REVUE BELGE
DE
NUMISMATIQUE
ET DE SIGILLOGRAPHIE
BELGISCH TIJDSSCHRIFT
VOOR NUMISMATIEK EN ZEGELKUNDE

PUBLIÉE
SOUS LE HAUT PATRONAGE
DE S. M. LE ROI
PAR LA
SOCIÉTÉ ROYALE
DE NUMISMATIQUE DE BELGIQUE
AVEC L'AIDE DE LA DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE DE
L'ENSEIGNEMENT, DE LA FORMATION ET DE
LA RECHERCHE DU MINISTÈRE DE LA
COMMUNAUTÉ FRANÇAISE ET DU
MINISTÈRE
DE LA VLAAMSE GEMEENSCHAP

UITGEGEVEN
ONDER DE HOGE BESCHERMING
VAN Z. M. DE KONING
DOOR HET
KONINKLIJK BELGISCH
GENOTSCHAP VOOR NUMISMATIEK
MET DE FINANCIËLE STEUN VAN HET
MINISTERIE VAN DE VLAMSE GEMEENSCHAP
EN VAN DE DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE DE
L'ENSEIGNEMENT, DE LA FORMATION ET
DE LA RECHERCHE DU MINISTÈRE
DE LA COMMUNAUTÉ FRANÇAISE

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BRUXELLES    BRUSSEL
The Koson-type gold coins represent perhaps the most controversial monetary issue in the Lower Danube area. M. Bahrfeldt, one of the first German researchers of this issue (1), integrated it into Dacian numismatics for the first time. The Roumanian numismatists I. Winkler (2) and C. Preda (3) have recently published exhaustive studies about it. The coin has a diameter of 18-21 mm and weighs 8.08-8.70 grams, approaching the Greek stater (the Attic didrachm had 135 grains) and the Roman aureus issued at the time. The obverse shows a consul between two lictors going left similar to M. Iunius Brutus’ denarius. In front of the first lictor there is the monogram BA (in ligature) and the name (KOΣΩΝ) in exergue. On the reverse there is an eagle with open wings, holding a wreath in its right claw (similar to Pomponius Rufus’ denarius), there is a pearl-ed circle around it (fig. 1). Roumanian numismatists are of the opinion that the coin was struck between 44-42 B.C. From the great number of hypotheses which have been published, we quote the one which states that king Coson’s Geto-Dacians may have taken part in the battle as Brutus’ (4) allies (mercenaries), or that the name Coson may have resulted from the name of a Dacian king Cotiso-Cosonius by means of etymological changes, as mentioned by Suetonius.

All certain monetary discoveries are located on the territory of ancient Dacia, a fact considered convincing enough to attribute them to a Dacian king. After retroactive documentation, we find

(4) V. PÂRVAN, Getica. O protoistorie a Daciei, Bucarest, 1926, p. 84, note 1.
that in the inter-war period two Roumanian historians of great scientific integrity and culture, V. Pârvan and N. Iorga (5), published precise Latin sources regarding king Koson (of the Odrysi, a southern branch of the Thracians) with episodes related to his intention of striking gold coins, disproving the existence of a Dacian king with this name. Recently, during a study trip (September 1990), I found that in the treasury of the museum in Odorheiul-Secuiesc (Transylvania) there are three Coson coins showing three distinct technologies: one, correctly written and drawn (fig. 1), one in punctiform writing (the so-called 'barbarized' writing, typical of Dacian coins) with linear outlines of the lictors and the third minted with a defective die of the obverse (the die was shifted vertically, and the name Coson appeared as a comb made of the moving points) (6). These variants suggest to us that we are in the vicinity of the probable Dacian mint in which the Coson coins were minted.


(6) The photographs were kindly put at my disposal by Mr. Jenô Zepeczâner, the museum's director.
Returning to the ancient sources, Appianus (Bell. Civil., IV.75) writes that when Brutus received the orphan child king Coson to be educated at Cyzicus, he also got hold of the gold and silver treasury of the deceased king of the Odrysi, Sadala the second, thanks to his widow Polimokrateia, and turned the gold into coinage. Mommsen (in Ephemeris epigraph., II, p. 251 ss.) and Vincenzo Strazzula (La serie dei re Odrisii dal 200 a. Cr. al 46 d. Cr., in Bessarione, series II, vol. II anno VI, Rome, 1902, p. 31 ss.) give the following royal successions with the Odrysi: “this Kotys III (coin with the names of Kotys and Raiscupor) having Sathinus and Sandalus-Sadala I as associates, coming after Kotys IV (up to about 48), Sadala II (up to 42), Koson (42), the fifth Kotys, after whom comes Raiscuporis II (16-11)”; other sources add that in the war between Pompey and Caesar, Pompey also had Thracian allies of king Kotys, headed by Sadalus, the latter’s son, besides Raiscupor’s braves. Thus, we notice that Pompey was allied with the Odrysi (Thracians) and Brutus, and was expecting the help of the Dacian king Burebista. The outcome was: Pompey’s defeat, Caesar’s murder in 44, then the defeat of M. Iunius Brutus at Philippi in 42, the year in which Koson appears as king of the Odrysi for a short time. This gives rise to the question: perhaps Brutus, having got possession of the gold in the year 42, but defeated in the same year, sent the gold to Dacia, to Comosicus or Scorylus, descendants of his friend king Burebista (?) to have coins struck which were similar to the Roman ones, but bearing the name of the young Thracian king Coson, in order to be able to pay the army which supported Coson’s reign? Perhaps it took longer to strike the coins in Dacia so that the year 42 came when Coson was dethroned by his descendant Kotys V. The coins were stored in Sarmizegetusa, the capital of the Dacian king, where

they were discovered in 1803 (1000 coins at Grădinița Muncelului) there being no conclusive evidence that they had been used at that time as a means of exchange. Therefore, it was an issue ordered by the Odrysian king Koson, struck in Dacia, but undelivered for reasons of force majeure, and not circulated either in the Thracians' or in the Dacians' world.

Among the Roman coins regarding Dacia, there are the aureus and the antoninianus issued by Trajanus Decius (fig. 2) and the antoninianus issued by Aurelianus (fig. 3), which on the reverse represents a standing woman in a rich dress, holding a stick with the head of a horned animal at its end while around there are the inscriptions DACIA and respectively DACIA FELIX. All these have not been convincingly explained in numismatic writings either as regards the iconography or their place and year of issue. The coin in our collection is made of silver, with a diameter of 21.4-24.4 mm, it weighs 3.84 g (fig. 2). In RIC (p. 120 no. 2) it is listed as antoninianus, Rome mint year 249 (?) and (p. 121 no. 12) it is listed as antoninianus, Rome mint, or Milan (?) years 249-251 with the mention that the place and date when Decius' coins were struck is uncertain. The animal head is called ass (8). H. Cohen lists the coin as

(8) H. MATTINGLY, RIC, IV, Part III, Londres, 1949, p. 120-121.
«petit bronze» (fig. 3) interpreting it in the same way (9); E. Bernareggi specified that it is an antoninianus struck about 275, and described the reverse as «Dacia standing with its totemic symbol» (10). Other Roumanian (11) and foreign numismatists (12) give the same interpretation: ass’s head or long-eared wolf’s. As it is known both Decius and Aurelianus launched wars in the Lower Danube region against the Carpi and after having defeated them, assumed the title restitutor Daciarum. Decius first fought at the end of 249 — in the winter of 249/250, noticing ipso facto the procession of folk masks with which the Dacians greeted the New Year.

Consequently, we are of the opinion that the first issue with this image could have been struck only from 250. In the mythology of the peoples of shepherds and farmers of the Lower Danube, the nanny-goat and the billy-goat were the object of cult, they were devised as demonic personifications of zoological prolificacy and soil fertility.

The allegory of the nanny-goat and billy-goat was present in the New Year’s Eve celebrations in all Roumanian villages and towns in ancient times as well as today. The head is the main part of the mask-costumes of nanny-goats (13). That is why we have concluded that the images on the above-mentioned coins can only represent the mask of a nanny-goat and of a horned billy-goat, held by a woman, both motifs symbolizing Dacia.

In fig. 4-5 we show a drawing of the billy-goat - nanny-goat mask uncovered and a photo of the dance of the nanny-goat covered with a Roumanian woollen rug, today. As regards the ass, this is an animal characteristic of warm regions (North Africa, the Near East, Southern Europe); only exceptionally does it acclimatize itself to cold and wet regions such as the Carpathian-Danube area. The wolf’s head (the Dacian flag) which we once thought to be likely (14),

(11) C. BOLLIAC, *Excursiune arheologica din anul 1869*, Bucarest, 1869, p. 44.
Fig. 4. The dance of the nanny-goat mask, uncovered.

Fig. 5. The dance of the nanny-goat mask, covered with a Roumanian woollen rug.

had another appearance, as seen on Trajan's Column in Rome or on its copy in Bucharest. We mention that the Roumanian scholar and historian N. Iorga was the first to state that it was unacceptable to identify the ass head on a stick with the image in Dacia's hand on Decius and Aurelian's coins (15).