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Roman Coins from the Municipium of Brigetio*

Tamás FEHÉR**

This paper publishes 50 coins found in the civil town of ancient Brigetio, today Komárom in Hungary. They were unearthed in private gardens and got to the local museum, to private collections or simply lost by now. These coins provide a good complementary material to the finds excavated 1992 and 2016 at Komárom-Szőny Vásártér (Marketplace), which was the central area of the municipium. Altogether 235 coins were suitable to be analysed in a table showing the circulation of coins struck between AD 68 and 251. A chart was also prepared to highlight the trends based on value (in as) rather than on number of pieces. It shows that the stable presence of coins started in the Flavian period, increased in the Antonine era, however, dropped due to the Marcomannic wars. The reign of the Severan dynasty was a real boost bringing silver denominations instead of bronze ones, which almost exclusively dominated the Antonine period. Coin circulation suddenly ceased after the reign of Trajan Decius, which is also supported by an antoninianus hoard buried ca. AD 252. The last coins represented both in the hoard and in the continuous coin circulation were minted under Trebonianus Gallus.

In 2016 the excavations came to an end at the Vásártér (Marketplace) of Komárom-Szőny (Hungary), the centre of the municipium of Brigetio. The analysis of the finds coming to light for 25 years was started, including the numismatic material which has recently been analysed by Lajos Juhász¹ in a conference paper, except for the pieces found in 2005 and 2016, which were still under restoration.

It is worthwhile noting that we could have even a larger examinable material, if the coins found in 1970 during the rescue excavation linked to the construction of the Vásártér supermarket were re-discovered in the Kuny Domokos Museum (KDM) in Tata. Unfortunately, the documentation of the excavation is also silent on this.² There was another excavation in this area led by Aladár Radnóti in 1930³ where we have no information about the numismatic material either (were probably taken to the Hungarian National Museum at that time.)

The purpose of this article is to publish coins found outside the excavations in the municipium of Brigetio, which partly found their way to the collection of Klapka György Museum in Komárom or to private collections. Since, to interpret these pieces independently from the ones found during excavations would not make any sense, in the second half of this paper I attempt to highlight the main tendencies of the coin circulation of the area. During the excavations between 1992 and 2016, 268 pieces⁴ of antique coins were found, I am now presenting 50 additional pieces, which increase the sample to be investigated with almost 20%.

* This article was previously published in Hungarian in the Numizmatikai Közlöny 116–117 (2017–2018), 125–130.

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1 JUHÁSZ 2018.

2 KDM Archives Inv. nr. 91–73. I did not find in the 2009 inventory any coin that were registered after 1970 and could potentially have come from this excavation. FMRU III did not mention such pieces either in the Brigetio chapter or at KDM (p. 440–455). Recently Bence Simon has localised the rescue excavation, however, he did not find any numismatic material mentioned either, I hereby express my gratitude to him for the information shared.

3 BARKÓCZI 1951, 5.

4 262 pieces from the period 1992–2015 (JUHÁSZ 2018) and 6 pieces from 2016 (JUHÁSZ forth).

	Ruler	Denomination	Year of Issue	Reverse	RIC
1.	Otho	denarius	69	SECVRITAS PR	10
2.	Domitian	denarius	81–96	?	?
3.	Domitian	as	86–88	FORTVNAE AVGVSTI	544
4.	Trajan	sestertius	98–117	standing deity	?
5.	Trajan	dupondius	98–117	seated deity	?
6.	Trajan	dupondius	98–117	?	?
7.	Trajan	as	98–117	SPQR OPTIMO PRINCIPI	?
8.	Trajan	denarius	98–117	SPQR OPTIMO PRINCIPI	?
9.	Hadrian	as	117–138	SALVS AVGVSTI SC COS...	?
10.	Hadrian	dupondius	117–138	seating deity	?
11.	Hadrian	as	124–128?	galley	673d?
12.	Hadrian	dupondius	117–138	standing person in toga at right	?
13.	Hadrian	sestertius	117–138	?	?
14.	Hadrian	denarius	117–138	two persons shaking hands	?
15.	Hadrian	as	117–138	?	?
16.	Hadrian	as	117–138	?	?
17.	Antoninus Pius	sestertius	138–161	?	?
18.	Antoninus Pius	sestertius	148–149	COS IIII (Aequitas)	855
19.	Antoninus Pius	subaeratus den.	138–161	?	?
20.	Marcus Aurelius	as	145–47	HILARITAS	1230
21.	Marcus Aurelius	as	174–175	IMP VII COS III SC (Tiberis)	1142
22.	Marcus Aurelius	sestertius	161–180	seating deity	?
23.	Lucilla?	sestertius	164–169	?	?
24.	Commodus	denarius	180–192	?	?
25.	Septimius Severus	denarius	193–211	?	?
26.	Septimius Severus	drachma	194	Caesarea Cappadocia	n/a
27.	Iulia Domna	denarius	203	PIETAS PVBLICA	574
28.	Geta	subaeratus den.	198–209	VICT AETERN	101

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29.	Geta/ Caracalla	provincial	193–199	Nicopolis ad Istrum	n/a
30.	Iulia Maesa	denarius	218–222	?	?
31.	Alexander Severus	as	222–235	?	?
32.	Alexander Severus	denarius	229	LIBERALITAS AVG IIII	205
33.	Alexander Severus	subaeratus den.	229	LIBERALITAS AVG IIII	205
34.	Alexander Severus	denarius	222	MARTI PACIFERO	160
35.	Alexander Severus	denarius	222–235	?	?
36.	Alexander Severus	denarius	222–235	?	?
37.	Gordian III	sestertius	241–242	P M S COL VIM / AN II	n/a
38.	Gordian III	sestertius	238–244	Viminacium	n/a
39.	Philippus Arabs	antoninianus	248	SAECVLARES AVGG COS III	24c
40.	Philippus Arabs	sub. ant.	244–249	LAETIT FVNDAT	36?
41.	Trajan Decius	antoninianus	250	ABVNDANTIA AVG	10
42.	Herennia Etruscilla	antoninianus	250	PVDICITIA AVG	59b
43.	Licinius II	red. follis	317–324	campgate'	?
44.	?	red. follis	310–313	GENIO POPVLI ROMANI	?
45.	Constantine I	red. follis	310–311	SOLI INVICTO COMITI TF PTR	870
46.	Const. dynasty	AE 3–4	346–361	FEL TEMP REPARATIO SMB? horseman	?
47.	Constantius II	AE 3–4	351–361	FEL TEMP REPARATIO horseman	?
48.	Valentinian I	AE 3–4	363–375	?	?
49.	Valentinian I	AE 3–4	363–375	?	?
50.	Valentinian I	AE 3–4	363–375	?	?
51-56.	6 pieces unidentifiable asses, dupondii, sestertii				

Tab. 1 Coins found in the municipium of Brigetio outside the excavations.

The first coins to appear are the ones minted at the end of the 1st century AD. There is an increase during the Antonine period whilst during the Marcommanic wars (167–180) the presence of coins is minimal. A boost came under the Severian dynasty, but the constant coin circulation ceased in the early 250's, when the municipium (at that time already colonia) was abandoned. This fact and the chronology is supported by an antoninian hoard buried at that time.⁵ It could not be coincidental that the last pieces both in the hoard and the coin circulation were issued by Trebonianus Gallus. (Naturally, we always need to pay attention to the fact that coins did not necessarily get into the ground during the reign of the issuing emperor e.g. amongst the three coins minted under the Marcommanic wars two were unlikely to get out of circulation in those years due to their worn condition. Also, the 2nd century sestertii are usually so worn that a circulation for several decades can be assumed ending occasionally in the first half of the 3rd century. The reason for abandoning the municipium is not discussed here but beside an external invasion (from the other side of the Danube) the civil war between Trebonianus Gallus and Aemilian should be also considered.

Coins found by private individuals help us to understand the geographical spread better, since excavations were carried out quite concentrated in the middle of the Marketplace whilst e.g. private gardens have not been touched by archaeologists, therefore it can be a good complementary sample. The gardens in question are mainly along the limes road (modern Highway 1) and most of them within 100 meters from the Marketplace.

Compared to the excavation material (5%), the ratio of the coins issued in the 4th century is higher (16%) in private gardens. I share Juhász' view who explains the presence of these late Roman coins by the usage of the road in the 4th century.⁶ This practically means that the farther we are from the limes road the less chance there is to find such a small bronze coin.

There is no limes falsum amongst the ones from the private gardens and there are only four suberatii: 3 denarii from Antoninus Pius, Geta and Alexander Severus and one antoninian from Philippus Arabs. In line with Juhász' conclusion⁷ on the excavation material, in the Antonine era we have only bronze denominations (except for three denarii found in one place) whilst in the Severian, it is the opposite except for one single Alexander Severus and some Viminacium pieces.

The following table (*Tab. 2*) and chart (*Fig. 1*) show the chronological spread of coins found in excavations and private gardens based on the issuer. First, all denominations are converted to asses then a total value in as is calculated for each ruler. The next step is to divide this amount by the number of months spent on the throne. Finally, we get a weighted average *as* per month value. Limes falsa, provincial coins and those which cannot be linked to one single ruler are excluded. Naturally, this value-based approach can be challenged in a way that the classic exchange rates between the denominations should not have worked the same way in the middle of the 3rd century as in the 1st and 2nd century. Nevertheless, since these traditional denominations had existed until that time and the antoniniani (double denarii) were produced in relatively good quality I think there are good arguments supporting a value-based calculation instead of comparing e.g. the number of 2nd century bronze pieces in different denominations to 3rd century denarii and antoniniani. The coins of the emperors ruled only for a short period of time (1–2 years, if any) were added to the next ruler.

5 RADNÓTI 1946; FEHÉR 2019.

6 JUHÁSZ 2018, 18.

7 JUHÁSZ 2018, 14–18.

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		<i>Antoniniani</i>	<i>Denarii</i>	<i>Sestertii</i>	<i>Dupondii</i>	<i>Asses</i>	<i>Quadrantes</i>		Total pieces	Total asses	Months of reign	Average as/ month
69–79	Vespasian	0	4	0	0	0	0		4	64	114	0,56
81–96	Domitian	0	3	1	0	2	1		7	54,25	180	0,30
98–117	Trajan	0	5,5	4	10	2	0		22	126	234	0,54
117–138	Hadrian	0	8	8	4	13	0		33	181	251	0,72
138–161	A. Pius	0	6	4	4	9	0		23	129	271	0,48
161–180	M. Aurelius	0	6	7	5	12	0		30	146	228	0,64
180–192	Commodus	0	3	1	0	0	0		4	52	153	0,34
193–211	S. Severus	0	29	1	0	1	0		31	469	214	2,19
211–218	Caracalla	1	6	0	0	0	0		7	128	74	1,73
218–222	Elegabal	0	12	0	0	0	0		12	192	45	4,27
222–235	A. Severus	0	28	3	0	1	0		32	461	156	2,96
235–238	M. Thrax	0	2	0	0	0	0		2	32	39	0,82
238–244	Gordian III	5	1	5	0	0	0		11	196	70	2,80
244–249	Philip I	8	0	4	0	0	0		12	272	67	4,06
249–251	T. Decius	3	0	2	0	0	0		5	104	24	4,33
251–253	T. Gallus	1	0	0	0	0	0		1	25	24	1,04
Total pcs & average		18	113,5	40	23	40	1		236	2606,25	2208	1,18

Tab. 2 Coin circulation in the municipium of Brigetio, coins issued AD 68–251.

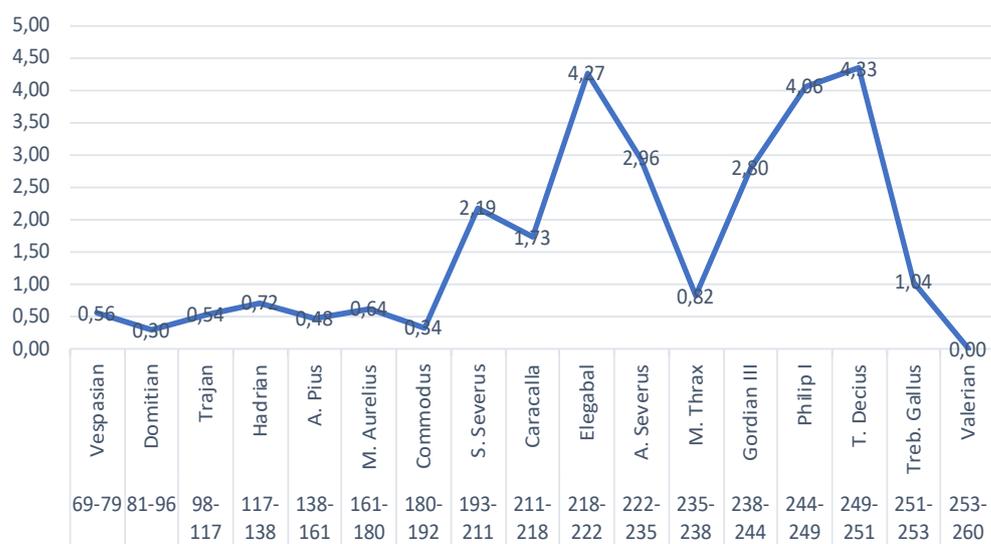


Fig. 1 Coin circulation in the municipium of Brigetio, coins issued AD 68–251 (as/month).

As it can be seen 235 pieces were suitable for analytical purposes from identification and chronological point of view. It is interesting to see the potential impact of the well-known historic events. For instance, the Quad invasion in 167 also reflected in a denarius hoard buried in the municipium.⁸ We can see that the decline of the monthly value already began during the reign of Antoninus Pius, which may be surprising at first sight, since it was recorder as the time of welfare and prosperity. However, if we have a second look, it should be clear that in 167 the coin circulation was composed mainly by Antoninus Pius pieces due to his record long and economically successful reign, therefore the decline may highlight the wartime which is underpinned then by the almost complete lack of the coinage of Commodus. He concluded a peace treaty in 180, however, the fact that his coins are so rare suggests that the reconstruction was not started too quickly. The boost starting with Septimius Severus continues in the golden era of Brigetio under Severans mainly due to the relatively peaceful times and the pay raise given to soldiers. There is a spectacular peak under Elagabalus, which still needs to be explained if possible, at all. Worth considering are the low figures under Maximinus Thrax; could that be a consequence of the repression on the Severan elite by the new ruler? The values increasing from this moment on should mirror the growing inflation until the break under Trebonianus Gallus.

Now for a comparison with other Pannonian cities, the civil town (municipium/colonia) of Aquincum (3rd district of Budapest) would suggest an ideal case since there were similar conditions. There is a recent analysis on the coin circulation in Aquincum,⁹ however, due to methodological reasons I decided not to use it as benchmark. E.g. the author covers the years between 218 and 238 as one single period (period IX) which would mean that if I use the same structure the peak under Elagabalus and the other side of the scale under Maximinus Thrax could not be perceived at all, but differences would dissolve in an average value. Therefore, we would lose two outstanding phenomena to be explained or at least, to be dealt with.

Hopefully, adding coins found in the past or future excavations to the existing material we will get an even more reliable picture on the coin circulation in the municipium of Brigetio. I hereby express my gratitude to Lajos Juhász who shared his two articles in print with me and helped me with his comments in finalising this paper. Special thanks to István Vida who did the exhaustive work of identifying the coins found during the excavations for many years.

8 FEHÉR 2019.

9 MARCHIŞ 2009–2010.

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