

**„BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY**  
**DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND SECURITY**  
**STUDIES**

*History illustrated by coin.*  
*The numismatic collection „Alexandru Borza”*  
**Abstract of doctoral thesis**

**Scientific coordinator:**

Cristian Anton GĂZDAC, Habilitated Lecturer

**PhD student:**

Ovidiu Maxim OARGĂ

**CLUJ-NAPOCA**

**2019**

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**Key words:** Borza, numismatic collection, coin, catalogue, Republican, Imperial, Byzantine, nominal, botanical garden, monetary hoard, Blaj, natural sciences, ethnobotany, scout, founding member, Uniate, Romanian Academy, antiquarian, Dyrrhachium, Apollonia, acquisition, purchase, denarius, as, dupondius, follis, antoninian, gold, silver, bronze, geobotany.

The current paper, same as the title mentions it, presents the numismatic collection which Alexandru Borza compiled over his impressive life. Of all coins from this valuable and new collection, were approached the coins of classic and late Antiquity, namely the Greek, Dacian, Roman Republican, Roman Imperial and Byzantine ones.

Specialised institutions from our country, such as museums, hold as inventory an impressive number of private collections (especially amassed by wealthy persons, namely physicians, architects, teachers, patrons, lawyers, etc, at the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century,) not yet valorised scientifically.

The thesis encompasses an introduction which briefly presents the purpose, objectives and work methodology, then a biographic chapter about life and scientific activity of Alexandru Borza and a chapter about building up of the numismatic collection. Five chapters that analyse the numismatic material divided on ages follow, and a chapter of the conclusions, then the used bibliography. The most substantial part of this paper is represented by the catalogue of coins that is divided into six annexes that encompass pieces arranged chronologically, according to ages. Annex VII includes the plates concerning the 23 Roman Imperial coins that are part from a possible monetary hoard with a greater number of such pieces.

In the first part of the paper, namely the introduction, are described both the purpose and objectives and methodology used at writing up the thesis. The main purpose of the thesis is to valorise by publication a spectacular numismatic collection belonging to a personality with prodigious scientific activity. This paper is attempting to make available a great quantity of material, which we hope to be useful for future researches, especially for those of private collections acquired by profile institutions from our country. The proposed objectives are: producing a coherent and well-structured catalogue of coins, interpretation of the determined numismatic material (subject to information that we currently hold), and drawing up some conclusions concerning the way collection „Alexandru Borza” may bring new data in archaeological and historical context.

Used methodology in our approach is one illustrative of the work manner from the field of numismatics and includes the systematic study of the biographic and bibliographic sources. The most important phase was that of identifying all pieces after their issuers and their chronological organisation. For that purpose, were used different specialised catalogues (for example, RRC for determination of the Roman Republican coins, RIC, for the determination of the Roman Imperial coins, IBC, for the analysis of pieces from the Byzantine period, etc) or on-line sources. Similarly, all articles that published different coins from this collection were consulted. Each coin was weighed (with a special scale, recommended and used in the field, with small error rate) and measured with a slide rule.

Photographing all pieces that were the object of this study, both the obverse and reverse, was another important work phase, mandatory for compiling a numismatic catalogue.

After identification of coins that underwent our research, was also organised the catalogue of these pieces, according to some specific features of this field. Thus, the catalogue was compiled according to more criteria. Firstly, coins were divided according to their historical age, into more categories (Greek coins, Dacian pieces, Roman Republican coins, Roman Imperial and Byzantine). Then pieces were divided chronologically, according to the issuer, and where existed more pieces issued by the same emperor, according to the minting year. Finally, to structure this catalogue is was also considered the nominal of these pieces, respectively the material they were made of.

For each coin from the catalogue was rendered information on the issuer, nominal value, minting year, mint or workshop where this piece was made, diameter and weight. Similarly, each piece was depicted in detail, with information on the representations from the obverse and reverse, legend from both sides, very important aspects as for determination of these monetary pieces. At the same time, for each coin were provided data on bibliography, how it was acquired or origin place, respectively the inventory number from the numismatic register.

The coin lot that is the focus of this study was also approached statistically. Thus, based on the catalogue we attempted a classification according to the number of emperors represented within this collection, the number of nominals present or from the point of view of the material that these pieces were made of.

According to the information obtained following analysis of all coins, another phase of the research was that of historical and numismatic interpretation, which was possible in some

cases due to notes that the collector left, and in others, based on obtained results after a detailed analysis of these pieces, respectively of some common features. In these cases, different specialised studies that mentioned similar pieces with those from this collection were consulted.

At the same time were researched as many as possible pieces of information on life and activity of professor Alexandru Borza, by consulting and reading some articles and books that appeared over time. The most important sources were the work (appeared in 1973 as manuscript, in the inventory of the museum from Alba Iulia) of Ion Resmeriță, *Viața și opera profesorului ALEXANDRU BORZA (Life and work of professor ALEXANDRU BORZA)*, and that of Alexandru Borza, *Amintirile unui botanist din Alba Iulia (Memories of a botanist from Alba Iulia)*.

Furthermore, were consulted documents from the archive of the museum as for the acts that preceded the sales-purchase agreement by which was concluded the purchase of the numismatic collection. Similarly, in the archives of the museum were researched other documents that recorded data on the life and activity of Alexandru Borza, including photos that depicted him.

Chapter I, "Alexandru Borza – biographic information", presents the life and activity of professor Alexandru Borza chronologically. This first chapter is divided into 7 sub-chapters, being concisely depicted the whole life of the collector starting with parents and family, then childhood and adolescence, student life, both at the Faculty of Theology and that of Natural Sciences, continuing with that of professor in Blaj and then Cluj-Napoca. The last sub-chapter illustrates the life of Alexandru Borza after the Second World War, more precisely, between 1947 and 1971.

The II<sup>nd</sup> chapter, „Compiling of the numismatic collection”, presents information on passions and interests of Alexandru Borza for archaeology and numismatics, passions instilled by Adalbert Cserni. The activity of collector begins from childhood, while teen his collection encompassing hundreds of coins. Thus, throughout his life, Alexandru Borza collected 1661 such pieces, coins which, towards the end of life, in 1971, he sold to the museum from Alba Iulia. Among these numismatic pieces, 48 are Greek coins, 6 Dacian coins, 112 Roman Republican coins, 742 Roman Imperial coins, 125 Byzantine coins, 124 Medieval coins, 496 modern coins and 4 medals.

Within this chapter are presented general aspects of the coins from this numismatic collection. Following analysis of these pieces, one notices that for the majority of coins there is no information on the manner of purchase or discovery place. Still, following notes left by Alexandru Borza, we find out that a part of the coins of this collection was also purchased from different towns across the country but also from abroad. Furthermore, from data recorded by the collector we found out that some pieces come from graves, others from the area of some Roman forts. At the same time, among these coins exists information on the purchase manner, the place from where these were bought, the year when these were bought and even the purchase cost.

Chapter III analyses the 48 Greek coins from the collection „Al. Borza”, varied pieces, issued in different Greek colonies, and which chronologically date between the V<sup>th</sup> century BC and beginning of the I<sup>st</sup> century BC.

Although we do not have information on how these coins were purchased or the discovery place, we may assume that the majority were procured by purchase, from different antiquarians from the southern part of the country (considering that the majority are emissions of the Greek fortresses).

Chapter IV analyses the Dacian coins from the collection. The 6 monetary pieces date between the end of the III<sup>rd</sup> century BC and beginning of the I<sup>st</sup> century BC., a coin being Huși-Vovriești type, one Adâncata-Mănăstirea type, one Vârteju-București type, two pieces Aninoasa-Dobrești type and one coin Aiud-Cugir type.

Chapter V presents the 112 Roman Republican coins from the numismatic collection of professor Alexandru Borza, meaning 109 denarii, 2 asses and a dupondius. These pieces date between 211/208 BC and 31 BC.

Unfortunately, neither for this coin lot, as for the majority of pieces from the collection of professor Alexandru Borza, is known the discovery place or purchase manner. We suspect that they were purchased from different antiquarians from inland or abroad but, as it most often occurs, there is no information on the discovery place or from where these were purchased.

Chapter VI deals with the most numerous group of coins from the collection, meaning the Roman Imperial ones. This lot includes 742 coins that date between 22/1 BC and 493/553? (the municipal coin of Rome), issued by an important number of emperors. Thus, were catalogued pieces dated to Julio-Claudian dynasty beginning with Augustus, from the period of ”the 4 emperors” and Flavian dynasty, from the period of the Antonine dynasty, Severan one, the crisis

of the III<sup>rd</sup> century, more precisely its peak, from the period of the Gallic Empire (260-274), of the Illyrian Empire, from the period of the Dominate, of the Valentinian dynasty, from the time of the late Roman Empire – Theodosian dynasty. In this monetary lot, is one piece 1 AE, respectively a municipal coin of Rome. From the period between the Dominate and the Valentinian dynasty, we have 5 more coins AE type, which, due to poor conservation status, could not be identified. Similarly, due to advanced degradation (most likely, in addition, to wear due to intense circulation, these were also burnt) of some monetary pieces from the period of the II<sup>nd</sup>-III<sup>rd</sup> centuries, these could not be identified. Besides these monetary emissions, in this lot, we also have 4 provincial pieces 1 AE without issuers.

Important in this case is the fact that of the 742 Roman Imperial coins, for a number of 95 pieces we have information, from the data recorded by the collector, about purchase, the town from where these were purchased and purchase cost. For some of these, we also know the discovery place.

Of the notes that professor Alexandru Borza left, 17 coins were identified about which we have information on their origin place. Most of them were discovered in Alba Iulia, between 1900 and 1910, likely in the campaigns of archaeological researches carried out by Adalbert Cserni on the territory of the town, actions that the collector took part in, being a child at that time.

Following scrutiny and identification of the Imperial Roman coins, was noticed a lot of 23 pieces, which, due to some common features (gilding the coins to embellish appearance and their usage in necklace, noticeable aspect after the traces of sticking of some fastening systems; their similarity in certain ways, such as defect stamping of the letters of the legend, but also the fact that between them are more pieces from the same emperor) and based on collected data, seems to represent a fragment from a hoard with a greater number of such pieces.

Chapter VII belongs to coins from the Byzantine period. 125 Byzantine coins were identified and determined in the numismatic collection „Alexandru Borza”. These date between the end of the V<sup>th</sup> century/beginning of the VI<sup>th</sup> century and XIII<sup>th</sup> century.

After this extensive numismatic analysis (more precisely: 1033 pieces of which 48 are Greek coins, 6 Geto-Dacian, 112 Roman Republican, 742 Roman Imperial and 125 Byzantine issue) we can draw some conclusions. Although, unfortunately for us, there are few notes left by

the collector on how the coins were acquired or the context of their discovery, however this information has been helpful for determining some assumptions and conclusions.

Unfortunately, as we have seen in many other cases (especially in private collections), for most of these currencies, there are no data on how they were acquired or the place where they were purchased or discovered, the context in which they were captured, important information that helps to draw conclusions on the situation as they were lost or hidden, events that could influence these circumstances, even the movement of money in a certain space, territory or region.

Among the 1033 pieces which are the subject of this study, we have information only on a total of 134 coins, from the data recorded by Alexandru Borza on how they were purchased, where they came from or the context of their discovery. This information was found for the Roman Imperial coins (95 pieces) and the Byzantine coins (39 shows).

More pieces from the group of the Roman Imperial coins have undergone a subsequent combustion process, which leads us to believe that some of these currencies could come from cremation graves. Due to the lack of information about the context of the discovery, we can only assume that some of these pieces could come from necropolis on the Forks Hill (investigated in several campaigns in the late 19th and in the beginning the 20th century by the archaeologists of that time). We do not exclude the fact that some of these coins were discovered isolated settlements housing that at certain time and in a certain context, were burned.

Although we do not have information about how the vast majority of the Roman Imperial coins were purchased or about the place of their discovery, we can still draw some conclusions about their alleged origin, based on the state of their preservation and the quality of the piece. About pieces that are in a state of very good conservation, particularly, the Denarii and the Antoniniani, we can assume that they could come from bigger hoards (knowing the fact that at that time that coins of good quality, appearance and intrinsic value, were taken out of circulation and hoarded) across the province (even in today's Moldavia and the eastern half of Wallachia). The coins in a poor state of preservation, with different levels of wear, could come either from the archaeological discoveries made in different settlements and camps (Alba Iulia / Apulum Moigrad / Porolissum, etc.), or from isolated or accidental discoveries, occasioned by various urban or agricultural work.

The large number of post-Roman coins with high levels of wear in the collection of Professor Alexandru Borza (as shown in the catalog), lead us to believe that these pieces were purchased in batches (the collector bought multiple currencies at the same time from the same source, some of them well preserved, others in various states of decay. These pieces come, most likely, from the southern areas of the country (here, the circulation of these coins was more intense), especially in the region today's Dobrogea, an area which, after the Roman withdrawal, remains under the Roman domination.

There is no information about how the other coins in this large collection, namely the Greek, the Roman Republican or the Geto-Dacian were purchased, or about the place or context of their discovery. However, following the monetary discoveries, both as hoards and isolated / random we can draw some conclusions, mainly about the place of origin.

Thus, the Greek coins could have been obtained by purchasing from various antique dealers / traders in the south (since the most are issues of the Greek cities). From this batches, the presence of a total of 18 coins (of which 16 are issued by the city of Dyrrhachium and 2 by the city of Apollonia), leads us to suppose that they could come from a hoard with a larger number of such pieces. This statement is based on specific characteristics, such as, primarily, the large number, 16 respectively, issued by the city of Dyrrhachium and 2 by the city of Apollonia. This leads us to believe that the pieces were purchased at the same time (in one batch) and from same person, so they can be captured in the same place. Furthermore, after analyzing in detail, it was found that all these currencies have a similar patina, which shows that by the time of their discovery, they had lain in the same type of soil, all together. All these clues, in conjunction with the information about the sheer number of such pieces which crossed the Danube and their recovery, in particular by discoveries of treasures, leads us to the conclusion that they may come from a larger hoard discovered in Transylvania.

About the place of origin of the 6 Geto-Dacian coins, we can presume that they could have been discovered around the Dacian mintsbut also around many cities in the Carpathian-Danube area. Their physical appearance, in terms of conservation status, leads us to believe that most likely these pieces could come from the some treasures mentioned in Chapter 4.

Although we do not know many details about the context of discovery of the Roman Republican coins in this collection, or how they were acquired, we can assume that it is possible that one of these pieces, to be part of different treasures like those of Medves (discovered before

1914 of which only 13 coins were recovered) and Teiuş. To the same extent, according to some information on the coin found in the Alba County, we suspect that some of these coins might come from the excavation campaigns conducted by A. Csernai between 1895-1908, knowing that Alexandru Borza, as a child and teenager took part in the archaeological researches.

We can not exclude the version that between these pieces, there were also coins found around the Dacian fortresses as that one from Piatra Craivii, which were discovered, among several items including a few coins from the Dacian period, in several places by locals and shepherds.

In terms of historical and numismatic, the coins covered by this study are of various issues, some produced in local workshops, in a certain period of time, shorter or longer (and which had a limited area of circulation), others issued in a larger number, in the official or imperial mints, which had a larger area of circulation in Dacia. These are represented by pieces issued by the Greek colonies along the Danube (among which those of Callatis, Tomis and Histria), by those with the representation of Athena on the obverse and the owl on the reverse or those Thracian Getae and Scythian in Dobrogea, also, by the Macedonian kings, or during the Dacian period, coins that were produced in different workshops of the Geto-Dacian period of maximum socio-economic development of the population of Dacia, then part of Roman republican coins that have started to penetrate the territory of Dacia the first century A.D., the Roman Imperial coins, which circulated heavily in Dacia, or by those Byzantine.

Analyzing Professor Alexandru Borza' collection we found the presence of quite rare coins among which the earliest, represented by tetradrahne or drachmas of the cities of Athens, Histria, Callatis, Corinth, the west coast coins of King Lysimachia or the bronze produced in the local workshops, most likely in a relatively small number, then the Dacian coins, which can be rare found in private collections or in specialized institutions like museums. And among the Roman coins, both republican and imperial, there are issues that can be classified as rare, for example, the denarii emitted by kings with a brief reign such as Otho, Galba, Vitellius or the medallion issued by Severus Alexander. Also, the gold coins, both from Roman imperial period and the Byzantine pieces are considered extremely rare.

In terms of nominal, namely of the material from which they are made, out of the 1033 coins that made the subject of this study 10 are of gold (including 5 issued during the Roman Empire and another 5 in the Byzantine Empire), 505 silver (of which 26 issued in colonies, 6 in

the Dacian workshops, 109 in the Roman Empire, 362 in the Republican mints and 2 in the Byzantine Empire), the remaining of 516 are bronze coins.

Analyzing this collection we can notice Alexandru Borza's passion for the Roman coins, he managed to gather, throughout his life, 854 such pieces (112 Roman Republican coins and 742 pieces Roman Imperial).

In terms of conservation, it was found that the parts that make up this impressive collection is divided into two categories, namely coins kept well, some almost uncirculated and others with varying degrees of wear (worn, faded, drilled, burned, scratched , etc.).

Based on these observations, we can say as a conclusion that Alexandru Borza was not a typical collector, who focused on a period, the coins that he purchased were very varied, from this point of view. Moreover he did not take into account the conservation status of the pieces, he purchased that were very well preserved, but also very degraded. This leads us to suppose that he, even if he was not identified as a real numismatist, became since his childhood, being animated in this process by the patriotic feeling that these pieces are not to be alienated or lost definitively from the cultural national heritage.

The catalogs of coins, namely the annexes are the bulk of this work. It is divided into seven parts (The catalog of the Greek coins, the catalog of the Dacian coins, the catalog of the Roman coins republican catalog Roman coins imperial catalog Roman coins imperial hoard, catalog Byzantine coins and boards) and subsume the whole novel monetary material, presented in chronological order, the pieces being determined and cataloged in standard parts, illustrated obverse/ reverse and described in terms of features and determinations.

The "Alexandru Borza" Money Collection, the most important private collections of the National Museum, is a representative numismatic set, both through its number, variety, but also by the rarity and quality of the pieces.