

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ
НАЦИОНАЛЕН АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИ
ИНСТИТУТ С МУЗЕЙ

НУМИЗМАТИКА, СФРАГИСТИКА И ЕПИГРАФИКА

21



1892 - 1921 - 1948

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2025



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BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE WITH MUSEUM

НУМИЗМАТИКА, СФРАГИСТИКА И ЕПИГРАФИКА

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21



1892 - 1921 - 1948

SOFIA
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THE FATE OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARTIFACTS FROM UNDERWATER RESEARCH IN ROMANIA IN THE THIRD QUARTER OF THE 20TH CENTURY: A POSSIBLE COIN HOARD FROM CALLATIS AND ITS HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

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ABSTRACT

During underwater research conducted in the 1960s and 1970s at Callatis and later at Tomis, several archaeological artifacts were discovered, including amphorae, anchors, and shipwreck remains. These objects were soon added to public collections in Constanța and Bucharest. However, some smaller objects, such as coins, remained in the private collection of one of the divers – engineer Vasile Cosma – who also participated in many independent dives. In fact, these coins and other small finds were never documented in official publications or added to state collections. Nevertheless, they did exist and, according to their last known owner, were sold to other collectors in the late 1970s, before Cosma emigrated to the United States of America. The hoard came to our attention by chance in the 1990s, when another local collector (the last known owner, after having gone through at least two other local collections) attempted to sell the coins to the National History and Archaeology Museum in Constanța. This article presents all available information concerning two related sets of coins: the original hoard of 15 Histrian coins, which included drachmas from the fourth series, and a group of 15 counterfeit Histrian drachmas that replaced the originals until the mid-1990s. The original initial hoard is significant for at least two reasons. First, it is the only known hoard of this kind – composed entirely of Histrian coins – found in a Greek city of Ionian origin within the territory controlled by Callatis, a Doric Greek centre. Second, it represents, maybe, the sole piece of archaeological and numismatic evidence related to the conflict for control of the Tomis *emporium*, which took place around 250 BC. We know that the original coin hoard contained silver coins specific only to the fourth series, minted in Histria. The conflict involved two opposing coalitions, composed of

Greek centres such as Histria, Callatis, Apollonia Pontica, Heraclea Pontica, and Byzantion, as well as the Egyptian and Seleucid kingdoms.

Keywords: Callatis, Histria, coins, hoard, forgeries, war, underwater research, around 250 BC

INTRODUCTION

Updating and expanding the information, as well as organizing and interpreting the materials related to pre-Roman coin finds from Callatis and Tomis, remains our constant goal. It is one of our oldest concerns, though not yet comprehensively addressed due to limited publishing opportunities. This coin find is the result of underwater surveys conducted in the 1960s and 1970s at Callatis and Tomis, during the early days of underwater archaeology in Romania. These efforts were led by individuals with different backgrounds: Constantin Scarlat, a naval officer and head of the underwater research department at the Romanian Navy Museum in Constanța (also considered the founder of Romanian underwater archaeology), and Vasile Cosma, a civilian engineer from the “Alexandru Sahia” film studio in Bucharest. Both participated in dives in archaeologically significant areas and made discoveries of ancient remains of particular importance. The initial objective of the project was to carry out topographic and geographical research of the underwater terrain along the Romanian coastline.

RESULTS OF AQUATIC RESEARCH NEARBY CALLATIS

During these underwater research expeditions, amphorae, tiles, architectural fragments, wrecks of ancient ships (one of which was carrying a cargo of marble blocks), various land structures (stone and brick buildings), remains of ancient brick walls (likely foundations of dwellings) were discovered. One particularly noteworthy observation was that the archaeological materials and shipwrecks were not covered by sand, but only slightly submerged. During the same period, in the context of the aforementioned activities, steps were taken to establish a section for underwater archaeology at the Navy Museum in Mangalia. At the same time, in 1967, a brief underwater intervention was carried out by the Archaeology Museum in Constanța, during which two anchors – one made of lead and one made of iron – were discovered (Scorpan 1970, 639)¹. Later, in 1974, the Romanian Navy Museum conducted new underwater research in the area of the hydrotechnical constructions in

¹ “In the summer of 1967, the Archaeological Museum in Constanța conducted a modest survey in the presumed area of the ancient port of Callatis, located between the end of the breakwater with the lighthouse (the current civilian port) and the diversion canal south of Mangalia, 100-200 m offshore”.

the new port basin at Mangalia. During this investigation, the underwater breakwaters and the final configuration of the port of Callatis were identified (Moşneagu 2006, 125 – 143). However, from that moment on, the underwater area – with its many archaeological remains – was irreparably damaged by the dredging works necessary to create the conditions for specific modern port activities (Alexandru, Constantin, Ionescu 2012, 441 – 442).

In conclusion, the scientific activity coordinated by Constantin Scarlat played a significant role in saving objects of archaeological heritage interest, as the areas he researched were subsequently irreparably affected – on one hand by the expansion of the modern port of Constanța, and on the other hand by the location of the new port and shipyard over a large part of the ancient port of Callatis (Scarlat 1973, 529 – 540; Scarlat 1976, 55 – 64; Moşneagu 2006, 127; Paraschiv-Talmațchi, Custurea 2016, 243). As a result of the enthusiasm shown for underwater archaeological research, in just one year, the underwater research section was reestablished at the Constanța Museum of Archaeology on August 28, 1969. Its brief activity was focused on prospecting an area with underwater remains near the Constanța Casino (Paraschiv-Talmațchi, Custurea 2016, 244). Constantin Scarlat's work was diverse and remarkable. In his free time, and without involving the Constanța Naval Museum, he trained a generation of autonomous divers and divers affiliated with institutions interested in underwater research (Moşneagu 2007, 103; Velcescu 2018, 194).

After nearly 30 years, between 1994 and 1998, the “Callatis” Archaeological Museum in Mangalia, in collaboration with the “Metamauco” Cooperative in Padua, conducted underwater examinations in the area of the fortress and port of Callatis (Stanecka 2013, 327). On this occasion, new pottery and architectural fragments were discovered. Later, in 2007, the “Callatis” Archaeological Museum in Mangalia carried out new underwater archaeological research in the area of the walls of the Callatis fortress and in the area of the ancient port. This research was the result of a collaboration agreement with the “Octopus” Maritime Archaeological Research Association in Budapest and the “Carpatica” Diving Center in Bucharest (Stanecka 2013, 327). The stated objectives of this intervention were: *“Instrumental examination of the ruins of the Callatis Fortress, a Greco-Roman settlement submerged in the Black Sea, accurate determination and location of these ruins, determination of the extent of the ruins and examination of their condition”* (Ionescu, Colesniuc, Pâslaru 2011)².

Most of the archaeological material discovered in the aforementioned underwater contexts was deposited in museums in Mangalia and

² The information was kindly provided by Dr. Sorin Marcel Colesniuc of the National History and Archaeology Museum in Constanța, to whom we extend our sincere thanks.

Constanța, while the smaller objects like coins, were kept in private collections. Unfortunately, like other small archaeological finds, the coins discovered during underwater research in Constanța and Mangalia have never been mentioned or published. Unfortunately, a widespread custom existed among intellectuals in Constanța and Mangalia in the 1960s and 1970s: collecting ancient artifacts resulting from archaeological research, whether terrestrial or underwater. As a result, many of these artifacts ended up as gifts in the hands of individuals, rather than being preserved in the collections of authorized institutions (Chera 1999, 7 – 8)³.

The second person actively involved in the underwater research was Vasile Cosma. Beginning in 1966, during his summer holidays in Mangalia and Constanța, he had the opportunity to join the diving group led by Constantin Scarlat. Later, after learning new diving techniques and under the pretext of continuing his work on behalf of the “Alexandru Sahia” film studios, Vasile Cosma conducted independent dives in the Black Sea, collecting various ancient objects from the seabed (Cosma 1973b, 51 – 58). Most of these finds became the core of his personal collection, kept at his home (Moșneagu 2006, 126). It is very likely that the coins discovered on these occasions, along with other small objects, which were intended directly for personal collections, were at some point sold to a private buyer (Cosma 1973a, 32, note 9; Moșneagu 2006, 129-130)⁴. It is interesting to note that during this specific historical period in socialist Romania, Vasile Cosma was able to build his private collection of various heritage objects collected from the bottom of the Black Sea without encountering any issues with the authorities. This was possible because Law No. 63 of 1974 stated that heritage remains belonged to the state, but only if they were found on land. Since these artifacts originated from the marine environment, they fell outside the law’s jurisdiction (Moșneagu 2006, 128). In conclusion, although it was illegal in Romania to own or sell historical and archaeological heritage objects, this restriction applied only to terrestrial finds.

Vasile Cosma was also interested in improving the technical processes used to excavate and remove natural deposits from archaeological objects found on the seabed of the Black Sea, without disturbing the water in the work area, in order to safely bring them to the surface. We believe that he enhanced these methods in order to improve the results of his under-

³ The late archaeologist Constantin Chera stated that “various personalities of the Constanța intelligentsia managed to preserve for posterity a relatively large number of monuments from the fortress’ burial grounds”. See, for example, the situation of the accidental archaeological discoveries from the necropolises of Callatis and Tomis.

⁴ Most likely, those coins, as well as other small archaeological objects, with the possible exception of small accumulations of coins regarded as hoards, were found scattered, carried in different directions by underwater currents, and not discovered *in situ*. According to a 1975 circular for the preservation of all national heritage remains, these artifacts never appeared on the list of objects discovered on the bottom of the Black Sea.

water research led in areas with archaeological potential, particularly in the recovery of small and very small objects. In this context, he developed technical drawings and the operating principles for a compressed air lift system⁵.

In the 1970s, beyond the general enthusiasm, there were also archaeologists from the scientific archaeological world in Constanța who identified the problems that had arisen, both official and unofficial, and pointed them out in a very elegant manner. Thus, they requested that underwater research be transformed into systematic research, that modern working methods be used by delimiting the researched area, that clear legal provisions be established regarding the right to underwater research and the ownership regime of the discovered objects, including that everything collected from the seabed be recorded in institutional inventories and not in personal collections (Scorpan 1970, 639; Irimia 1970, 17 – 21)⁶.

Most of Vasile Cosma's private collection was sold (in 1976 and 2009) to the National History Museum of Romania. It consisted mainly of amphorae, more precisely twelve specimens, anchors, and other larger objects from Mangalia, resulted from dives conducted in 1967 and 1970. Some other objects were discovered in the port area of Constanța in 1973 (Velcescu 2018, 200). Another part of his collection ended up at the Romanian Navy Museum in Constanța (Velcescu 2018, 199 – 200). It is also worth to note that, as it later came to light, some of the archaeological artifacts published by Vasile Cosma were irretrievably lost from his personal collection (Munteanu, Croitoru 2018, 212, note 7) or sold.

In addition to the previously mentioned submerged discoveries at Callatis, other finds have been made more recently, coming both from shipwrecks discovered in the port area and from other underwater research, as well as *passim* finds and objects coming from archaeological excavations in the area of ancient Callatis. These include integral and intact vessels, as well as fragments of Greek amphorae, some of which are in the custody of the "Callatis" Archaeological Museum. These vessels are dated between the second quarter of the 5th century BC and the middle of the 3rd century BC and were produced in Mende, Chios (new type), Peparethos, Cnidos, Thasos, Sinope, Chersonese, etc. (Mateevici, Ionescu 2018, 57).

COIN FINDS FROM MANGALIA (CALLATIS)

A relatively small number of the discovered coins were examined by us in 1994 and early 1995, in an attempt to salvage any useful information regarding the presence and circulation of coins in Callatis during

⁵ <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-locale/slatina/jacques-cousteau-al-romaniei-vasile-cosma-1604975.html> (the link was active by 15.09. 2025).

⁶ [Most attempts (underwater research – our note) belong to passionate but amateur individuals, so even if they have yielded some results, these have not been scientifically recorded.]

the pre-Roman and Roman periods. Among these coins, discovered approximately 60 years ago at the bottom of the sea, we note fifteen silver coins issued by the colony of Histria (dated to the 4th – 3rd century BC), which appear to have belonged either to a diver from Scarlat's team (which at one point included 17 members – see Moșneagu 2006, 126), or rather from the Vasile Cosma collection. These coins were discovered on an area of approximately 3.5 m². The coins were sold long before 1990, as part of a coin exchange or rather through direct sales between collectors⁷. In the early 1990s, 15 Histrian silver coins, “part of the IV series”, ended up in a last local private collection⁸, which no longer exists today. It is also known that after 1979, Vasile Cosma emigrated to the USA, where he remained until the end of his life, in New York (Moșneagu 2006, 126; Velcescu 2018, 195).

Based on what has been published so far, it is known that underwater research in Mangalia has uncovered a series of archaeological objects dated from the 5th to 1st centuries BC (1966) (Moșneagu 2006, 125). These include iron and lead anchors from large merchant or warships and dated from the 3rd to the 1st centuries BC (discovered in 1967 or 1973) (Scorpan 1970, 639, 643; Moșneagu 2006, 126). Additionally, ancient shipwrecks have been identified, one of which is definitely dated to the 4th – 3rd century based on similar amphorae discovered *in situ* in 1966 (Moșneagu 2006, 127), bearing “prominent burn marks” (Moșneagu 2006, 127). Another Greek amphora was discovered in 1974 (Moșneagu 2006, 129).

The discovery of coin hoards in the coastal marine environment of Romania's present day littoral zone is not unprecedented. Three other such hoards are known to date. Between 1969 and 1970, during the dredging of the port of Mangalia, seventeen bronze coins from Callatis and Tomis were discovered and added to the numismatic collection of the Bucharest Institute of Archaeology (Dima 2005, 37 – 38). In 1975, a coin hoard was discovered during the dredging of the Constanța port basin, most of which was dispersed among the discoverers, while eighteen pieces entered the numismatic collection of the Museum of National History and Archaeology in Constanța. All the coins were fused together in the form of a metal block, which, according to the person who published the hoard, originated from a coin deposit aboard a ship that sank at some point in antiquity (late 3rd – early 4th century AD). The coins (*follis*) were issued for Diocletianus, Maximianus Herculus, Constantinus I and Galerius in the workshops of Thessalonica, Heraclea and Antioch and represented

⁷ The information was obtained from the private owner in the mid-1990s, when the coin hoard was offered for sale to the Museum of National History and Archaeology in Constanța.

⁸ The „new coins from the hoard” were offered for sale to the National History and Archaeology Museum in Constanța in 1994 or 1995. However, at that time the museum did not have funds in its budget specifically allocated for the purchase of archaeological and monetary artifacts.

unsuccessful attempts at imitations that were cast in moulds (Ocheșeanu 1984, 131 – 134; Dima, Talmațchi 2007, 155 – 160).

In 1976, a diver discovered the hoard in Mangalia harbour, in an area flooded or eroded by seawater, near the small breakwater, at a depth of 4 metres, over an area of 10 m². The hoard included 43 Roman imperial denarii dating from the 1st to 3rd centuries AD. The last coins were minted for Gordianus III (Vertan 1980, 330 – 340).

Another hoard appeared in an unspecified context, on the territory of the Mangalia shipyard, between the years 1985-1989 (1987?). From this hoard, 13 Roman Republican denarii were recovered. Chronologically, it falls between the years 133 and 42 BC (Vertan, Georgescu, Ocheșeanu 1990, 221 – 224).

Finally, in 2000 – 2001, approximately 200 medieval coins were discovered at a depth of 2 – 3 m in the Black Sea, about 200 m north of the “Capului Turcului” point, in Eforie Sud. Some of these coins were brought to Bucharest, while 25 gold and silver pieces (including sequins, reales, Polish ort coins, testoni, florins, lion-thalers) entered the numismatic collection of the Museum of National History and Archaeology in Constanța. The hoard dates back to either the first half of the 17th century AD or no later than the sixth decade of the same century (Custurea, Dima, Talmațchi, Velter 2007, 121-135). Later, in 2005, another coin hoard was discovered in Eforie Sud, consisting of 124 silver coins (lion-thalers, écus, florins, reales, etc.) originating from a ship. This hoard dates back to the middle of the 17th century, specifically the middle of the seventh decade of the century (Custurea, Dima, Talmațchi, Velter 2007, 137-198).

So, what was known is that at the beginning of the 90s of the 20th century, under the conditions of underwater archaeological research, a small hoard was discovered, consisting of 15 Histrian drachmas, which were part of the IVth coin series⁹. This was the information about a hoard composed of original Histrian silver pieces. This is very important, considering the uniqueness of such a discovery at Callatis. According to a monetary repertoire compiled in 2004, only a few isolated Histrian coins are known from Callatis – namely, one didrachm (Canarache 1968, 136; Poenaru Bordea 2004, 45, no. 4), one drachma and two bronze coins of the Apollo type (Poenaru Bordea 2004, 49, no. 21). Being silver pieces specific to the series or group IV from Histria, according to the most recent contributions in this regard, the coin hoard could be dated between 313 and 256/255 BC (Dima 2014, 24 – 26).

However, during our analysis of this coin hoard, we encountered several research challenges that gave us a new perspective on the coins we had

⁹ The information was obtained from the private owner in the mid-1990s, when the coin hoard was offered for sale to the Museum of National History and Archaeology in Constanța.

examined in the 1990s. Drawing upon over three decades of experience in the scientific study of Histrian coinage from the pre-Roman period and in the identification of counterfeit specimens, we have concluded that the silver coins presented in the 1990s at the Museum of National History and Archaeology in Constanța were in fact forgeries. These forgeries were executed with considerable skill, exhibiting well-defined die links. It is plausible that they were manufactured abroad and subsequently imported into Romania through various channels, possibly in the aftermath of the fall of the communist regime. The available evidence suggests that the original coins from the hoard were likely replaced by these counterfeit pieces through exchanges or transactions among private collectors¹⁰.

CATALOGUE OF THE HISTRIAN SILVER HOARD CONSISTING OF COUNTERFEIT COINS FROM THE EARLY 1990S

1. AR (drachma); 7 h; 5.83 g; 18 x 17.5 mm (**Plate I.1**).

Obverse: Two facing heads of Apollo side by side, the left one is inverted.

Revers: Eagle on dolphin, both standing left; between the tails of the eagle and the dolphin H; legend: ΙΣΤΡΙΑ.

Good state of preservation.

<https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?pid=16101>; see the original (?) at Stancomb 2000, pl. VII, no. 141, 4th century BC.

2. AR (drachma); 5 h; 5.88 g; 18 x 17.5 mm; (**Plate I.2**).

Obverse: Two facing heads of Apollo side by side, the left one is inverted.

Reverse: Eagle on dolphin, both standing left; in the right field, between the eagle's plumage and tail Θ; legend: ΙΣΤΡΙΑ; (the letters are with globules).

Relatively good state of preservation.

https://groups.io/g/CFDL/topic/the_vergina_fake_istros/36749923, the Vergina hoard appeared on the antiquities market in 2008; see the original at Pick 1898, 164, no. 434.

3. AR (drachma); 12 h; 5.78 g; 17 x 16.6 mm (**Plate I.3**).

Obverse: Two facing heads of Apollo side by side, the left one is inverted.

Revers: Eagle on dolphin, both standing left; between the heads of the eagle and the dolphin a globule; between the tails of the eagle and the dolphin a prominent point; below the dolphin X and P in monogram; legend: ΙΣΤΡΙΑ (the ends of the letters are with globules).

Good state of preservation.

<https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?pid=11062>; <https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?pid=16110>.

4. AR (drachma); 12 h; 5.83 g; 17 x 16.3 mm (**Plate I.4**).

Obverse: Two facing heads of Apollo side by side, the left one is inverted.

¹⁰ We never had access to the silver drachmas from the original hoard. The counterfeit Histrian silver coins in the catalogue were examined and recorded with all their technical data, and photographed at the time of their presentation for acquisition. Subsequently, we were never able to see them again. Their last owner, who also provided various information about the source of the discovery and sold the Histrian silver pieces to the museum in Constanța (which we later identified as fakes), died around 2005-2007.

Revers: Eagle on dolphin, both standing left; between the heads of the eagle and the dolphin a globule; between the tails of the eagle and the dolphin a prominent point; below the dolphin X and P in monogram; legend: ΙΣΤΡΠΗ (the letters are with globules).

Good state of preservation.

<https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?pid=11062>; <https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?pid=16110>.

5. AR (drachma); 2 h; 5.69g; 17.5 x 16.5 mm (**Plate I.5**).

Obverse: Two facing heads of Apollo side by side, the left one is inverted.

Revers: Eagle on dolphin, both standing left; between the tails of the eagle and the dolphin Γ; legend: (Ι)ΣΤΡΠΗ.

Good state of preservation.

https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?album=search&cat=0&pid=7369#top_display_media; see the original at Pick 1898, 163, no. 427.

6. AR (drachma); 12h; 5.36 g; 16.3 x 15.8 mm (**Plate I.6**).

Obverse: Two facing heads of Apollo side by side, the left one is inverted.

Revers: Eagle on dolphin, both standing left; beneath the dolphin Δ; legend: ΙΣΤΡΠΗ.

Relatively good state of preservation.

<https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?pid=21368>; https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?album=search&cat=0&pid=6564#top_display_media; Prokopov 2007, 13, no. 11; see the original at Pick 1898, 162, no. 420.

7. AR (drachma); 12 h; 5.58 g; 16.5 x 15.7 mm (**Plate I.7**).

Obverse: Two facing heads of Apollo side by side, the left one is inverted.

Revers: Eagle on dolphin, both standing left; beneath the dolphin Δ; legend: ΙΣΤΡΠΗ.

Good state of preservation.

<https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?pid=21368>; https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?album=search&cat=0&pid=6564#top_display_media; Prokopov 2007, 13, no. 11; see the original at Pick 1898, 162, no. 420.

8. AR (drachma); 12 h; 5.61 g; 19 x 17.8 mm (**Plate I.8**)

Obverse: Two facing heads of Apollo side by side, the left one is inverted.

Revers: Eagle on dolphin, both standing left; beneath the dolphin Γ and A in monogram; legend: ΙΣΤΡΠΗ (the ends of the letters are with globules).

Good state of preservation.

https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?album=search&cat=0&pid=6564#top_display_media; Prokopov 2007, 14, no. 15; see the original at Pick 1898, 161, no. 417.

9. AR (drachma); 12 h; 5.70 g; 19 x 17.9 mm; (**Plate I.9**).

Obverse: Two facing heads of Apollo side by side, the left one is inverted.

Reverse: Eagle on dolphin, both standing left; beneath the dolphin Γ and A in monogram; legend: ΙΣΤΡΠΗ.

Good state of preservation.

https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?album=search&cat=0&pid=6564#top_display_media; Prokopov 2007, 14, no. 15; see the original at Pick 1898, 161, no. 417.

10. AR (drachma); 3 h; 5.49 g; 18 x 16.9 mm (Plate II.10).

Obverse: Two facing heads of Apollo side by side, the right one is inverted.

Reverse: Eagle on dolphin, both standing left; beneath the dolphin Γ and Α in monogram; possibly between the tails of the eagle and the dolphin a globule; legend: ΙΣΤΡΠΗ.

Good state of preservation.

<https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?pid=13693>; https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?album=search&cat=0&pid=6564#top_display_media; Prokopov 2007, 14, no. 15; see the original at Pick 1898, 161, no. 417; var.

11. AR (drachma); 1 h; 5.21 g; 18.5 x 18 mm; (Plate II.11).

Obverse: Two facing heads of Apollo side by side, the left one is inverted.

Reverse: Eagle on dolphin, both standing left; between the heads of the eagle and the dolphin a globule; between the tails of the eagle and the dolphin a globule; beneath the dolphin Γ and Α in monogram; legend: ΙΣΤΡΠΗ.

Relatively good state of preservation.

https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?album=search&cat=0&pid=6564#top_display_media; Prokopov 2007, 14, no. 15; see the original at Pick 1898, 161, no. 417; var.

12. AR (drachma); 1 h; 5.69 g; 18 x 17.4 mm (Plate II.12).

Obverse: Two facing heads of Apollo side by side, the left one is inverted.

Reverse: Eagle on dolphin, both standing left; beneath the dolphin Δ; legend: (Ι) ΣΤΡΠΗ.

Good state of preservation.

https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?album=search&cat=0&pid=7368#top_display_media; see the original at Pick 1898, 162, no. 421.

13. AR (drachma); casted; 12 h; 5.43 g; 18 x 16.9 mm; (Plate II.13).

Obverse: Two facing heads of Apollo side by side, the left one is inverted.

Reverse: Eagle on dolphin, both standing left; beneath the dolphin Α; legend: ΙΣΤΡΠΗ.

Relatively good state of preservation.

https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?album=search&cat=0&pid=15354#top_display_media; see the original at Pick 1898, 162, no. 419.

14. AR (drachma); 12 h; 5.53 g; 18.5 x 18 mm; (Plate II.14).

Obverse: Two facing heads of Apollo side by side, the left one is inverted.

Reverse: Eagle on dolphin, both standing left; beneath the dolphin ΔΙ; legend: (Ι) ΣΤΡΠΗ.

Relatively good state of preservation.

https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?album=search&cat=0&pid=6564#top_display_media; Prokopov 2007, 13, no. 12; see the original at Pick 1898, 164, no. 440 (but for eagle on dolphin both standing right).

15. AR (drachma); 6 h; 5.34 g; 17.1 x 15.8 mm (Plate II.15).

Obverse: Two facing heads of Apollo side by side, the left one is inverted.

Reverse: Eagle on dolphin, both standing left; beneath the dolphin ΔΙ; legend: ΙΣΤΡΠΗ.

Good state of preservation.

https://www.forumancientcoins.com/fakes/displayimage.php?album=search&cat=0&pid=6564#top_display_media; Prokopov 2007, 13, no. 12; see the original at Pick 1898, 164, no. 440 (but for eagle on dolphin, both standing right).

*

A significant role in the political, economic, and commercial development of the Ionian city of Tomis in the mid-3rd century BC was played by the conflict involving Callatis, Histria, Apollonia Pontica, and the Seleucid king Antiochus II on one side, and Byzantion, Heraclea Pontica, the Egyptian king Ptolemy II Philadelphos and Tomis, on the other. This conflict, which centred on control of the emporium of Tomis for economic and commercial interests, is described by Memnon of Heraclea Pontica (Pippidi 1967a, 33 – 34). The event took place approximately around 256 – 255 to 253 BC (Avram, Poenaru Bordea 2010, 628) and ended with the victory of the allies of the Tomitan centre. This outcome led to the removal of a possible commercial monopoly by Callatis and Histria over Tomis. According to epigraphic sources from the 3rd century BC, Tomis remained at the stage of an emporium until the mid-3rd century BC (Avram, Poenaru Bordea 2010, 569 – 570). In its early stages, the settlement was relatively small and modest in terms of size and level of development (Rădulescu, Scorpan 1975, 46; Buzoianu, Bărbulescu 2007, 293). Tomis appears to have long maintained the status of a Milesian commercial establishment, indicating a lower political-administrative standing, likely dependent on Histria's economic and commercial sphere of influence. It was only after 260 BC, when the city acquired the status of a *polis*, becoming a stable political entity, prosperous economically and commercially, thus approaching the Roman era (Vulpe 1968, 154 – 155). This is when the city began to mint coins (Avram, Poenaru Bordea 2010, 569), a clear expression of its economic and financial independence, leaving the monetary sphere of interests of Histria (Poenaru Bordea 1970, 133 – 144). The Tomitan colony became a sought-after warehouse for goods, a hub of land transport (Vulpe 1968, 156), with merchants from Byzantion coming to control the entire trade in the Left Pontus (Marcu 1998, 39 – 60).

Although defeated following the war in the middle of the 3rd century BC, the Dorian colony of Callatis enjoyed a period of economic and commercial prosperity in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. Epigraphic evidence indicates intense political, economic, and cultural relations with centres in both the Pontic and Aegean-Mediterranean basins, not only prior to but also following the conflict (Pippidi 1967a, 52-53; Doruțiu-Boilă 1988, 248). Evidence of Callatis' prosperity at the end of the 3rd century BC can also be found in the substantial donations made by local citizens for the construction of a temple dedicated to the god Dionysus (Pippidi 1967a, 54; Pippidi 1967b, 159). Thus, Callatis experienced its economic peak during the 3rd century BC and the first half of the 2nd century BC (Pippidi 1967a, 51), with inscriptions revealing evidence of dynamic commercial activity across a wide geographical area specific to the Greek world (Pippidi, Berciu 1965, 239).

If the most recent proposed chronology for Group IV from Istros is accurate, the Histrian drachmas of the IV series, which we know were part of the original coin hoard, could probably belong to the years 280 – 256/255 BC (Dima 2014, 24 – 26). This suggests that the original hoard of coins discussed here arrived in Callatis during the military conflict aimed at securing military and economic control over Tomis – a period when Callatis and Histria were allied. It is quite possible that the original coins from the hoard were transported aboard a ship from Histria, together with a significant quantity of amphorae, possibly intended for commercial purposes (between 256 and 254 BC). However, the possibility that one of the submerged wrecks discovered at Callatis was a warship cannot be ruled out.

CONCLUSIONS

Our approach supplements the information published to date on the results of archaeological research carried out in the submerged area of the city of Callatis, the local port, at the beginning of the second half of the 20th century, with the good and bad recorded in several articles.

In this context, the mention of the discovery of a Histrian silver coin hoard from the Hellenistic period complements to a certain extent the relatively rich list of similar discoveries in the Pontic region and, more specifically, in Mangalia¹¹. It provides information on the presence and circulation of the coins beyond the *chora* (its own area of economic and commercial resonance), in the context of the connections made with the rest of the Greek world in the area, in the second half of the 1st millennium BC. As previously mentioned, this hoard (the original one) would be the only one known to date among the Histrian coin finds recorded in the Dorian colony of Callatis. Its presence also appears to coincide with the significant conflict for control of the *emporium* of Tomis, probably highly valued as a geographical position, between two camps, well represented by Greek centres such as Histria, Callatis, Apollonia Pontica, Heraclea Pontica, Byzantion, as well as the Egyptian and Seleucid kingdoms.

A Histrian silver coin hoard was indeed discovered in the 1960s and 1970s during underwater archaeological research at Callatis. It is known that all of the original drachmas belonged to the fourth series minted at Histria. Beyond this, we have no other reliable information regarding the primary hoard. Unfortunately, the most recent owner of the “hoard” was already in possession of 15 counterfeit coins produced in imitation of the

¹¹ Unfortunately, precise information regarding the archaeological context of the original hoard's discovery is not available. The only detail that can be inferred from the documentation provided by the Coin Room of the Constanța Museum in the 1990s is that the hoard originated from underwater investigations carried out at Callatis during the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is most probable that, following its recovery, the assemblage passed directly into the private collection of engineer Vasile Cosma.

original Histrian drachmas. This conclusion was reached gradually over the past several years, through our ongoing research and drawing upon more than three decades of experience in the study of drachmas struck at the Histrian mint during the pre-Roman period, including the identification of counterfeit issues. Our investigation began with the material presented to us in the 1990s by the last collector who sought to sell the hoard to the Museum of National History and Archaeology in Constanța. Although the research process proved to be complex and demanding, we consider the effort justified in light of the significance of the original hoard for understanding the history of the western Pontic region during the Hellenistic period.

Taking advantage of the ignorance of some and perhaps the naivety of others, someone along the “chain” – from one collector to another, through exchanges or sales – replaced the original coins with counterfeits in the early 1990s. It is certain that the last owner was the most disadvantaged party in this entire chain of collectors.

In conclusion, we emphasize the danger for specialized research of the insertion on the auction market and in private collections of fake copies, for example those made after original pieces from Histria, produced in contemporaneity, since the beginning of the 90s of the 20th century.

Updating the subject and supplementing the information, organizing and interpreting the existing materials, as well as cataloging in a scientific context some unprecedented coin discoveries to date, such as the present coin hoard, are objectives that we have set for ourselves and which we hope to successfully achieve in stages.

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СЪДБАТА НА АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИТЕ АРТЕФАКТИ ОТ ПОДВОДНИ
АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИ ПРОУЧВАНИЯ В РУМЪНИЯ ПРЕЗ ТРЕТАТА
ЧЕТВЪРТ НА XX ВЕК: ЕДНО ВЪЗМОЖНО МОНЕТНО СЪКРОВИЩЕ
ОТ КАЛАТИС И НЕГОВОТО ИСТОРИЧЕСКО ЗНАЧЕНИЕ

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По време на подводни проучвания, проведени през 60-те и 70-те години на миналия век в Калатис, а по-късно и в Томис, са открити много археологически артефакти, включително амфори, котви и останки от корабокрушения. Част от тези находки наскоро след това са били включени в публичните колекции в Констанца и Букурещ. Някои по-малки предмети като монети, обаче, остават в частната колекция на един от водолазите – инженера Василе Косма, който е участвал и в много индивидуални гмуркания. Всъщност тези монети и други малки находки никога не са документирани в официални публикации, нито са постъпвали в държавни колекции. Въпреки това те са съществували и според последния им известен собственик са били продадени на други колекционери в края на 70-те години на XX век, преди Косма да емигрира в САЩ. Съкровището попадна в полезрението ни случайно през 90-те години на миналия век, когато друг местен колекционер (последният известен собственик) се опитва да продаде монетите на Националния историко-археологически музей в Констанца, след като преди това е прегледал поне две други местни колекции. Тази статия представя цялата налична информация относно два свързани комплекта монети: оригиналното съкровище от 15 монети на Истрос, което включва драхми от четвърта серия, и група от 15 фалшиви истроски драхми, които са заместили оригиналите преди средата на 90-те години на миналия век. Оригиналото първоначално съкровище е важно поне по две причини. Първо, то е единственото известно съкровище от този вид, съставено изцяло от монети на Истрос – град с йонийски произход, открито в територията контролирана от Калатис – дорийски гръцки център. Второ, то представлява може би единственото археологическо и нумизматично доказателство, свързано с конфликта за контрол над емпориума Томи, който се е състоял около 250 г. пр. Хр. Знаем, че оригиналното парично съкровище е съдържало сребърни монети, специфични само за четвъртата серия, сечени в Истрос. Конфликтът е включвал две враждебни коалиции, съставени от гръцки центрове като Истрос Калатис, Аполония Понтика, Хераклея Понтика и Византион, както и Египетското и Селевкидското царство.



Plate I. The counterfeit Histrian drachmas, produced in the early 1990s, which replaced the original pieces of the hoard discovered in the 60s – 70s of the last century at Callatis (nos. 1 – 9).



Plate II. The counterfeit Histrian drachmas, produced in the early 1990s, which replaced the original pieces of the hoard discovered in the 60s – 70s of the last century at Callatis (nos. 10 – 15).