

**Coin collections and coin hoards  
from Bulgaria**

**COIN FORGERIES AND REPLICAS  
2006  
Ilya Prokopov**



Sofia 2007

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*"Forewarned is forearmed!"*

## FOREWORD

In 2005 and 2006 I continued with my work on identifying, registering and publishing the counterfeit coins that I have had the chance to see. In my opinion, this work should go on notwithstanding all the difficulties connected with the detecting of the coins and with the access to the information about the workshops where they are being produced. In this booklet, I make a presentation of another one of the masters of replicas and copies. Given the fact that he used to manufacture ancient objects too, some replicas of objects, apart from his replicas of coins, have been included herein.

In some of the reviews of our previous books about the fakes, I have come across some useful recommendations for publishing the authentic coins along with the counterfeit ones, so that an instant comparison could be made.<sup>1</sup> I do accept and support this idea, however for its realization it will be necessary to obtain the permission of numerous publishers, as well as authors, to use similar illustrations. It would not be correct to scan photos from books or to copy them from the Internet without observing the copyrights. I promise I will surely consider the realization of this useful proposition as soon as possible, the obtaining of the consent of the copyright holders, however, should be mandatory.

In 2004 and the beginning of 2005 a multitude of coins appeared

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1. This proposition was made by Mr. Reid Goldsborough to whom I am very grateful for the excellent idea.

on the market and the legend that these belonged to a number of newly found coin treasures spread around. As the legend goes two of these pseudo-treasures consist of tetradrachms and one - of Roman Republican denarii. Such treasures have really been discovered but the coins themselves fell into the hands of certain dealers who afterwards engaged different studios to reproduce the coins into copies and counterfeits. Practically the original coins included in these new treasures are not still on offer on the market; it is only the fake ones that are being sold. This will go on until there are no opportunities left for selling the copies and the counterfeits.

The first "treasure" actually consisted of about a hundred tetradrachmas of Byzantium, Odessos, Messembria, Lampsacus, etc.<sup>2</sup> All coins in this "treasure" are casts of genuine coins, with the weight of the originals having been preserved. Some fakes are so perfect that one cannot distinguish them from the originals by their appearance. As far as the technology of production is concerned two types of fakes can be differentiated. The coins of the first type are made of a white metal alloy with a low melting point. After the cast is made (under pressure, gravitationally or in vacuum) the coins undergo a manual processing that includes removing any tiny sprues, filling up of caverns and bubbles, and above all processing of the edge in order to efface any traces of the channels through which the metal had accessed the mould. The processing includes cutting, filing, polishing and disguising. The following manner of disguising has been recently detected. Multiple blows with a sharp object that resembles a knife are being struck along the edge under different angles. The traces of the cutting form a strange texture resembling a grid or a web. It does disguise the edge quite well; however, it should ring a bell that the coin might be a fake. One of the simplest methods to check such a coin is, apart from the observation, to listen to the sound of the metal. If you place the coin on a small surface, or if you hold it vertically by its very edge and give it a slight knock with another metal object, you will instantly note that the fake coin made of other metal or alloy makes quite a different sound. With the abovementioned tetradrachms

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2. Regarding the composition of this treasure, I consulted my colleague Constantin Marinescu from New York and I am mostly grateful for his help.



of Lysimachos and Byzantium from the so called "Lysimachi type", the sound is hollow and tuneless.

The second group of fake tetradrachms are silver cut. At first glance, they resemble casts, which however is due to the specifics of the cast of the core before the cutting was made. The coins have blebs and jogs of quite a big size, some of which have remained after the pressing or cutting. The weight of the original coins has been preserved. Those coins manufactured following the ancient technology have a fine workmanship. Firstly, the coin cores were cast and then, after being heated, they were cut into coins. Some coins were pressed using the same pairs of dies; however, they are of a significantly lower quality, especially as far as the edge is concerned. The pressing technology always leaves tiny fresh cracks with very sharp ends on the edge. Under close observation, the edge of the fake coin is easily discerned from the original one. Cutting or pressing the coins also affects the nature of the production. For example, some studios that use the classical production technology of manual cutting choose smaller nominals because the process of hammer striking is hard enough. In the manufacture of big nominals different kinds of hydraulic, eccentric and screw presses or even big hydraulic jacks are used. Typical of these methods of production is that the ready core is processed without being heated up. Given the big power of the presses, it is not necessary to use heating for facilitating the process of metal deformation. This is technically hard to perform because it is quite dangerous and difficult to fix with precision a red-hot piece of metal under the powerful press. In the case of manual cutting, it is quite different - synchronizing the actions of two or three persons can easily be achieved after some training.

The coin dies used for cutting counterfeits are being additionally utilized for making imprints.

In addition, later when the steel dies get worn out these help for the production of coin casts. As a whole, they look quite well, still, hardly visible though, there are some admixtures in the alloy, causing certain changes in the colour nuances of the metal. However, this can

be traced only with coins that have not been processed additionally after the casting. When the coins are processed to look older and get a patina, it is very difficult to identify them. Close examination of the edge is the easiest method.

When the coins are not heated well enough, as it should be following the classical technology of cutting, some cracks with slightly different characteristics can be formed as well. The reason is that the periphery cools much faster than the centre of the core. The core relief becomes perfect under given temperature conditions, at the same time however the periphery, i.e. the edge, has already got cold. Due to the pressure exerted on the core the metal that has cooled up gets cracked and covered with multiple tiny fissures. Some traces always remain when there is additional processing for making the edge look older and for eliminating these fissures.

The third method of making counterfeits that is extremely jeopardizing and was not actively practiced in the past is the one using galvanoplasty. In one of our earlier booklets, we stated that this method was more or less neglected. However, in the recent year we were able to find out that it was not forgotten at all, on the contrary, it has been highly elaborated. Copies and fakes, made by this method, are perfectly similar to the originals. They are far more precise and difficult to discern compared with all other fakes. Sometimes a destructive method of investigation is needed in order to identify the counterfeit. For the time being, I am not prepared enough to offer some more useful information on this matter.

Another group of counterfeit coins consist of several thousand Roman Republican denarii that have been copied from three newly found coin treasures. These include almost all Republican denarii that were in circulation on the Balkan Peninsula as late as the time of Octavian August. A number of lots each containing a couple of dozens of these counterfeits are being offered to clients even at the national numismatic conventions. As a result of a blunder of some dishonest greedy dealers I had the opportunity to inspect a lot

consisting of two thousand denarii. The coins have been offered to clients as a newly discovered big collective find. Unfortunately, I was not able to take photos and to inspect in detail the fakes. Still, they can be characterised as follows: they are casts of a soft metal or alloy; the casts are of an extremely high quality, the edges are almost perfect; their patina is also very good; the traces of wear, the control marks and the money changers' prints are excellently imitated in these fakes, and even the denarii serati can hardly be discerned from the originals. These fakes can be identified with the help of two quick tests. Firstly, you should test the sound of the metal. You could simply drop the coins on a table or a desk, the same way you would throw a contemporary coin. With genuine coins, you get a clearly ringing sound, while in the case of fakes the sound is muffled and non-melodious. The second test concerns the metal softness. There will be a trace left if you give the edge a harder press. I mean a real press, as it would not affect or damage a genuine coin at all because silver has a higher degree of solidity. So, do not be afraid to make the test. Apart from these two quick methods of testing, you can also inspect the patina very carefully under high magnification. You will also find that when magnified, the texture of the edge is much more different from the original one. The best thing you can do is to make the comparison immediately on spot, but if you do not have a genuine Republican denarius at your disposal, mind the fact that the patina is somewhat incompact and not as evenly distributed as with the authentic coins. The hollows located closely to the high-relief points are often glued on with a thicker patina of brownish-red or black-brownish colour. Apart from the patina, in the lower parts of the relief you can trace some silicate particles, humus, etc., unnaturally intermingled. What is characteristic of these fakes is that the metal or the alloy, they were cast from, does not allow the chemical production of a patina, therefore the latter is being additionally pasted on.

Coin striking or pressing reflects the nature of the production. For example, some workshops which use the classic production technology with manual striking, aim to smaller denominations, because the process of striking with hammer is quite heavy.

For producing large scale coins different hydraulic presses, eccentric presses, screw presses or even big hydraulic jacks are used. These production methods are usually applied by processing the ready core without heating. Because of the powerful presses it is not necessary to facilitate the process of metal deformation by heating. Besides, it is too dangerous and inconvenient to fix precisely a heated piece of metal under the powerful press. It is quite different when talking about the manual striking where synchronization between two or three people is absolutely possible after several trainings.

Before we proceed to the catalogue, I would like to personally thank my colleagues Svetoslava Filipova and Eugeni Paunov for their kind assistance in my work on the book.

## ABBREVIATIONS

### A

AE - *Aes*, copper

AR - *Argentum*, silver

AV - *Aurum*, gold

adv. - advancing

### C

cuir. - cuirassed

### D

dr. - draped

### E

El. - electron

ex. - exergue

### G

g - grams

### H

h - hour

### L

l.- left

laur. - laureate

### M

mm - milimeters

### N

No. - number

### O

Obv. - obverse

### P

p. - page

### R

r. - right

Rev. - reverse

### S

stg. - standing

# CATALOGUE

## GREEK COINS

### AKRAGAS, SICILY

1. AE Hemilitron, 27/26 mm; 10,442 g; 12h

Obv. ΑΚΡΑΓΑ ΝΤΙ ΝΩΝ. Eagle r., its head thrown back, wings spread, holding tunny-fish in its talons.

Rev. Crab, holding eel in l. claw; beneath, conch-shell and cuttlefish; six pellets around.



### MESSANA, SICILY

2. AE 21/21 mm; 7,269 g; 6h

Obv. ΜΕΣΣΑΝΙΩΝ. Hare bounding l., in ex., locust r.

Rev. Cuttlefish.



## SYRACUSE

### 3. AR Decadrachm

Obv. Galloping quadriga driven l. by charioteer, holding goad, crowned by Nike flying r. above; in ex., panoply of armour consisting of cuirass flanked by greaves, with shield on l., and crested helmet on r.

Rev. Head of Artemis-Arethusa l., wearing hair-band, four dolphins around.

Replica of "Lipanoff Studio"



### 4. Similar

AV 38 mm; non-existing denomination.

Cast from replica of "Lipanoff Studio"



## VELIA, ITALY - LUCANIA

5. AE, 23/23 mm

Obv. Head of Athena l., wearing helmet decorated with Pegasus.

Rev. YEΛHTΩN Stag kneeling l., being attacked by lion.

The coin was made by casting 2 separate halves for the obverse and for the reverse. Then they are processed, adjusted to each other and glued. The interesting fact about this piece is that it copies a silver coin that is an author's replica by Slavey.<sup>3</sup>

*Enlarged photo - p.74.*



## APOLLONIA PONTIKA, THRACE

6. AR 13/14 mm; 2,818 g; 8h

Obv. Gorgoneion facing.

Rev. Anchor, A to l., crayfish to r.

"Varna-1 Studio"

*Enlarged photo - p.74.*



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3. D.Dimitrov, I.Prokopov, B. Kolev, Modern Forgeries of Greek and Roman Coins. Sofia, K&K Publishers 1997, p. 13, no. 26.

## THASOS, THRACE

7. AR Stater, 6,865 g

Obv. Naked ithyphallic satyr, carrying in his arms a struggling nymph r.

Rev. Rough quadripartite incuse square.



### Similar

8. AR Stater, 21/20 mm; 6,694 g

*Enlarged photo - p.74.*



## PSEUDO HOARD - SILVER COINS OF ISTROS (HISTRIA)

### ISTROS, THRACE

9. AR Stater

Obv. Two young male heads facing, side by side, one upright, the other inverted.

Rev. ΙΣΤΡΗΙ. Sea-eagle stg. l. on dolphin l., which it attacks with his beak, below monogram H.

*Enlarged photo - p.75.*





10. Similar. AR Stater

Rev. - below monogram Δ.

*Enlarged photo - p.75.*



11. Similar. AR Stater

Rev. - below monogram Δ.

*Enlarged photo - p.75.*



12. Similar. AR Stater

Rev. - below monogram ΔΙ.

*Enlarged photo - p.75.*



13. Similar. AR Stater

Rev. - below monogram ΑΓ.

*Enlarged photo - p.76.*



14. Similar. AR Stater

Rev. - below monogram ΠΙΟ (similar to Philip coins with a short right shoulder and a dot in the middle.)

*Enlarged photo - p.76.*



15. Similar. AR Stater

Rev. - below monogram ΑΓ.

The coin is manufactured with the same pair of coin dies as the above, but it was additionally processed and covered with artificial patina imitating silver oxide.

*Enlarged photo - p.76.*



16. Similar.

AR Quarter stater, 1,067 g

*Enlarged photo - p.76.*



## **PSEUDO HOARD - HELLENISTIC TETRADRACHMS**

### **ALEXANDER TYPE**

17. AR Tetradrachm, 34/36 mm; 17,15 g

Obv. Head of young Heracles r., clad in lion's skin.

Rev. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ. Zeus seated l. on throne holding eagle and scepter. In field to l., helmet and monogram, beneath throne - monogram.

Note: This is possibly a galvanoplastic copy that is a precise repetition of the original.



18. Similar

AR Tetradrachm, 35/37 mm; 16,85 g

This is possibly a galvanoplastic copy that is a precise repetition of the original.



19. Similar

AR Tetradrachm, 36/36 mm; 17,26 g

This is possibly a galvanoplastic copy that is a precise repetition of the original.



20. AR Tetradrachm, 30/30 mm; 16,98 g

Obv. Head of young Heracles r., clad in lion's skin.

Rev. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ. Zeus seated l. on throne holding eagle and scepter. Beneath eagle - ΔΗ, beneath throne - monogram.

This is possibly a galvanoplastic copy that is a precise repetition of the original.



21. AR Tetradrachm, 33/33 mm; 16,59 g

Obv. Head of young Heracles r., clad in lion's skin.

Rev. ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ. Zeus seated l. on throne holding eagle and scepter.

In field to l. - trident, beneath throne - monogram.

This is possibly a galvanoplastic copy that is a precise repetition of the original.



### LYSIMACHI TYPE

22. AR Tetradrachm, 17,735 g

Obv. Diad. head of Alexander the Great r., wearing horn of Ammon.

Rev. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΛΙΣΙΜΑΧΟΥ. Athena enthroned l., holding Nike and resting l. arm on shield. Below Nike - monogram; under throne - BY. In ex.: trident.

This is possibly a galvanoplastic copy that is a precise repetition of the original.



Similar.

23. AR Tetradrachm, 16,426 g

This is possibly a galvanoplastic copy that is a precise repetition of the original.



Similar.

24. AR Tetradrachm, 16,963 g

This is possibly a galvanoplastic copy that is a precise repetition of the original.



Similar.

25. AR Tetradrachm, 17,823 g

Rev. No trident.

This is possibly a galvanoplastic copy that is a precise repetition of the original.



26. Similar.

AR Tetradrachm, 16,440 g

Rev. In left field - herma.

A galvanoplastic copy that is a precise repetition of the original.



### CHERRONESOS, THRACE

27. AR Tetradol, 13/13 mm; 2,278 g

Obv. Forepart of lion r., looking back.

Rev. Quadripartite incuse square, the alternate depressions deeper: containing monogram E, pellet and tunny fish.



### PHILIP II

28. AV Stater, 8,56 g

Obv. Laur. head of Apollo r.

Rev. Galloping biga driven r. by charioteer holding goat. In field above - tripod. In ex.: ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ.

Like a group of golden staters of Philip this coin is made by a technology that excellently copies the obverse and the reverse of an original sample but cannot imitate very well the edge. Usually it has a shape of a cast sprue and metal reduction is necessary. Typically such type of fakes always have an edge that is higher than the coin relief. If it is reduced entirely than the edge becomes lighter and it can be seen clearly that the

coin is a fake. That is why one of the methods consists in forging out in a cylinder, i.e. being rotated it gets lots of slight hits.

*Enlarged photo - p.77.*



29. AV 1/8 stater, 1,708 g

Obv. Head of young Heracles r., clad in lion's skin.

Rev. ΦΙΛΙΠΠΙΟΥ. Above - thunderbolt, below - small lion's head facing.

*Enlarged photo - p.77.*



30. AR 1/5 stater, 13/12 mm; 1,994 g; 8h

Obv. Laur. head of Apollo r.

Rev. ΦΙΛΙΠΠΙΟΥ. Naked youth on horse.

The coin was made by casting two separate halves for the obverse and for the reverse. Then they were processed, fixed to each other and glued. In general, with this method of counterfeiting the final stage includes processing the edge in order to conceal the glued area. In this particular case the counterfeiters did not obtain a high quality forgery and that is why they left this specimen without further processing which gave me a chance to document it.

*Enlarged photo - p.77.*



## ALEXANDER THE GREAT

31. AV Stater, 19/19 mm; 8,370 g; 12h

Obv. Head of Athena with Corinthian helmet r.

Rev. ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ. Nike stg. l., holding wreath and ship's mast.

The coin is a copy, made of copper alloy with thin gilt. There are no signs showing it is a souvenir copy.

*Enlarged photo - p.77.*



## MITHRADATES VI, EUPATOR - THE PONTIC KINGDOM

32. AR, Tetradrachm

Obv. Diad. head of Mithradates r.

Rev. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ / ΜΙΤΡΑΔΑΤΟΥ / ΕΥΠΑΤΟΡΟΣ Stag stg. l., monograms, star and crescent; all within ivy-wreath.

The production technique here is the same as the one of the the first pseudo hoard tetradrachms shown above.





## PSEUDO HOARD - MACEDONIAN TETRADRACHMS

33. AR Tetradrachm, 14,251 g

Obv. Laur. head of Zeus r.

Rev. ΦΙΛΙΠ / ΠΙΟΥ. Naked youth on horse passing r., holding long palm branch. Below - snake and shield.



34. Similar.

AR Tetradrachm, 14,252 g

Below - branch and monogram.



35. Similar.

AR Tetradrachm, 14,931 g

Below - candlestick and monogram.



36. Similar.

AR Tetradrachm, 13,848 g

Below - snake and shield.



37. Similar.

AR Tetradrachm, 15,011 g

Below - snake and shield.



38. Similar.

AR Tetradrachm, 25/24 mm; 14,643 g; 7h

Below - monogram and twig.



39. AR Tetradrachm, 23/25 mm; 14,342 g; 6h  
Below - snake and shield.



40. AR Tetradrachm, 24/25 mm; 14,265 g; 6h  
Below - snake and shield.  
Obverse and reverse dies as above.



41. AR Tetradrachm, 26/24 mm; 14,355 g; 6h  
Below - snake and shield.  
Reverse die as above.



## CELTIC IMITATION OF PHILLIP II

42. Similar, bad style, rough cast.

AR tetradrachm, 13,762 g.

Cast, part of large pseudo hoard.



## ROMAN COINS

### REPUBLICAN GOLD COIN

43. AV 60 asses, 13/13 mm ; 2,85 g; 11h

Obv. Drap. Bust of Mars r. with helmet; below - X.

Rev. ROMA. Eagle with spread wings on thunderbolt r.<sup>4</sup>

*Enlarged photo - p.78.*



### Q. NASIDIUS

44. AR denarius, 19/18 mm; 3.147 g; 2h

Obv. NEPTVNI. Head of Cn. Pompeius Magnus r., behind him - trident; below - dolphin.

Rev. Q. NASIDIUS. Ship sailing r.; above r. - star.



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4. Published in: Prokopov, I. & K. Kissyov, E. Paunov. Modern Counterfeits of Ancient Greek and Roman Coins from Bulgaria, Sofia 2003, p. 48, No.113. The photo and the metric data of this coin were given to me by Dr. Svetoslava Filipova - Regional Museum Kuystendil.

## CALIGULA

45. AR denarius, 19/19 mm; 3.391g

Obv. C CAESAR AVG GERM P M TR POT. Laur., bare head of Caligula r.

Rev. GERMANICVS CAES P C CAES AVG GERM. Bare head of Germanicus r.



## CLAUDIUS I

46. AR Denarius, 3,273 g

Obv. TI CLAVD CAESAR AVG .... Laur. bust r.

Rev. IMPER RECEPT on battlement of wall of praetorian camp, soldier and standard within.



47. AE As 31/30 mm; 12.50 g.

Obv. TI CLAVDIVS CAESAR AVG P M TR P IMP P P. Bare head l.

Rev. CONSTANTIAE AVGVSTI S-C. Constantia, helmeted and in military attire, standing l., r. hand raised, holding long spear.

Cast, late 19 - early 20 c.

*\*Property of the Archaeological Museum-Sandanski (South-West Bulgaria).*



## NERO AND AGRIPPINA JUNIOR

48. AR Denarius, 3,462 g

Obv. AGRIPP AVG DIVI CLAVD NERONIS CAES MATER. Confronted busts of Nero r., bare-headed, and Agrippina Junior l., dr.

Rev. NERONI CLAVD DIVI F CAES AVG GERM IMP TR P. Around oak-wreath encircling EX S C.

The coin is artificially worn and with an imitated metal assay. Concerning the wearing - it is obvious it was made by using a grinding machine. The letters are made flat in a very unnatural way. A large part of the low relief however is not processed, just toned. There it can be easily recognized that the coin is cast. The assay is not typical for the coins from this age and the cutting to the periphery of the core is not very successful.

*Enlarged photo - p.78.*



## GALBA

49. AE Sestertius, 35/37 mm; 23,478 g; 12h

Obv. IMP SERS VLP GALBA CAES AVG TR P. Laur. bust r.

Rev. LIBERTAS PVBLICA, S - C. Libertas stg. l., holding scepter and a hat.

This is a new stage of the coin counterfeiting process. This coin couple was already registered and published, but regarding coins that were cut. This one, however, was cast after a mould of an already existing counterfeit coin. This means, that most probably Studio Varna-2 cannot produce their own matrixes and this is why they take prints from the existing ones before these get worn out by minting. Therefore, this studio has used steel matrixes bought from another engraver. This tendency was already noted before.<sup>5</sup>



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5. See: Prokopov, I.&R.Manov. Forgery Studios and Their Coins. Sofia 2005, no.79

Similar as previous

50. AE Sestertius, 23,167 g

A rough cast, with additional tooling - covered with silicate materials and paints in order to imitate a patina.

"Gulyanci-Pleven" Studio



### ANTONINUS PIUS, PAUTALIA THRACIAE

51. AE Medallion, 43 mm; 64.25 g

Obv. AYK KAI T ΛΙ ΑΔΡΙ ΑΝΤΩΝΙΝΟC. Draped bust r. ΗΓΕΝ ΠΙΟΝ – ΠΕΙ – ΟCΟΠΕΙ CΚΟC

Rev. Heracles standing three-quarter l., holding torch in r. hand and club in l., lion's skin draped over l. arm; column with statue of standing figure holding staff in background, two small Erotes at Heracles feet. In ex: ΠΑΥΤΑΛΙΩΝΤΩΝ.

The original of this very rare medallion was published for the first time by Dr V. Grigorova.<sup>6</sup> The distributed copies originate from it. This can be seen in the details and especially in one defect of the reverse close to the the right leg calf of Heracles.

Cast.



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6. See: V. Grigorova, "Neue Beitrage zur Erforschung der Munzprägung von Pautalia", *Annotazioni Numismatiche*, Suppl. XII, Milano 1998. Later was also published in *NAC* 27, May 12th, 2004, Lot number 409.

52. Similar.

As previous number, but this medallion was made by taking a print from the previous and when cast, the relief was even more blurred. It is covered by a thick artificial patina in order to hide all the defects and the poor image. Cast.



### **SABINA**

53. AE Sestertius, 37/37 mm; 25,074 g; 11h, pierced.

Obv. SABINA AVGVSTA HADRIANI AVG PP. Dr. bust r.

Rev. Female figure enthroned l., holding branch and scepter.

The above mentioned about the Galba sestertius is valid for this coin as well. It could be added that the patina of the both coins is similar, almost grey and very well glued or acquired by a chemical process. The color, however, is unnaturally grey, too unusual for AE coins. The coin is pierced and the internal part of the opening is processed very diligently so that the fresh, not corroded metal could not be seen.





## SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS

54. AR Denarius, 19/19 mm; 3,137 g; 6h

Obv. SEVERVS AVG PART MAX. Laur. and cuir. bust r.

Rev. CONCORDIA AVG. Concordia enthroned l., holding patera and 2 cornucopiaes.

The obverse has already been published, however in combination with other reverses.<sup>7</sup>



## SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS AND IULIA DOMNA

55. AR Denarius, 17 mm;

Obv. SEVERVS AVG PART MAX. Laureate bust of Severus to right, wearing aegis.

Rev. IVLIA AVGVSTA Draped bust of Julia Domna to right.<sup>8</sup>



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7. See in: Prokopov, I. & K. Kissov, E. Paunov. Modern Counterfeits of Ancient Greek and Roman Coins from Bulgaria, Sofia 2003, p. 58, no.142.

8. Information and images thanks to Dr. F.Filipova, Director of Historical Museum, Vidin.

## CARACALA, PAUTALIA THRACIAE

56. AE coin

Obv. (AYT K M AYPH) ANTΩNINOC. Laur. head r.

Rev: ΟΥΛΠΙΑC – ΠΑΥΤΑΛΙΑ – C. The Nymphe of Strymon region under vine, 4 genius and inscriptions: BOTPY; XPY/COC; CTAXY; and APFY/POC.

The coin was forged in a very interesting way. It is glued by two different halves. The obverse is from an original provincial coin of Caracala. The reverse is a fake cast. After the coupling the edge was processed so that it should look original. The obverse and reverse patina is different. At the obverse it looks originally light green and gentle, there are breaks at the coin periphery. The reverse patina has an oily green color and is artificial.<sup>9</sup>



## SEVERUS ALEXANDER

57. AV Aureus, 19/19 mm; 6,582 g

Obv. IMP C M AVR SEV ALEXAND AVG. Laur. and cuir. bust r.

Rev. PM TR P V COS II PP. Mars stg. l., holding spear and trophy.

A very good pressing, made by a print of an original coin. On the emperor's face there is a tiny deformation. If carefully observed, a knot could be seen. The left foot of Mars on the reverse is unanaturally thin. This is because when pressing, the matrix was not well filled.

I have seen two coins manufactured with this pair of coin dies.

*Enlarged photo - p.78.*



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9. The forgery identification was made by Dr. V. Grigorova.

## **GORDIAN I**

58. AR Denarius, 19/20 mm; 2,994 g; 6h

Obv. IMP M ANT GORDIANVS AFR AVG. Laur. and dr. bust r.

Rev. CONCORDIA AVG. Concordia enthroned l., holding patera and 2 cornucopiaes.

The obverse die was published, but in combination with other reverses.<sup>10</sup>



## **TRAJAN DECIUS**

59. AV Aureus, 17/17,5 mm; 4,005 g; 10h

Obv. IMP MO TRAIANVS DECIVS AVG. Laur. and cuir. bust r.

Rev. GENIVS EXERC ILLVRICIANI. Genius standing l.



60. AV Aureus, 19/19 mm

Obv. IMP MQ TRAIANVS DECIVS AVG. Laur. and cuir. bust r.

Rev. ADVENTVS AVG. Horseman l., raising r. hand and holding spear.



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10. See in: Prokopov, I. & K. Kissyov, E. Paunov. Modern Counterfeits of Ancient Greek and Roman Coins from Bulgaria, Sofia 2003, p. 63, no.157-158.

61. AR Denarius, 18/18,5 mm; 3,006 g; 7h

Obv. IMP CM Q TRAIANVS DECIVS AVG. Laur. and dr. bust r.

Rev. GENIVS EXERC ILLYRICI AVG. Genius stg. l., holding patera and cornucopiae, in r. field - standard.

As with the previous number.



### **CLODIUS ALBINUS**

62. AR Denarius, 17 mm; 3,769 g

Obv. DCL SEPT ALBIN CAES. Bust r.

Rev. ...S II. Male figure l.



### **MANLIA SCANTILLA**

63. AR Denarius, 18 mm; 3,810 g

Obv. MANL SCANTILLA AVG. Dr. bust r.

Rev. IVNO REGINA. Juno stg. l., holding patera and scepter, accompanied by a peacock.



## HOSTILIAN

64. AV Avreus, 20/19 mm; 4,01 g; 12h

Obv. C VALE MOSTILIANVS AVG. Laur. cuir. bust r.

In the obverse inscription there are 2 impossible mistakes in the name and title of the emperor (MOSTILIANVS instead of HOSTILIANVS and IVG instead AVG.

Rev. PROVIDENTIA AVG. Female figure stg. l., holding scepter and globe.<sup>11</sup>

The edge is cracked.



## JULIAN OF PANONIA

65. AV Solidus, 18/18 mm ; 3,27 g; 10h

Obv. IMP C IVLIANVS P F AVG. Laur. cuir. bust r.

Rev. LIBERTAS PVBLICA. Female figure stg.l., holding pileus and cornucopiae.<sup>12</sup>

The weight of the coin is less than the normal. Its weight should be between 4,50 and 5,12 grams.



## DIOCLETIAN

66. AV Aureus, 20/19,5 mm; 4,65 g; 12h

Obv. IMP C C VAL DIOCLETIANVS P F AVG. Laur. cuir. bust r.

Rev. IOVI C ONSE RVATORI. Jupiter stg. l., holding Victory on globe and scepter.<sup>13</sup>



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11-13 Photos and metric data of the coins given by Dr. Svetoslava Filipova - Regional Museum Kuystendil.

## CONSTANTIUS I

67. AV Medallion 4 aurei, 34/34 mm; 20,800 g; 12h

Obv. CONSTANTIVS PF AVG. Laur. bust r., wearing imperial mantle and holding eagle-tipped scepter.

Rev. CONCORD IA AVGG ET CAESS. Two emperors stg. facing each other, holding globe, below - wreath with XX. In ex.: SIS.

This is a new phase of counterfeiting. From a silver medallion which is an author's replica by Slavey a die stamp is taken and then a golden medallion is cast from it.<sup>14</sup>



## LICINIUS I

68. AV Aureus ?

Obv. LICINIVS PF AVG. Laur. head r.

Rev. IOVI CONSERVATORI. Jupiter stg. l., holding Victory on globe and scepter, eagle at his feet. In l. field - ?, in ex.: SIS.

Cast. On the obverse, there is a deformation of the eye as a result of the casting.



## ARCADIUS

69. AV Solidus

Obv. DN ARCADI VS PF AVG. Helm., diad. half-bust  $\frac{3}{4}$  facing, holding shield and spear.

Rev. CONCORDIA AVGGG. Constantinopolis enthroned facing, holding scepter and Victory on globe. In ex.: CONOB.

"Lipanoff Studio"



14. The same coin die pair is already published, but the medallion is silver. See in: Prokopov, I. & K. Kissyov, E. Paunov. Modern Counterfeits of Ancient Greek and Roman Coins from Bulgaria, Sofia 2003, p.70, <sup>1</sup> 179. I would recommend comparing the coin dies.

# BYZANTINE COINS

## THEOPHILUS

70. AV Solidus

Obv. ΘΕΟΦΙΛΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ. Bust facing, wearing crown and chlamis, holding patriarchal cross and akakia.

Rev. +ΜΙΧΑΗΛ Σ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ. Facing busts of Michael II and Constantine, each wearing crown and chlamis, between their heads, cross.

The coin is a cast made of gold, which is low grade, or not equal to the profile. Later, an additional gilt with a higher grade gold was made. The latter also does not correspond to the original. The surface is unnaturally yellow and slippery. With a magnifier the unusual structure of the metal can be seen. In this case it can be noticed how the gilt has covered a small production defect at the periphery. The spot of the cast sprue was masked after it was cut and slightly deformed. Then the gilt was made.



## ISAAC II

71. Electrum aspron trachy

Obv. The Virgin enthroned facing, nimbate. On either side of nimbus: MP - ΘΥ.

Rev. ΙΣΑΚΚΙΟC ΔΕCΠ. Archangel Michael on r., with his r. hand crowns the emperor and Isaac on l., both stg. facing.

Produced from hard white metal (probably silver alloy) and then additionally gilt with low-grade gold in order to imitate electron.



## THE "MANDEV STUDIO"

Once, in the 60's of the last century, a young artist became enthusiastic about the beauty of ancient objects and coins. His profession and experience were just appropriate so he could go into producing artistic replicas of antiquities. In the beginning, he started looking for the right materials and studying in depth ancient technologies. Gradually he was elaborating his work, as well as the production methods and the materials. During that period, it was impossible for anyone to practise anything without notifying the authorities. His work became noticeable, and he was appraised as an artist and a master and finally he was entrusted with prestigious assignments. He made replicas and copies of coins, as well as of ancient objects. His basic activity was connected to making replicas of a high artistic value that were given as presents to official visitors of the state and used for other official purposes.

In the numismatic field, the production of coin replicas was designed so that these could be used as medallions and other decorations. In order to achieve excellent results the artist had to apply the original technologies of production and to use materials similar, as much as possible, to the authentic ones. For instance, when working with gold, he had to use a material such as the one used by the ancient people. When cutting staters of Philip II, Alexander the Great, Philip III Arhiadeus, etc., he picked some gold dust, extracted directly from the rivers in Western Bulgaria. Thus, the product was as close as possible to the originals dated many years ago as far as the parameters of the metal content were concerned. A similar approach he applied when working with silver and bronze. To produce the new replicas and copies the artist made use of genuine objects and coins that were already destructed. In the manufacture of exact copies of coins, he used the ancient cutting technology by heating and hammer blowing. When making replicas and other products designed as souvenirs, he used big mechanical presses. He submitted all his products to the state and had no idea what happened to them afterwards. Some were given as presents to VIP guests and state and party leaders; the whereabouts of others, however, were unknown, remaining under the control of people whose intentions were not always that honest. This happened before the appearance of the well-known Bulgarian masters of replicas and copies - some of them still popular outside the country.



Years later, in my practice, when I started to show interest in replicas, copies and counterfeits, I often came across some very interesting coins and medallions but I had no idea at all whose work they were. In the beginning, I thought they were coins and objects made outside Bulgaria. Some of them were so well executed that even good specialists in that country, as well as in the USA and Europe, were misled. Single pieces of staters and aureuses, as well as copies of objects, made by this same artist, are still being sold and re-sold as authentic ones. This also applies to several gold and silver Roman medallions. The copies manufactured from 100% original materials, practically cannot be identified because the artist did not put a mark on them. It was the obligation of the respective authorities, who gave the orders, to do the marking. Those in charge submitted the originals to him to take the imprints and then they took the ready products, as well as all the documentation, referring to them. They required there should be no difference between the finished products and the originals, while the markings, if such were later put by them at all, should not be known to the artist. In this aspect of his activities, he had no freedom and he was not even allowed to keep any documentation about the products he made. Fortunately enough, when manufacturing artistic replicas, he could act more freely. In the replicas, he carved and modelled up the images and the portraits imparting his own vision and style that often were much more different from the prototypes. The dies of these replicas were later used for the manufacturing of numbers of souvenirs that were fully available to the consumers. Many of them still decorate pendants, rings, earrings, etc.

Since 1989 and the changes that took place in Bulgaria a great number of this artist's products suddenly emerged on the market. Being honest as a person and as an artist who has put all his creativity and soul in his work, master Mandev was filled with indignation against these speculations with his pieces of artistic work. He was much scandalized by the fact that a big part of them was being presented as originals of Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Mediaeval coins and ornaments. Similar things happened to the objects he had produced. Competent institutions issued certificates defining these as originals and museums and collectors alike started to buy them. Mandev began to look for a way to show to the public that the above items are his creations, trying to prevent any further deceptions with other pieces of his work. It happened that we met in 1999 at the expertise course I organized at the National Historical Museum in Sofia at that time. Being much knowledgeable about this subject though, master Mandev had decided to attend the course in order to keep himself up with the new information. As

we got to know each other, he shared his anxiety and asked me to present his work in some of my publications. I did readily agree, of course, but then I came across another problem: none of his author's materials was preserved. He had almost nothing available, not even designs and sketches. He had submitted everything to the authorities. That is why Mandev decided to begin gathering back his pieces of work. Today, 5 years later, his hard efforts notwithstanding, the items he has managed to collect are still limited in number and insufficient. This applies, above all, to the coins. What we can use for his presentation here are only the few artistic replicas of his that are available now. In spite of this, we decided to show whatever there remains as the real result of a many-years-long activity and creativity. We have come to an agreement that in the future we will also publish any objects that he will manage to discover in different collections.

# CATALOGUE

## COINS AND MEDALLIONS

72. AR. Replica of a decadrachma of the Derrones. The size and the weight are close to that of the original. The coin die illustrated herein was manufactured through casting following the prototype made by Mandev.



73. AR. Replica of a decadrachma of the Derrones. The size and the weight are close to that of the original. The coin die illustrated herein was struck by means of a hydraulic press from a pair of steel dies. Attempts are being made to present the replica as an authentic coin.



74. Replica of a decadrachm of the Derrones. The size is similar to that of the authentic coin. The coin die illustrated herein was manufactured through casting of some white alloy. The prototype made by Mandev was struck by means of a hydraulic press from a pair of steel dies.



75. Replica of a coin of Velia. The size is similar to that of the authentic coin. The coin die illustrated herein was manufactured through casting of a bronze alloy and was later gold-plated. The prototype made by Mandev was manually struck from a pair of steel dies



76. Replica of a tetradrachm of Lysimachus. The size is close to that of the original coin. The coin die illustrated herein was executed by striking from aluminium. The prototype made by Mandev was cut with a pair of steel dies.



77. A pair of steel dies. A replica of a coin of Philip II. The size is that of a presumptive decadrachma.



78. Replica of a coin of Philip II struck from aluminium with the above pair of steel coin dies.



79. A steel pair of dies. Replica of a coin of Philip V. The size is that of a presumptive decadrachma.



80. Replica of a coin of Philip V struck from aluminium with the above pair of steel coin dies.



81. A pair of steel dies. A replica of a coin of Messembria of the "Alexander" type. The size is that of a presumptive decadrachma.



82. Replica of a coin of Messembria of the "Alexander" type struck from aluminium by the above pair of steel coin dies.



83. Replica of a bronze coin of Augustus and Rhometalces. The coin presented here is manually cut from bronze and subsequently gold-plated. Attempts have been made coins produced as souvenirs that were cut from bronze with this pair of coin dies to be offered as originals after they were made look older and were well coated with patina.



84. Replica of a bronze coin - sestertius of Nero. The coin shown here was struck by a hydraulic press with a pair of steel coin dies made by Mandev.



85. A souvenir jewel typical of Mandev's style. A silver denarius of L. Verus mounted in a case and a hemstitched medallion.



86. Replica of a silver souvenir denarius. A silver denarius of P. Niger manually struck and then gold-plated.



87. Replica of a provincial coin of Carakalla struck manually, gold-plated, mounted in a case.



88. Replica - a gold medallion of Postumus. Manufactured by casting from a bronze alloy, afterwards gold-plated. The size is approximately 50 mm. Executed by Mandev in a limited souvenir series.



89. Replica - a gold medallion of Constantius I. Manufactured by casting from a bronze alloy, afterwards gold-plated. The size is approximately 30 mm. Executed by Mandev in a limited souvenir series.





90. Jewel-souvenir. In the centre there is a solidus of Theodosius executed by Mandev which was afterwards mounted in a case - medallion. All this is made of bronze and was afterwards gold-plated.



91. Replica of a Bulgarian silver mediaeval coin of Tzar Georgi Terter.



## OBJECTS

A silver cup. Author's replica made after an original from the Mycenaean or Archaic period of Greek art.



Sketches upon copper plates on the theme "A Hunting Scene" after some originals from ancient Thrace.



Sketches "Griffons". Models engraved on base metal plates.



Silver application - copy of an item from the gold Thracian treasure from Kralevo. Apart from being made of silver in order to differ from the original, it has a ring attached to it to be used as a medallion.



Silver basin. Author's replica following the Christian Orthodox arts, diam. 20 cm.





## PSEUDO COIN HOARD - TETROBOLS OF HISTIAEA ON EUBOEIA ISLAND

I had the chance to quickly check a pseudo coin hoard counting around 700 coins. All of them were white metal alloy casts with a color, very close to silver. All coins here were made by copying the original coins from a really existing coin hoard. For the limited time I had, I managed to photograph only 110 coins that I am now presenting here.

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# ENLARGEMENTS

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No.6



No.8



No.9



No.10



No.11



No.12



No.13



No.14



No.15



No.16





No.28



No.29



No.30



No.31



No.43



No.48



No.57



## OUR NEXT BOOKS

### "FIVE NEW PSEUDO COIN HOARDS"

BY I.PROKOPOV& K.KISYOV

Five new pseudo coin hoards are presented, copying original hoards from different periods and of different types.

The first one includes silver coins from Western Black Sea region,V-IV c.BC.

The second presents bronze coins of the Macedonian rulers from IV c.BC.

The third hoards consists bronze Roman Provincial coins.

The fourth hoard contains bronze Byzantine coins.

All coins in these four pseudo coin hoards are absolutely exact copies of the originals made by methods of galvanoplastics and specially developed artificial patinas.

The fifth one is composed of silver medieval Bulgarian coins. The coins are made from new coin dies copied by pantograph.

Hoard 1



Hoard 2



Hoard 3



Hoard 4



Hoard 5



# "COIN FORGERIES AND REPLICAS" 2007

BY I.PROKOPOV

In 2006 the number of coin forgeries grew rapidly, as the 2 main tendencies, registered back in 2004, continued. The first one is the production of easy to recognize forgeries. The second tendency is making high quality copies, difficult to register as forgeries.

In this next book there are coins presenting both tendencies - single specimens, as well as parts of pseudo hoards of classical coins. Some of them, for example some Roman gold coins, do really have the color of an authentic old gold.



## PREVIOUS TITLES:

1. **"Modern Counterfeits and Replicas of Ancient Greek and Roman Coins from Bulgaria"** by I.Prokopov, K. Kissyov and E. Paunov.
2. **"Contemporary Coin Engravers and Coin Masters from Bulgaria"** by I.Prokopov.
3. **"Cast Forgeries of Classical Coins from Bulgaria"** by I.Prokopov and E.Paunov
4. **"Counterfeit Studios and Their Coins"** by I.Prokopov and R.Manov

*More info at [www.sp-p.net](http://www.sp-p.net)*