БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ
НАЦИОНАЛЕН АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИ
ИНСТИТУТ С МУЗЕЙ

НУМИЗМАТИКА, СФРАГИСТИКА и ЕПИГРАФИКА

21



СОФИЯ
2025

1892 - 1921 - 1948
БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ
НАЦИОНАЛЕН АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИ ИНСТИТУТ С МУЗЕЙ
BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE WITH MUSEUM

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Адрес на редакцията: Национален археологически институт с музей
ул. „Съборна“ № 2, София 1000; главен редактор: numsfr_epig@abv.bg
Contact/Address: National Archaeological Institute with Museum
2 Saborna Str., BG – 1000 Sofia; Editor-in-Chief: numsfr_epig@abv.bg

Печатница: BULGED

ISSN 1312-5532 (print)
ISSN 2603-3275 (online)

BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
NATIONAL INSTITUTE
OF ARCHAEOLOGY WITH MUSEUM

NUMISMATICS, SIGILLOGRAPHY and EPIGRAPHY

21



SOFIA
2025

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A RECENTLY ARCHAEOLOGICALLY EXCAVATED 3RD CENTURY *DENARII* COIN HOARD FROM PAVLIKENI, NORTH BULGARIA (ANCIENT LOWER MOESIA)

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ABSTRACT

Pavlikeni is known for archaeology mainly with the Varbovski livadi site – a Roman-era ceramic production centre and a *villa*, but the analysis of other data on settlement structures and finds reveals a more complex habitation during the period 2nd – 4th century AD. A small coin hoard of nine *denarii* puts some additional information on the archaeology of another not less important site – the ancient settlement in the northwestern part of Pavlikeni. The coins are probably a purse hoard with daily money, deposited or stored in a wall of a large building, situated on the western limits of the settlement site. Its deposition is not a result of a barbarian attack, as there are no traces of destruction by fire, but of some other unknown reasons. The coin hoard contributes to the dating of the building, the chronology of the site and to the coin circulation during the 1st decades of the 3rd century in the province of Lower Moesia.

Keywords: *denarii* coin hoard, purse hoard, daily money, hoards from archaeological contexts, Lower Moesia, Thrace, Roman-era settlement, administrative territory of *Nicopolis ad Istrum*, ancient settlement in the northwestern part of Pavlikeni.

INTRODUCTION

A short analysis of finds, settlement and burial structures from the land of Pavlikeni is necessary for the better understanding of the context of the recently excavated *denarii* coin hoard, which is the subject of this paper (**fig. 1**). There is a need of such an overview due to misunderstanding in publications on the relation of certain finds and exact settlement or burial structures.

https://doi.org/10.53250/nse21.49-72

First of all, the region of Pavlikeni most probably belonged to the province of Thrace before the administrative reforms that were issued in 193 AD, during the reign of Publius Helvius Pertinax (Чакъров 2018, 49; Чакъров 2024b, 57)[1]. After the reforms it had to be in the province of Lower Moesia. Some of the more significant indications for that is the discovery of one of the terminal stones (ILBulg 429) for the boundary between the provinces of Lower Moesia and Thrace from 136 AD from the area of the village of Butovo, which is situated 9.5 km to the northwest from Pavlikeni. From the land of the same village originates a burial *stela* from the mid-2nd century with a Latin inscription, mentioning a *buleuta* from *Nicopolis ad Istrum* (Conrad 2002, 108 – 110, Nr. 48; Conrad 2004, 220, Nr. 347). At the large settlement in Butovo was found a Roman military diploma from AD 07.01.228, mentioning also the name of the city (Султов 1985, 38 – 41; RMD II 132; Боянов 2008, 343, № 88). These monuments are clear indications that the ancient settlement in the northwestern part of Pavlikeni belonged to the rural territory of *Nicopolis ad Istrum* and to the province of Lower Moesia after the reforms in the last decade of the 2nd century (Чакъров 2024a, 3 – 5).

FINDS WITHOUT CONTEXT FROM THE AREA OF PAVLIKENI

Six statuary groups are also among the most interesting finds with unknown context from the area of the town (Филов 1912, 25 – 29, № 20 – 24, 28; Чакъров 2023, 38, бел. 1): one of *Liber Pater* and his followers (Филов 1912, 25 – 26, № 21; ILBulg. 424), one with *Dionysus* with his *thiasus* (Филов 1912, 25 – 27, № 22; IGBulg II 699), two anepigraphic with *Dionysus* and his *thiasus* (Филов 1912, 27 – 29, № 23, 24), one with Hercules Augustus (Филов 1912, 33 – 34, № 28; ILBulg 421), another one with a dedication of a woman to her grandchildren, represented as *Sol et Luna* (Филов 1912, 23 – 25, № 20; ILBulg 426). There is also a Roman military diploma from AD 26.10.153 with unknown provenance from the vicinity of Pavlikeni (Nenov 1997, 15 – 21; Боянов 2008, 153, 346 – 347, № 94). An altar, with dedication in Latin to Jupiter *Sabadius* and Mercury (ILBulg 423) also originates from the area of Pavlikeni. It comes from one of the settlement sites in the vicinity of Pavlikeni, not clear which one exactly (Чакъров 2023, 20, 36, бел. 1).

SETTLEMENT AND BURIAL SITES FROM THE AREA OF PAVLIKENI

There are also settlement and burial sites with more data on their context and chronology (**fig. 1**). The most significant is the manufacturing centre and *villa* at Varbovski livadi area with its 50 kilns, other manufacturing installations and a *villa* complex (Sultov 1985, 22 – 25;

[1] For the change of the provincial border: Boteva 1996, 174; Ботева 1997, 27 – 28; Ботева 2001, 212 – 213.

Владкова 2011; Чакъров 2018, 49 – 90; Ivanov 2019, 1 – 31; Иванов 2021 104 – 107; Ivanov 2022, 103 – 106) (**fig. 1.3**). The ceramic production started most probably during the reign of Emperor Hadrian (117 – 138) or Antoninus Pius (138 – 161) and continued until the end of the 70s of the same century (Sultov 1985, 22 – 25; Владкова 2011, 47; Чакъров 2018, 49; Иванов 2021, 104 – 107; Ivanov 2022, 103 – 106). The managing of the manufacturing centre in this period could have been in the hands of *Gaius Ursidius Senecio*, a Roman citizen whose funerary *stela* was excavated in one of the necropolises at the site (Чакъров 2018, 77).

The *villa* complex at the Varbovski livadi site was probably founded on the ruins of the ceramic production installations in the last decades of the 2nd century and continued to function until the late 30s of the 3rd century, as the latest coins of Emperor Severus Alexander (222 – 235) infer (Владкова 2011, 48 – 49, 137; Чакъров 2018, 49). P. Vladkova and V. Varbanov date the abandonment of the *villa* as a result of the barbarian invasion in AD 239 (Владкова 2011, 48 – 49, 137; Върбанов 2017, 30 – 31). According to V. Varbanov the invasion could be dated also in AD 238 (Varbanov 2012, 299) or in AD 238/239 (Varbanov 2012, 299). He also suggests an invasion undocumented in the written sources in the last years of the reign of Emperor Severus Alexander (222 – 235) (Varbanov 2012, 299 – 300). There is a post *villa* habitation, or visiting the site for robbing for building material, in the first two or three quarters of the 4th century, with coins from the time of Emperor Diocletian (284 – 306) and the Tetrarchy (293 – 305), Constantine I (306 – 337) and a latest issue of Emperor Constantius II (337 – 361) (Цочев 1998, 14 – 16; Владкова 2011, 49; Чакъров 2018, 49).

Some 2 km to the northeast from the Varbovski livadi site is situated another Roman-era settlement – that at Lako dere/Mashatlaka area (**fig. 1.5**). Its chronology is known only from surface pottery found there (Владкова 2011, 7 – 9, 18). An altar with a dedication to Jupiter *Optimus Maximus* and Juno *Regina* (ILBulg 425) originates from this area. It is not clear whether it was found in that settlement, but there is a high probability that it is the case (Чакъров 2023, 19; Чакъров 2024b, 56 – 57, 92 – 93, обр. 42).

Another settlement site in the very close vicinity of Pavlikeni is the one at the Beli Bryag area, situated to the northeast of the town (**fig. 1.4**). The site has been interpreted mainly as a *villa* (Султов 1977b, 20, бел. 11; Църов 2005a, 183; Владкова 2011, 9, 18; Poulter 2019, 734 – 740; Boyd 2019, 812 – 815), but its size of *c.* 25 ha puts it in the group of medium-sized settlement sites in the territory of *Nicopolis ad Istrum* (Чакъров 2023, 22) and thus a *vicus* interpretation is not impossible. There is data on ceramic production at the site (Султов 1977b, 20; Владкова 2011, 9; Харизанов 2019, 35). It probably had also a relation to sandstone quarrying (Чакъров 2023, 22). The mound necropolis, situated to the northwest of the Beli Bryag area (**fig. 1.9**), the *tumuli* (**fig. 1.10**) and the column in the area of

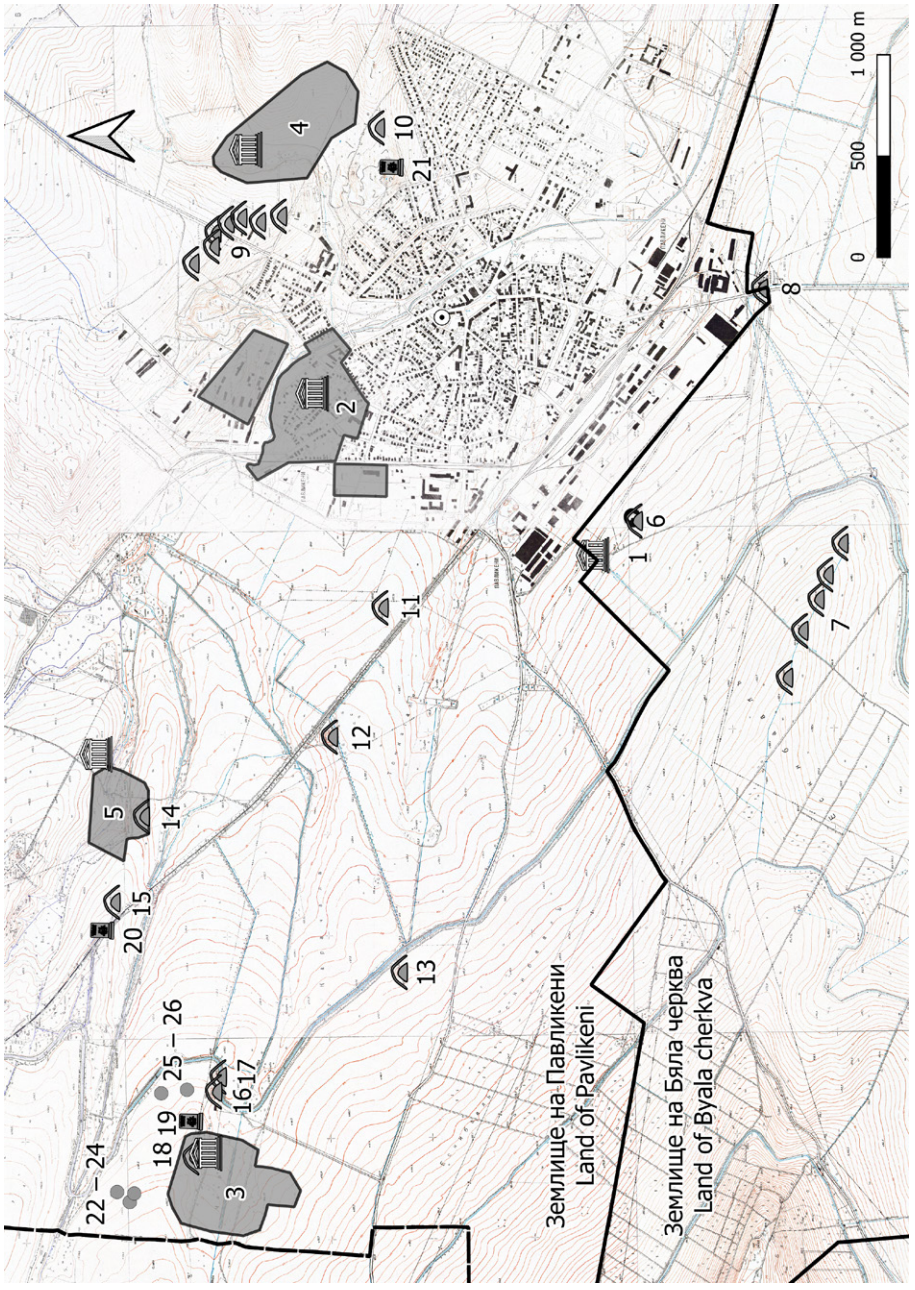

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Land of Pavlikeni
Землище на Бяла черква
Land of Byala cherkva

Fig. 1. Map with settlement sites, *tumuli*, graves and sites with undefined function in the vicinity of Pavlikeni. 1. The Eski baala settlement site (AMB No 10010216). 2. The ancient settlement in the northwestern part of the town of Pavlikeni (AMB No 10002868). 3. The manufacturing and *villa* site at Varbovski livadi area (AMB No 0700287). 4. The settlement site at Beli bryag area (AMB No 0700284). 5. The settlement site at Lako dere/Mashatlaka area (AMB No 0700286). 6. The burial mound at the Eski baala area near the town of Byala cherkva (AMB No 10010217). 7. The tumular necropolis at the Eski baala area near the town of Byala cherkva (AMB No 0700459). 8. Burial mound at the Power Station of "Energo Pro Varna" EAD in the area of the town of Byala cherkva (AMB No 10010344). 9. Tumular necropolis at Beli bryag/Polyanata area and in the Bulgartsvet farm in the town of Pavlikeni (AMB No 0700272). 10. Burial mound at Tashlatsite area in the town of Pavlikeni (AMB No 0700285). 11. Burial mound at Nad grada area (AMB No 0700282). 12. Burial mound at the Karachala area (AMB No 0700289). 13. Burial mound at the Eski baala area (AMB No 0700281). 14. Burial mound at Lako dere/Mashatlaka area (AMB No 0700287). 15. Burial mound at Lako dere area (AMB No 0700280). 16. Burial mound at the Varbovski livadi area (AMB No 10007336). 17. Burial mound at the Varbovski livadi area (AMB No 10007335). 18. Burial mound at the Varbovski livadi area (AMB No 10007337). 19. Grave and a funerary *stela* at the Varbovski livadi area (AMB No 10007338. 20. Cist grave on the Sofia – Varna rail road (AMB No 0700277). 21. Column in front of the "Bora" Park-Hotel in the town of Pavlikeni (AMB No 10007417). 22 – 26. Sites with unspecified functions at the Varbovski livadi area (AMB No 10007330 – 10007334).

Обр. 1. Карта със селища, могили, гробове и обекти с неопределена функция в близост до гр. Павликени. 1. Селището в м. Ески баалъ (АКБ № 10010216). 2. Античното селище в северозападната част на гр. Павликени (АКБ № 10002868). 3. Производственият център и вила в м. Върбовски ливади край гр. Павликени (АКБ № 0700287). 4. Селището в м. Бели бряг край гр. Павликени (АКБ № 0700284).5. Селището в м. Лако дере/Машатлъка край гр. Павликени (АКБ № 0700286). 6. Могила в м. Ески баалъ край гр. Бяла черква (АКБ № 10010217). 7. Могилен некропол в м. Ески баалъ край гр. Бяла черква (АКБ № 0700459). 8. Могила в двора на подстанцията на „Енерго-про Варна" ЕАД в землището на гр. Бяла черква (АКБ № 10010344). 9. Могилен некропол в м. Бели бряг/Поляната и в двора на „Булгарцвет" в гр. Павликени (АКБ № 0700272); 10. Надгробна могила в м. Ташлъците при гр. Павликени (АКБ № 0700285). 11. Могила в м. Над града (АКБ № 0700282). 12. Могила в м. Карачала (АКБ № 0700289). 13. Могила в м. Ески баала край гр. Павликени (АКБ № 0700281). 14. Могила в м. Лако дере/Машатлъка край гр. Павликени (АКБ № 0700287). 15. Могила в м. Лако дере край гр. Павликени (АКБ № 0700280). 16. Могила в м. Върбовски ливади край гр. Павликени (АКБ № 10007336). 17. Могила в м. Върбовски ливади край гр. Павликени (АКБ № 10007335). 18. Могила в м. Върбовски ливади край гр. Павликени (АКБ № 10007337). 19. Гроб и надгробна плоча в м. Върбовски ливади край гр. Павликени (АКБ № 10007338). 20. Цистов гроб при жп линията София – Варна край гр. Павликени (АКБ № 0700277). 21. Колона пред парк-хотел „Бора" в гр. Павликени (АКБ № 10007417). 22 – 26. Обекти с неопределена функция в м. Върбовски ливади край гр. Павликени (АКБ № 10007330 – 10007334).

the "Bora" restaurant (**fig. 1.21**) to the southwest are probably part of the cemeteries of the Beli bryag site (Чакъров 2023, 22).

Not far from Pavlikeni is situated the small settlement site at Eski Baala area (Чакъров 2024b, 35 – 93, 366 – 369) (**fig. 1.1**). It can be defined as a *villa* with its size of 6 – 9 ha, the discovered funerary statues and remains of a mausoleum, as well as the inscription for a military officer from the "century of Decius" (Чакъров 2024b, 56 – 57). The preliminary dating of the site is from the third quarter of the 2nd century to the middle of the 3rd century (Чакъров 2024b, 57).

Fourth century habitation is also evident in the area of Pavlikeni. Along the route of the Sofia – Varna railway line, about 3.5 km northwest of Pavlikeni, a cist grave was excavated, made of reused limestone elements from a tomb from the 2nd – 3rd century (Цочев 1998, 114 – 115; Беливанова 1998, 120 – 122, 125, обр. 7; Църов 2005b, 106 – 116) (**fig. 1.20**). The finds: a ceramic jug, a glass cup, a bronze crossbow fibula, a gold earring with glass inlay, a necklace of 41 glass beads and six bronze coins, minted from the reign of Emperor Diocletian (284 – 305) to the time of Emperor Maximinus II Daza (310 – 313), date the grave later than the first decade of the 4th century. The grave is situated between the Varbovski livadi site and the Lako dere site, about 1.2 km from the first and *ca.* 0.875 to the latter. This infers that there is probably a still unregistered contemporaneous 4th century settlement site in the area of the burial place.

ROMAN AND LATE ROMAN COIN HOARDS FROM THE AREA OF PAVLIKENI

Two Roman and late Roman coin hoards have been discovered in the Pavlikeni area so far, as well as two more (Теодосиев 2017, 142 – 144), whose character as coin hoards and existence in general require further discussion. The earliest and most impressive is the Pavlikeni 1976 *denarii* coin hoard from the Varbovski livadi ceramic production site (**fig. 1.3**). It is well published and is one of the few discovered during archeological excavations (Цочев 1998, 3, 5 – 108). Unfortunately, in 2006 it was almost entirely stolen from the Regional Museum of History in Veliko Tarnovo (Теодосиев 2017, 143). The coin hoard still needs further analysis of its context and character. First of all, the hoard was not excavated in 1977 (Paunov, Prokopov 2002, 58, No 92; Теодосиев 2017, 143), as is stated in some publications, but on 15.07.1976 (Илариoнов 1976, 1; Султов 1977a, 82 – 83). The hoard was found in a ceramic pot (Sultov 1985, 24, 31, note 28, Table XXXIX.1, Table L.2; Kabakčeva, Sultova, Vladkova 1988, 26 – 27, No 147; Ivanov 2019, 20; Ivanov 2022, 66, 70, 196 – 197, No 193)[2], covered by a coarse Dacian cup made on a potter's wheel, with a

[2] The pot is kept in the Antiquity Fund of the Veliko Tarnovo Regional Museum of History, inv. No 1797 A/TOM.

missing horizontal handle (Sultov 1985, 24, 31, note 28, 88, Table XLV.6; Kabakčeva, Sultova, Vladkova 1988, 46, No 296)[3]. The pot was situated in the southwest corner of the *villa* (Султов 1977a, 83), or in the southwest corner of building E (Владкова 2011, 34 – 35)[4].

The hoarding must have been a long-lasting process. There are a significantly larger number of coins minted during the reigns of the emperors Vespasian (69 – 79) and Domitian (81 – 96), 238 and 227 respectively, but the coins from the reign of Emperor Nerva (96 – 98) are 83. The beginning of the hoarding can be attributed to the period with the most numerous issues – those from the time of the emperors Trajan (98 – 117) with 686 coins, Hadrian (117 – 138) with 578 coins and Antoninus Pius (138 – 161) with the largest number of 742 coins[5]. The latest coins from the Pavlikeni 1976 hoard are four *denarii* – two of Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161 – 180) (Цочев 1998, 92, № 733 – 734) and two of Lucius Verus (161 – 169) (Цочев 1998, 97, № 773 – 774), minted in 166/167 AD (Paunov, Prokopov 2002, 58, No 92; Върбанов 2008, 384; Теодосиев 2017, 143). The date of the minting of the coins is determined by the 21st year of the emperor's tribunician power and the 7th year of the co-emperor's tribunician power, both in the period December 166 – December 167 (RIC III, p. 226, p. 259). Most scholars agree that the hoard was buried due to the invasion of the *Costoboci* (Sultov 1985, 24; Владкова 1994, 118 – 125; Цочев 1998, 107; Владкова 2011, 47; Ivanov 2019, 26; Иванов 2024, 4, 18, 27 – 28, 35. M. Ivanov links the hoard to the invasion in 170 AD (Иванов 2024, 18). According to V. Varbanov, this was the invasion in 171 AD (Varbanov 2007, 156, 162 – 166; Върбанов 2008, 384, 386 – 387; Върбанов 2017, 19 – 24).

The next coin hoard from the area of Pavlikeni comes from a cist grave from the 4th century (**Fig. 1.20**). The exact context of the bronze issues from this burial structure on the Sofia – Varna railway line is unknown (Църов 2005b, 106). Their number (6) suggests that they could be a hoard (Теодосиев 2017, 144). It is not sure whether the coins were in a purse. Some of them could be Charon's obol, others – part of the deceased's personal belongings, *etc*. The coins are as follows: one of Emperor Dioceletian (284 – 305), minted in 298 – 299 AD; four of Emperor Galerius Maximinus

[3] B. Sultov mentions that the pot was covered by the conical bowl on Table XIV.6 in his posthumously published dissertation (Sultov 1985, 24, 31, note 28). However, on the referenced by B. Sultov table is shown a reconstruction process of the fast wheel ceramic production. Most probably the right table is XLV.6, because in the field inventory book for the site (kept in Pavlikeni History Museum) under field inventory No 1032 is mentioned "Clay cup – grayish-black ceramics (the coins)" and in the publication the cup is defined as conical (Sultov 1985, 24, 31, note 28). The cup is kept in the Antiquity Fund of the Veliko Tarnovo Regional Museum of History, inv. No 2014 A/TOM.

[4] It is not sure in which part of building E was found the coin hoard, because B. Sultov mentions "in the southwestern corner of the architectural complex" (Султов 1977a, 83) *i.e.* the *villa* complex at all.

[5] Statistics in: Цочев 1998, 100.

(305 – 311), minted in 302 – 303 AD, 305 – 311, 308 – 311 and 311; one of Emperor Maximinus II Daza (308 – 313), minted in 310 AD (Русев 2019, 433 – 435). From the coin identification is evident that the latest one is not of Emperor Maximinus II (Теодосиев 2017, 144), but an issue of Emperor Galerius Maximinus from 311 (Русев 2019, 434 – 435, № 24.6.5). The question of whether it is a hoard, or if it is – what its exact composition is, remains unclear.

The latest coin hoard from the Pavlikeni region is the Pavlikeni 1969 hoard (Теодосиев 2017, 143). Four hundred copper coins were found in a ceramic pot during dragging an irrigation canal in 1969 (Gerasimov 1979, 138). The hoard consists of coins of the following emperors: Valentinian (364 – 375), Constans (333 – 350) and Valens (364 – 378) (Gerasimov 1979, 138; Теодосиев 2017, 143). The context of the hoard and its precise dating are obscure due to the uncertainty of its actual place of storage[6].

There is also a probable coin hoard of *denarii et antoniniani* from the mid-3rd century from the Pavlikeni region, listed as Pavlikeni-1977a by N. Teodosiev (Теодосиев 2017, 144). It was registered by the author based on personal information from local people. This verbal nature of the probable hoard makes its existence uncertain.

THE ANCIENT SETTLEMENT IN THE NORTHWESTERN PART OF PAVLIKENI[7]

The settlement – characteristics

The site, known in the archaeological literature as the ancient settlement in the northwestern part of Pavlikeni, is situated 736 m northwest from the church of Pavlikeni (Султов 1962, 7 – 20; Султов 1977 17 – 19, 45, 54; Владкова 2011, 8, 10, 18; Chakarov 2017, 49 – 77; Чакъров 2023, 19) (**fig. 1.2**). It is located on the two sloping banks of a small river called Lako dere[8] (**fig. 3**). Residential and manufacturing architectural complexes, as well as kilns for the production of ceramics, have been excavated (Султов 1962, 7 – 20; Султов 1977b, 17 – 19, 45, 54; Владкова 2011, 8, 10, 18; Chakarov 2017, 49 – 77; Чакъров 2023, 19 – 20). The site had at least two mixed (tumular and flat) necropolises – one to the northwest, in the area of the former Cooperative Farm, and another to the west – in the area of the former Veterinary Clinic (Чакъров 2023, 19 – 63, 241 – 247). The funerary *stela* with a Latin inscription (ILBulg 422) of *Sippia Paezusa*,

[6] In the bulletin of T. Gerasimov is mentioned that the coin hoard is kept at the Pavlikeni History Museum, as M. Yovchev told him (Gerasimov 1979, 138). The person was probably Milcho Yovkov, who is a local historian, from the village of Dimcha, Municipality of Pavlikeni. The museum was found in 1978 and the hoard was found in 1969, and thus it is impossible that the hoard was stored there. The information could be relevant for 1979, when the museum already functioned, but there is no such a hoard, kept there (based on the personal observations of the author as a former employee of the museum).

[7] The main bibliography for the site is cited in: Чакъров 2023, 38 – 39, бел. 5.

[8] For the river course and tributaries: Чакъров 2023, 39, бел. 6.

erected by her husband *Marcus Antonius Marcellus*, probably originates from the northern necropolis (Чакъров 2023, 23). It can also be assumed that the altar dedicated to Jupiter *Sabadius* and Mercury (ILBulg 423), is also from the same settlement (Чакъров 2023, 20, 38, бел. 1).

The exact category and function of the site is not completely clear. Based on the dedication to Jupiter and Juno *Regina* (ILBulg 425), made by the *beneficiarius consularis* (from *Legio I Italica*?) *Aurelis Aeternalis*, V. Avramov and P. Vladkova suggest that the site is a road station (Аврамов 1929, 59; Владкова 2011, 7 – 10). According to V. Avramov, the probable road station is located at the crossroad between the *Novae* and *Augusta Traiana* routes through the Shipka Pass and *Nicopolis ad Istrum – Melta* (Аврамов 1929, 58 – 59). Since the inscription ILBulg 425 is from the Lako dere area and is dedicatory nature, this hypothesis needs further proof. The Ancient settlement in the northwestern part of Pavlikeni, with its 30 ha area, is a medium-size settlement in the rural territory of *Nicopolis ad Istrum*. It is probably a *vicus* with market-oriented ceramic production, with certain commercial characteristics, as the five marble *exagia* and the cult monuments dedicated to Mercury suggest (Чакъров 2023, 19 – 20, 30 – 31)[9].

The average distance between known settlement sites in the area of Pavlikeni is 2.75 km[10]. The ancient settlement in the northwestern part of Pavlikeni has the smallest average distance of 2.15 km compared to the other four known ones. This probably means that it has a central position in the local area. A possible explanation could be its hypothetical identification as a *vicus* or a roadside station, as is suggested by V. Avramov and P. Vladkova.

COIN HOARDS FROM THE SETTLEMENT

A scholarly invented coin hoard from the ancient settlement in the northwestern part of Pavlikeni is also mentioned in publications as Pavlikeni-1959 (Теодосиев 2017, 142). The "hoard" in question consists of 40 bronze coins and 3 *denarii* (Теодосиев 2017, 142). The coins come from excavations of B. Sultov in 1959 at 3, Vasil Nedkov Street in the town (Султов 1962, 15 – 16). The coins were found by the owners of the plot, when they made a deep ploughing of their garden, revealing the stone foundations of a wall more than 30 m long, two transverse walls, the remains of a collapsed tiled roof and an eight-metre deep well at the southern end of the building (Султов 1962, 7 – 8). The owners have made a pile of soil and plowed up remains and finds from the Roman era (Султов 1962, 8). After that,

[9] The area of the site is enlarged in western direction since the latest excavations of the author in 2024.

[10] Five settlement sites are used in this statistic-: Varbovski livadi, Lako dere, Eski Baala, Beli Bryag and the ancient settlement in the northwestern part of Pavlikeni. The average distance from Varbovski livadi to the other four is 3.6 km; from Lako dere is 2.4; from Eski aala 2.6; from Beli ryag 3 km.

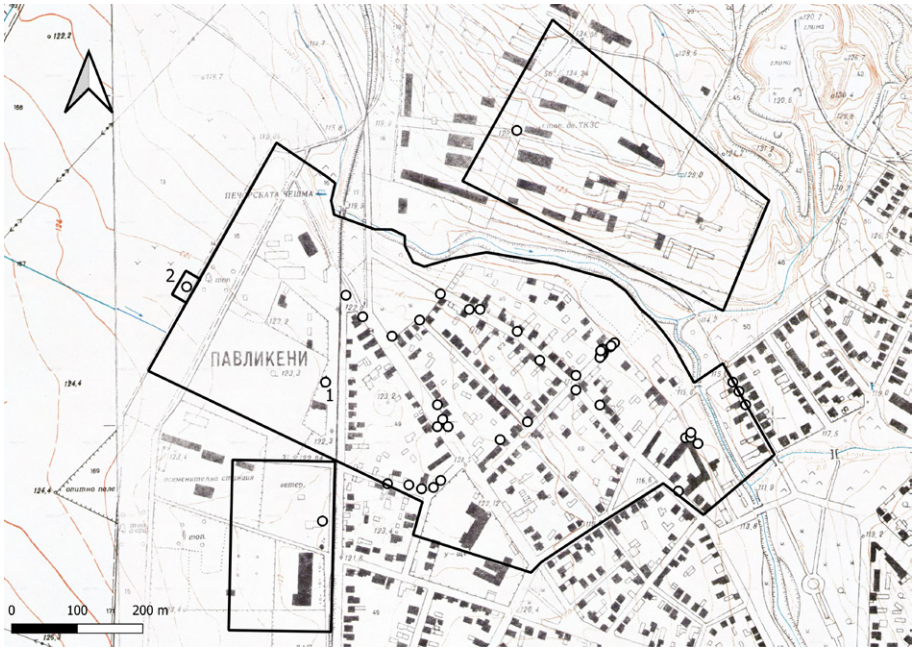


Fig. 2. The ancient settlement in the northwestern part of Pavlikeni – settlement site and necropolises areas. Circles – excavated areas or places with finds. 1 – the excavated in 2024 part of a building with the coin hoard; 2 – the excavated in 2024 part of a necropolis.

Обр. 2. Античното селище в северозападната част на гр. Павликени – площ на селището и некрополите. Окръжности – проучвани участъци или места с находки. 1 – изследваната през 2024 г. част от сграда; 2 – изследваната през 2024 г. част от некропол.

excavations were carried out by B. Sultov. He also collected the finds from the ploughing. The author published the results in an article, mentioning from where certain finds originate (Султов 1962, 7 – 16). He explicitly says that the coins were found during the deep ploughing and the piling of the mixed destructions by the owners (Султов 1962, 15 – 16). Some of the coins could have been from a hoard, but a more reasonable explanation is that they originate from the excavation area within this settlement at all, where a large architectural complex was registered. The inventing of the "hoard" was made by H. Haritonov in his publication on coin finds and hoards from Pavlikeni. He divides the coins into two "hoards" and gives a lot of other incorrect information about their context (Харитонов 1998, 31, № 2 – 3)[11]. Later, N. Teodosiev combined the coins in the same manner as one "hoard",

[11] In the inventory book of the Numismatic Fund of Veliko Tarnovo Regional Museum of History are listed 44 coins (inv. No 1224 – 1233 M/TOM, 1255 – 1265 M/TOM). The two series were listed on different dates and probably this made H. Haritonov to divide them into two hoards.

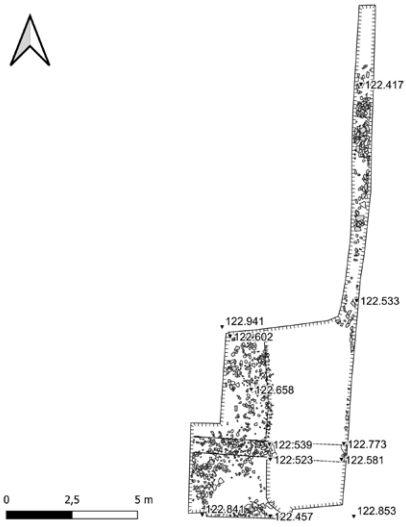


Fig. 3. Plan of the excavated part of a building with the destructions *in situ*.
Обр. 3. План на изследваната част от сградата с деструкциите *in situ*.

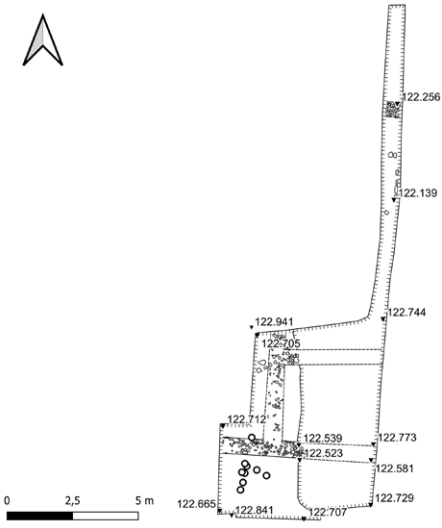


Fig. 4. Plan of the excavated part of a building with the ancient ground level. Circles – the coins from the hoard.
Обр. 4. План на изследваната част от сградата с античното ходово ниво. Окръжности – монетите от находката.

based probably again on the modern address of finding (Теодосиев 2017, 143), without taking into account that the ploughing and the excavation area was wide enough to have many single coins.

The earliest single coins from the excavations of B. Sultov from the site were minted during the reign of Emperor Antoninus Pius (138 – 161). However, most of the coins are from the Severan dynasty (193 – 235) (Султов 1962, 15). The same situation is valid for the later excavations of the present author. Most of the coins are provincial issues of local mints such as *Nicopolis ad Istrum*, *Marcianopolis*, *Odessos*, *Philippopolis*, *Serdica*, *Pautalia*, *Hadrianopolis*, as well as of Asia Minor cities and the mint of Rome (Султов 1962, 15 – 16). The latest coin from the archaeological context from the site is a bronze issue of Emperor Gordian III (238 – 244), minted in *Hadrianopolis* (Султов 1962, 15).

A coin hoard from the 4th century has been reported from the area of the ancient settlement in the northwestern part of Pavlikeni. It should be composed of five bronze issues of emperor Valens (364 – 378) with the following description given by the publisher H. Haritonov: bust of the emperor to the right and legend DN VALENS PF AVG on the obverse and VOT V in a wreath on the reverse, probably minted in Rome[12]. It was found

[12] The mint is defined as Rome in the inventory book.

in 1960 during digging activities in the area of the "Sortovi semena" State Industrial Enterprise (Харитонов 1998, 32)[13]. H. Haritonov writes that it is a purse hoard (Харитонов 1998, 32), but there is no such evidence in the inventory book. The author made a mistake, because "5" in the inventory book is not the number of the coins, but the modern price value in the assessment protocol, so the "coin hoard" is actually a single silver, not bronze coin[14]. Unfortunately, it is stolen from the museum in 2006 and no further information could be acquired. However, the coin with this description must be a silver coin from the emperor's Constantinople mint.

The "Sortovi semena" State Industrial Enterprise is in the area of the western necropolis of the ancient settlement in the northwestern part of Pavlikeni, where a Roman iron sword with a probable grave context was found in the same year (Иванов 2013, 129 – 137; Чакъров 2023, 21, 39, бел. 10, 40, бел. 15). Not far from there are situated 2nd – 3rd century buildings from the western limits of the site[15] (**fig. 2.1**). The 4th century coin is the latest one from the site so far, unfortunately without corresponding structures.

DATE OF THE SETTLEMENT

The earliest coins from the site are the issues of Emperor Antoninus Pius (138 – 161) and the latest one of Emperor Gordian III (238 – 244), but the predominant mints are from the Severan dynasty (198 – 235), as was already mentioned above. Most likely, the site was founded in the last decades of the 2nd century – the late Antonine (138 – 192) period or during the reign of Emperor Septimius Severus (193 – 211) (Chakarov 2017, 52; Чакъров 2023, 19 – 20, 30 – 31). The beginning of the ceramic production at the site is dated to this period (Chakarov 2017, 52; Иванов 2021, 107 – 108; Ivanov 2022, 106 – 107).

According to V. Varbanov, the ancient settlement in the northwestern part of Pavlikeni ceased to exist due to a barbarian invasion during the reign of Emperor Philip the Arab (244 – 249) in 245 or 248 AD (Върбанов 2017, 32 – 33). The excavations so far have not shown evidences of destruction by fire. They give information more likely for the abandonment of the site (Чакъров 2023, 28 – 29). The context of the bronze coin from the reign of Emperor Valens (364 – 378) from the area of the "Sortovi semena" State Industrial Enterprise raises the question of whether the life at the site was resumed after its abandonment in the middle of the 3rd century.

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[13] Veliko Tarnovo Regional Museum of History, Numismatics Fund, inv. No 1309 M/TOM.

[14] There is no bronze mint of Emperor Valens with this description. In the inventory book the coin is listed as a silver one.

[15] Excavations of the author in 2024, discussed below.

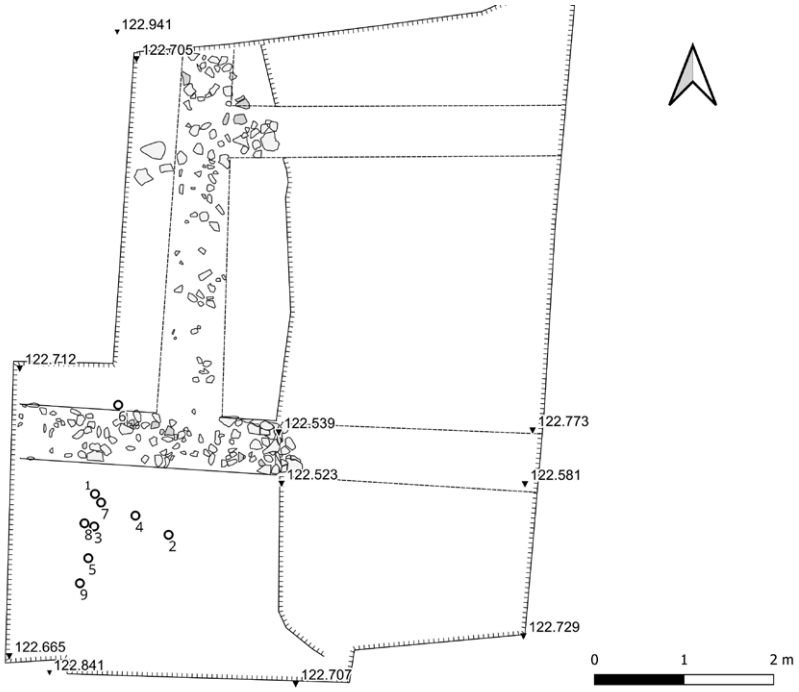


Fig. 5. A detail of the plan of the excavated part of a building with the ancient ground level. Circles – the coins from the hoard (catalogue numbers).
Обр. 5. Детайл на плана на изследваната част от сградата с античното ходово ниво. Окръжности – монетите от находката (каталожни номера).



Fig. 6. Find-spots of coins 2 – 7, 9 from the hoard (catalogue numbers).
Обр. 6. Местата на откриване на монети 2 – 7, 9 от находката (каталожни номера).



Fig. 7. Find-spots of coins 2 – 7, 9 from the hoard – detail (catalogue numbers).
Обр. 7. Детайл на местата на откриване на монети 2 – 7, 9 от находката (каталожни номера).



Fig. 8. Find-spots of coins 1 and 8 from the hoard (catalogue numbers).
Образ 8. Местата на откриване на монети 1 и 8 от находката (каталожни номера).

THE RECENTLY DISCOVERED *DENARII* COIN HOARD FROM PAVLIKENI

In the late autumn of 2024 part of a building from the ancient settlement in the northwestern part of Pavlikeni was excavated (**fig. 2.1**). It was studied by the author during a rescue archaeological campaign caused by a project for the connection of a solar power plant to the national electricity system. This is the westernmost architectural complex of the site, which has expanded the area of the site in a western direction. Although the building was partially destroyed right before the excavations by the digging activities, a relatively large part of it was excavated, but in a very limited excavation area. Some 257 m to the northwest, four inhumation graves from the early 3rd century were excavated, three of which contained valuable grave goods (**fig. 2.2**). The remains of the building lie 205 m north of the graves at the former Veterinary Clinic.

Four walls and the destructions of a collapsed roof from the building were examined (**fig. 3**). The walls are low sandstone foundations bonded with clay. They had to carry a superstructure in *opus craticium* (a wattle and daub technique) or were built by mud bricks. Three of the walls are in an east-west direction and one (visible as a robber trench) is in a south-north direction (**fig. 4**). The southernmost and northernmost walls probably mark the length of the building along the north-south axis – 13.5 m. The building continues to the west (in the area of the already constructed solar power plant), to the north (in the neighbouring private plot) and to the east (in the area parallel to Dondukov Street), *i.e.* its western and eastern limits are unknown. Between the walls, a compact layer of collapsed roof destructions was recorded, consisting mainly of *tegulae et imbrices* and a smaller amount of sandstones (**fig. 3**). In the area between the southern and the next parallel wall, a floor level was recorded, consisting of fragmented ceramics, burnt pieces of daubs, a fragment of a rotary quern and other rubbish materials.

There are no traces of destruction by fire. The building was most probably abandoned and at a later period its walls were robbed for stone material. Its exact function has not been determined due to the limited area of the excavations. It is certainly a large building with different premises. A lot of fragments of ceramic vessels were found under the collapsed roof destructions. Two iron tools were also found there – an iron wedge (field inv. No 13) and a ring from a ploughshare (field inv. No 14). The rest of the finds from the building are nine silver *denarii*, which form a small coin hoard – the subject of the present article (**Plate I**)[16].

The coin hoard consists of nine well preserved *denarii* (VF or XF grade). The earliest one is of Empress Faustina the Younger (161 – 175),

[16] They are kept in the Numismatic fund of the Regional Museum of History in Veliko Tarnovo, inv. Nos: 4929 – 4937 M/TOM.

minted in 161 – 164 AD (**cat. No 2; Plate I.2**). The next one is of Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161 – 180), minted in 166 – 167 AD (**cat. No 1; Plate I.1**). The remaining seven are from the early representatives of the Severan dynasty (193 – 235): an issue from 195 AD of Empress Julia Domna (193 – 211) (**cat. No 4; Plate I.4**); a coin from 200 AD of Emperor Septimius Severus (193 – 211) (**cat. No 3; Plate I.3**); a *denarius* of the beardless Caracalla (198 – 217) as *Caesar* from 196 – 198 AD (**cat. No 6; Plate I.6**); an issue of Empress Julia Domna (193 – 211) from 196 – 211 AD (**cat. No 5; Plate I.5**); an issue of the beardless Caracalla (198 – 217) from 207 AD (**cat. No 7; Plate I.7**); two *denarii* of the bearded Caracalla, one from 213 AD (**cat. No 8; Plate I.8**) and one from 214 AD (**cat. No 9; Plate I.9**).

The coin of Empress Faustina the Younger is more worn. Better preserved are the issues of Emperor Marcus Aurelius, Septimius Severus and Julia Domna. The least circulated coins belong to the coinage of Emperor Caracalla. The hoard has a *terminus post quem* for its deposition 214 AD. The coins may have been stored or hidden during the last years of the reign of Emperor Caracalla (198 – 217), or during his successors Macrinus (217), Diadumenian (217 – 218), or even later – during the reign of Emperor Elagabalus (218 – 222). These coins could be defined as a purse hoard (Abdy 2002, 9 – 10; Varbanov 2012, 291 – 296; Върбанов 2017b, 26 – 27, 29 – 32; Varbanov 2020, 514 – 515). They fit well into the criteria for daily spending money, which according to C. Găzdac are hoards with no more than 20 pieces (Găzdac 2012, 167). The hoard composition shows that the coin of Empress Faustina the Younger from 161 – 164 AD and that of Emperor Marcus Aurelius from 166 – 167 AD are in circulation in 214 AD or later, which means *c.* 50 years. The issues from the time of the Severan dynasty are closer to the time of deposition and are probably more relevant to the current coins in circulation.

The coin hoard was discovered scattered over a relatively small area (1 sq. m.) on both sides of the southernmost wall of the building (**fig. 4; fig. 5**). All of the coins were found under the collapsed roof destructions, eight of them south of the building (**cat. Nos 1 – 5, 7 – 9**), *i.e.* outside it, and one (**cat. No 6**) north of the wall – inside the building[17] (**fig. 5; fig. 6; fig. 7; fig. 8**). The nature of the context of the hoard suggests that it was in an organic purse or some other decomposable container. The dispersion of coins has no clear explanation. On the one hand, they could be lost by their owner, but in that case, they could be found in a more compact heap. Another explanation is that they were hidden or stored in the wattle and daub or mud brick wall and were later scattered by the decomposition of the wall, after

[17] Initially seven *denarii* were found (**cat. Nos. 2 – 7, 9**). Their close proximity to the western excavation limits caused the making of an extension of the trench to the west. In the area of the extension two more coins from the hoard were found (**cat. Nos. 1, 8**).

the building was abandoned[18]. An indication for that option is the fact that eight of the coins are outside of the building and one is inside it. The context of the hoard, the date of the latest coin (214 AD) and the absence of destructions by fire do not suggest that the hoard was a result of a barbarian invasion. Why its owner did not come to retrieve it back remains unclear.

CATALOGUE OF THE COINS FROM THE HOARD

1. ***Obverse:*** ANTONINVS AVG ARM PARTH MAX.
Dotted circle along the periphery. Laureate bearded bust of Marcus Aurelius to the right.
Reverse: TR P XXI IMP IIII COS III.
Dotted circle along the periphery. *Aequitas* standing left, holding scales in her stretched forward right arm and cornucopia in her left arm.
Axis: 1 o'clock; mint: Rome; date: 166 – 167 AD; type RIC III 171; diametre: 18/19 mm; thickness: 2 mm; weight: 3.31 g; inv. No 4930 M/TOM (**Plate I.1b)**.

2. ***Obverse:*** FAVSTINA AVGVSTA.
Dotted circle along the periphery. Bust of Faustina the Younger with tied hair on her back, facing right.
Reverse: DIANA LVCIF.
Dotted circle along the periphery. Diana *Lucifera* standing left, holding with her two hands long lighted torch to the left.
Axis: 11 o'clock; mint: Rome; date: 161 – 164 AD; type RIC III 674; diametre:17 – 18 mm; thickness: 2 mm; weight: 2.89 g; inv. No 4929 M/TOM (**Plate I.2**).

3. ***Obverse:*** SEVERVS AVG PART MAX.
Dotted circle along the periphery. Laureate bust of Septimius Severus to the right.
Reverse: P M TR P VIII [C]OS II P P.
Dotted circle along the periphery. Victory flying to the left, holding a garland in her two hands above a shield over an inclined to the right low column.
Axis: 1 o'clock; mint: Rome; date: 200 AD; type RIC IV 150; diametre: 19 – 21 mm; thickness: 2 mm; weight: 3.60 g; inv. No 4931 M/TOM (**Plate I.3**).

4. ***Obverse:*** IVLIA DO-MNA AVG.
Dotted circle along the periphery. Bust of Julia Domna to the right.
Reverse: V E S-T A.
Dotted circle along the periphery. Seated to the left veiled *Vesta* holding a *palladium* in her stretched forward right arm; holding a pointing upward and right sceptre in her left hand.
Axis: 6 o'clock; mint: Rome; date: 195 AD; type RIC IV 538; diametre: 18 – 19 mm; thickness: 2 mm; weight: 3.34 g; inv. No 4932 M/TOM (**Plate I.4**).

5. ***Obverse:*** IVLIA AVGVSTA.
Dotted circle along the periphery. Bust of Julia Domna to the right.
Reverse: PIETAS PVBLICA.
Dotted circle along the periphery. Veiled Pietas standing left with her raised two

[18] The idea for a purse in/on the wall emerged during a discussion between the author and Dr. Ivan Tsarov (archaeologists and long-time director of the Veliko Tarnovo Regional Museum of History).

arms above a burning altar.
Axis: 7 o'clock; mint: Rome; date: 196 – 211 AD; type RIC IV 574; diametre: 17/19 mm; thickness: 2 mm; weight: 2.92 g; inv. No 4933 M/TOM (**Plate I.5**).

6. ***Obverse:*** M AVR ANTON [CAES PONTIF].
Dotted circle along the periphery. Cuirassed bust of the beardless Caracalla with a cloak to the right.
Reverse: [MARTI] VLTORI.
Dotted circle along the periphery. Cuirassed Mars *Ultor* with a flowing cloak to the right, holding a trophy on his left shoulder with his left arm and bearing a pointing forward and upward spear with his right hand.
Axis: 11 o'clock; mint: Rome; date: 196 – 198 AD; type RIC IV 11; diametre: 16/18 mm; thickness: 2 m; weight: 2.61 g; inv. No 4934 M/TOM (**Plate I.6**).

7. ***Obverse:*** ANTONINVS PIVS AVG.
Dotted circle along the periphery. Laureate bearded bust of Caracalla to the right.
Reverse: PONTI-F TR P X COS II.
Dotted circle along the periphery. Mars with a flowing cloak to the right; holding a trophy on his left shoulder with his left arm and bearing a pointing forward and upward spear with his right hand.
Axis: 1 o'clock; mint: Rome; date: 207 AD; type RIC IV 88;
diametre:19 mm, thickness: 2 mm; weight: 3.07 g; inv. No 4935 M/TOM (**Plate I.7**).

8. ***Obverse:*** ANTONINVS PIVS AVG BRIT.
Dotted circle along the periphery. Laureate bearded bust of Caracalla to the right.
Reverse: P M TR P XVI C-OS IIII P P.
Dotted circle along the periphery. Standing *Libertas*, facing left, holding a *pileus* by its pointed end with her stretched forward right arm; holding a pointed upward and slightly to the right sceptre in her left hand.
Axis: 2 o'clock; mint: Rome; date: 213 AD; type RIC IV 209a; diametre: 18 mm; thickness: 2 mm; weight: 3.52 g; inv. No 4936 M/TOM (**Plate I.8**).

9. ***Obverse:*** [ANT]ONINVS PIVS AVG GERM.
Dotted circle along the periphery. Laureate bearded bust of Caracalla to the right.
Reverse: P M TR P XVII COS III P P.
Dotted circle along the periphery. The laureate emperor with a heavily folded toga walking left, holding with his left hand a pointing downward sceptre and with his right hand a pointing forward branch.
Axis: 12 o'clock; mint: Rome; date: 214 AD; type RIC IV 246; diametre: 18/20 mm; thickness: 2 mm; weight: 2.87 g; inv. No 4937 M/TOM (**Plate I.9**).

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НОВООТКРИТА НАХОДКА ОТ ДЕНАРИИ ОТ III ВЕК ОТ АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИ РАЗКОПКИ В ГР. ПАВЛИКЕНИ, СЕВЕРНА БЪЛГАРИЯ (АНТИЧНА ДОЛНА МИЗИЯ)

Калин ЧАКЪРОВ

РЕЗЮМЕ

През 2024 г. в гр. Павликени е открита находка от девет денарии. Тя произхожда от спасителни археологически разкопки на обект Антично селище в северозападната част на гр. Павликени, ръководени от автора на настоящата публикация. Монетите са открити на площ от около 1 м^2 под деструкциите от рухнал керемиден покрив на сграда със стени със зидана с камъни основа и наземна част от нетрайни материали. Осем от монетите са открити в пространството извън сградата, а една във вътрешността. Малкото количество денарии на толкова ограничена площ вероятно свидетелства за разпиляна кесия с джобни пари. Разликата в местоположението на осемте монети извън сградата и една в нейните очертания може да бъде тълкувано като свидетелство за укриване или съхраняване на находката в кесия, скрита в стената. Вероятно находката се разпръсва на такава площ вследствие на разпадането на стената след изоставянето на сградата. При проведените досега археологически разкопки на Античното селище в северозападната част на гр. Павликени не са установени следи от опожарявания, причинени от вражеско опустошение.

Досегашните данни за обитаването на селището свидетелстват, че то е основано към края на II в. и просъществува докъм средата на III в. Единичните монетни находки от обекта са интерпретирани в посока на това, че то е напуснато вероятно вследствие на вражеско нашествие, случило се през 245 или 248 г. Най-късната монета от находката е отсечена през 214 г. Хронологическата разлика по-скоро свидетелства, че нейното укриване не е свързано с някое от тези нашествия, а е породено от други причини, които не могат да бъдат установени.



Plate I. The coins from the hoard (catalogue numbers).
Табло I. Монетите от находката (каталожни номера).