

Dubravka UJES MORGAN The foreign policies of Philip V and Perseus
and the large mixed silver coin hoards in the Northern Balkans

In this paper I propose a new explanation of the occurrence of several large mixed hoards of Hellenistic and barbarian silver coins in the distant regions of the Northern Balkans in terms of the foreign policies of Philip V and Perseus and their payments to their barbarian allies.

There are eight such coin hoards, which contain an unusual combination of silver coins from different issuing authorities: (1) Hellenistic royal coinages, mostly the Macedonian royal coinages from Philip II to the Alexander-type issues of Antigonos Gonatas in 272 B.C., and others such as Lysimachean, early Seleucid and Attalid, (2) the north Balkan and lower-Danubian barbarian imitative coinages datable to the end of the 3rd and the 2nd century B.C. and (3) in four hoards, the Athenian 3rd century coinage. The coins are considerably worn, and many bear deep chisel gashes, presumably from checking the quality of their silver. The distribution pattern of the five hoards with known provenience falls within the boundaries of the lands of the Scordisci, a powerful Celtic tribe, who after their invasion of Greece in 280/279 B.C. returned to the north of the Balkans and settled in the valley of the middle Danube (Strabo 7.5.12, also 7.2.2; Posidonius at Athenaeus 6.25, p. 234B (FrGrHist 87, F 48); Justin 32.3.8; Papazoglu, *The Central Balkan Tribes in Pre-Roman Times*). Two hoards come from the regions bordering the Scordiscan lands.

It is remarkable that no other hoard with such a combination of different coinages occurs anywhere else. Hoards with only Hellenistic royal silver coinages are numerous and widespread throughout and beyond the Balkans; those that also contain the Athenian 3rd century coins occur in Macedonia and some regions of Greece, such as Thessaly, known as a source of mercenary soldiers (IGCH; Launey, *Les armées hellénistiques*, 1987²; Nicolet-Pierre&Kroll, in *AJN* 2, 1990; Touratsoglou, in *Essays Hersh*, 1998). However, the Scordisci are not attested as mercenaries in the service of the Hellenistic kingdoms, who would have brought their salaries back to their homeland. Moreover, the internecine warfare between the Macedonian kingdom and the Dardanian kingdom situated between the Scordisci and Macedonia (e.g. Ammianus Marcellinus 27.4.4; Festus 9.1; Orosius 5.23.17-19; Iordanes *Rom.* 219) seems to have inhibited any direct flow of coins northwards; neither the literary sources nor the archaeological finds provide any evidence for trade between Macedonia and the Scordisci (Ujes, in *Histoire et mesure*, Num. spécial *Monnaie et frontiere*, 2003). Finally, plundering cannot be considered as a way of acquiring these coins, because attacks by the Scordisci started to be intense only after Macedonia had become a Roman province, and the Macedonian and other royal coins there had already been taken out of circulation.

Hence the question arises of *when* and *why* the coins present in these hoards arrived in the territory of the Scordisci. The lower-Danubian barbarian “Huși-Vovriești” coinage, probably attributable to the Bastarnae (Preda, *Monedele Geto-Dacilor*; Pink, *Münzprägung der Ostkelten*) seems to provide the needed link. The presence of this coinage suggests that the mixed hoards reflect Philip V’s preparations for a war against Rome in the last decade of his reign, namely payments to the Bastarnae, who on his behalf invaded the Dardanian kingdom and stayed there for three years, while being largely helped and supported by the Scordisci (Livy 39.35, 40.5, 40.21, 40.57-58, 41.19, 41.23, 42.11; Polybius 25.6; Meloni, *Perseo*; Walbank, *Philip V*; Gruen, in *GRBS* 15, 1979; Hammond, Walbank, *History of Macedonia III*; Papazoglu, *op.cit.*). After Philip’s death, Perseus’ negotiations with the Bastarnae failed and they left, but he summoned them again and in 168 B.C. they arrived on the Macedonian frontier, only to return home after more failed negotiations (Livy 44.27.1-3).

There are no other specific historical conditions which could have prompted the movement of all three coinages and their fusion in the hoards deposited in the territory of the Scordisci. The absence of any other hoard in the territory of the Scordisci containing Hellenistic silver coinages indicates that the overall inflow of such coins most probably remained very restricted until the last decade of Philip V’s reign, when huge sums were paid to his barbarian allies. These payments seem to have brought mostly the “old” tetradrachmas, whose “face-value” was still widely accepted, although they were issued by the former kings and despite the decrease of their weight by wear.

Thus the military plans and arrangements of Philip V and Perseus appear as the most probable historical background for a large inflow of the Macedonian, other Hellenistic and barbarian coins into the land of the Scordisci and their deposition in the mixed hoards.