

Besprechungen

Dimitar Draganov, *The Coinage of Deultum*, Sofia: Bobokov Bros. Foundation, 2007. Pp. 475, numerous colour and black-and-white illustrations. € 120.–, ISBN 978-954-9460-03-2. *Dimitar Draganov*, *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum*, Bulgaria, Ruse, Bobokov Bros. Collection, Thrace and Moesia Inferior, vol. 1. Deultum, Ruse: Bobokov Bros. Foundation, 2005. Pp. 303, 2010 coins illustrated on 134 plates. € 160.–. ISBN 954-9460-01-0 (vol. 1).

That two large and lavishly-produced volumes on the coinage of Deultum on the Black Sea should appear within a short space of time is no accident. Both are the work of the same scholar, Dimitar Draganov, and both are based on the extensive collection formed by two brothers, Plamen and Atanas Bobokov. The first to appear was the *SNG* volume, which details the extensive Bobokov collection of Deultum coins. In the following year (2006) the Bulgarian version of *The Coinage of Deultum* appeared, and the English version was published in 2007.

One thing should be made clear straight away: the contents of the *SNG* volume are largely reproduced in *The Coinage of Deultum*, and consequently there is little to be gained in treating the former as a separate volume here. Indeed, it is hard not to argue that the monograph *The Coinage of Deultum* renders the separate *SNG* volume largely redundant. In both publications all 2010 coins of the Bobokov collection are illustrated in exactly the same order, with the same excellent black-and-white photographs, the same numbering and accompanied by the same descriptions. The only difference is that some additional material from other sources has been inserted in the monograph (on this material, more in a moment) and that annotations on the dies are included.

This is not the first monograph to be devoted to Deultum. The city's coinage has been the subject of an earlier study by Jordanka Jurukova, *Die Münzprägung von Deultum* (Berlin 1973). However, the new monograph includes much more material with more detailed discussions and aims to be a «complete study of Deultum's coinage» (p. 7). Indeed, this is a sumptuous production, with many colour illustrations, produced by one of the foremost experts on the coinage of the Balkans in antiquity.

Colonia Flavia Pacis Deultensium was founded in the reign of Vespasian, near to

the site of an earlier Thracian port (p. 24). Its coinage is restricted to the reigns of Trajan (AD 98–117), Caracalla (211–217), Macrinus (217–218), Severus Alexander (222–235), Maximinus (235–238), Gordian III (238–244) and Philip (244–249), and the die study encompasses a total of 181 obverse and 674 reverse dies (p. 7). In other words, its output was moderate, and most of that belongs to the third century, with only a few coins produced earlier.

The commentaries are detailed and constitute a comprehensive reworking of the material in the *SNG* volume. We begin with a historical overview (chapter 1) and a presentation (chapter 2), reign by reign, of every obverse die and the reverses used in conjunction with it (illustrated in full colour), accompanied by a full discussion of the date and structure of each issue. This predominantly visual arrangement of the material is exemplary and very helpful. The first issues, of Trajan, are of markedly Roman style, and were perhaps made in the capital in AD 100 (pp. 42–4). The remainder of the coinage belongs to the third century and is clearly provincial in origin.

Chapter 3 discusses the reverse types, one by one. Every reverse die for each type is illustrated again, in full colour. Variants are carefully noted. Where the same reverse die is used for more than one ruler (e.g. Macrinus and Diadumenian, Severus Alexander and Julia Mamaea, Philip I and II), specimens of those dies used for each ruler are illustrated. While it is not uncommon to find the same reverse die shared between contemporary rulers among the coins of Deultum (e.g. between Macrinus and Diadumenian or Severus Alexander and Julia Mamaea), there are no cases of dies being transferred from one reign to another (e.g. between Gordian and Philip).

Most of the coins of Deultum depict deities, which are given both their Roman and Greek names in the discussions (Diana/Artemis, Aesculapius/Asclepius, Minerva/Athena, Cybele, Ceres/Demeter, Mercury/Hermes, Sarapis, etc.), and personifications (Aequitas/Dikaio-syne, City goddess, Concordia/Homonoia, Salus/Hygieia, Fortuna/Tyche, etc.). There are also typical colonial types such as the standing Marsyas, the priest ploughing, and the wolf and twins. A variety of temples are shown, sometimes in three-quarters perspective (e.g. nos. 1348–1349). A rare type appears to show the Capitoline Triad (no. 1626), and another a river god and Thalassa with a ship (nos. 1252–1254).

Another unusual type, showing Perseus and Andromeda with the sea monster, occurs frequently.

Only two denominations were produced for Deultum, and the most intriguing type of all occurs only on the smaller: an onion-shaped object, usually shown standing on a small base. This Draganov plausibly identifies it as a fountain of Meta Sudans type (pp. 146–148) whereas past scholars tentatively identified it as a beehive. As Draganov notes, a beehive does not seem very probable, and he thinks this type is an example of civic pride in a unique monument. On some of the coins this base appears rounded (e.g. rev. 627) while on others (e.g. rev. 626) it is decorated with what looks like a small, pedimented aedicula, which might be intended to represent a nymphaeum. However, one is also reminded of cult images which are sometimes shown with a small representation of their temple at the base, which raises the possibility that this type could signify something more than the mere glorification of civic plumbing or beekeeping. Could the similarity of the fountain's shape to images of Telesphorus (who also appears exclusively on the smaller denomination) be intentional, and is it instead some kind of cult object?

Chapter 4 contains essays on various themes: a comparison between the types of Deultum and neighbouring cities; thoughts on the sharing of dies or engravers between cities in the region; and some general observations on production. Draganov suggests that the dies for the third century coinage of Deultum might have been produced by a central workshop elsewhere, but that the coinage itself could have been struck in the city by a team sent from the central workshop. This would help to explain the obvious stylistic similarities between cities in the region as well as the rarity of obverse die-links between coinages of different cities (pp. 165–166).

Chapter 5 comprises a discussion of denominations, concluding that they are Roman; chapter 6 discusses the coin legends. There is then a brief chapter on forgeries, including notification of an interesting hoard of cast provincial coins, now in the Bobokov collection (none of them are forgeries of Deultum, however). Chapter 8 concludes with a look at finds of Deultum coins, mainly in the Balkans.

The largest section of the book (pp. 189–461) is the Catalogue. This, as indicated above, is essentially the SNG Bobokov, with a small

amount of additional material included only when the dies are not represented among the Bobokov material. The sources of this additional material are somewhat restricted¹. The only coin from a major international collection I could find is no. 31a, in Berlin. Otherwise the sources used include Jurukova and recent auction catalogues (listed on p. 10), specimens from Bulgarian museums in Plovdiv, Popovo, Stara Zagora and Varna, and from private collections. A few pieces from other published collections are listed: Evelpidis; Lindgren; Winsemann Falghera, and the odd piece published in articles on specialised themes (Schaaf on numismatic representations of ships; Stoll on architectural images). Major collections like the British Museum, the Bibliothèque nationale, and the American Numismatic Society were apparently not utilised, although it is far from clear whether all the dies represented in those collections are encompassed by the Bobokov collection.

Thus the approach to gathering data in *The Coinage of Deultum* is somewhat unusual. As Draganov notes (p. 8), «scholars usually collect [photographs and metrological data] for at least several years, from numerous museums around the world. Obviously, it would be an enormous advantage if we had large collections of coins of every ancient city.» For Deultum, the Bobokov collection appears to constitute just such an advantage: it is a very large collection of coins of a single city. However, traditionally one would collect as much material as possible, from whatever sources available, to build up the die study. As it stands, *The Coinage of Deultum* is essentially a die study of the Bobokov collection. The assumption seems to be that this collection is so comprehensive that there would be little point in investigating smaller collections.

Is this assumption correct, and is the Bobokov collection really as comprehensive as it seems? The bulk of the coins are from Severus Alexander onwards, where coverage appears to be very comprehensive: many coins presented are die duplicates. However, some unique dies, or die combinations, are represented only by specimens from other sources, suggesting that there are gaps. The coverage for Caracalla and Macrinus seems to be slightly less comprehensive, with fewer die duplicates. Here, as Draganov suggests, we may expect new discoveries, such as a smaller denomination for Macrinus (p. 52).

1 Not every source is indicated: where, for example, does the unique die combination 1612a come from? The description of its die numbers in the text appears to be wrong, though in the plates they are correct (obv. 162 / rev. 299a).

As it happens, this reviewer was able to access a small private collection of coins of Deultum (8 specimens) for comparison with the die study in *The Coinage of Deultum*. These coins were collected some years ago, by someone with no specialist interest in the issues of Deultum, and without reference to any publications on the subject. They are thus a fairly random sample of what one might find by examining other collections.

The results of the comparison of the eight coins with the die study in *The Coinage of Deultum* are as follows:

Macrinus: obv 18; rev –

Diadumenian: obv 28; rev 284 (SNG Bobokov 162)

Julia Mamaea: obv 68; rev 256 (SNG Bobokov 557–559)

Maximinus: obv 85; rev 57 (SNG Bobokov 724–725)

Gordian III: obv 116; rev –

Gordian III: obv 113; rev 124 (SNG Bobokov 1074–1079)

Philip I: obv 159; rev 105 (SNG Bobokov 1739–1741)

Philip II: obv 172; rev 140 (SNG Bobokov 1840–1844)

It is surprising to find that in this small collection, 25% of the reverse dies are new, suggesting that an examination of other collections might have added significantly to the die corpus, at least as far as the reverses are concerned. Moreover, while the Gordian III reverse is an otherwise well-represented type (Homonoia: pp. 130–132), the new reverse for Macrinus is of a type otherwise not recorded for this emperor: a city goddess standing holding a phiale and sceptre. This is Draganov's type 1 city goddess, otherwise known only

from a single die used in the reign of Severus Alexander (p. 137). For the record, I illustrate these two coins here (figs 1 and 2).

These discoveries might not tell us anything important about Deultum's coinage or add anything of significance to the discussions in *The Coinage of Deultum*, but they do illustrate how even the smallest collections of material can contain new information, and how ideally one should leave no stone unturned in the search for data. For sure there will always be omissions, no matter how much material one examines—but for this reason it pays dividends to encompass as much material as possible. It is a fact of life that scholars often face difficulties in finding time and funding for travel to visit collections, and inevitably larger collections of material—such as the Bobokov collection—are more rewarding to the researcher, but we should be mindful of the limitations even of comprehensive-looking assemblages.

These minor observations about coverage aside, it must be said that *The Coinage of Deultum* is a significant contribution to Roman provincial numismatics. The study includes many types not in Jurukova's 1973 publication and it is an important advance in our knowledge of civic coinage in the Black Sea region. Its author has made the fullest use of the extraordinarily extensive Bobokov material. The photographs are of high quality, with crisp, clear images, which is particularly important because the coins themselves are not always particularly well-preserved. In short, *The Coinage of Deultum* is an authoritative and well-written book, and beautifully laid out for the convenience of the reader. This reviewer hopes that it will serve as a model for future studies of Balkan mints.

Kevin Butcher



Fig. 1: Deultum, Macrinus, obverse die 18, new reverse die with standing city goddess.



Fig. 2: Deultum, Gordian III., obverse die 116, new reverse die with standing Homonoia.