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THE DYNAMICS OF PROVINCIAL MINTING IN THE TOWNS OF THRACIA AND MOESIA

ABSTRACT: This article analyses the dynamics of provincial coinage in the towns of Moesia Inferior and Thracia from the reign of Augustus to the end of Saloninus. Drawing on numismatic catalogues and online databases, it tabulates the number of coin types issued by each town and establishes the period of activity for each mint. The findings show that minting intensified most significantly in the 3rd century AD, particularly under the Severan dynasty, before ceasing after AD 260. The study also highlights parallels in the development of minting in both provinces, while noting structural differences: Moesia Inferior was dominated by a few key centres, whereas minting in Thracia followed a more decentralised model. These results offer new insights into the operation of the monetary system in the Balkan provinces and its connections to administration, military presence, and imperial policy.

ABSTRAKT: Artykuł analizuje dynamikę emisji monet prowincjonalnych w miastach Mezji Dolnej i Tracji od czasów Augusta do końca panowania Salonina. W oparciu o katalogi numizmatyczne oraz bazy danych online zestawiono liczbę typów monet emitowanych przez poszczególne miasta i określono okres aktywności każdej mennicy. Wyniki wskazują na wyraźne nasilenie produkcji monetarnej w III w. n.e., szczególnie za panowania dynastii Sewerów, oraz jej całkowite wygaszenie po 260 r. n.e. W badaniu zwrócono również uwagę na podobieństwa w rozwoju mennictwa w obu prowincjach, przy jednoczesnym podkreśleniu różnic strukturalnych: w Mezji Dolnej dominowały nieliczne, kluczowe ośrodki, natomiast w Tracji mennictwo miało charakter bardziej zdecentralizowany. Wyniki analizy rzucają nowe światło na funkcjonowanie systemu monetarnego w prowincjach bałkańskich oraz jego powiązania z administracją, obecnością wojskową i polityką cesarską.

KEYWORDS: Roman provincial minting, Moesia Inferior, Thracia, Nicopolis ad Istrum, Marcianopolis, Tomis, Severan dynasty, imperial propaganda

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: rzymskie mennictwo prowincjonalne, Mezja Dolna, Tracja, Nikopolis ad Istrum, Marcianopolis, Tomis, dynastia Sewerów, propaganda cesarska

Provincial coinage in the Roman Empire offers a very rich and complex source of insights into the functioning of the provinces, local urban communities, and the relationship between the centre and the periphery of the vast Roman state.¹ In contrast to imperial coins, the production of which was strictly controlled by the central imperial authorities, provincial coins show great diversity in terms of iconography, legends, language, and functions.² Their analysis reveals local expressions of cultural, ideological, and religious identity, as well as the ways in which imperial propaganda was received across different regions of the Empire.

Provincial coinage developed intensively from the time of Augustus until the mid-3rd century AD, after which it declined in favour of a unified imperial system following the reforms of Aurelian. Provincial coins were mainly minted in bronze, less often in silver, by autonomous towns, often on the initiative of local elites, and in the later period also in official provincial mints operating under state supervision.

The scholarly literature on provincial coinage usually distinguishes three basic categories of issues differing in both form and function: municipal issues (civic), colonial issues, and imperial provincial issues (the so-called pseudo-autonomous and imperial issues). This division is based on the variation in the competence of the issuers, the nature of the iconographic representations, and the presence or absence of the emperor's image. Each of these categories reflects the different degree of connection to the central administration and the different purposes served by monetary production in the provinces.³

Local coins (which can be described as urban) were minted by individual towns (Fig. 1), usually with the name of the urban community highlighted in the legend and with iconographic motifs characteristic of the town. The reverses of such coins often depict local deities, urban personifications, mythological scenes associated with local traditions, as well as buildings or topographical symbols. Production of this type does not usually include the names of emperors or Roman officials, which may indicate its autonomous character.⁴

Minted on the initiative of Roman officials, coins represented an intermediate form between local production and the official imperial coinage (Fig. 1). Their legends feature the names of proconsuls, legates, or other representatives of the Roman administration exercising authority over a province. These coins were intended to combine local initiative with imperial ideology, promoting the power of the emperor, but also

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² Sear 1982, p. 5; Price, Trell 1991, pp. 11–32; Howgego 1995, pp. 13–19; Weiss 2005, pp. 57–60; Howgego *et al.* 2005, pp. 1–3, Heuchert 2005, pp. 29–32.

³ Sear 1982, pp. 5–8; Krzyżanowska 1970, pp. 19–23; Butcher 1988, pp. 17–22; Weiss 2005, pp. 57–60.

⁴ Howgego *et al.* 2005, pp. 29–36; Oppermann 2007, pp. 45–58; Varbanov 2005, pp. 9–13.

emphasising the presence and importance of the Roman official as an intermediary between the centre and the periphery. They often had a political and propagandistic function, serving to integrate local communities with the rest of the Empire.⁵

Quasi-governmental production with universal reach was supra-local and was often realised in official provincial mints operating under state supervision (Fig. 1). Its iconography and content were largely standardised, and reverse types were often modelled after central minting. The names of emperors and members of their families appear in legends, and the depictions on the reverses carry universal political and ideological messages, showing Pax, Virtus, Fides, Roma Aeterna, or Victoria Augusti, among others. Such coins are often referred to as the ‘state coin’ of the province, as their function extended beyond the boundaries of a single town.⁶

In the provinces of Moesia and Thracia, we find numerous examples of all three types of provincial issues, making this region particularly valuable for analysing the diverse nature of the minting of the eastern provinces of the Empire (Fig. 1). The diverse nature of these issues testifies to the dynamic relationship between local identity and the central authority of Rome. The example of Moesia and Thracia shows that provincial minting was not a homogeneous phenomenon, but an evolving system that adapted to the political, religious and administrative needs of both towns and the Empire.

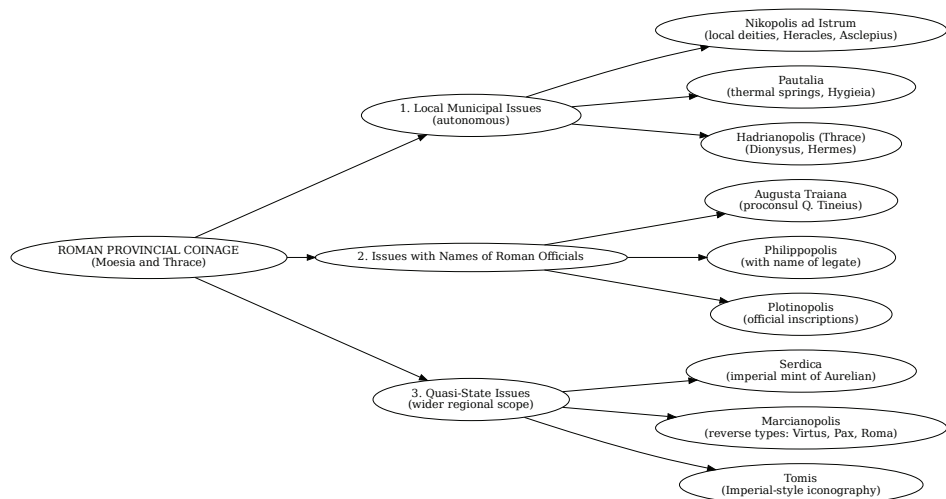


Fig. 1. Classification of the provincial coinage in Moesia and Thrace

Ryc. 1. Kasyfikacja mennictwa prowincjonalnego w Mezji i Tracji

⁵ Levick 1982, pp. 104–110; Burnett, Amandry, Ripollès 1992, pp. 6–8; Howgego *et al.* 2005, pp. 3–5; Weiss 2005, p. 58.

⁶ Levick 1982, pp. 114–115; Howgego *et al.* 2005, pp. 49–51, Heuchert 2005, pp. 40–44; Weiss 2005, pp. 60–65.

The article focuses on the provincial coinage from the territories of Moesia and Thracia, analysed chronologically and quantitatively. The aim of the study is to capture the dynamics of local development in these provinces, with particular reference to the intensity of coin emissions during the reigns of different Roman emperors. The starting point for the analysis is data obtained from publicly available and recognised numismatic portals, such as RPC Online (Roman Provincial Coinage Online), WildWinds, ACSearch, CoinArchives, and Forum Ancient Coins, which compile documentation of provincial coins based on museum sources, auction archives, and private collections.⁷

Basing the analysis on a number of known coin types⁸ attributed to specific rulers, correlated with the length of their reign, made it possible to determine the average number of emissions per year. This method, although limited by the incompleteness of the source material, enabled the identification of periods of increased minting activity and therefore of moments of political, military, or economic significance.⁹ This approach allows us to not only to capture the chronological patterns in minting, but also to outline the broader political and administrative trends that influenced the functioning of provincial mints. Calculating the average number of coin types falling into each year of the reign of a given ruler reveals periods of particularly intense minting.

In the first stage of the analysis, a summary table was prepared covering the totality of the available data on provincial coins from Moesia and Thracia, treating the two provinces as a single area of analysis (Table 1). Such a compilation revealed the overall scale and rhythm of coin emissions in the Balkan region over a long diachronic perspective. However, in the next step, the data was analysed separately for administrative units – Moesia Inferior (Table 2) and Thracia (Table 3) – which enabled more detailed regional comparisons and identification of differences in the organisation and functioning of local mints. Indeed, the individual towns of these provinces responded differently to impulses coming from the centre of the Empire, adapting the intensity and nature of their monetary production to local conditions – such as the presence of military camps, urban development, economic needs, or relations with the population of neighbouring territories. The summaries

⁷ Today, publicly accessible numismatic portals play an extremely important role in the development of ancient coinage research, not only as tools for popularising knowledge, but also as rich repositories of photographic documentation used by researchers and academic institutions alike. However, it should be borne in mind that, in the case of scholarly studies, each recorded specimen should be approached critically, both in terms of authenticity as well as typology, chronology, or provenance attribution.

⁸ In this analysis, the term ‘coin type’ refers to a distinct reverse design, defined by its iconography and legend, regardless of variations in obverse portraiture or minor stylistic differences. This definition follows the typological conventions adopted in the *Roman Provincial Coinage* project. A coin type is thus not an individual specimen, but a category encompassing all coins that share the same reverse motif and inscription. See: Burnett, Amandry, Ripollès 1992, Introduction, esp. pp. 6–7.

⁹ Moushmov 1912, pp. xi–xiv; Varbanov 2005, *Introduction*.

presented here are, therefore, not only statistical in nature, but provide a starting point for in-depth research into the dynamics of provincial coinage in this part of the vast entity that was the Roman Empire.

Table 1. Number of coin types issued by emperors in Moesia (Inferior, Superior) and Thrace

Tabela 1. Liczba typów monet emitowanych przez cesarzy w Mezji (Dolnej, Górnej) i Tracji

Emperor	Years of reign	Number of known coin types¹⁰	Average number of coin types per year of reign
Augustus	41	10+	0.24
Tiberius	22	3+	0.14
Caligula	4	16+	4.00
Claudius	13	16+	1.23
Nero	14	23+	1.64
Vespasian	10	10+	1.00
Titus	2	3+	1.50
Domitian	15	31+	2.07
Nerva	2	9+	4.50
Trajan	19	39+	2.05
Hadrian	21	81+	3.86
Antoninus Pius	23	206+	8.96
Marcus Aurelius	19	351+	18.47
Commodus	15	361+	24.07
Pertinax	1	4+	4.00
Clodius Albinus	4	3+	0.75
Septimius Severus	18	1109+	61.61
Caracalla	19	1239+	65.21
Geta	14	407+	29.07
Macrinus Diadumenian	1	465+	465.00
Elagabalus	4	584+	146.00
Severus Alexander	13	341+	26.23
Maximinus Thrax	3	142+	47.33
Gordian III	6	945+	157.50
Philip I	5	198+	39.60
Philip II	5	122+	24.40

¹⁰ The ‘+’ sign indicates that the number of coin types given is based on available documentation, but the existence of additional, hitherto unrecorded emissions cannot be excluded. Nevertheless, the data can be considered representative of the general trend and characteristics of coin production.

Emperor	Years of reign	Number of known coin types¹⁰	Average number of coin types per year of reign
Trajan Decius	2	9+	4.50
Trebonianus Gallus	2	19+	9.50
Volusian	2	11+	5.50
Aemilian	1	5+	5.00
Valerian I	8	11+	1.38
Gallienus	15	61+	4.07
Macrianus II	2	1+	0.50
Pupienus	1	1+	1.00
Saloninus	2	2+	1.00
Herennius Etruscus	1	7+	7.00
Hostilian	2	5+	2.50
Civic and semi-autonomous	-	7+	-
Total		6855+	

Table 2. Number of coin types issued by emperors in Moesia Inferior
Tabela 2. Liczba typów monet emitowanych przez cesarzy w Mezji Dolnej

Emperor	Years of reign	Number of known coin types	Average number of coin types per year of reign
Augustus	41	5+	0.12
Tiberius	22	2+	0.09
Caligula	4	9+	2.25
Claudius	13	7+	0.54
Nero	14	8+	0.57
Vespasian	10	3+	0.30
Titus	2	1+	0.50
Domitian	15	10+	0.67
Nerva	2	5+	2.50
Trajan	19	9+	0.47
Hadrian	21	21+	1.00
Antoninus Pius	23	36+	1.57
Marcus Aurelius	19	54+	2.84
Commodus	15	105+	7.00
Pertinax	1	4+	4.00
Septimius Severus	18	542+	30.11
Caracalla	19	345+	18.16

Emperor	Years of reign	Number of known coin types	Average number of coin types per year of reign
Geta	14	150+	10.71
Macrinus / Diadumenian	1	352+	352.00
Elagabalus	4	404+	101.00
Severus Alexander	13	195+	15.00
Maximinus Thrax	3	51+	17.00
Gordian III	6	477+	79.50
Philip I	5	69+	13.80
Philip II	5	57+	11.40
Total		2921+	

Table 3. Number of coin types issued by emperors in Thrace
Tabela 3. Liczba typów monet emitowanych przez cesarzy w Tracji

Emperor	Years of reign	Number of known coin types	Average number of coin types per year of reign
Augustus	41	5+	0.12
Tiberius	22	1+	0.05
Caligula	4	7+	1.75
Claudius	13	9+	0.69
Nero	14	15+	1.07
Vespasian	10	7+	0.70
Titus	2	2+	1.00
Domitian	15	21+	1.40
Nerva	2	4+	2.00
Trajan	19	30+	1.58
Hadrian	21	60+	2.86
Antoninus Pius	23	170+	7.39
Marcus Aurelius	19	297+	15.63
Commodus	15	256+	17.07
Clodius Albinus	4	3+	0.75
Septimius Severus	18	567+	31.50
Caracalla	19	894+	47.05
Geta	14	257+	18.36
Macrinus	1	113+	113.00
Elagabalus	4	180+	45.00
Severus Alexander	13	146+	11.23
Maximinus Thrax	3	91+	30.33

Emperor	Years of reign	Number of known coin types	Average number of coin types per year of reign
Gordian III	6	440+	73.33
Philip I	5	116+	23.20
Philip II	5	64+	12.80
Trajan Decius	2	1+	0.50
Trebonianus Gallus	2	9+	4.50
Volusian	2	11+	5.50
Valerian I	8	7+	0.88
Gallienus	15	59+	3.93
Macrianus II	2	1+	0.50
Pupienus	1	1+	1.00
Saloninus	2	2+	1.00
Civic and semi-autonomous	-	7	-
Total		3853+	

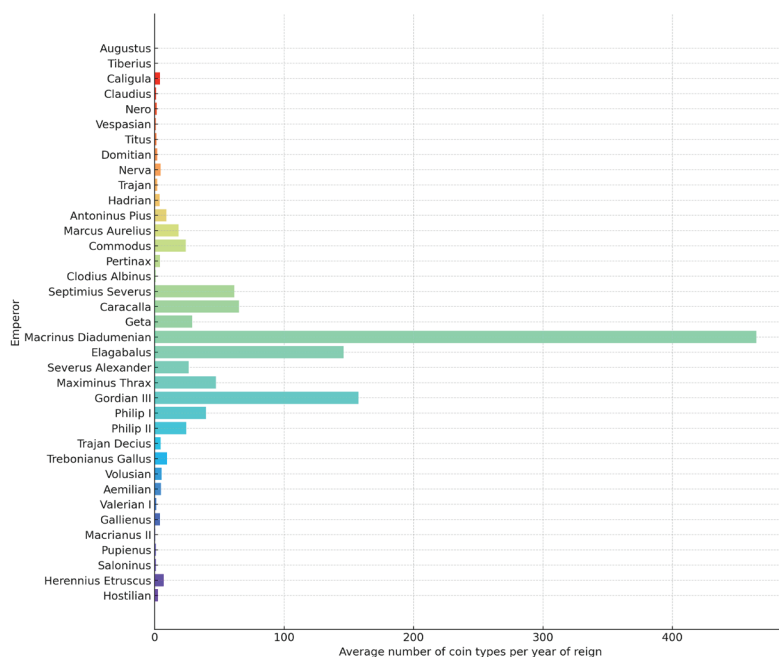


Chart 1. Average number of coin types per year of reign of particular emperors in Moesia (Inferior, Superior) and Thrace

Wykres 1. Średnia liczba typów monet na rok panowania poszczególnych cesarzy w Mezji (Dolnej, Górnej) i Tracji

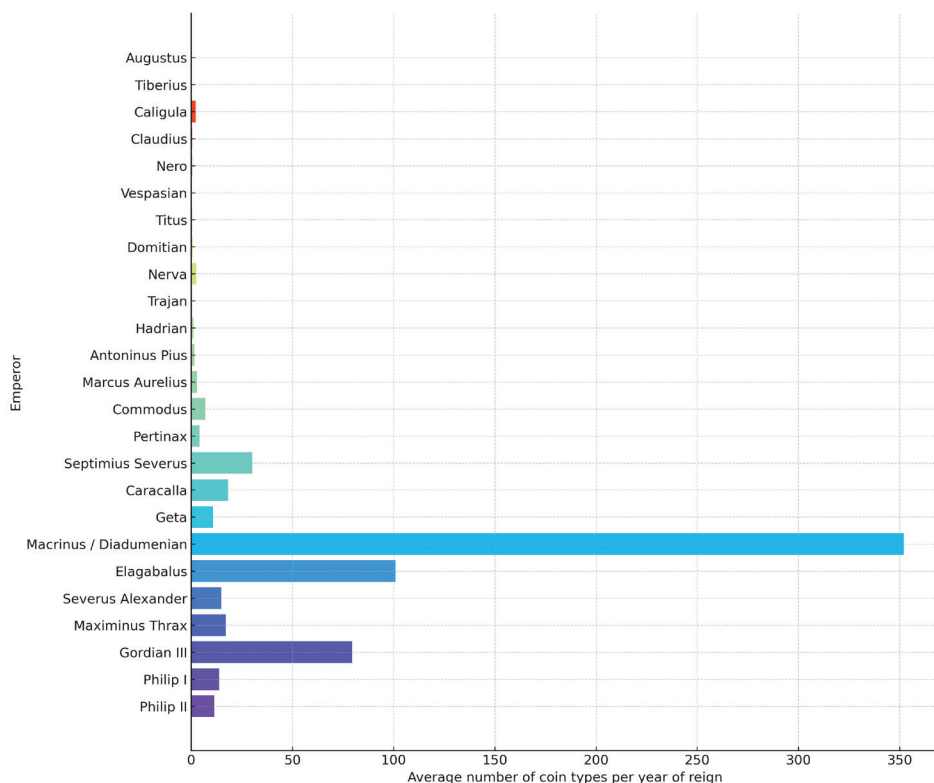


Chart 2. Average number of coin types per year of reign of particular emperors in Moesia Inferior
Wykres 2. Średnia liczba typów monet na rok panowania poszczególnych cesarzy w Mezji Dolnej

Provincial coinage in Moesia Inferior and Thracia developed in parallel between the reigns of Augustus and Saloninus, when it eventually declined (Table 1; Chart 1). In the 1st century AD, minting activity was relatively limited, both in the number of coin types and the range of iconography. This changed in the 2nd century AD, with production increasing, particularly under the last emperors of the Nerva-Antonine dynasty – Marcus Aurelius and Commodus. The trend continued in the following decades, peaking under the Severan dynasty, especially under Macrinus and Diadumenian (Tables 1–3; Charts 1–3).

The analysis does not assume a straightforward correlation between the number of preserved coin types and the actual scale of minting. Instead, these figures are used as a tool to compare the intensity of minting activity during different reigns, despite the incomplete state of the evidence. Against this background, the case of Macrinus and Diadumenian stands out clearly. Although their reigns were very brief, the number of recorded types is exceptionally high. This can be explained by a combination of factors: a sudden surge in minting following the rapid change of power in AD 217, the strategic

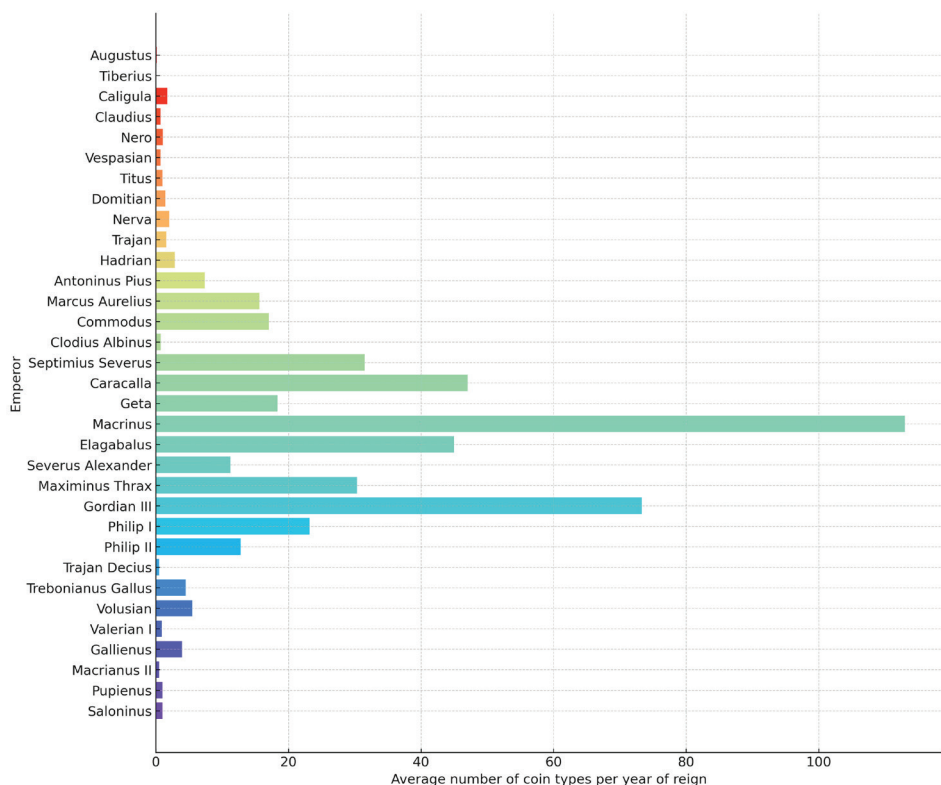


Chart 3. Average number of coin types per year of reign of particular emperors in Thrace
Wykres 3. Średnia liczba typów monet na rok panowania poszczególnych cesarzy w Tracji

importance of the Danubian provinces at that time, and administrative measures that likely stimulated local production. This example shows that even short reigns could give rise to intense and ideologically charged minting activity, leaving a dense but chronologically concentrated numismatic record.

This period is marked by an intensification of minting activity, driven by military presence, a growing demand for propaganda, and the reorganisation of administrative structures in the Danubian provinces.¹¹ Particularly striking is the brief yet prolific reign of certain emperors, which resulted in the production of an unusually large number of coins (Chart 1). In the second half of the 3rd century AD, a gradual decline in minting is evident, culminating in the complete cessation of provincial coinage. This development is closely linked to regional instability, the wider imperial crisis, and changes in central monetary policy, which ultimately brought an end to the system of autonomous municipal issues in Moesia and Thracia.¹²

¹¹ Heuchert 2005, pp. 38–41.

¹² Jurukova 1987, pp. 118–122.

Minting in Moesia Inferior and Thracia shows clear regional dependencies that may indicate differences in Roman monetary policy and local economic and administrative conditions. One of the most visible divisions is the difference between the coastal towns and the inland centres. Towns on the Black Sea and the Propontida (the Greek name for the Sea of Marmara), such as Odessos, Tomis, Mesambria, Sestos or Byzantion, had a long tradition of coinage even before the Roman period.¹³ Mints were active there already in Greek times, but with the Roman conquest, their significance decreased until some of them ceased to strike coins in the 1st century AD. This decline may be attributed to tighter Roman control over the monetary system and a diminished need for local issues in regions that had previously functioned within the Greek monetary economy.

The situation was quite different in inland towns, especially in Moesia Inferior, where new minting centres developed during the Roman period, such as Nicopolis ad Istrum, Marcianopolis, and Augusta Traiana.¹⁴ Many of these towns did not have a tradition of coinage in before the Roman period, but in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD they became important provincial centres. Rather than relying on older Greek minting centres, Rome promoted coin production in new locations, probably because of the strategic importance of these towns for administration and military operations.¹⁵

Another important distinction lies in the differing development of minting between Moesia Inferior and Thracia. In Moesia Inferior, minting activity progressed more steadily and consistently. As early as the 1st century AD, some provincial mints were already active and in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD minting reached its peak.¹⁶ In Thracia, by contrast, provincial minting was marked by greater interruptions. Some towns, such as Abdera, Maroneia, and Mesambria, which had a rich minting tradition in the Greek times, did not produce coins in the 1st century AD.¹⁷ It was not until the 2nd century AD that some regions resumed issuing coins, likely due to changing imperial policies and the growing demand for currency in the provinces. This suggests that the minting traditions of a particular town did not always define its role in the Roman system. In some areas, Rome reduced the activities of former mint centres and centralised production in new locations. Moesia Inferior, with its strategic military importance, exhibited a more stable minting development compared to Thracia, where minting activity experienced more interruptions and resumptions.

¹³ Pick 1898; Moushmov 1912; Schönert-Geiss 1991; Sear 1982; Vasić 2015, pp. 99–100; Varbanov 2005; Karajotov 2009, pp. 36–56; Tachev 2024.

¹⁴ Pick 1898; Moushmov 1912; Schönert-Geiss 1991; Varbanov 2005; Vasić 2015; Tachev 2024.

¹⁵ Jurukova 1987, pp. 97–100; Vasić 1988, pp. 169–172.

¹⁶ Varbanov 2005, s.v. Marcianopolis.

¹⁷ Pick 1898; Moushmov 1912; Karajotov 2007; Karajotov 2009, pp. 36–56.

Table 4. Number of coin types – comparison between the major mints of Moesia and Thracia

Tabela 4. Liczba typów monet – porównanie głównych mennic Mezji i Tracji

Province	Mint	Number of coin types
Moesia Inferior	Nicopolis ad Istrum	904+
	Marcianopolis	843+
	Tomis	712+
Thracia	Philippopolis	620+
	Pautalia	584+
	Deultum	527+

The most active provincial mints in Moesia and Thracia were Nicopolis ad Istrum, Marcianopolis, and Tomis, all located in Moesia. Nicopolis ad Istrum issued at least 900 coin types, Marcianopolis slightly fewer, and Philippopolis, the leading Thracian mint, issued 620. These mints were notable for their large output and long existence.¹⁸ Following them in terms of minting activity were Pautalia, Deultum, and Hadrianopolis, particularly active during the 2nd and 3rd centuries. In contrast, the activity of such mints as Imbros and Elaeos, with only 8 and 3 coin types, respectively, was much more limited. Other towns, such as Byzantion, Abdera, and Sestos, issued relatively few coins and did not impact the provincial monetary system significantly. While many of these towns had rich traditions of coinage during the Greek times, their importance under Roman rule was marginal.

Table 5. Duration of minting activity in the towns of Moesia and Thracia

Tabela 5. Czas trwania działalności menniczej w miastach Mezji i Tracji

City	Chronological Span	Years of Activity ¹⁹
Tomis	Augustus - Philip I	270
Odesa	Augustus - Gordian III	265
Perinthos	Claudius - Gallienus	225
Philippopolis	Domitian - Gallienus	195
Pautalia	Hadrian - Gordian III	170
Deultum	Trajan - Philip II	150
Hadrianopolis	Hadrian - Philip I	150
Nicopolis ad Istrum	Antoninus Pius - Philip II	145

¹⁸ Schönert-Geiss 1987, pp. 115–119.

¹⁹ The data presented in Table 5 represent the full span between the earliest and latest known coin issues for each city, but should not be interpreted as evidence of continuous minting throughout that entire period. In several cases, such as Plotinopolis, it is likely that minting occurred intermittently, with possible breaks in activity. Overlooking these interruptions could result in misleading interpretations regarding the actual duration of coin production.

City	Chronological Span	Years of Activity¹⁹
Marcianopolis	Hadrian - Philip II	145
Serdica	Marcus Aurelius - Gallienus	140
Dionysopolis	Antoninus Pius - Gordian III	130
Istros	Hadrian - Gordian III	120
Kallatis	Nero - Philip II	120
Anchialos	Hadrian - Gordian III	120
Byzantium	Caligula - Gallienus	120
Coela	Hadrian - Gallienus	110
Bizya	Hadrian - Gallienus	110
Augusta Traiana	Marcus Aurelius - Gallienus	110
Abdera	Tiberius - Marcus Aurelius	100
Apollonia Pontica	Domitian - Gordian III	95
Sestos	Augustus - Philip II	95
Maroneia	Nero - Volusian	90
Trajanopolis	Trajan - Gordian III	90
Plotinopolis	Antoninus Pius - Geta	65
Viminacium	Gordian III - Gallienus	60
Messembria	Septimius Severus - Philip II	60
Topeiros	Antoninus Pius - Geta	60
Nicopolis ad Mestum	Commodus - Geta	50
Elaeos	Commodus	15
Imbros	Augustus – 2nd century	120 (estimated)

The longest-lasting provincial mints in Moesia and Thracia were Tomis, Odessos, Perinthos, and Philippopolis, with coin production attested as early as in the 1st century AD and, in many cases, continuing until the mid-3rd century AD (Table 5).²⁰ Such long and continuous activity at these centres reflects their significant role in the monetary system of the region and the ongoing demand for coins during various phases of the provinces' administrative and military development. These mints served numerous rulers and remained integral to the local economy for extended periods. A similarly high level of activity was seen at Nicopolis ad Istrum and Marcianopolis, which,

²⁰ The chronology of activity for individual mints was determined by the presence of coins bearing the names of specific emperors. The earliest issues bearing the emperor's name marked the beginning of a mint's activity, while the latest identified coin types associated with the reigning emperor marked its end. This method is based on the analysis of numismatic material from catalogues, digital databases, and specialised studies, excluding irregular or autonomous issues. It should be noted that this approach does not account for possible interruptions or fluctuations in minting intensity. As such, the chronological range reflects only the documented presence of the mint in numismatic sources.

though not operative until the 2nd century AD during the reign of Hadrian or Antoninus Pius, remained highly active mint centres until the reign of Gordian III or Philip II. Their significance lay more in the scale of production than in the duration of activity, further underscoring their central role in the minting structure of Moesia Inferior.

In contrast to these long-established centres, some mints only operated for a short time, handling a small number of emissions. For example, Elaeos only issued coins during the reign of Commodus, and Imbros only during the autonomous period and under Augustus. Plotinopolis operated at selected times during the reigns of Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta. A similar situation is observed in the case of Nicopolis ad Mestum, whose issues focus on the reigns of Commodus, Caracalla, and Geta. The short-lived and limited activity of these mints suggests their secondary importance and dependence on ad hoc political, military, or economic needs.

Particularly prominent among the Moesian centres are Nicopolis ad Istrum (Fig. 2), Marcianopolis (Fig. 3) and Tomis (Fig. 4), which are characterised not only by large numbers of coin types, but also by their important role in the regional monetary economy.²¹ The scale of coin production in these towns can be directly linked to the military importance of Moesia Inferior, a border province that played a key role in the defence system of the Roman Empire. The presence of legionary camps and the need to provide supply facilities for the army may have significantly influenced the intensification of local coinage. Tomis, despite its coastal location, also shows a high level of minting activity, which may indicate its significant role in the military supply system and trade network. As a port on the Black Sea, the town may have acted as a key transport hub, handling the flow of people and goods along the Danubian *limes*, which naturally generated an increased demand for means of payment.²²



Fig 2. One of the most frequently encountered coin types struck in Nikopolis ad Istrum. *Moesia Inferior*, Septimius Severus, AE27, AD 193–211. Image: © Corpus Nummorum, CN type 22481, <https://www.corpus-nummorum.eu/types/22481>. Licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Ryc. 2. Jeden z najczęściej spotykanych typów monet bitych w Nikopolis ad Istrum. *Mezja Dolna*, Septymian Sewer, AE27, 193–211 AD. Źródło: © Corpus Nummorum, CN typ 22481, <https://www.corpus-nummorum.eu/types/22481>. Licencja CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

21 Varbanov 2005, Hristova, Jekov 2006; Isvoranu 2009.

22 Heuchert 2005, pp. 38–41; Varbanov 2005, *passim*.



Fig 3. One of the most common coin types from Marcianopolis. *Moesia Inferior*, Septimius Severus & Julia Domna, AE ca. 27, ca. AD 209–211. Image: © Corpus Nummorum, CN coin 31489, https://www.corpus-nummorum.eu/CN_31489. Licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Ryc. 3. Jeden z najczęstszych typów monet z Marcianopolis. Mezja Dolna, Septymiusz Sewer i Julia Domna, AE ok. 27, ok. 209–211 AD. Źródło: © Corpus Nummorum, CN moneta 31489, https://www.corpus-nummorum.eu/CN_31489. Licencja CC BY-NC-SA 4.0



Fig 4. One of the most common coin types from the mint of Tomis. *Moesia Inferior*, Gordian III & Tranquillina, AE26, 238–244 AD. Approximate diameter. Image: © Corpus Nummorum, CN coin 25497, https://www.corpus-nummorum.eu/CN_25497. Licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Ryc. 4. Jeden z najczęstszych typów monet z mennicy w Tomis. *Mezja Dolna*, Gordian III i Trankwilina, AE26, 238–244 AD. Średnica przybliżona. Źródło: © Corpus Nummorum, CN moneta 25497, https://www.corpus-nummorum.eu/CN_25497. Licencja CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Unlike Moesia Inferior, Thracia did not have a strong military presence. It was not a frontier province, and its economy relied more on agriculture and trade than on the operations of legions. While there were large mints in Thracia, such as Philippopolis, Serdica, and Pautalia, they did not achieve the same level of production as those in Moesia Inferior. The analysis of coin types shows that even the largest Thracian mints did not match any of the top three mints of Moesia Inferior. Nicopolis ad Istrum, Marcianopolis, and Tomis minted coins in far greater numbers than any of the Thracian mints (Table 4). Notably, Tomis, which ranked third in Moesia, had a higher number of issues than Philippopolis, the largest mint in Thracia. Nicopolis ad Istrum, with 904 coin types, and Marcianopolis, with 843 coin types, significantly surpassed Philippopolis, which minted 620 types. Even Tomis, the third-largest mint in Moesia Inferior, reached 712 types, surpassing the most active mint in Thracia (Table 4).

Table 6. Similarities between the provincial minting of Moesia Inferior and Thracia

Tabela 6. Podobieństwa w mennictwie prowincjonalnym Mezji Dolnej i Tracji

Category	Moesia Inferior	Thracia
Duration of minting activity	From Augustus (27 BC) to Saloninus (260 AD).	From Augustus (27 BC) to Saloninus (260 AD).
The greatest intensification of minting	The 3 rd century, especially the period of the Severan dynasty (193–235 AD).	The 3 rd century, especially the period of the Severan dynasty (193–235 AD).
The most active emperors	Macrinus / Diadumenian Elagabalus Gordian III	Macrinus / Diadumenian Gordian III Elagabalus and Caracalla
Increase in coin issuance	Gradual increase since Antoninus Pius (1.57 types of Average coin types/year), sharp increase under Septimius Severus.	Gradual increase since Antoninus Pius (7.39 types of Average coin types/year), sharp increase under Septimius Severus.
Highest coin issuance	Septimius Severus 542 coin types Gordian III 477 coin types Elagabalus 404 coin types	Caracalla 894 coin types Septimius Severus 567 coin types Gordian III 440 coin types
The sudden decline of minting	After 260 AD, coin production almost completely disappears.	After 260 AD, coin production almost completely disappears.

Table 7. Differences between the provincial minting of Moesia Inferior and Thracia

Tabela 7. Różnice w mennictwie prowincjonalnym Mezji Dolnej i Tracji

Category	Moesia Inferior	Thrace
Number of mints	7 cities issuing coins.	22 cities issuing coins.
Diversity of minting centers	Coinage concentrated in a few major cities (e.g. Nikopolis ad Istrum, Marcianopolis).	Greater number of small and medium-sized mints, widely dispersed geographically.
Total number of coin types	2,921+ coin types	3,853+ coin types
Average coin types per emperor	Generally lower averages, with isolated extreme peaks (e.g. Macrinus / Diadumenian).	More emperors reach high averages, broader distribution of high minting activity.
Emperors with exceptionally high output	Macrinus / Diadumenian (352 types/year), Elagabalus (101 types/year).	Caracalla (47.05 types/year), Marcus Aurelius (15.63), Commodus (17.07) – consistently higher figures in Thrace.
Distribution of minting activity	Smaller number of issues concentrated in few cities.	Much larger number of issues spread across many cities.
Peak production	Few extreme highs under individual emperors.	Sustained high levels under multiple emperors.

Category	Moesia Inferior	Thrace
Role of local mints	Dominance of Nikopolis ad Istrum and Marcianopolis.	No single dominant mint; much greater diversity of local centers.
Expression of local identity	Local motifs concentrated in a limited range of cities.	More varied iconography and local symbols due to higher number of minting cities.
Significance during 2nd–3rd centuries CE	Increased activity, but mainly in select centers.	Thrace emerges as one of the empire's most significant provincial minting regions.

A comparison of the dynamics of provincial minting in Moesia Inferior and Thracia reveals important similarities, indicating the convergent development of minting systems in the two Balkan provinces (Table 6). The first notable point is the identical chronological range of minting activity, from the reign of Augustus to the end of the reign of Saloninus. This demonstrates the parallel integration of these regions into the provincial monetary system for over two and a half centuries. In both provinces, there was a significant increase in coinage during the 3rd century AD, particularly under the Severan dynasty (193–235), marking the peak of minting activity. The most active issuers in both regions were the same emperors, including Septimius Severus, Caracalla, Geta, Macrinus, Diadumenian, Elagabalus, Gordian III, and Philip I, which reflects a consistent local response to the propaganda and economic demands of the central authority (Table 6). The growth trajectory is also similar: after relatively moderate issuance intensity under Antoninus Pius, coin production sharply increased under Septimius Severus. The highest production levels occurred during the reigns of Macrinus, Diadumenian, and Elagabalus, whose issues significantly exceeded the annual averages of earlier rulers (cf. Table 6).

It is noteworthy that the decline of provincial minting occurs almost simultaneously in both provinces after 260 AD. Lack of coin issues after the death of Saloninus indicates a deep monetary and administrative crisis in the region, linked to political changes and the reorganisation of the system of mints within the Roman Empire. Although it is often assumed that the cessation of provincial minting in Moesia and Thrace occurred after the death of Saloninus (AD 260), this generalisation does not apply uniformly. In the case of Nikopolis ad Istrum, coin production appears to have ended much earlier, with the last securely dated issues belonging to the reign of Trajan Decius (AD 249–251). This suggests that the chronology of provincial mint closures varied considerably by city and may have been influenced by local political and military circumstances.

Although Moesia Inferior had the most active mints, the total number of coin types minted in Thracia was greater. This is mainly due to the difference in the organisation of mint networks in the two provinces. Moesia Inferior had fewer mints (8),

but they were very active and concentrated, especially Nicopolis ad Istrum, Marcianopolis, and Tomis, which issued coins in huge quantities. In Thracia, on the other hand, there were as many as 22 mints, which individually produced fewer coins than the largest mints in Moesia, but their total output exceeded that of Moesia Inferior.

One important reason for the discrepancy in minting activity between Moesia Inferior and Thracia is the difference in their economic and administrative structures. Thracia, being territorially larger and with a more dispersed structure, had mints located in a number of towns – ports, such as Mesambria and Apollonia Pontica, and commercial and administrative centres, like Philippopolis, Serdica, and Pautalia. In contrast, minting in Moesia Inferior was more concentrated, likely focused on supporting the Roman troops stationed along the Danube (Table 7). Another contributing factor was the variation in the operational duration of mints. Some Thracian mints may have been active for longer periods, allowing them to issue more coin types, despite their lower annual output compared to Moesia. Furthermore, minting in Moesia Inferior was more centralised, with the main mints playing a dominant role in production. Conversely, Thracia's minting system was more decentralised, with many towns minting coins for their own local purposes, even if their output was less significant (Table 7).

An analysis of provincial minting in Moesia Inferior and Thracia shows a consistent pattern of development in both minting systems, marked by a significant peak in the 3rd century AD and a sharp decline in activity after the death of Saloninus. Although both provinces followed a similar chronological trajectory and responded to the same political and military stimuli, there are clear differences in minting structures. Moesia Inferior, with the dominant centres in Nicopolis ad Istrum, Marcianopolis, and Tomis, focused coin production in a few key locations. In contrast, Thracia followed a more dispersed model, with a larger number of less active mints. Ultimately, comparing the operational duration and issuance intensity of these mints provides valuable insights into the organisational and functional mechanisms of the provincial monetary systems in the Balkans. It also sheds light on their role within the administrative, military, and ideological framework of the Roman Empire.

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DYNAMIKA MENNICTWA PROWINCJONALNEGO W MIASTACH TRACJI I MEZJI

(Streszczenie)

Artykuł stanowi kompleksową analizę działalności menniczej w prowincjach Mezja Dolna i Tracja od czasów Augusta do końca panowania Salonina (ok. 260 r. n.e.). Głównym celem badania jest ukazanie zróżnicowania intensywności i czasu trwania emisji monet prowincjonalnych w poszczególnych miastach oraz porównanie charakteru działalności menniczej w obu prowincjach. Podstawą analizy są dane zaczerpnięte z katalogów numizmatycznych (m.in. *Roman Provincial Coinage*, *Die antiken Münzen Nord-Griechenlands*) oraz internetowych baz danych, takich jak OCRE i RPC Online. Dane te zostały zestawione w formie tabelarycznej, uwzględniającej liczbę znanych typów monet oraz okres funkcjonowania mennic.

W części wstępnej autorka przedstawia ramy chronologiczne badania i metodologię – skupiając się na analizie typów monet jako wyznaczniku aktywności menniczej. Podkreśla, że liczba typów nie przekłada się bezpośrednio na liczbę wybitych egzemplarzy, ale dobrze odzwierciedla zmienność ikonografii i intensywność produkcji. Wskazuje również na trudności interpretacyjne związane z różnym stanem opracowania źródeł dla poszczególnych miast.

W części analitycznej zestawione zostały dane dla kilkunastu miast Tracji (np. Augusta Traiana, Anchialos, Hadrianopolis, Philippopolis) i Mezji Dolnej (np. Nikopolis ad Istrum, Marcianopolis, Tomis, Odessos, Istros). Wyniki pokazują wyraźny wzrost aktywności menniczej w II w., z kulminacją w III w. n.e., szczególnie w okresie dynastii Sewerów (193–235), który autorka interpretuje jako czas szczególnej mobilizacji środków finansowych na potrzeby wojska oraz zwiększonej aktywności propagandowej. Za panowania cesarzy Sewerów wiele miast prowincjonalnych wybijało monety z rozbudowaną ikonografią, prezentującą zarówno wizerunki cesarskie, jak i lokalne bóstwa, personifikacje prowincji, symbole wojskowe czy sceny kultowe.

Analiza porównawcza pokazuje istotne różnice między obiema prowincjami. W Mezji Dolnej dominują duże i aktywne centra mennicze, takie jak Nikopolis ad Istrum i Marcianopolis, które emitują dużą liczbę typów przez długi czas – co może świadczyć o centralizacji produkcji i jej powiązaniu z garnizonami wojskowymi. W Tracji natomiast obserwujemy większą liczbę mennic, z których większość działała krótko i wytwarzała ograniczoną liczbę emisji. Zdaniem autorki może to odzwierciedlać inne mechanizmy organizacji władzy lokalnej i mniejszy wpływ stałych garnizonów.

W artykule wskazano również na ważne zjawisko wygaszenia działalności menniczej po około 260 r. n.e. – zbieżne w czasie z reformami pieniężnymi i upadkiem wielu lokalnych struktur administracyjnych. Autorka zwraca uwagę, że mimo braku formalnego zakazu, po tej dacie żadna z mennic prowincjonalnych w Tracji i Mezji Dolnej nie wznowia produkcji, co może być efektem centralizacji systemu monetarnego i marginalizacji lokalnych ośrodków w nowym modelu zarządzania imperium.

Ostateczne wnioski podkreślają znaczenie prowincjonalnych emisji nie tylko jako środka płatniczego, lecz także jako źródła do badań nad funkcjonowaniem administracji prowincjonalnej, polityką wizerunkową dynastii cesarskich i lokalną tożsamością społeczności miejskich.

Artykuł wnosi istotny wkład do badań nad numizmatyką rzymską, ukazując złożoność systemu monetarnego na Bałkanach oraz zróżnicowanie lokalnych modeli produkcji monetarnej w kontekście zmian politycznych i militarnych III w. n.e.

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