

COINS AND COIN CIRCULATION IN THE LATE ANTIQUITY (294-498) IN THE
UPPER AND MIDDLE COURSE OF STRUMA RIVER
(ABSTRACT)

The analyses in the current study are made on the basis of investigation and identification of 11 184 late ancient coins from hoards and single specimens from archaeological sites of exact site-find. The investigated territory includes the Upper and Middle course of Struma river (ancient Strymon), as well as passes and valleys of some smaller rivers reaching the valleys of rivers Dzherman, Upper Mesta (ancient Nestus), Vardar (ancient Axios), Morava (ancient Brongus), Strumeshnitza and Bregalnitza. The considered late ancient coins of 47 hoards and archaeological sites cover the territory of present day Pernik region, the areas of Kjustendil valley centred around ancient Pautalia (Kjustendil), geographical regions of Kraishte, Piyanetz and Kamenitza, Gorno Pole (with its centre Sapareva Banya, ancient Germania), Dolno Pole (with Kocherinovo and Blagoevgrad), and the Middle Struma region with the ancient towns near Sandanski and Petrich. A central place in the study takes coin circulation in Pautalia, the main urban centre in the studied territory. The town is an important administrative and economic centre situated at major crossroads where trends of both western and eastern parts of the empire are equally felt.

Politically and geographically the Upper Struma region represented the most western part of the province of Thrace until the second half of 3rd century, while after the administrative reforms of the Late Empire it was incorporated in the boundaries of the province of Dacia Mediterranea, which comprised the urban areas of Serdica (Sofia), Pautalia (Kyustendil), Germania (Sapareva Banya), Naissus (Nish, Republic of Serbia) and Remessiana (Bela Palanka, Republic of Serbia). The territory of Middle Struma after 45 AD (when the province of Thrace was established and its southern part, until then belonging to the province of Macedonia, was joined to it) until the second half of 3rd century represented the north-eastern part of the province of Macedonia. After Emperor Diocletian's (284-305) and Emperor Constantine's (306-337) administrative reforms in the late 3rd and early 4th century the lands along the Middle course of Struma river were included in the territory of Macedonia diocese with its main town Thessalonica, where the areas of the late ancient towns near today's Sandanski and Petrich are also situated. A central place among physical-geographical features of the studied region is taken by Struma river and its basin, together with its adjoining valleys.

In the region there was a well developed and organized road network of main and secondary roads facilitating contacts among urban centres and other settlements. Main roads of interprovincial importance passed through the region having considerable significance in shaping the road network in the studied region: the Serdica – Pautalia – Stobi road; the road along the Struma valley from Serdica through Middle Struma region to the Aegean coast, joining Via Egnatia at Amphipolis; and the road connecting Pautalia through Germania to Philippopolis, as well as a number of other secondary routes. By their status the archaeological sites whose coins have

been included in the study are of various character:

- the main urban centre of **Pautalia**: its urban territory comprises most of the studied region (without the Middle Struma course) until the end of the 3rd century;
- the late ancient town of **Germania** near Sapareva Banya;
- **ancient and late ancient towns** near today's Sandanski and Petrich;
- **late ancient settlements** – sites in the village of Bosnek; the settlement on the hill of Krakra; Golemo Selo, Dupnitza region; Laskarevo village; Karnalovo village, Petrich region;
- **villas** – the sites in Bela Voda district of Pernik and in Krlev Dol village;
- **late ancient fortresses** – by Sushitza village, Kyustendil region; Dolno Tzerovo village, Blagoevgrad region;
- **marketplaces** – the sites in Arbanas district of Radomir and Barakovo district in the town of Kocherinovo;
- **necropoli** – a coin hoard from the village of Nedelkova Grashtitza, Kyustendil region, Loven Dom (Hunting Lodge) and Grobnitza Mavzolei (Tomb Mausoleum) in Sandanski;
- **sanctuaries** – the site in Tzarkva (Church) district in the town of Pernik;
- **basilicas** – in the district of Strumsko in Blagoevgrad and in Mikrevo village.

The coin hoards of the villages of Drumohar, Mazarachevo and Marvodol could be localized to some extent conditionally due to the manner of their acquisition. Late ancient settlements and fortifications have been recorded near all three present day villages. The objects considered are consistently distributed in the studied territory and give a good idea of the coin circulation and the spread of different types of coins. Data from 9 coin hoards and 11 archaeological sites, as well as single coins of known site-find, have been used in the study of late ancient coin circulation in Pautalia. For the sake of completeness, information about discovered coin hoards published in the Bulletins of the Archaeological Institute and the Archaeology journal has also been used.

From the 11 184 investigated late ancient coins from the Upper and Middle course of Struma river, 4642 coins have been deciphered according to the preserved images and inscriptions on the obverses, and 6381 coins - according to the types represented on the reverses.

The images on the coin obverses and reverses are discussed in the numismatic literature and follow the principles of late ancient minting. The trend of successive dominating types on the coin reverses, set ultimately by Constantine I (306-337) after 324 AD, facilitates dating and conclusions regarding the chronology of events.

On the basis of the considered coins, in the images and inscriptions of some specimens have been established new points not covered in the literature so far:

- On coins of Maximian Herculus (286-310) from the site in Arbanas district of the town of Radomir, of the type CONCORDIA MILI/TVM with an image of the emperor and Jupiter, cat. №№ 31 and 34, produced in the mint of Heraclea in 295-296, the inscription on the obverse is IMP C MA MAXIMIANVS PF AVG, in contrast to the one

representative of this type, mint and minting period – IMP C MA VAL MAXIMIANVS PF AVG.

- On a coin of Emperor Constantine I from the coin hoard from the Middle course of Struma river, cat. № 207, of the type IOVI CONSERVATORI AVGG NN, produced in 312-301 in the second (B) officina of Thessalonica mint, the image on the obverse is a head of the emperor with a laurel wreath. According to the information given in RIC VI about Constantine I's minting, the second officina of Thessalonica mint produced coins with an obverse image representing a bust of the emperor with a laurel wreath, a chain armour and a mantle.
- The obverse of a coin of Emperor Licinius (308-324), cat. №90 of the coin hoard from the village of Karnalovo, Petrich region, of the type GENIO AVGVSTI, minted in 309-311 in the Siscia mint, features a bust of Licinius with a laurel wreath, a chain armour and a mantle. According to information in RIC VI, the obverse of the coin must feature a head of the emperor with a laurel wreath. Evidently both versions were minted in the Siscia mint.
- A coin of Emperor Theodosius I (379-395) from the site of Dom na politicheskata prosveta (Political Education House) in Kyustendil, cat. №872, has a votive inscription on its reverse reading VOT X MVLX XV. It was minted in the Aquileia mint. According to RIC VIII and LRBC, this type of coins were minted only for Valentinianus II, but as our coin shows, such mintings exist also for Theodosius I.
- A coin of Emperor Honorius (393-423) from a coin hoard from Kyustendil, cat. №1059, of the type Cross in a Laurel Wreath and an inscription CONCORDIA AVG on the reverse, minted in the Constantinople mint in 402-408, is a version of the one described in LRBC under №2209. On the coin referred in LRBC the inscription combination on the obverse and reverse is DN HONORI/VS PF AVG / CONCOR/DIA AVG. On our coin the inscriptions read: DN HONORIVS PF AVG/ CONCORDIA AVG.
- The reverse of a coin of Emperor Marcianus (450-457) from the coin hoard of the village of Bosnek, cat. №1179, of the Constantinople mint, features a cross in a wreath. On its obverse a part of the emperor's name can be read (DN MAR...) which leaves no doubt in its belonging. Copper coins with such an image are typical of Theodosius II's minting and in rarer cases – of Valentinianus III's. Probably, our coin was minted at the very beginning of Marcianus' rule using a coin core of a coin of his predecessor – Theodosius II.

A contribution of this study is the identification of new versions in the images and inscriptions of coins. Seven of the Upper and Middle Struma river coins studied here are barbarian imitations of Constantine I's coins of the type VICTORIAE LAET/AE/ PRINC PERP, with an image of two Victorias standing, holding a shield with an inscription VOT PR on an altar, in different stages of barbarization. This coin type is typical of the period 318-319 AD and was minted in western and central mints; in the Balkans the Siscia specimens are mainly found. The minting

of these imitations is almost simultaneous with the originals and is work of German tribes. In a great part of these coins the legends on the obverse and reverse are depicted through indistinct characters, while the representation of goddesses is so schematic as to be difficult to be recognized. The coins were found in Kyustendil (2), the Arbanas district of Radomir town (3), Tarzhishteto (The Marketplace) in the district of Barakovo in Kocherinovo (1) and the village of Gabene, Petrich region (1). The weights of these coins are in the range of one standard deviation, tending to decrease. Apparently these coins were circulating freely together with their prototypes, as can be seen by their presence in coin hoards and archaeological sites of different character.

NOMINALS:

The review of the late ancient coins from the above mentioned coin complexes and coin hoards shows definitive domination of bronze nominals. The Upper and Middle Struma region in the 4th and the 5th centuries was far from the borders of the empire, lacking heavy military units in its territory, and as gold was used basically for legionaries' salaries and payment of contributions, the relatively small amount of golden coins about which there is information seems natural. At the same time bronze nominals were typical of daily commercial relations. According to published information, six coin hoards containing golden coins were found in the region: in Zidini area, Bazovitza village, Kyustendil region – 1 coin of Emperor Leo I's (457-474), 3 coins of Emperor Zeno (474-491) and 1 coin of Emperor Anastasius (491-518); in Kyustendil – 3 solidi of Honorius (393-423) and 7 solidi of Theodosius II (402-450); near the village of Goz, Breznik region, under St. Peter peak – 8 solidi of Leo I (457-474); in 1958 at Sapareva Banya in a scree in the forest – 3 solidi of Leo I (457-474); the hoard of 50 golden coins found around Kyustendil – 1 coin of Emperor Honorius (393-423), 48 coins of Emperor Theodosius (402-450) and 1 coin of Eudoxia (the wife of Emperor Arcadius); and the last coin hoards – at Vrachane station, Blagoergrad region, containing 5 golden coins of Emperors Constantine (306-337), Gratianus (367-383) and Theodosius (379-395).

A solidus of Emperor Theodosius (379-395), weighing 4.50 g, was found in Kyustendil. A golden coin – solidus of Emperor Arcadius (383-408), weighing 4.60 g, was found between the villages of Vaksevo and Tishanovo, Kyustendil region. The coin hoard from the village of Bolsnek, Pernik region, contains apart from 511 copper coins also a solidus of Emperor Theodosius II, weighing 4.40 g. A golden coin – a tremissis of Emperor Zeno (474-491), weighing 1.50 g, came from the village of Zidartzi, Pernik region. A golden coin – a tremissis of Emperor Valentinianus III (425-455) came from Kostovo Orniche area in the lands belonging to the village of Chernichene. Its weight is 1.41 g. A solidus of Emperor Leo I (457-474) minted in 462-466 in the Constantinople mint was found in the Drene area in the lands belonging to the village of Krupnik. This solidus weighs 4.35 g. The weights of the above mentioned golden coins are in the range of the standard deviation of the 4.55 g standard introduced by Constantine the Great; the same holds true about other solidi and their subdivisions, as well as about coin

weight control standards.

The silver coins are two: a silver coin of Emperor Diocletianus (384-305) minted in 295 came from the village of Laskarevo, and a siliqua of Emperor Jovianus (363-364) came from the basilica in the Strumsko district in Blagoevgrad.

Small nominals – a half of follis and the so called $\text{Æ}3$ and $\text{Æ}4$ – dominate among the bronze coins. The number of heavy pre-reform folles (minted before the first reduction of 307 AD) is 30 and they were found in Pautalia (3 coins); the sanctuary in Daskalovo (2 coins); in Arbanas (9 coins); in the fortress of Krakra hill near Pernik (1 coin from the archaeological campaign of 2002-2003); the basilica in Strumsko (1 coin); the sites of Poshta (Post Office) (1 coin) and Loven Dom (5 coins) in the town of Sandanski. Eight pre-reform folles came from the region of Petrich town, 4 of them – from the coin hoard from the village of Karnalovo, while 4 others lacking precise site-finds were from the region of the ancient town in the Kozhuh area.

An coin hoard of 32 late ancient copper and silver-plated coins – folles and half folles, 8 of which minted before the follis reductions of 307 AD – was found in 2001 near an ancient tumular necropolis at the village of Krivonos, Breznik region.

More substantial is the presence of folles minted in the period between 307 and 313 AD. Their number is 213 in total – 65 of them from the Middle Struma coin hoard; 52 from the hoard at the village of Karnalovo; 41 from the late ancient town near Sandanski; 20 from the sanctuary in Daskalovo; 17 from the archaeological sites in Kyustendil (ancient Pautalia); 15 from the marketplace in Arbanas; 7 from the village of Laskarevo; 3 each from the coin hoards in the villages of Lilyach and Nedelkova Grashitza, both in Kyustendil region, and from the Petrich region; 2 each from the settlement at Golemo Selo, the marketplace in Kocherinovo and the ancient town at Rupite village; 1 each from the villa at Kralev Dol and from Melnik. Until 346/348 AD (monetary reform of Constantius II and Constans), most of the coins are fractions of the follis and coins minted after the denominations of 318 and 330 AD.

Relatively small is the number of coins of $\text{Æ}2$ nominal, minted in the period 348-354 AD, after the reform of Constans and Constantius II. Specimens of this heavy nominal have been recorded in Pautalia (11 coins); the sanctuary in Daskalovo (3 coins of Constantius II); the marketplace in Arbanas (6 coins of Constantius II and 3 coins of Constantius Gallus); the coin hoard from the village of Lilyach (one coin of Constantius II); Germania (also one coin of Constantius II); the marketplace at Kocherinovo (28 coins of the different versions of FEL TEMP REPARATIO type); the coin hoard from the region of Sandanski town (1 coin of Constans); the Poshta site in Sandanski (3 coins of Constantius II); and from the region of Petrich (1 coin of Constantius II). Of the big nominal introduced by Julian II in 361 AD 9 coins have been found (one each from the finds in the villa in Kralev Dol, at the settlement on the Krakra hill and from the region of Petrich, and two each from the finds in Kyustendil, Daskalovo and Kocherinovo).

The coins of $\text{Æ}2$ nominal from the period 364-395 AD are 41: from Kyustendil (4); the villa at Kralev Dol (1); the marketplace in Arbanas (5); Krakra fortress (1); the coin hoard from the village of Lilyach (7); the site at Golyamo Selo (4); the marketplace in Kocherinovo (15); the

fortress at the village of Dolno Tzerovo (1); the Poshta site in Sandanski (3) and Petrich town (1). The rest of the coins are exclusively of Æ3 and Æ4 nominals, and after 395 AD, in agreement with the Theodosius I's law, they are the only bronze coins minted. In 408 AD the weight of the coins of Æ3 nominal is reduced and practically only bronze coins of Æ4 nominal were circulating on the market in the 5th century.

Of the considered coin hoards which were hoarded after 395 AD, coins of Æ2 nominal minted in the period 348-395 AD were present only in the hoards from Lilyach and Sapareva Banya, as well as in the hoards from the sites at Mladezhki Dom (Youth House), Hudozhestvena Galeria (Art Gallery) and Poliklinika 2. Despite Theodosius II's decree of 395 AD, usage of this nominal continued. The coins in the coin hoards from the ancient Pautalia, Bosnek, Marvodol, Drumohar, Mazarachevo, Suchitza and Kyustendil region are of Æ3 and Æ4 nominals, with a prevalence of the smaller nominal. The situation with the hoards from the village of Nedelkova Grashitza and the fortress at the village of Dolno Tzerovo is a little different. The first coin hoard was placed as a burial offering and is of *terminus post quem* 335 AD. The same is the situation with the coin hoard from the necropolis at the village of Zabel, Tran region, which contains 16 copper and silver-plated billon coins – folles and their fractions from the period 313-324AD. The hoard from Dolno Tzerovo is more compact, spanning the period 341/346-378 AD and is of *terminus post quem* 378 AD. Both hoards lack small nominal coins from the late 4th century.

MINTS:

Mint marks are preserved on 1725 coins, 339 of them being minted in western and central workshops of the empire, 1386 – in Balkan and eastern mints. According to the relevant mints these coins are distributed in the following way:

From West and Central Europe:

- Siscia – 233;
- Rome – 62;
- Aquileia – 23;
- Ticinium – 8;
- Arles – 5;
- Trier – 5;
- Lugdunum 3.

From the Balkans:

- Thessalonica – 547;
- Constantinople – 220;
- Heraclea – 202;
- Sirmium – 14;

- Serdica – 2.

From Asia:

- Cyzicus – 251;
- Nicomedia – 92;
- Antioch – 41.

From North Africa:

- Alexandria – 17.

With the centre of the Roman empire moved east and especially after the establishment of the new capital of Constantinople, the prevalence along the Upper and Middle Struma course of coins minted in Balkan and Asia Minor mints is only to be expected.

Similar proportion is typical of the territory of modern Bulgaria and is evidenced by the investigation of the coins from Odartzi village (58 to 10 coins, the better part being from Constantinople and Cyzicus workshops); Koprivlen village (25 to 2, the better part being coins minted in Constantinople); Roman village, Sofia region (122 to 38, with the Thessalonica and Constantinople coins prevailing); the necropolis of Augusta Traiana (209 coins, with none from the central or western mints); the coin hoard from Ticha Dam; Marcianopolis (42 to 3); Pleven – ancient Storgosia; Ulpia Oescus; Kazachevo village, Lovech region, etc.

The coin distribution principle in territories close to working mints is also seen in coin hoards and coin complexes from other parts of the Roman empire. In the coin hoards from the ancient theatre in Stobi and from Tzarvulevo village, Shtip region in the Republic of North Macedonia, dominate coins minted in the mints of the prefecture of Illyricum, with those from Thessalonica prevailing. In the coin hoards from Golyamo Gradishte (ancient Pincum) in North Serbia on the Danube river, Viminacium (with *terminus post quem* 375 AD), Chukaritsa, Belgrade region, the coins from Siscia and Thessalonica prevail. In another coin hoard of Constans and Constantius II from Viminacium the coins from Thessalonica dominate, followed by those from Siscia. In the hoard from the village of Miokus on the Sava river, Northwest Serbia, close to Sremska Mitrovitsa (ancient Sirmium), the coins from Siscia and Thessalonica are 24 from each place, followed by those minted in Sirmium – 22.

Generally, the coins minted in the Thessalonica mint which is also the closest one definitively prevail in the studied territory. The presence of coins from distant coin workshops in West Europe is typical for the beginning of the considered chronological period. An exception is the mint in Rome whose coins minted in the period 408-455 AD are well represented in the region. Similar is the situation with the coins from the coin hoard from the village of Brestovitza, Plovdiv region, the coin hoard from the region of Shumen, the archaeological complex Yuzhen Park (South Park) – Lozenetz. Although the Serdica mint is nearby, its coins are only 2. The Serdica mint produced coins at the beginning of the considered period, from 303 to 308 AD, its main purpose being minting golden and silver coins.

The coins from Siscia, situated in the central territories of the empire in Pannonia, are traditionally well represented, especially in the period 364-378 AD, when the the mint was very active and

four officinas were in operation. From 233 coins minted in Siscia in total, 102 are from the period 364-378 AD. By the middle of the 4th century Dacia, Macedonia and Pannonia dioceses made up the prefecture of Illyricum. The two active mints in the territory of the prefecture were in Thessalonica and Siscia and it is their production that prevailed in the considered territory. After the 420s the situation changed – the mint in Siscia ceased functioning. The considerable presence of Cyzicus coins is directly related to its substantial bronze coin minting, especially after 378 AD. The coins from Thessalonica, Heraclea, Constantinople and Nicomedia are in general proportionally distributed relative to the total number of coins in the subperiods. The investigation established some differences in the way mint marks and additional signs are inscribed.

- In the coin complex from the site of Vzaimno uchilishte (Mutual School) there is one posthumous coin minted in the Heraclea mint (cat. №353). In the LRBC the sign of the Heraclea mint for this period is SMHA. On our coin behind the symbol of the officina (A) there is a dot – **SMHA·**.
- On a coin of Emperor Valens (364-378) from the coin hoard from the village of Lilyach, of the type SECVRITAS REIPVBLICAE with Victoria, cat. № 711, minted in the Aquileia mint in 367-375 AD, the additional sign of the mint is a star in the right field on the coin reverse. According to the LRBC №1033, the star is in the left field.
- A coin of Theodosius (379-395) from the coin hoard of the village of Lilyach, Kyustendil region, of the type GLORIA ROMANORVM (the emperor with a labarum and a captive), cat. № 881, was minted in the first officina of the Tessaloniki mint. According to LRBC, the Tessaloniki mint minted these coins on behalf of Theodosius I in the second (B) and fourth (Δ) officinas.
- A coin of Theodosius I from the coin hoard in Kyustendil of the type GLORIA REIPVBLICE with a camp gate, cat. № 901, which was minted in the period 383-392 AD only in the Thessalonica mint, is minted in the third officina of the mint. According to LRBC coins on behalf of Theodosius I were minted in the second (B) and the fourth (Δ) officina. The third officina minted coins with the name of Arcadius. But the coin under consideration shows that evidently coins with the name of Theodosius I were also minted there.
- A coin of Theodosius II (402-450) from the coin hoard from the site of Dom na savetite (Councils House) in Kyustendil, cat. № 1142, minted in the Nicomedia mint in the period 425-450 AD, belongs to the second (B) officina, in discrepancy with the information given in LRBC, stating that the second Nicomedia officina minted coins until 408 AD.
- On coins of Theodosius II from the coin hoard from the site of Dom na savetite in Kyustendil, cat. №№ 1156 and 1157, and the hoard from the basilica in Mikrevo village, cat. № 1158 of the type Cross in a Laurel Wreath, minted in the Cyzicus mint, the preserved officina mark is B (second). According to the LRBC, in this period there was one active officina in the Cyzicus mint, namely A, while the second officina ceased

work in 425 AD.

The last two cases are not single phenomena and have been evidenced in other coins, too.

- On coins of Emperor Marcianus (450-457) from the coin hoard from Bosnek village, cat. № 1178, 1179, 1186, 1187, 1198, 1200, there is discrepancy between the monogram types of the emperor and the mints where they were minted. According to the LRBC, coins on behalf of Marcianus with monogram № 8 were not minted in the Thessalonica mint, neither coins with monograms 5, 6 and 9 – in Constantinople, nor coins with monogram 4 – in Nicomedia, but such coins are present in the hoard considered here.

CHRONOLOGY:

In most of the archaeological sites and coin hoards included in the study coins run smoothly until the second half of the 5th century, outlining several events which influenced hoarding and hiding of the hoards.

In 316 AD the First civil war between emperors Constantine (306-337) and Licinius (308-324) broke out. After Constantine's victory the whole western part of the Balkan peninsula – Macedonia, Illyria, Dardania, Greece, parts of Moesia – was incorporated in his dominion. In the Balkans only the province of Thrace remained in Licinius' dominion. In two of the presented coin hoards – from the village of Karnalovo, Petrich region, and from the Middle course of Struma river – *termini post quem* are the coins of Constantine I and Licinius I minted in the period 313-317 AD. The latest coins in both hoards were minted before March 1, 317 AD, when with the end of the First civil war between Constantine I and Licinius I in Serdica the two augusti proclaimed Constantine's sons – Crispus (317-326) and Constantine Junior (317-240) – and Licinius' son – Licinius Junior (317-324) – caesars, confirming thereby hereditary principle in transfer of power. Evidently, reverberation of military operations led to hiding a lot of coin hoards: from Arnautovo village, Balchik, Bliznak village, Gita village, Nove (Svishtov region), Razboyna village.

The coin hoards from the village of Dolno Tzerovo and the region of Sandanski town with *terminus post quem* 378 AD can be related to the repercussions after the defeat and death of Emperor Valens (364-378) at Odrin in 378 AD and the subsequent devastation of Thrace by the Goths. As mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus, “their ravages spread unpunished throughout the breadth of Thrace”. Though the presence of coins from the period 383-395 AD (4 coins) in the fortress at Dolno Tzerovo is evidence of its habitation at the very end of the 4th century. The lack of coins from the 5th century suggests that it was not thoroughly rebuilt until the beginning of the 6th century. In the territories around the present day towns of Pernik and Kyustendil, as well as in the ancient Pautalia itself, the Goth wave from the late 370s seems not to have had such an importance as evidenced by the lack of coin hoards and coin complexes ending by 378 AD. The coin complex from the villa at Kralev dol ends by the beginning of the 5th century with a coin of Emperor Arcadius and 5 indeterminate coins from the end of the 4th – 5th century.

Investigators associate the destruction of the villa with the last waves of Goth invasions at the end of the 4th century. More reasonable would be to move on the time of the villa destruction to a little later period and to associate it with the first Hun invasions in the Balkans in 408 AD. *Terminus post quem* 408 AD defines the coin hoards from the Roman villa in the district of Bela Voda, situated close to the villa from Krlev Dol. Also in Bela Voda one more late ancient fortified villa has been examined and its destruction is dated at the beginning of the 5th century (the latest found coin is of Emperor Arcadius), followed by prompt rebuilding and partial repairs. In the examination of an early Christian church, situated in the Koloto saddle on the Karvavoto slope opposite Krakra, together with other finds a coin of Emperor Arcadius (383-408) was found, which determined the time of destruction of the building – in the 5th century. The same *terminus post quem* defines also the coin hoards from the House №1 of the Architectural Complex at Golyamo Selo, Dupnitsa region. The coin hoards of the Polyanski Pat grounds in the village of Nedelkova Grashitza ends with coins of Emperors Arcadius (383-408) and Honorius (393-423).

Entirely different is the situation with the sanctuary at Daskalovo, as its destruction was brought about by religious causes inherent to the empire. According to the numismatic material, the destruction of the sanctuary could be assigned to the very end of the 4th century. Despite early Christian penetration into the territory of Pautalia, where the sanctuary is situated, pagan religion went on strong enough. The latest coins found in the sanctuary in Daskalovo were minted in the period 383-395 AD – they are 159 in number. With such an amount of coins it could not be claimed they happened to be there by chance or were thrown in there out of habit after the sanctuary had been destroyed. In 392 AD Emperor Theodosius I issued his famous Constantinople decree which “prohibited every display – both public and private – of pagan cult”. After this act pagan religion was virtually banned. The time of destruction of Daskalovo sanctuary has to be sought immediately after or around this event. The latest coins found by the investigation of the Zeus and Hera sanctuary near the village of Kopilovtzi, Kyustendil region, belong to the same period. These are coins of Valentinianus (375-392) – 16 coins, Theodosius I (379-395) – 3 coins, Arcadius (383-408) – 2 coins.

Termini post quem of the coin hoards from the villages of Lilyach, Drumohar, Mazarachevo, Sushitza, Marvodol, the town of Sapareva Banya, from the sites of Dom na savetite, from excavations in Kyustendil, Hudozhestvena Galeria (Art Gallery), Mladezhki Dom (Youth House), M. Shishman, and the coin hoard of solidi of Honorius and Theodosius II in Kyustendil, are the coins of emperors Theodosius II and Valentinianus III minted in the period 425-450 AD which link the causes for the hoards concealment to the 440s. Data from the above mentioned archaeological sites in Kyustendil show that in six of them (Mladezhki Dom, Dom na savetite, Hudozhestvena Galeria, Don na knigata, Dom na politicheskata prosveta, Dervish Banya) the latest coins were minted again in the period 425-450 AD.

Coins from archaeological investigations in Sandanski town appear regularly and smoothly until the middle of the 5th century, and then after an interruption of about 50 years coin circulation

resumed at the beginning of the 6th century. In contrast to the situation in Pautalia, in the late ancient town by Sandanski of the middle of the 5th century there are no records of brands and destruction characteristic of an invasion.

Concerning coins from the Kocherinovo marketplace, the latest ones are again from the period 425-450. With the exception of probing explorations in Cheprashlako, the marketplace territory has not been archaeologically explored, which prevents definitive conclusions.

Only one of the presented coin hoards has for *terminus post quem* coins of Emperor Marcianus (450-457). That hoard lacks a precise site-find. Assuming the number of coins in the hoard is correct, its concealment could be associated with the events from the beginning of Marcianus rule – 451 AD, when the last invasion of Attila's Huns in the Balkan provinces of the empire came.

In the coin complexes from the explorations of the Krakra hill (including the coin hoard of 2002), Arbanas district and the coin hoard from Bosnek village, Pernik region, the latest coins found belong to Leo I's rule (457-474). Considering also the above mentioned coin hoard of gold coins from Goz village, Breznik region, the region of the present day town of Pernik was affected by events which occurred during the rule of Leo I. In 466-467 the Huns led by Holmidak crossed the Danube and reached south of it, having being held up only at Serdica. In 469 fierce battles were fought at Serdica between empire's Alan mercenaries with their leader Aspar and the leader of Isaurians Tarasikodissa – the future emperor Zeno. Zeno was defeated and took refuge behind the town walls. Proximity of Serdica to the territory of the above mentioned coin complexes and coin hoards provide grounds for linking their *terminus post quem* to these events.

Coins from the archaeological excavation in the Kozhuh area in 2007 and single coins from the region of the ancient town, at this stage of investigation, come to a close by the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th century. On the basis of stratigraphic data and the coins found at the site of Terakotena rabotilnitza (Terracotta Workshop), four stages of existence have been fixed, the fourth one fitting into the chronological bounds of the studied period – end of the 3rd – end of the 4th century, – the latest coins having being dated to the period 388-395 AD. The subsequent archaeological investigations in Heraclea Sintica moved the upper chronological boundary to the end of the 5th century, with the destruction at the end of the 4th century due to a powerful earthquake.

Two coin hoards from the early Christian basilica in the Mikrevo village with *terminus post quem* 474 and 476 AD determine the earliest possible period for the building of the basilica.

The coins of the hoard from the village of Nedelkova Grashtitza, Kyustendil region, and the coin complexes from the sites of Loven Dom and Grobnitza Mavzolei in Sandanski were placed as burial offerings. The coins from the hoard were probably put in the tomb immediately after 335 AD. The coins from the sites of Loven Dom and Grobnitza Mavzolei determine the period of necropoli use, the upper boundary of the burials in the first necropolis reaching 355 AD, and of that of the second – 335 AD. To these coins could be added the coin hoard the village of

Zabel, Tran region, discovered during archaeological explorations of the necropolis in 2001 in a shallow rock airpocket used as an additional chamber for a tomb structure. The hoard contains 16 copper and silver-plated coins – folles and their fractions, from the beginning of the 4th century. It was placed as a tomb offering up to the 330s AD. Placing coins in tomb structures in the 4th century follows a tradition existing in funeral practice from before Christ. Such cases have been recorded in the entire territory of present day Bulgaria and in particular along the course of Struma river, as well as in the eastern regions of Northern Macedonia.

Investigation of coin circulation of the Late Antiquity in the Upper and Middle Struma region shows unambiguously an increasing inflation, especially from the end of the 4th century, which finds its explanation in the general economic crisis seizing the Roman empire. The graphically represented data on the amount of coins in the particular subperiods show the dynamics of coin supply entry along the Struma course. The chart indicates gradual increase of the coin supply after 324 AD, reaching a peak in the period 378-395 AD (see page ...). The largest downturns belonged to the periods 313-324 AD and after 408 AD, while coin circulation after 474 AD faded out. In the 5th century the course of Struma river became an arena of military conflicts and internal imperial controversies which inevitably affected coin circulation. In the second half of the 5th century it gradually faded down, with a hiatus of 30 to 40 years (until the beginning of the 6th century). The causes of this phenomenon could be sought in the economic devastation after a series of barbarian invasions and total devaluation of the bronze nominal. It should not be ignored also that worn out and effaced coins continued their circulation. Bronze nominals stabilization was also the principal objective of the reform of Emperor Anastasius in 498 AD, after which the late Roman bronze currency was replaced by the early Byzantine follis and its fractions.

Contributions of the current presentation:

The present study, as a first of its kind for the region of the Upper and Middle course of Struma river in the period 294-498 AD, is built on the basis of 11 184 investigated coins, including coins from 23 coin hoards and 24 archaeological sites.

- New versions of images and inscriptions on the coin obverses and reverses have been identified;
- New versions of writing the mints names have been recorded;
- Presented charts show clearly the dynamics of historical and economic processes;
- Analyzing of collected empirical material, the supply to the considered region of the products of particular mint workshops in the Late Roman empire has been described;
- The coin analysis adds to the historical sources on the developments in the considered region during the chronological period from the end of the 3rd to the end of the 5th century, while some generally accepted ideas about historical events could undergo corrections based on the specific numismatic material.