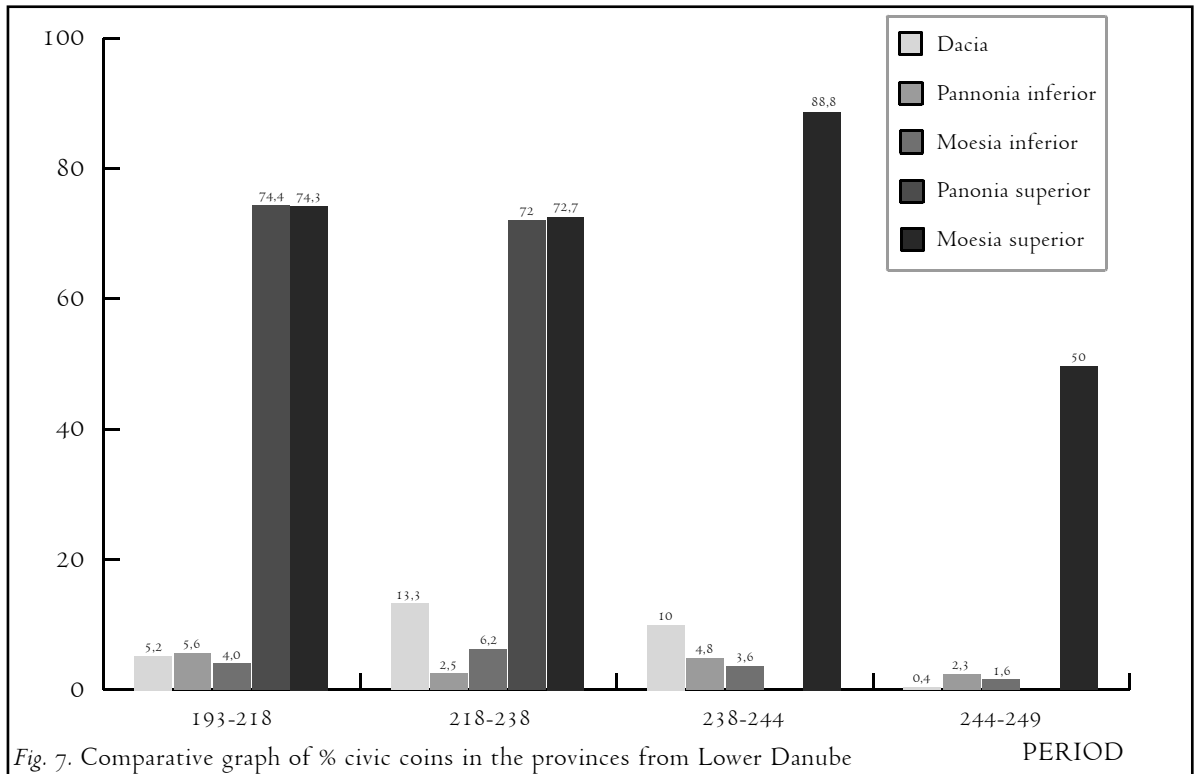


Fig. 7. Comparative graph of % civic coins in the provinces from Lower Danube

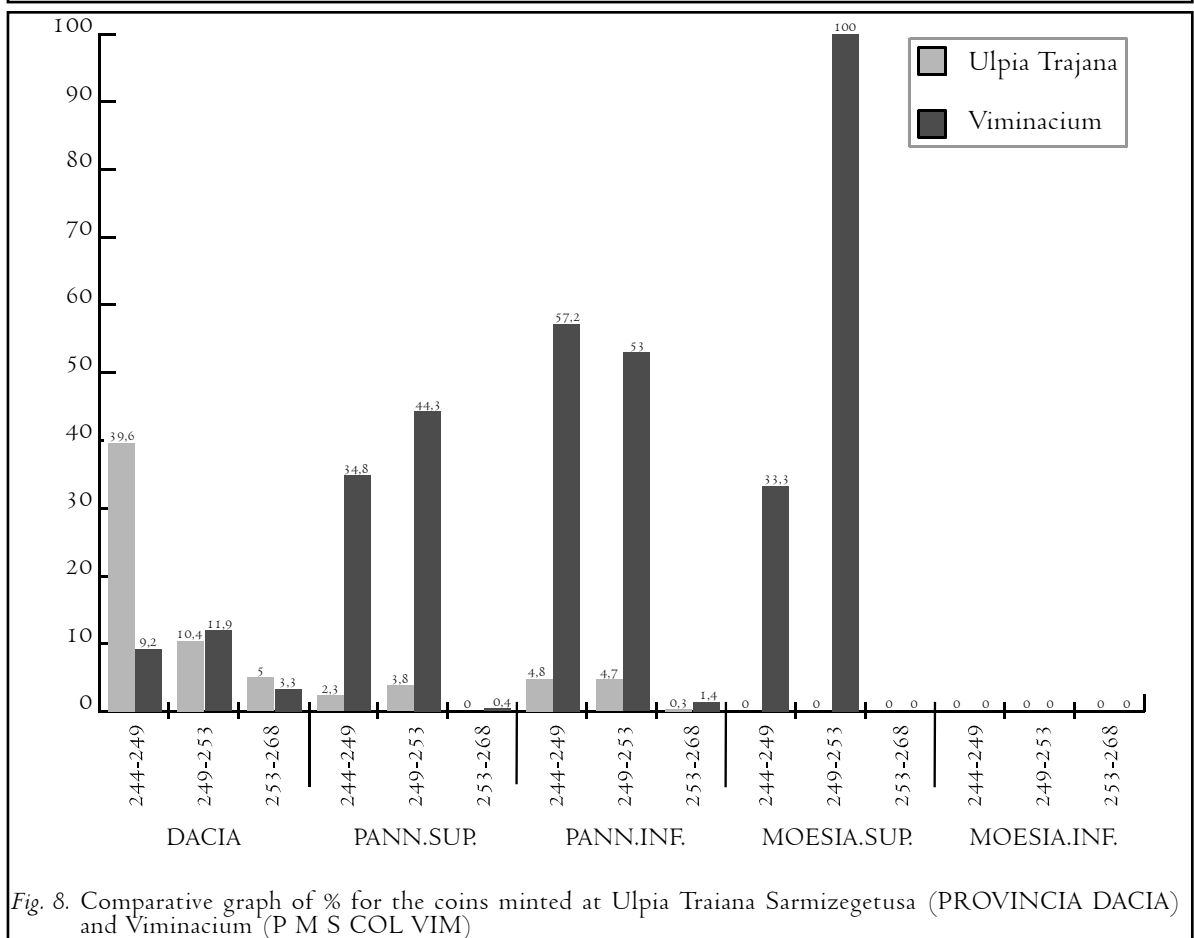


Fig. 8. Comparative graph of % for the coins minted at Ulpia Trajana Sarmizegetusa (PROVINCIA DACIA) and Viminacium (P M S COL VIM)

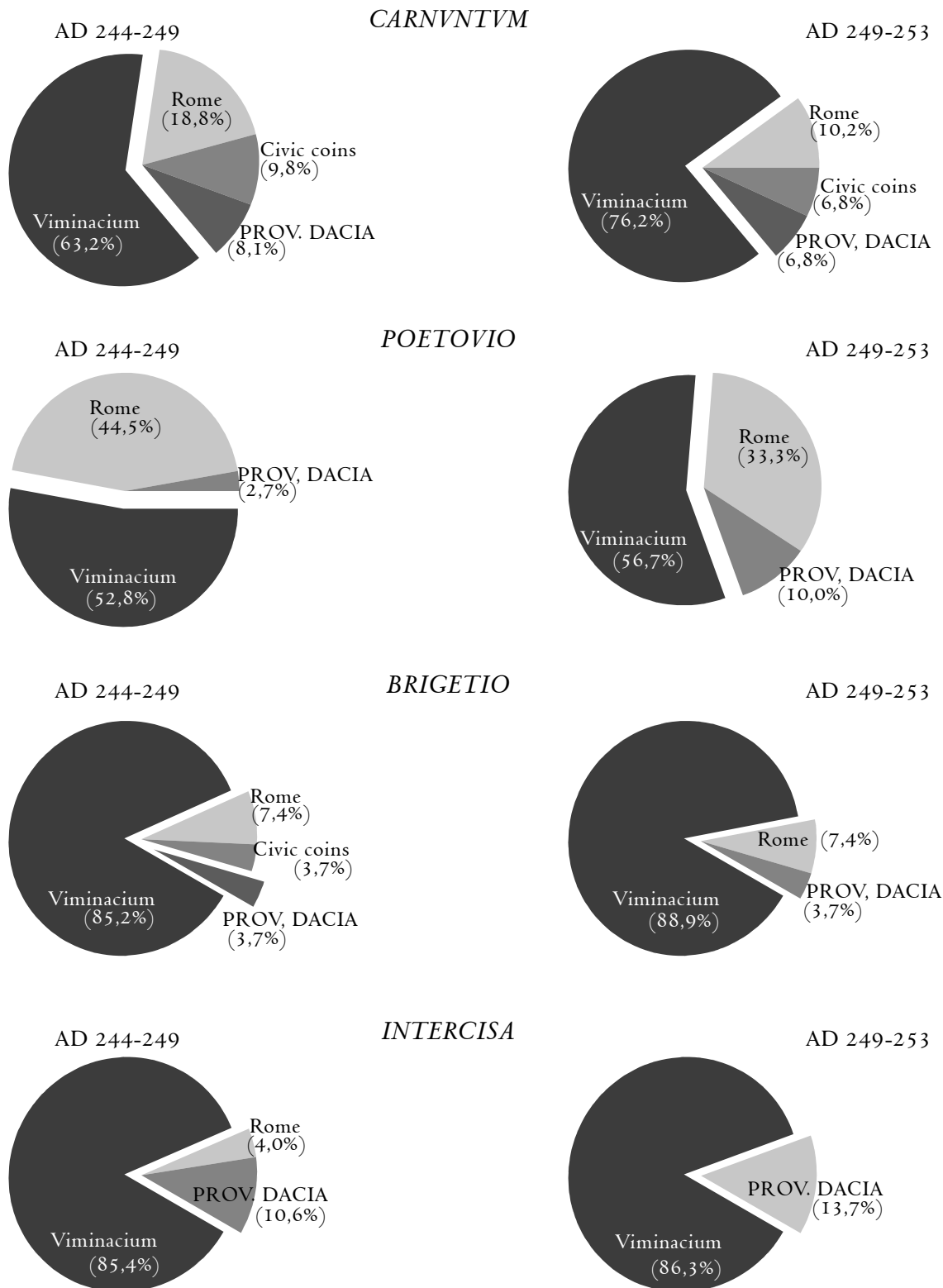
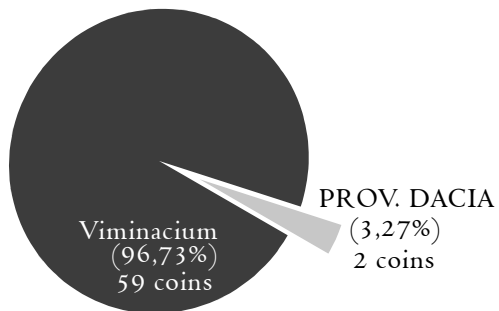


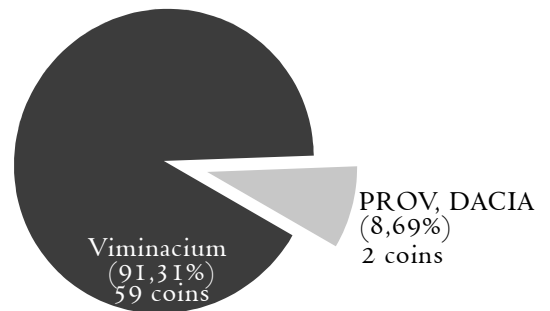
Plate 1²⁰

20. These pie-charts are based on the database from Gázdac, C.: *Monetary circulation in Dacia and the provinces from Middle and Lower Danube from Trajan to Constantine I (AD 106-337)*, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, tab. D 1, Philip I-Valerianus I.

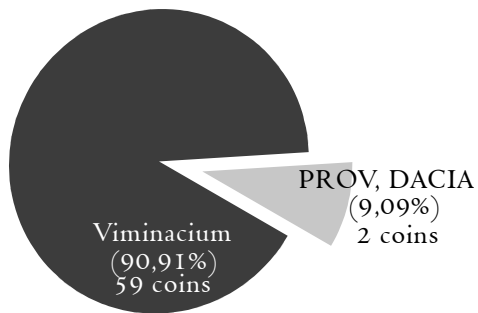
BOŠNJANE
(Moesia Superior, Serbia)



BREZANE
(Moesia Superior, Serbia)



HORREVM MARGI
(Moesia Superior, Serbia)



VRANJE
(Moesia Superior, Serbia)

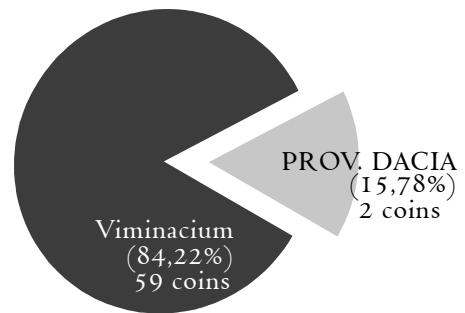


Plate 2. Coins "PROVINCIA DACIA" and Colonia *Viminacium* in the hoards from Moesia Superior

