

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ
НАЦИОНАЛЕН АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИ
ИНСТИТУТ С МУЗЕЙ

НУМИЗМАТИКА, СФРАГИСТИКА И ЕПИГРАФИКА

21



1892 - 1921 - 1948

СОФИЯ
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

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ROMAN AND LATE ROMAN LEAD TESSERAE FROM *NICOPOLIS AD ISTRUM*

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ABSTRACT:

The present paper discusses lead *tesserae* discovered during archaeological excavations at *Nicopolis ad Istrum* – an urban centre initially at the northern edge of the province of Thrace, and later in the province of Lower Moesia and its successor *Moesia Secunda*. The finds come from an area in the southwest corner of the *agora*. There is situated a П-shaped square open to the west, surrounded by a colonnade from the north, west and south – a portico or *stoa*. The edifice is adjacent to the *odeon/bouleuterion*. A huge number of pits were dug into the virgin layer, which predate the colonnade. They are filled up with soil and architectural elements from a 2nd – 3rd century public building – column shafts, bases, capitals, architraves, *mensa ponderaria*, inscriptions, *etc.* Except for the architectural fragments, which have good parallels with the Antonine period buildings in the city, most of the pits contain small finds, including coins and some of them lead *tesserae*.

The last two categories of finds are the subject of the present analysis. The coins are mainly from the last decades of the 4th century. They give the *terminus post quem* for the erection of the *stoa* public building. A relatively smaller number are the coins from the 2nd – 3rd century. Together with the architectural details, they could be used to determine the dating of most of the *tesserae*. Despite the minor number of small finds discussed, they come from relatively well-dated contexts of the Roman, Late Roman and Early Byzantine city of *Nicopolis ad Istrum*.

Keywords: *Nicopolis ad Istrum*; lead *tesserae*; Roman and Late Roman coins; archaeological context.

INTRODUCTION

Nicopolis ad Istrum is a Roman, Late Roman and Early Byzantine city, situated on the left bank of the Rositsa River¹, 3.5 km southeast of the

¹ A left tributary of the Yantra River. The latter flows into the Danube River, not far from the village of Krivina, Ruse district.

modern village of Nikyup. This location is close to the outskirts of the *Haemus* Mountain and the southern edge of the Danube plain in present-day Central Northern Bulgaria, Veliko Tarnovo district (**fig. 1**).

The *tesserae* presented in this article originate from the excavation area “Southwest Corner of the Forum” in *Nicopolis ad Istrum*, explored archaeologically by Dr. I. Tsarov² (**fig. 2**). The excavation area is a П-shaped colonnade, surrounding an open square facing west on the three sides (north, east and south). This complex has many features of a portico or *stoa*, situated between the *odeon/bouleuterion* and an *insula* west of the southwest corner of the *agora* (**fig. 3**)³.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORICAL PERIODIZATION OF *NICOPOLIS AD ISTRUM*

There are different hypotheses about the date of the founding of *Nicopolis ad Istrum*. Almost all of them are related to the First and Second Dacian Wars (101 – 102, 105 – 106) of Emperor Trajan – during their course or soon after (analyses of the main theories: Boteva 2014, 199 – 201; Топалилов 2012, 761 – 762). When exactly, has not yet been determined. Initially, the city belonged to the province of Thrace and, together with *Marcianopolis*, was one of the two Thracian urban centres at the northern end of the province (Boteva 1996, 173 – 176). The border between Thrace and Lower Moesia was marked in 136 AD by four boundary stones passing through the administrative territory of the city (ILBulg 429, ILBulg 358, ILBulg 390, ILBulg 386), probably placed along the limits of the hinterland of *Nicopolis* (Владкова 2020, 254 – 255; Чакъров 2021, 110). During the brief reign of Emperor Pertinax in 193, the city was transferred to Lower Moesia (Boteva 1996, 173 – 176). Later, the territory of the city was probably also expanded and settlement life flourished during the reign of the Severan dynasty (Boteva 1996, 176). The city was most likely fortified later, after 170 AD, as a reaction to the invasion of the *Costoboci* (Иванов 1988, 97 – 108; Русева-Слокоска 1994, 171 – 181; Poulter 1995c, 77 – 112).

There is an abundance of epigraphic and architectural information from the site for the Antonine period and especially for the later period of

² The site has been studied for eleven years : 1980 – 1981, 1983 – 1984, 2017 – 2023: Иванов, Цочев, Недялков 1981, 60; Иванов и др. 1982, 41; Иванов и др. 1984, 71; Иванов и др. 1985, 138; Вълков 1985, 66 – 67; Църов 1985, 35 – 40, обр. 1 – 8; Вълков 1986, 89; Иванов, Иванов 1994, 14 – 15, 113 – 122; IGBulg V 5216; Църов 1998, 111 – 117; Църов 2018, 238 – 240; Църов 2019a, 256 – 258; Църов 2019b, 73 – 78; Църов 2019c, 73 – 78, 381; Църов 2020, 723 – 727; Църов 2021a, 661 – 664; Църов 2021b, 11 – 17, 285). The volumes of “Archaeological Discoveries and Excavations” have not been published since 2021. This is the reason why the reports for the excavations in the period 2021 – 2023 are not cited here.

³ The excavator, Dr. I. Tsarov, has a preliminary interpretation of the area as a portico. The *stoa* interpretation was proposed by Prof. Dr. S. Torbatov (National Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) during the annual archaeological reports in 2022.



Fig. 1. The excavated area on a 1943 aerial orthophoto picture (V. T. RMH– Veliko Tarnovo, inv. No 250 A/НСФ), Fig. K. Chakarov.

Обр. 1. Проученият сектор, отбелязан на въздушна ортофотоснимка от 1943 г. (РИМ – Велико Търново, инв. № 250 А/НСФ), Обр. К. Чакъров.



Fig. 2. The excavated area on an aerial orthophoto picture of the city, photo by Eng. I. Kalchev, Fig. by K. Chakarov.

Обр. 2. Проученият сектор, отбелязан на ортофотоснимка, снимка инж. Ив. Калчев, Обр. К. Чакъров.

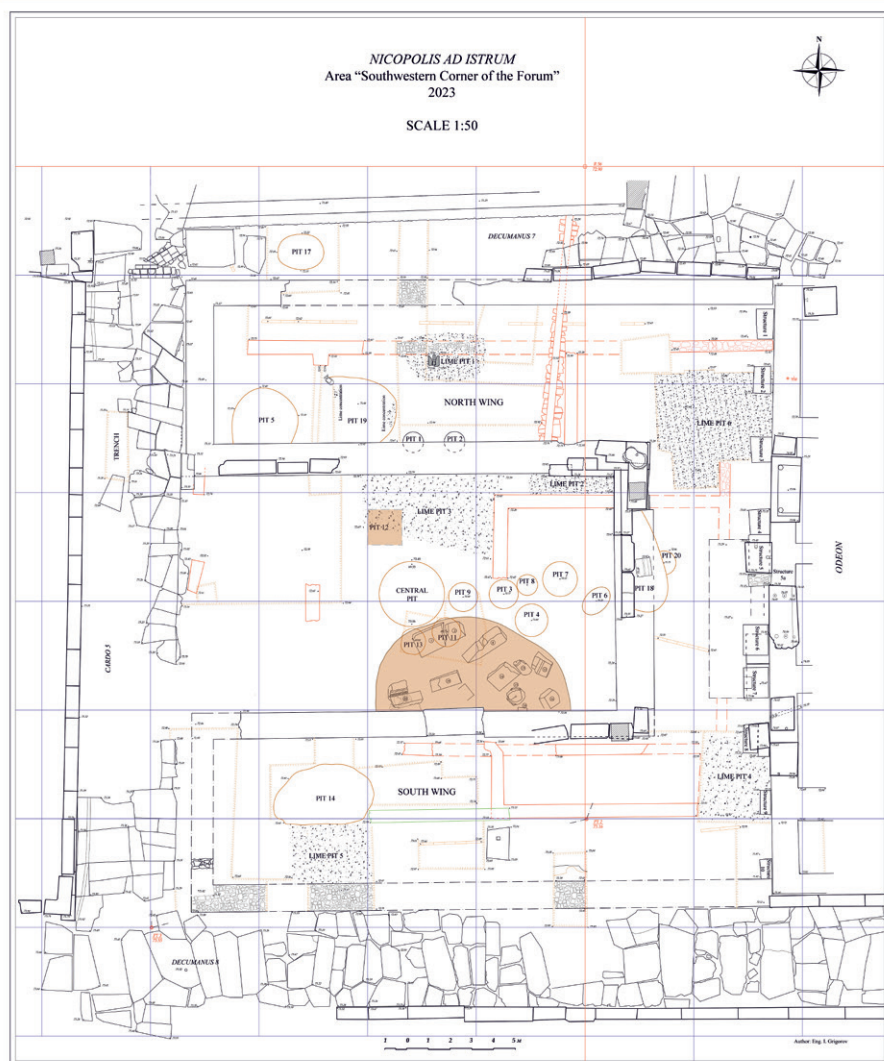


Fig. 3. Plan of the excavated area, courtesy of Dr. I. Tsarov, author of the plan Eng. I. Grigorov, modifications (English translations, highlighting of structures with *tesserae* and coins) K. Chakarov.

Обр. 3. План на проучения сектор, с позволението на д-р Ив. Църов, автор на плана инж. Ив. Григоров, добавки (превод на английски, оцветяване на структурите, от които произхождат тесери с монети) К. Чакъров.

the Severan dynasty. The actual foundations of these edifices are not always known due to leveling up activities and constructions from the 4th century and later, which caused the reuse of inscriptions and an entablature from the 2nd – 3rd century (see most recently: Владкова 2021). When traces of early buildings have been discovered, they are usually represented by later robber trenches along their walls (again: Владкова 2021).

During the barbarian invasion in 250 – 251 AD, the city was besieged but not captured (Poulter 1995a, 13 – 14; Грозданова 2019, 95 – 96; Върбанов 2017, 8). However, the rural territory of *Nicopolis* underwent a major collapse, as is evidenced by the numerous buried coin hoards (Върбанов 2017, 8), the end of the life of many rural unfortified settlements (Чакъров 2021, 32), the cessation of the city's autonomous coinage during the reign of Emperor Gordian III (238 – 244) (Pick 1898, 82; Poulter 1995a, 13), and an almost complete cessation of epigraphic activity (IGBulg II 734 and IGBulg V 5216 from 270/271 AD; Poulter 1995a, 14), *etc.*

There is almost no information about *Nicopolis ad Istrum* in the second half of the 3rd century, except for two inscriptions from 270/271 AD (IGBulg II 734; IGBulg V 5216), information about the existence of some buildings in the city (Владкова 2021, 421), and one mention in the written records of a new Gothic siege in 270 AD (Poulter 1995a, 14).

A large-scale reconstruction of *Nicopolis ad Istrum* was carried out after the Gothic invasion in the middle of the 3rd century. It is dated to the second half of the 3rd century – the first half (or beginning) of the 4th century (Русева-Слокоска 1994, 172 – 181; Poulter 1995c, 102; Владкова 2021, 86, 108 – 109, 152 – 153, 339). It is still uncertain when exactly this happened, but the erection of some buildings in the *agora* could be dated to the middle of the 4th century (Владкова 2021, 435, 441 – 442). Severe devastations in the last quarter of the 4th century were traced down during the archaeological excavations (Владкова 2021, 173, 268, 324 – 325, 339, 382, 437, 441). Robbing of structures and leveling of terrains for constructions and reconstructions were carried out at the end of the 4th and the first half of the 5th century (Владкова 2021, 173, 199 – 200, 385, 434).

In the middle of the 5th century, the city suffered a severe devastation by the Huns (Poulter 1995b, 34; Poulter 1995c, 104; Poulter 1995d, 214 – 215) or by Gothic raids (Динчев 2002, 45 – 50; Динчев и др. 2009, 20). It is well marked by burnt-down destructions of public and private buildings, as well as the collapse of the Late Roman fortification. Scholars have suggested that this was the invasion in 447 AD (Poulter 1995b, 34; Poulter 1995c, 104; Poulter 1995d, 214 – 215) or another, in the 60s of the 5th century (Динчев 2002, 45 – 50; Динчев и др. 2009, 20).

Life did not stop within the limits of the Roman and Late Roman city during the second half of the 5th century (Динчев 2002, 45 – 50; Владкова 2021, 61 – 62). Over the ruined massive buildings and streets modest stone walls emerged, constructed with clay and in rare cases with mortar (Иванов, Иванов 1994, 112, обр. 96; Владкова 2021, 61 – 62, 383). Such structures were built even by the beginning of the 6th century (Владкова 2021, 61 – 62, 432, 443).

According to V. Dinchev, the early Byzantine *Nicopolis ad Istrum*, the

so-called *castellum* or *Nicopolis ad Istrum* 2, was built at the end of the 5th – beginning of the 6th century⁴ (Dintchev 1997a, 54; Dintchev 1997b, 101 – 102; Динчев 2002, 45 – 49; Владкова 2021, 429). This is a separate fortress built next to the southeast corner of the Roman and late Roman curtain wall. This *castellum* surrounds a fortified area almost four times smaller than that of the Roman and Late Roman city: 21.55 ha *versus* 5.74 ha (Иванов, Иванов 1994, 23).

At the same time, a new urban centre emerged – the early Byzantine city on the naturally fortified Tsarevets hill in the modern city of Veliko Tarnovo, a place in the Fore-Balkan part of the *Haemus* Mountain (Dintchev 1997a, 54). The ancient city could be identified with *Zikideva* mentioned in historical records (Velkov 1995, 491 – 496; Dintchev 1997, 67 – 69; Динчев 2013, 453 – 456). Gradually, *Zikideva* replaced *Nicopolis ad Istrum* as an Episcopal chair. It became the new urban centre in the region. Both existed simultaneously almost until the end of the 6th century, *Nicopolis ad Istrum* until the beginning of the last quarter of the 6th century (Poulter 1995b, 45) and *Zikideva* reached the second decade of the 7th century (Дочев 2002, 291 – 292; Динчев и др. 2009, 25 – 26; Динчев 2013, 475 – 476; Poulter 2019a, 26). This brief overview is necessary for a better understanding of the context of the presented lead tokens within the general framework of periodization of *Nicopolis ad Istrum* and its territory.

CONTEXT OF THE LEAD TESSERAE AND PERIODIZATION OF THE EXCAVATION AREA “SOUTHWEST CORNER OF THE FORUM”

The relative and absolute chronology of the excavated area has not yet been established. The lead *tesserae* and coins presented here come mostly from a huge pit situated at the southern end of the open-air square set up by a П-shaped *stoa* gallery (**fig. 3**). This pit has the enormous diameter of 5.60 x 3.30 m (**fig. 3, fig. 4, fig. 5**). It is filled with almost virgin yellowish-brown soil and an abundant amount of architectural elements of an impressive entablature and interior of a public building from the 2nd – 3rd centuries (**fig. 3, fig. 4, fig. 5**): bases, columns, epistyles, cornices, inscriptions, measuring table with gladiatorial scenes, *etc.* (**fig. 3, fig. 4, fig. 5**) (Църков 2018, 238 – 240; Църков 2019a, 256 – 258; Църков 2019c, 73 – 78, 285; Църков 2020, 723 – 727; Църков 2021a, 661 – 664; Църков 2021b, 11 – 17, 285).

According to the head of the excavations, Dr. I. Tsarov, this pit is earlier than the northern base of the southern wing of the *stoa* and has the following interpretation. The fact that in this section the foundations were built on an unstable terrain caused the wall to collapse. As a solution for the repair, a layer was dug out that did not cover the entire width of the foundation, and through a series of funnel-shaped holes, the builders

⁴ Contrary to this, A. Poulter suggests that the early Byzantine *castellum* was built in 453 AD (Poulter 1995b, 34 – 37).



Fig. 4. The huge pit with architectural fragments – view from the northwest, authored by and courtesy of Dr. I. Tsarov.

Обр. 4. Голямата яма с архитектурните детайли – изглед от северозапад, с авторството и позволенията на д-р Ив. Църов.



Fig. 5. The huge pit with architectural fragments – close-up view from the northwest, authored by and courtesy of Dr. I. Tsarov.

Обр. 5. Голямата яма с архитектурните детайли (близък план) – изглед от северозапад, с позволенията и авторството на д-р Ив. Църов.

perforated the remaining part of the backfill of the earlier pit under the wall. Then, the architectural details from the entablature of the building were inserted into the funnel-shaped holes to strengthen the foundations. The head of the excavations, Dr. Ivan Tsarov, dates the repair to the end of the 5th – beginning of the 6th century, although he finds it strange because of the archaeological finds from the pit dating from the second half of the 2nd century – the first half of the 5th century and the most common coins from the end of the 4th – the middle of the 5th century (Църов 2018, 238 – 240; Църов 2019a, 256 – 258; Църов 2019c, 73 – 78, 285; Църов 2020, 723 – 727; Църов 2021a, 661 – 664; Църов 2021b, 11 – 17, 285).

This reconstruction raises several chronological and constructional questions. One of them is that there are 2nd – 3rd centuries architectural fragments collected from the entablature of the *stoa* and then used as a boosters for the foundations of the same building. It would mean that the *stoa* was left without an entablature. Another question is how limestone blocks of 1000 or 2000 kg could be inserted into the foundations.

The area has structures from at least six different periods, some of them with separate stages. If a detailed view on the stratigraphy of the excavated area is made, it could also be interpreted in the following way (**fig. 3, fig. 4, fig. 5**)⁵:

Period 2nd – 3rd century – almost no traces of it. Partially preserved level below lime pit No 5 in the southern wing of the complex (**fig. 3, fig. 6, fig. 7**). The level is overlaid by a thick parallel wall from the 3rd century (?), which overlays earlier pit and cuts off another meridional thick wall. The parallel wall is cut off by lime pit No 5. The lime pit is cut off by pit No 14, which is backfilled with 2nd – 3rd century materials. Lime pit No 5 and the earlier layer below it are cut off by the south wall of the south wing of the *stoa*. Only the lower foundations have survived from the latter, and its upper part appears to be a robber's trench made of soil, small pebbles and mortar. The situation at lime pit No 5 is indicative of the relative chronology of the site.

The next structures are walls 0.55 – 0.60 m wide, built of sandstone and mortar, and a sewer with ceramic pipes, interrupted by the northern wing of the *stoa* (**fig. 4, fig. 6, fig. 7**). They most likely date back to the 3rd century, and the superpositions between the sectors of the 0.50 – 0.60 m wide wall indicate that it had different stages.

Lime pits Nos. 4 – 6 are most likely related to the construction of the *odeon*, as is evidenced by lime pits No. 4 and No. 6, which are related to the building on the western wall of the *odeon*. Lime pits No. 4 and 6 are cut off by the attached masonry pillars of structures from later periods.

⁵ The following periodization is based on personal on site observations of the author as a team participant and discussions with the members of the team. The final periodization is up to the head of the excavations – Dr. I. Tsarov.



Fig. 6. Cross-section with information about the relative chronology of the area – view from the west: 1 – the earliest layer; 2 – thick wall; 3 – lime pit No. 3; 4 – pit No. 14; 5 – the south wall of the south wing of the *stoa*; 6 – robber trench of the south wall of the south wing of the *stoa*, courtesy of I. Tsarov, photos K. Chakarov.

Обр. 6. Стратиграфски профил с информация за относителната хронология на сектора – изглед от запад: 1 – най-ранен пласт; 2 – тесен зид; 3 – варница № 3; 4 – яма № 14; 5 – южен зид на южното крило на стоата; 6 – траншея от ограбване на южния зид на южното крило на стоата, с позволението на д-р Ив. Църов, снимки К. Чакъров.

Next in chronology are the pits of various sizes dug in the virgin soil. A clear example of their superior position is that pit No. 14 cuts off lime pit No. 5 (**fig. 3, fig. 6, fig. 7**). The fill of the pits consists mainly of soil, a smaller amount of ceramics from the 2nd – 4th centuries, coins from the 2nd – late 4th – early 5th century, and in some of the pits – architectural fragments. An exception is pit No. 14 which has an abundance of ceramics. The latest coins from the pits provide a *terminus post quem* for the filling of the pits at the end of the 4th – beginning of the 5th century. Similar pits with the same chronology have been excavated in other areas of the agora complex, some of them also containing earlier materials from the 2nd century and Late Antique coins (Владкова 2021, 107 – 112).

The terrain was leveled soon after the pits were filled and the construction of the *stoa* began. The *stoa* foundations cuts off, in several places, the earlier 3rd century thin walls and the preceding its construction pits No. 1 – 2, 5, 19 (**fig. 3, fig. 4, fig. 5**). Thus, the latest materials from the pits provide a *terminus post quem* for the foundation of the *stoa* – the end of the 4th – beginning of the 5th century. Most probably, during this period, ma-



Fig. 7. Cross-section with information about the relative chronology of the site – view from the east: 1 – earliest layer; 2 – thick wall; 3 – lime pit No. 3; 4 – pit No. 14; 5 – the south wall of the south wing of the *stoa*; 6 – robber trench of the south wall of the south wing of the *stoa*, courtesy of I. Tsarov, photo K. Chakarov.

Обр. 7. Стратиграфски профил с информация за относителната хронология на сектора – изглед от изток: 1 – най-ранен пласт; 2 – тесен зид; 3 – варница № 3; 4 – яма № 14; 5 – южен зид на южното крило на стоата; 6 – траншея от ограбване на южния зид на южното крило на стоата, с позволението на д-р Ив. Църов, снимка К. Чакъров.

sonry pillars were attached to the western wall of the *odeon*, which could be associated with the plan of the *stoa* (fig. 3).

The latest period is a period of robbing of the stone material of the *stoa*, which was a long-lasting process, but most intense during the construction of the 5th – 6th century *castellum* south of the Roman and Late Roman city. Traces of this process were found on the walls of the *stoa* (fig. 3, fig. 6, fig. 7) and probably in pit No. 20, which is a chronological exception among the other pits at the site. Some finds also indicate robbing in the 18th – 19th centuries.

THE LEAD TESSERAE FROM THE EXCAVATED AREA AND CURRENT INTERPRETATIONS OF SIMILAR OBJECTS FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The artifacts presented cannot be identified as commercial stamps. They are more similar to *tesserae* tokens (Plate I.1 – 4; cat. Nos 1 – 4). The artifacts lack the usual conical back and perforation for the string of commercial seals from this period (Boersema, Dallzell 2021, 4 – 13). The function of these coin-like objects is still debatable – whether each *tessera* had an individual official purpose – a substitute of coins for distribution

of grain, for entrance to public games; application in board games; *etc.* (Boersema, Dallzell 2021, 8 – 9). Recent theories have focused on the use of lead tokens in the monetary system or in connection with religious festivals (Boersema, Dallzell 2021, 9).

During the 1st – 3rd centuries, lead tokens had different design characteristics in different part of the Roman Empire. They could be one-sided or two-sided, with depictions of deities in combination with different objects or the name of the city that issued them (Boersema, Dallzell 2021, 6 – 8). It could be said that they are for local use (Boersema, Dallzell 2021, 6 – 8). *Tesserae* were issued by both officials and private individuals in Rome and other cities of the Empire (Boersema, Dallzell 2021, 6 – 8). The examples from *Ephesus* provide interesting information. The tokens, found there, bear the names of *boularches*, *grammateus boules*, *gerousia*, *agoranomos* – *i. e.* different magistrates in the local government. Similar cases are attested in another Greek-speaking city – Athens (Boersema, Dallzell 2021, 6 – 8). Such features could be expected in *Nicopolis ad Istrum* due to the Asia Minor origin of its citizens.

THE LEAD *TESSERAE* FROM THE EXCAVATED AREA – CONTEXTS⁶

Four of the *tesserae* (**Plate I.1 – 3, Plate I.5; cat. No 1 – 3, cat. No 5**) from *Nicopolis ad Istrum* come from a huge pit with architectural fragments from the 2nd century, coins from the 2nd – early 5th century, and other materials, near the north wall of the south wing of the *stoa* (**fig. 3, fig. 4, fig. 5**)⁷. They have a residual character. Another one (**Plate I. 4; cat. No. 4**) comes from pit No. 12, which cuts off lime pit No. 3 (**fig. 3**). It is the only small find from this Late Antique pit, and is probably also of residual character.

The earliest coin from the huge pit beneath the northern foundations of the south wing of the *stoa*, where four of the *tesserae* were found (**Plate I.1 – 3, Plate I.5; cat. Nos 1 – 3, cat. No 5**), is a heavily worn bronze Roman coin (as) from the 1st century (**Plate II.1; cat. No 6**). Next in chronology are two provincial bronze issues, one minted during the reign of Emperor Severus Alexander (222 – 235) in 225 – 226 AD at *Marcianopolis* (**Plate II.3; cat. No 7**), and the other an illegible cast coin (**Plate II.3; cat. No 8**). The remaining coins are long circulated AE3 and AE4 issues of the Constantinian dynasty (305 – 363) (**Plate II.4 – 6; cat. Nos 9 – 11**), with two more identifiable issues – one of Constantius II as *Augustus* (351 – 355) and another of Constantius II as *Augustus* or Julian II as *Caesar* (355 – 360); the Valentinian (364 – 392) (**Plate II.7; cat. No. 12**); and the Theodosian

⁶ The analysed *tesserae* and coins are identified by the author.

⁷ At the upper level of the northern wall of the south wing, in the area of the huge pit, was found a Late Antique *fibula* (field inventory No 6/2018) with bent stem (type 20a after E. Gencheva), dated to the end of the 5th – 6th century (Генчева 2004, 55 – 57).

dynasties (379 – 457) (**Plate II. 8 – 14, cat. Nos. 13 – 19**). Five coins are worn issues from the 4th – 5th century (**Plate II. 15 – 19, cat. Nos. 20 – 24**) and another six are illegible coins (some of them fragments) also from the same period (**Plate II. 20 – 25, cat. No. 25 – 30**). The latest better identified coins are two heavily worn issues from the reign of the emperor Theodosius I (379 – 395) (**Plate II. 8 – 9; cat. Nos. 13 – 14**) and an issue of Arcadius (383 – 408) (**Plate II. 14; cat. Nos. 19**). They provide a *terminus post quem* for the backfilling of the pit under the foundations of the northern wall of the southern wing of the *stoa*, and for the foundation of the complex in general, at the end of the 4th – beginning of the 5th century (**fig. 8**).

ROUND *TESSERAE* FROM THE 2ND – 3RD CENTURY FROM
THE EXCAVATED AREA

The *tesserae* tokens are struck, almost round, and flat or slightly hollow. The first one is a heavily worn, illegible specimen (**Plate I.1; cat. No. 1**). The second is a two-sided (type two after M. Still “Two-sided with various shapes of flan”: Still 1995, 38 – 40) and the rest are single-sided specimens with images of deities on one side.

The two-sided one is engraved with a facing right curly-haired male (?) bust on the obverse and the reverse (**Plate I. 2; cat. No. 2**). The actual condition of this *tessera* does not allow further iconographic analysis. Similar images can be found on pseudo-autonomous coins of *Nicopolis ad Istrum*, where *Dionysus* or *Apollo* is represented (examples in: Христова, Жеков 2009).

The other two are one-sided. The first one has a standing human figure facing right (**Plate I.3; cat. No. 3**). The position of his hands and body resembles the reverses of coins from the 2nd – 3rd centuries, minted in *Nicopolis ad Istrum*, with images of various deities in position with half-folded hands (examples in: Христова, Жеков 2009). The iconography of *Hygeia*, feeding a serpent from a *patera* is closest. It is known in combination with *Asclepius* (Христова, Жеков 2009, types 8.10.21.1, 8.10.21.2 – 5, 8.18.21.1 – 2, 8.23.21.1, 8.23.21.2, 8.26.21.1, 8.26.21.2) or with *Hygeia* herself (Христова, Жеков 2009, types 8.14.21.3 – 5, 8.18.21.4, 8.23.21.3, 8.23.21.4, 8.23.21.5 – 6, 8.25.21.1 – 2, 8.25.21.3 – 4, 8.26.21.3 – 4, 8.26.21.5 – 7, 8.26.21.8, 8.36.21.1 – 4). In this case, the details at the front side of the figure could be the left hand holding the *patera*, or the deity's hand itself and the serpent's head, while the motif on the back down is the serpent's tail. It can be assumed that the figure feeding a serpent is *Hygeia*.

The next one-sided specimen has an engraving of a standing frontal human figure, holding a staff with an entwined serpent in his right hand (**Plate I. 4; cat. No. 4**). This is the most common depiction of *Asclepius* on the autonomous coins of *Nicopolis* from Emperor Commodus to Emperor Gordian III (Дончева 1999, 170 – 171). Similar iconography can be found on coins with images of only the deity itself (Христова, Жеков 2009,

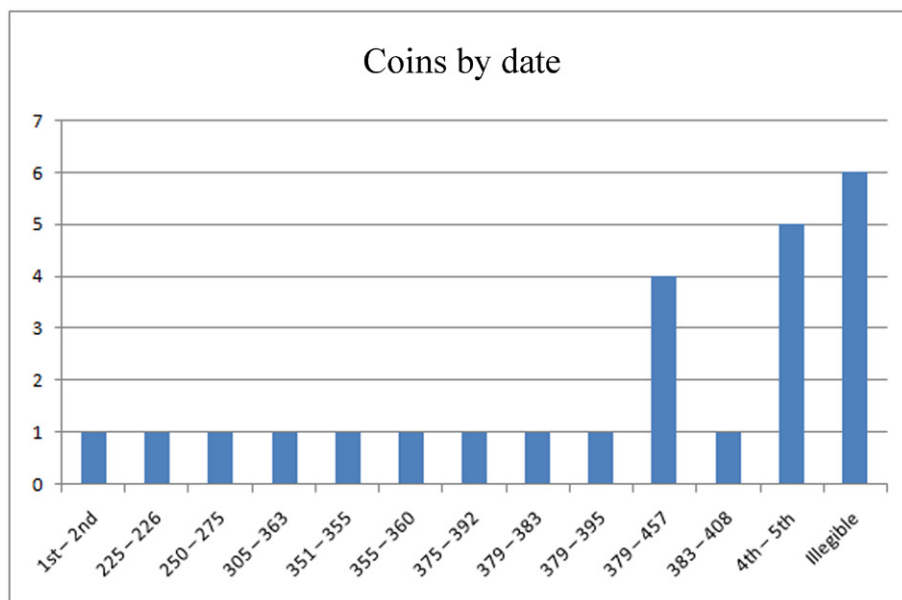


Fig. 8. Diagram of the coins from the huge pit, K. Chakarov.

Обр. 8. Диаграма с монетите на от голямата яма, К. Чакъров.

types 8.18.20.2 – 3, 8.18.20.4, 8.18.20.5, 8.18.20.6 – 8, 8.21.20.1, 8.21.20.2, 8.23.20.2, 8.23.20.3, 8.23.20.4, 8.23.20.5, 8.23.20.6, 8.25.20.1, 8.25.20.2, 8.25.20.3, 8.25.20.4 – 5, 8.25.20.6, 8.26.20.1 – 6, 8.26.20.7 – 10, 8.26.20.11, 8.36.20.1, 8.36.20.2 – 3, 8.36.20.4 – 7). Such depictions of the deity are recorded on tokens with images of gods from the Greco-Roman pantheon (Still 1995, 197). In other cases, he is represented together with *Higeya* and *Telesphorus*⁸. The worn-out specimen from *Nicopolis ad Istrum* does not allow the exact position of the deity to be determined. It is uncertain whether this is *Hygeia* on the obscure right part of the *tessera* or simply a surface element.

The cult of *Asclepius* in *Nicopolis ad Istrum* is attested by a votive plaque of the deity and the rest of the healing triad – *Hygeia* and *Telesphorus* (IGBulg II 676; Дончева 1999, 172); and a marble statue of *Asclepius* found in an area interpreted as a *palaestra* in the city (Иванов 1992, 30 – 35; Иванов, Иванов 1994, 149 – 150, № 6; Дончева 1999, 171 – 172). Two other inscriptions could have some connection to the cult of the deity, but their interpretation is not so explicit in that direction (Дончева 1999, 173). The cult of the healing god is well documented on the coins of *Nicopolis ad Istrum* and the numismatic specimens could suggest a wider

⁸ Examples of lead *tesserae* from the Roman Empire show also images of *Asclepius* and *Hygeia*: Boersema, Dalzell 2021, 60, No 188.

acceptance of its veneration by the city's population (Дончева 1999, 170 – 171), although depictions on coins are not always so unambiguous (Владкова 2003, 101). There could have been a temple of the god in *Nicopolis ad Istrum* (Дончева 1999, 171). His cult is not attested in the administrative territory (Владкова 2003, 106 – 107). It may mean that the worship of the deity was limited to the city itself.

SQUARE ROMAN OR LATE ROMAN *TESSERA* FROM THE EXCAVATED AREA

The fifth specimen differs from the others (**Plate I. 5; cat. No. 5**). It has an almost square shape, a hollow face, and a flat back⁹. On the obverse there is a depiction of two standing figures – one male on the left and another male or female on the right, both with their hands clasped – the left figure with his left hand and the right with both hands. There is a star above them and a cross to the right.

If the right figure is female, this could be interpreted as a wedding scene. Similar scenes are depicted on coins representing the weddings of imperial couples clasping right hands (*dextrarum iunctio*): Antoninus Pius and Faustina the Elder (AD 141), Marcus Aurelius and Faustina Younger (after 145 AD), Caracalla and Plautilla (after 201 AD), Severus Alexander and Orbania (225 AD) (Walter 1979, 275, 277). In the written records, the clasping of hands of the wedding couple was first mentioned at the end of the 4th century by Claudian. The meaning is probably that the father's patronage over the bride passes to the groom (Hersch 2010, 200 – 201). In the 4th century, wedding scenes of a bride and groom clasping hands are also known from reliefs on coffins in the context of Christian funeral rituals.

On coins, this *dextrarum iunctio* between married couples appears again in the 5th century. A series of commemorative coins were issued for the marriages of Empress Eudoxia and Valentinian III in 437 AD (with emperor Theodosius II as *Pronubus*); Empress Pulcheria and Marcian in 450 AD; Empress Ariadne and Anastasius I in 491 AD. In the last two cases, Christ has the role of *Pronubus* (Kantarowicz 1960, 6 – 7; Walter 1979, 277 – 278; Walker 2010, 851 – 852, 859). The coins were issued at times when a royal heiress married a man of humble origin to strengthen the throne (Walker 2010, 851, 859). Coins and belts with these marriage scenes were gifted to military officers and court servants as *largitio* (Walker 2010, 851).

The lead specimen from *Nicopolis ad Istrum* is type 7 after M. Still – “One-sided rectangular mould-formed bars”, dated to the 3rd – 4th century (Still 1995, 47). M. Still mentions that the examples he analysed do not have string holes. However, some of them have traces of seam marks around the edge, and others have a nail hole from the obverse to the

⁹ Initially the specimen was thought to be an *exagia*, but Prof. Dr. S. Torbaotov focused the present author's attention that it is not such kind of an artifact.

reverse. The examples with inscriptions show the abbreviation *DN*, which suggests a dating in the 3rd – 4th century. According to the author, these specimens could also have been made by private persons, due to the easy way of striking with a matrix (Still 1995, 47).

A *tessera* with similar iconography and shape is known from the collection of the Yambol Regional Museum of History (Томова 2008, 157 – 159, № 1; Табло XVII. 6 – 7). On the one side a male and a female figure are depicted, clasping hands. The other side has a vine leaf. According to B. Tomova, the *tessera* is a private invitation for an engagement or a wedding of a wealthy person, related to wine production (Томова 2008, 159). It differs from the specimen from *Nicopolis ad Istrum* in general in the iconography, the position of the hands, and the absence of a star and a cross.

A series of lead sealings from *Serdica*, similar in shape to the example from *Nicopolis ad Istrum*, are defined as *signacula* (Аладжова 2022, 93 – 98, 160 – 161, табло XXVI, табло XXVII). Although these specimens do not have a completely clear interpretation, they are considered as a kind of business cards authorizing certain officials in their public affairs (Аладжова 2022, 93, 98). There are two-sided specimens. Most of them have an inscription, some have a monogram, an eight-pointed star, etc. Two of the sealings come from contexts from the 6th – 7th century (Аладжова 2022, 93). Some of the *signacula* could also be of a residual nature, due to the complex stratigraphy of the excavated area, and thus their chronology could be broader, reaching even the 4th century (Аладжова 2022, 98). A distinctive feature of the *signacula* from *Serdica* and the piece from *Nicopolis ad Istrum* (cat. No 5) is that the former is mostly two-sided and have inscriptions, while the latter is one-sided and has no inscription.

In the case of the specimen from *Nicopolis ad Istrum*, the scene differs from the usual “*dextrarum iunctio*” representations due to the hands and the uncertainty that the right figure is a female. In terms of iconography it can be dated to the 3rd – 4th century or later. The star between the human figures and the cross are also more typical for coins from this period.

The lead *tessera* with two figures and probable Late Antique origin was probably lost, as were the other Late Roman numismatic issues, during the backfilling of the large pit preceding the foundation of the *stoa*, at the end of the 4th – the beginning of the 5th century. It is in accordance with the dating of type 7 after M. Still – one-sided rectangular mould-formed bars, dated to the 3rd – 4th century (Still 1995, 47).

The context of finding of the 2nd – 3rd century lead *tesserae* (**Plate I. 1 – 4; cat. No. 1 – 4**) shows that they are of residual nature in Late Antique

pits, immediately preceding the foundation of the *stoa* complex. Some of them have iconography found on coins minted by the city authorities. It can be assumed that they are of local origin, probably minted by the city mint offices. The supposed Late Antique *tessera* (**Plate I. 5; cat. No. 5**) is probably contemporaneous with the backfill of the pits, which happened at the end of the 4th – beginning of the 5th century.

All lead *tesserae* come from a place of a public nature, most probably related to commerce and/or public events. The 2nd – 3rd century issues could be connected with a destroyed building with elaborate architecture and possible commercial or/and religious functions. Besides the representative fragment of the entablature, an indication for that are the found measuring table with gladiatorial scenes and the two inscriptions, one made by a city official – *oikonomos* (*agoranomos*) – a person responsible for the city market and trade, and the other by two *agoranomoi* (Църков 2019a, 256 – 258; Църков 2019c, 73 – 78). The inscription of the *oikonomos* was found in the huge pit from which the three of the studied *tesserae* (**Plate I.1 – 3, Plate I.5; cat. Nos 1 – 3, cat. No 5**) originate. A fragment of the inscription of the *agoranomoi* is also from this pit (Църков 2020, 723; Църков 2021a, 663). In addition to the official rank of the dedicators, the monument has also several slots marked with Greek numerals. The item resembles a drop box, but its function is still uncertain¹⁰. Other fragments of the measuring table and the inscription of the *agoranomoi* were found in the nearby pit No. 6 (Църков 2021, 11 – 17, 285). It is not certain exactly where these fragments of a public edifice originally stood – on the place of the Late Antique *stoa* or somewhere nearby. P. Vladkova suggests that they belong to a western portico of a 2nd century *cardo*, registered in northern direction, and to a building to the west of this early street (**fig. 2, fig. 3**) (Владкова 2021, 229).

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¹⁰ Personal comments of Dr. N. Sharankov (Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Department of Classics) to whom the author expresses his gratitude. The artefact with slots and inscription of *agoranomos* is unpublished and still processed in the laboratory for conservation and restoration of the Veliko Tarnovo Regional Museum of History.

CATALOGUE OF *TESSERAE* AND COINS1. Lead *tessera*.**Obverse:** Worn, with traces of reliefs.**Reverse:** Worn, with traces of reliefs.

Axis: –; mint: –; date: 2nd – 3rd century; type: –; diameter: 9 – 11 mm; thickness: 2.0 mm; weight: 1.11 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 4.55 m, W 0.25 m, MASL 72.24 m; field inventory No. 24/2018 (**Plate 1.1**).

2. Lead one-sided *tessera*.**Obverse:** Dot decoration resembling a curly bust facing right.**Reverse:** Relief decoration resembling a curly bust facing right.

Axis: 6 o'clock; mint: –; date: 2nd – 3rd century; type: –; diameter: 15 – 17 mm; thickness: 2 mm; weight: 2.46 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 3.90 m, W 3.0 m, MASL 71.6; field inventory No. 7/2018 (**Plate 1.2**).

3. Lead one-sided *tessera*.**Obverse:** Standing human figure (Nemesis?) in a long dress, facing right with half-bent left arm to the right and an object above it (snake?), bent right arm, object behind (snake tail?).**Reverse:** Worn.

Axis: –; mint: –; date: 2nd – 3rd century; type: –; diameter: 15 mm; thickness: 1.0 mm; weight: 1.91 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 0.50, W 3.25 m, MASL 71.84, from the bottom of the pit; field inventory No. 24/2018 (**Plate 1.3**).

4. Lead one-sided *tessera*.**Obverse:** A heavily worn image of Asclepius, standing frontally, with a serpent entwined around his staff.**Reverse:** No.

Axis: –; mint: –; date: 2nd – 3rd century; type: –; diameter: 14 – 16 mm; thickness: 1.0 mm; weight: 1.60 g; coordinates: quad. F7/39, N 2.40 m, W 1.48 m, MASL 73.12, from the levelling layer over pit No. 12; field inventory No. 9/2021 (**Plate 1.4**).

5. Lead one-sided *tessera*.**Obverse:** Concave, with a scene of two standing figures facing each other, clasping hands – the left figure with his left hand, and the right with both hands, a star between them, a cross to the right; the left figure is male and is wearing a cloak fastened on the right shoulder. The right figure, male or female, is in a long dress.**Reverse:** Flat.

Axis: –; mint: –; date: 3rd – 4th century; type: –; height: 11 – 13 mm; width: 12 mm; thickness: 3 – 4 mm; weight: 3.57 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 3.96 m, W 2.60 m, MASL 71.54, from the backfill of the pit in front of the northern face of the northern wall of the south wing; field inventory No. 9/2018 (**Plate 1.5**).

6. AE As.

Obverse: Bust of a ruler facing right.**Reverse:** Standing figure (?).

Axis: –; mint: –; date: 1st – 2nd century; type: –; diameter: 25/26 mm; thickness: 3 mm; weight: 8.76 g; coordinates: quad. F7/60, N 3.1, W 3.0, MASL 72.88; field inventory No. 33/2018 (**Plate 2.1**).

7. AE25.

Obverse: AVT K M AVP CEV ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟC.

Bust of emperor Severus Alexander with a laurel wreath, facing right, a draped cloth fastened with a fibula on the right shoulder, ribbon winding back.

Reverse: VP ΦΙΛΟΠΑΠΠΙΟ ΜΑΡΚΙΑΝΟΠΟΛΙΤΩΝ (ΩΝ in ligature).

Dotted circle. Hera standing in 3/4 profile with head facing left, left leg slightly bent at the knee; holding a *patera* in her right hand and a sceptre in her left.

Axis: 12 o'clock; mint: *Marcianopolis*, during the provincial governorship of Fir. Philopappus (224 – 226); date: 225 – 226 AD; type: Pick 1041; diameter: 24.6 – 25.0 mm; thickness: 3 mm; weight: 9.8 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 4.0 m, W 1.0 m, MASL 70.53, in the clayish layer of the pit; field inventory No. 9/2019 (**Plate 2.2**).

8. AE19/20.

Obverse: Bust of an emperor facing right, illegible circular inscription.

Reverse: Standing human figure (?), illegible circular inscription.

Axis: 7 o'clock; mint: – cast Roman provincial mint; date: 3rd quarter of the 3rd century¹¹; type: –; diameter: 19/20 mm; thickness: 2.0 mm; weight: 4.30 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 0.00 m, W 3.30 m, MASL 72.01; field inventory No. 30/2018 (**Plate 2.3**).

9. AE4.

Obverse: Illegible circular inscription.

Bust of a ruler of the Constantinian dynasty with a pearl diadem, facing right.

Reverse: Four-line inscription VOT/XX/MVLT/XXX; dot above, vertical lines below.

Axis: 2 o'clock; mint: –; date: 305 – 363 AD; type: –; diameter: 12/13 mm; thickness: 2 mm; weight: 1.23 g; coordinates: quad. F7/60, from the cleaning of the face of the north wall of the south wing; field inventory No. 4/2018 (**Plate 2.4**).

10. AE3.

Obverse: A worn circular inscription ...ONSTANT...

Bust of a ruler from the Constantinian dynasty, probably Constantius II as *Augustus* with a pearled diadem, facing right.

Reverse: An illegible inscription of the type FEL TEMP REPARATIO.

A soldier spearing a fallen soldier.

Axis: 12 o'clock; mint: –; date: 351 – 355 AD; type: –; diameter: 20 mm; thickness: 2 – 3 mm; weight: 4.27 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 0.95 m, W 3.35 m, MASL 72.15, into the pit, near a cornice; field inventory No. 22/2018 (**Plate 2.5**).

11. AE4.

Obverse: Bust of an emperor, probably Constantius II as *Augustus* or Julian II as *Caesar*, facing right.

Reverse: Traces of an illegible circular inscription. Standing human figure.

Axis: 7 o'clock; mint: –; date: 355 – 360 AD; type: –; diameter: 14/16 mm; thickness: 2.0 mm; weight: 2.63 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 0.05 m, W 3.20 m, MASL 72.09; field inventory No. 28/2018 (**Plate 2.6**).

¹¹ Cast imitations of provincial bronze coins are found mainly in Lower Moesia and their production has been suggested in several sites along the *limes* (Draganov, Varbanov 2021, 425 – 427). The date of their production and use is still debatable. M. Dima and G. Talmačhi date the cast provincial copies from the Canlia coin hoard at the earliest in AD 244, but more probably later than that year (Dima, Talmačhi 2002, 75). However, the authors suggest also earlier casting in the 30s of the 3rd century (Dima, Talmačhi 2002, 75). A date in the 3rd quarter of the 3rd century for the specimen from *Nicopolis ad Istrum* was proposed to the present author by one of the anonymous reviewers of the article.

12. AE4.

Obverse: DN VAL[ENTIN]IANVS [PF AVG].

Bust of Emperor Valentinian II with a pearled diadem, facing right. The ruler is wearing a draped cloth fastened with a fibula on the right shoulder.

Reverse: Illegible circular inscription type SALVS REI PVBLICAE. Victory walking left with head facing backward, dragging a kneeling captive by the hair with her left hand and with her right hand holding a trophy.

Axis: 5 o'clock; mint: –; date: 375 – 392 AD; type: –; diameter: 12.1 mm; thickness: 1 mm; weight: 1.0 g; coordinates: F7/59, N 0.3 m, W 1.20 m, MASL 69.34; field inventory No. 4/2019 (**Plate 2.7**).

13. AE4.

Obverse: Worn circular inscription DN THEODO-SIVS PF AVG.

Bust of Emperor Theodosius I with a pearled diadem, draped and cuirassed, facing right.

Reverse: Four-line inscription VOT/X/MVLT/XX within the wreath and mintmark SMNA below.

Axis: 12 o'clock; mint: Nicomedia; date: 379 – 383 AD; type: RIC IX 38b; diameter: 15/16 mm. Thickness: 1 mm. Weight: 1.11 g. Coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 4.55 m, W 0.60 m, MASL 71.29, near the measuring table; field inventory No. 21/2018 (**Plate 2.8**).

14. AE4.

Obverse: DN THEODO-SIVS PF AV[G].

Dotted circle. Bust of emperor Theodosius I with a pearled diadem, facing right.

Reverse: SALVS REI-PVBLIC[AE]. XP monogram to the left.

Victory walking left with head facing backward, dragging a kneeling captive by the hair with her left hand and with her right hand holding a trophy on her shoulder.

Axis: 12 o'clock; mint: –; date: 379 – 395 AD; type: – resembles RIC IX 65b3 Thessalonica mint; diameter: 12/15 mm; thickness: 1 mm; weight: 1 g; coordinates: quad. F7/59, N 0.15 m, W 0.85 m, MASL 69.86, between the architectural elements in the pit; field inventory No. 31/2019 (**Plate 2.9**).

15. AE3.

Obverse: Illegible circular inscription.

Bust of an emperor from the Theodosian dynasty with a pearled diadem, facing right.

Reverse: Illegible circular inscription, probably SALVS REI PVBLICAE.

Victory walking left with head facing backwards, dragging a kneeling captive by the hair with her left hand and with her right hand holding a trophy. Chi-Rho in the left field.

Axis: 5 o'clock; mint: –; date: 379 – 457 AD; type: –; diameter: 17/18 mm; thickness: 2 mm; weight: 1.20 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 3.95 m, W 4.60 m, MASL 71.66; field inventory No. 3/2018 (**Plate 2.10**).

16. AE4.

Obverse: Illegible circular inscription.

Bust of an emperor from the Theodosian dynasty with a pearled diadem, facing right.

Reverse: Illegible circular inscription, probably SALVS REI PVBLICAE.

Victory walking left with head facing backwards, dragging a kneeling captive by the hair with her left hand and with her right hand holding a trophy. Chi-Rho in the left field.

Axis: 6 o'clock; mint: –; date: 379 – 457 AD; type: –; diameter: 12/13 mm; thickness;

1 mm. weight: 1.13 g; coordinates: quad. F7/49, N 2.60 m, W 1.85 m, MASL 71.38, from the bottom of the pit; field inventory No. 5/2018 (**Plate 2.11**).

17. AE4.

Obverse: Illegible circular inscription.

Bust of an emperor from the Theodosian dynasty with a pearled diadem, facing right.

Reverse: Illegible.

Axis: –; mint: –; date: 379 – 457 AD; type: –; diameter: 12 mm; thickness: 1 mm; weight: 0.67 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 1.10 m, W 2.20 m, MASL 71.51; field inventory No. 8/2018 (**Plate 2.12**).

18. AE4.

Obverse: Bust of an unidentified emperor from the Theodosian dynasty, facing right.

Reverse: Illegible circular inscription, probably SALVS REI PVBLICAE.

Victory walking left with head facing backwards, dragging kneeling a captive by the hair with her left hand and with her right hand holding a trophy. Chi-Rho in the left field.

Axis: 6 o'clock; mint: –; date: 379 – 457 AD; type: –; diameter: 13/14 mm; thickness: 1 mm; weight: 1.35 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50 N 3.96 m, W 3.57 m, MASL 71.01; field inventory No. 19/2018 (**Plate 2.13**).

19. AE4.

Obverse: DN [AR]CADIVS PF [AVG].

Bust of Emperor Arcadius with a pearled diadem, facing right.

Reverse: Illegible circular inscription, probably SALVS REI PVBLICAE.

Victory walking left with head facing backwards, dragging a kneeling captive by the hair with her left hand and with her right hand holding a trophy. Chi-Rho in the left field.

Axis: 6 O'clock; mint: –; date: 383 – 408 AD; type: –; diameter: 13/15 mm; thickness: 1.0 mm; weight: 0.59 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50 N 3.92 m, W 2.40 m, MASL 71.58; field inventory No. 11/2018; (**Plate 2.14**).

20. AE4.

Obverse: Illegible circular inscription.

Bust of an emperor with a pearled diadem, facing right.

Reverse: Worn.

Axis: –; mint: –; date: 4th – 5th century; type: –; diameter: 15/17; thickness: 1.0 mm; weight: 1.37 g; coordinates: quad. F7/49, N 4.12 m, W 0.63 m, MASL 71.13; field inventory No. 14/2018 (**Plate 2.15**).

21. AE4.

Obverse: Illegible circular inscription.

Bust of an emperor with a pearled diadem, facing right.

Reverse: Illegible circular inscription.

Standing frontally (?) emperor, holding a globe (?) in his right hand and a spear (?) in his left hand.

Axis: 1 o'clock; mint: –; date: 4th – 5th century; type: –; diameter: 14/16 mm; thickness: 2.0 mm; weight: 1.32 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 3.45 m, W 3.90 m, MASL 71.76; field inventory No. 17/2018 (**Plate 2.16**).

22. AE4.

Obverse: Illegible circular inscription.

Bust of an emperor with a pearled diadem, facing right.

Reverse: Inscription in two lines VOT/V within a wreath.

Axis: 12 o'clock; mint: –; date: 4th – 5th century; type: –; diameter: 12 mm; thickness: 2.0 mm; weight: 1.36 g; coordinates: quad. F7/49, N 3.96 m, W 3.55 m, MASL 71.00; field inventory No. 18/2018 (**Plate 2.17**).

23. AE3.

Obverse: Bust of an emperor, facing right.

Reverse: Worn.

Axis: –; mint: –; date: 4th – 5th century; type: –; diameter: 17/18 mm; thickness: 1.0 mm; weight: 2.18 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 0.05 m, W 2.50 m, MASL 72.17; field inventory No. 27/2018 (**Plate 2.18**).

24. AE4.

Obverse: Part of an illegible circular inscription ...IVS PF AVG.

Bust of an emperor with pearled diadem, facing right.

Reverse: Inscription in two lines VOT/V within a wreath.

Axis: 6 o'clock; mint: –; date: 4th – 5th century; type: –; diameter: 13/14 mm; thickness: 1.0 mm; weight: 0.95 g; coordinates: quad. F7/60, N 0.25 m, W 1.70 m, MASL 71.23; field inventory No. 42/2018 (**Plate 2.19**).

25. 1/4 of an illegible AE4 coin.

Width 8/11 mm; thickness 0.8/1.0 mm; restored diameter 16 – 17 mm; weight 0.34 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 1.0 m, W 0.55 m; field inventory No. 1/2018 (**Plate 2.20**).

26. Worn AE4 coin.

Diameter: 11/12 mm; thickness: 2 mm; weight: 1.17 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 3.96 m, W 2.60 m, MASL 71.61; field inventory No. 12/2018 (**Plate 2.21**).

27. Worn AE4 coin.

Width: 9 – 12 mm; thickness: 1.0 mm; weight: 0.22 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 4.60 m, W 1.35 m, MASL 71.46; field inventory No. 15/2018 (**Plate 2.22**).

28. Worn AE4 coin.

Diameter: 13/14 mm; thickness: 2.0 mm; weight: 1.44 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 2.40 m, W 3.96 m, MASL 71.73; field inventory No 16/2018 (**Plate 2.23**).

28. Worn fragment of an AE coin.

Width: 11/13 mm; thickness: 1.0 mm; weight: 1.13 g; coordinates: quad. F7/50, N 4.90 m, W 3.0 m, MASL 72.04; field inventory No. 31/2018 (**Plate 2.24**).

30. Worn fragment of an AE coin.

Width: 6.5/10.1 mm; thickness: 2 mm; weight: 0.7 g; coordinates: quad. F7/59, N 0.20 m, W 3.0 m, MASL 69.62; field inventory No. 3/2019 (**Plate 2.25**).

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РИМСКИ И КЪСНОРИМСКИ ОЛОВНИ ТЕСЕРИ ОТ НИКОПОЛИС АД ИСТРУМ

Калин ЧАКЪРОВ

РЕЗЮМЕ

В настоящата статия са представени оловни тесери, открити при археологически разкопки на сектор „Югозападен ъгъл на форумния комплекс“ в античния град Никополис ад Иструм – градски център, който първоначално принадлежи към провинция Тракия, а след 193 към провинция Долна Мизия (по-късно Втора Мизия). Секторът се намира на запад от одеона/булевтериона на античния град. Той представлява П-образен площад, отворен на запад и заобиколен от север, изток и юг от колонада. На същото място преди неговото изграждане има поредица от

по-ранни ями, вкопани в стерилния терен. Повечето от тях са запълнени с архитектурни детайли от по-ранна обществена постройка от II – III в. с представителна архитектура. В ямите се откриват натрошени части от колони, бази, капители, архитрави, надписи, мерителна маса и други детайли. Освен тях са открити и дребни находки, включително монети, които дават добра датировка на запълването на ямите. От тези ями произхождат и оловни тесери.

Предмет на настоящата статия са споменатите оловни паметници и съпътстващите ги монети, открити в затворени комплекси. Оловните тесери вероятно имат по-ранна датировка (II – III в.) и са попаднали по случайност при запълването на ямите. На по-добре запазените от тях личат божества, чиято иконография наподобява представянето на сцени от собственото монетосечене на Никополис ад Иструм. Запълването на ямите може да бъде отнесено към края на IV и началото на V в., за което свидетелстват откритите в тях най-късни монети. Само един от оловните паметници, предмет на настоящата работа, може да бъде отнесен към късноримската епоха. Това е тесера с квадратна форма, представяща две ръкостискащи се фигури, чиято иконография наподобява мотиви от късноримски монетни номинали.



Plate I. *Tesserae* from the huge pit and pit No. 12 (scale 2:1), courtesy of Dr. I. Tsarov, pictures K. Chakarov.

Табло. I. Тесери от голямата яма и от яма № 12 (М 2:1), с позволения на д-р Ив. Църов, снимки К. Чакъров.



Plate II. Coins from the huge pit and pit No. 12, courtesy of I. Tsarov, photos K. Chakarov.

Табло. II. Монети от голямата яма и от яма № 12 (М 1:1), с позволението на д-р Ив. Църов, снимки К. Чакъров.