THROWING THEIR WEIGHT(S) AROUND (I). AN EARLY BYZANTINE COIN WEIGHT FROM THE ACROPOLIS CENTRE-SOUTH SECTOR IN HISTRIA (ROMANIA)

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Abstract: This paper is the first in a short series of articles dedicated to a specific category of small finds from the Acropolis Centre-South Sector in Histria (Romania), namely the weights. The discussion concerns in this case a metal discoid coin weight with the value of two *nomismata*, found in the last habitation level of the *insula* excavated by the team from the University of Bucharest (Romania). The item can be dated, based both on analogies and find context, to the 6th century – the beginning of the 7th century AD.

Rezumat: Acest articol este primul dintr-o scurtă serie dedicată unei categorii specifice de obiecte minore descoperite pe Sectorul Acropolă Centru-Sud de la Histria (România), greutățile de cântar. Discuția de față privește un pond monetar în valoare de două *nomismata*, descoperit în ultimul nivel de locuire al *insulei* cercetate de echipa Universității din București (România). Piesa poate fi datată, atât pe baza analogiilor, cât și pe baza contextului de descoperire, în sec. al VI-lea – începutul sec. al VII-lea p.Chr.

Keywords: Lower Danube**,** coin weight, Early Byzantine, Histria
Cuvinte cheie: Dunărea de Jos, pond monetar, perioada bizantină timpurie, Histria

INTRODUCTION

The present paper focuses on a representative of a specific category of small finds from the Acropolis Centre-South Sector in Istros/Histria (Romania) – the commercial and coin weights. The discussion concerns in this case a metal discoid coin weight with the value of two *nomismata*, found in the last habitation level of the *insula* excavated by the team from the University of Bucharest (Romania). The item can be dated, based both on analogies and find context, to the 6th – the beginning of the 7th c. AD.

FIND CONTEXT

The archaeological research on the Acropolis Centre-South (ACS) Sector at Histria (Constanţa County, Romania) started in 2013, as a project of the University of Bucharest. The sector is located south of the centre of the acropolis of Histria, having to the north the Episcopal Basilica, to the east the *Domus* sector, to the south the Late Roman

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defensive wall, to the south-west another Christian basilica (*Basilica Pârvan* Sector), and to the west the Late Roman/Early Byzantine residential area named *Cetate* Sector[1].

The excavations conducted so far (2013-2025) brought to light a large structure, conventionally named Roman building no. 1 (CR01), an *insula* dated, based on the archaeological material, to the 6th – the beginning of the 7th c. AD. Thus, the building represents the last habitation phase in this area of Histria[2], which, at that time, was part of the province Scythia.

The item was found during the archaeological campaign conducted in 2018 – when seven new square trenches and six baulks were excavated[3] – and received the temporary inventory number 923/2018. The object was recovered on August 28th from one of the baulks, C008/C036, in sq. A1, at a depth of +0.22 m, from the lower, "yellow" layer of debris, noted 8002/36002, which was present in that part of the *insula* at a depth between +0.15/+0.28 – -0.44 m. This layer of debris, containing remains of mud-bricks, wattle, and tiles, mixed with pottery and glass shards, as well as fragments of metal objects, superposed in that area a compact yellow silt layer, which was interpreted as being originally the substructure of a pavement, identified at -0.44 m[4]. Thus, the item was found in the interior of the space labelled NNSp06, more precisely in the north-eastern part of the room, in the corner made by the walls Z012 (with a roughly east-west alignment) and Z013 (with a north-south alignment)[5], representing the northern and eastern delimitations of that space.

DESCRIPTION

The item taken into consideration for the present discussion is a metal disc with double grooved convex profile and rims on both sides, presenting a punched inscription on one side. The maximum diameter is 19 mm, and the diameter measured in the area of the rim is for both sides 18 mm. The interior diameter of each flat side, measured inside the rim, is 14.65 mm. The height at the edge varies between 4.7 mm and 4.9 mm. The weight of the object is 8.79 g. The colour after the green patina was removed is reddish-brownish, with brighter yellowish areas. It is complete and in a very good state of preservation (Fig. 1a-b).

1 Bottez et al. 2015, 157-158; Bottez et al. 2018, 282-283.
2 Bottez et al. 2018, 285.
3 Bottez 2022, 231.
4 Bottez 2022, 237-239.
5 Bottez 2022, 241-242.

Fig. 1a-b. The coin weight from the ACS Sector.

The disc was lathe-turned and is characterised by prominent centring points, with an exterior diameter of approximately 2.5 mm, on both sides.

In addition, the bottom side presents a fine groove doubling the edge, but only visible on approximately half of the circumference. Based on the way the resulting semicircle seems to lose itself towards the rim at both ends, it is more probable that it was like this from the beginning and that the missing part is not a result of prolonged use or subsequent corrosion.

On each side, the rim flattens towards the exterior in order to create the corresponding groove surrounding the flank of the disc. Still, although the involved operations seem to be the same for both sides, the result varies slightly. In the case of the bottom side, the rim is properly flattened, resulting into a straight, horizontal surface; in the case of the top side (wearing the inscription) the rim gently curves, going slightly up towards the exterior, offering a stronger impression of a carefully crafted object. Thus, it seems rather clear that the inscribing was not made randomly, but on the side which was meant to become the face of the disc.

The item presents on its face the denominational mark NB created through punching, flanked above and below by a minimal decoration made by punching and engraving. The two punched letters, N and B, are placed on each side of the centring point. The approach to creating the letters, as well as the decoration, seems to rely on a combination between a series of "proper" dots and more elongated punches. In the first case, the more circular punches with spaces between them are noticed especially in the case of letter N (which also shows on top some supplementary dots, not strictly required for creating the letter). The more elongated punches (oval/rectangular punches without space left between them) were used for the vertical lines of letter N and for almost the entire body of letter B. In the case of letter B, it looks as if the artisan made the vertical line in one series of strokes, the curve of the upper half of the letter in two series of strokes, the curve of the lower half in one series of strokes, and the horizontal part at the bottom of B from two more dot-like punches. The letters are flanked above and below by a horizontal line, mostly engraved continuously, but with

several punches also present (three on the right side of the upper line and one on the right side of the bottom line). Above the upper line there are a series of punches, round and elongated, placed in a register of nine interventions. Below the bottom line, there is a row of six punched dots. Supplementary, it is possible that two more dots were punched (not so visible because they are practically placed on the junction between face and rim), one forming the left upper end of letter N and the other symmetrically placed above the upper right side of letter B. The other side of the disc, the bottom, was left blank.

DISCUSSION

Function

The characteristics of the item presented above, such as shape/form, dimensions, material, weight, and the inscription indicating the denomination, to which the find context could be added, allow it to be attributed without doubt to the category of the metal discoid coin weights in use during the Early Byzantine period, more precisely during the 6th–7th centuries AD. The arguments for this attribution will be briefly discussed below.

Category

There are two main categories of weights that were used in parallel on the markets of the Byzantine Empire: the commercial weights, for merchandise, and the coin weights, for the verification of the quality and genuine character of the coins used in transactions.

During the Roman and Byzantine times, both scales (balances, devices with equal arms and two pans) and steelyards (devices with unequal arms) were in use. The steelyards were intended rather for weighing foodstuffs, with or without containers, such as meat, fish, vegetables, and amphorae, while the scales served for weighing coins, precious metals, or valuable substances[6]. It seems that the steelyards would have served their role best as weighing bulks or heavier merchandise in general, while the scales were intended for lighter items or more high-end products sold in small quantities. In addition, at least in theory, the steelyards were designed to weigh mainly commodities (unless somebody was lucky enough to weigh large amounts of coins at once), while scales could have been used both for commodities, but in comparatively small amounts, and for coins.

This situation could be reflected by the fact noticed in the dedicated literature that for example six ounces brass and bronze weights were among those of the largest

[6] Acara Eser 2003, 34.

denominations[7], which would have meant a mass of around 160 g, in the case of commercial weights used with scales. In comparison, weights for steelyards tend to be much heavier, as for example the weight representing the bust of empress Ariadne from Belgrade (Serbia), with a mass of 1,551 g[8], or the bust representing an empress from Hrisosotira (Bulgaria), with a mass of 766.64 g, and another from Ruse, with a mass of 3.475 kg[9]. In fact, steelyards could reach in later periods a maximum capacity between 35 and 60 *litrae*, approximately 11-19 kg[10], while at the beginning of the Byzantine period tended to weigh approximately 4 pounds[11]. Of course, this situation would not have impeded the use of several weights piled together in the pan of a scale, thus leading to the possibility of weighing heavier stuff. On another hand, it is not clear how much weight would have supported before breaking the pans (made of relatively thin metal and not very large) and the scales as an assemble.

Thus, from the point of view of their intended use, the weights can be split into two main categories, those made for steelyards and those made for scales, as their shape and details would have been adapted for a specific way of using them. The weights used with steelyards are frequently in the shape of a bust or statuette[12], although simpler forms, such as smaller or larger metal spheres, with a ring serving for hanging on the steelyard's arm, were also widely used[13]. The weights used with scales were flat, or more precisely they had flat sides, presumably for conveniently piling in the balance pans[14], no matter their shape.

The item discussed here belongs to the second category, being a weight designed to be used with scales, alone or in combination with similar weights with various denominations.

Type

The copper-alloy weights used with scales were produced during the Roman and Byzantine times in three main shapes, with some variations. The most frequent are the flattened sphere doubly truncated, the square, and the disc, with the occasional presence of octagonal or polygonal items[15].

7 Eisenberg et al. 2018, 89.
8 Vujović 2014, 171.
9 Hristov 2020, 282, 287.
10 Acara Eser 2003, 34.
11 Acara Eser 2003, 40.
12 Acara Eser 2003, 40.
13 Vujović 2014, fig. 6; Acara Eser 2003, 35.
14 Acara Eser 2003, 40.
15 Entwistle 2016, 291.

The coin weights made of metal – as their counterparts, the commercial weights – are found in three main forms: octagonal, square, and circular. The octagonal shape seems to have been the less used of the three, both in the case of commercial weights and coin weights; in fact, the octagonal shape was deemed as even rarer in the case of metal coin weights than in the case of metal commercial weights[16]. The square and circular variants were much more used, in both cases.

From this perspective, the item discussed here does not represent a challenge, being easy to assign it to the discoid type. In fact, all the details of the shape, discussed above, make this weight quite a standard one for its type. This situation makes its chronological attribution much easier, as it will be briefly discussed below.

Material and metal composition

The materials most commonly employed in the manufacture of Byzantine weights were bronze, glass and lead, with very rare instances when gold or silver were used[17]. There is even a mention of a discoid weight made of iron, with a value of 12 *nomismata*, found in a settlement on the Kefalos island (Greece), and dated to the 7th century AD[18]. The spherical stone weights, which were widely used during the Roman period, are being supplanted during the 4th century AD by copper-alloy weights[19].

The discussion will focus at this point on the first mentioned material, as the item found on the ACS Sector can be included in the category of weights made of bronze. In fact, the more suitable term in this case would be "copper-based alloy" or "copper alloy". In those instances, that allowed conducting compositional analyses on such weights, it could be noticed that in reality quite a large range of copper-based combinations were used. Thus, although many publications dedicated to this subject indicate as a rule the composition as "bronze"[20], in some cases the term "copper alloy" seems to be preferred[21], when no more detailed information is available.

The fact that a certain degree of prudence is necessary regarding this aspect is proved by the existence of items made of other copper-based alloys than tin bronze. For example, a discoid coin weight from the Bodrum Museum, with the

16 Bendall 1996, 29.

17 Entwistle 2002, 612; Entwistle 2016, 291.

18 Veikou 2014, 71-72.

19 Entwistle 2002, 613.

20 See, for example, Acara Eser 2003; Tekin 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2016. This seems to be also the case in general in the Romanian literature (see, for example, Severeanu 1929, Ocheșeanu 1984, Ocheșeanu, Cliante 1987, Paraschiv 2010); although there are also situations when the matter is avoided – see, for example, at Culică 1973-1975, the use of the expression "yellow metal".

21 See, for example, Entwistle 2002; Entwistle 2016.

denominational value of two *nomismata*, measuring 19 mm x 5 mm and weighing 8.59 g, inscribed on the face with NoB inside herringbone wreath, and dated to the 6th – 7th centuries AD, is presented as being made of brass[22], unfortunately without details regarding the compositional analysis. Brass was also used in the case of a decorated item, belonging to the group of square commercial weights, with dimensions of 43 mm x 45 mm x 10 mm and mass of 158.85 g, corresponding to the denominational value of 6 ounces, inscribed on its face[23]. The XRF analysis indicated the presence of 20% Zn, with only 1% Sn and 1.1% Pb, in the case of this weight from Hippos[24].

In the same time, even in the situations allowing conducting compositional analyses on such items, the difficulty of ascribing various compositions to clear-cut categories was emphasised in the dedicated literature. For example, in the case mentioned above, the percentage of zinc of 20% permitted the inclusion of the weight from Hippos in the category of "high zinc brass", a composition characterised by at least 15% Zn and without the presence of any other significant metal. In discussing their find, the authors also deplored the ambiguity arising in those cases when the copper is alloyed not only with zinc, but also with tin, while stressing the fact that the commercial weight under discussion had a composition that was unambiguously one of brass[25].

From this perspective, the weight from the ACS Sector represents a bit of a challenge, as the result of the XRF analysis indicates that the copper was alloyed not only with zinc and tin, but also (or mainly, in terms of percentages) with lead. All these metals present high enough values in the resulting alloy to not be stamped as minor elements, but as intentional additions to the composition.

The metal composition of our coin weight was determined using an ED-XRF handheld spectrometer Tracer 5i (Bruker Instruments), equipped with an Rh tube set behind a Be window, tension 6-50 kV, intensity 5-500 μA, acquisition time 60 seconds[26]. The measurements were conducted in this case after the patina was removed.

The result indicates that the metal used for making the object is a copper-based alloy, containing at present 60.11% Cu, 26.47% Pb, 5.19% Zn, and 5.05% Sn.

Of course, an important question arises with regard to the moment when these metals were added, and here there are two possible answers.

On one hand, this composition could be the result of a one-time operation, with all four metals – copper, lead, zinc, and tin – added following a carefully calculated recipe. Still, at least in my opinion, this technological solution would mean a bit of overkill, for

22 Tekin 2012, 616, cat. no. 18, fig. 18.

23 Eisenberg et al. 2018, 82.

24 Eisenberg et al. 2018, 91.

25 Eisenberg et al. 2018, 91.

26 Cristea-Stan et al. 2021.

several reasons. From the point of view of the historical context, such an approach does not match well the general situation of the period, with continuous economic, political and military challenges, which clearly were putting a lot of strain on obtaining various metals for the production in general. From the point of view of the compositional approach to this category of items, although not many published, the composition analyses point towards a relative lack of homogeneity of the alloy used for their production, as mentioned above; there is no clear indication that a specific technological tradition/recipe existed. Finally, and more importantly, from a technological perspective, especially given the specificity of the use of the weights (to sit quietly on a scale pan, so not a very strenuous job for the metal they were made of), there was no need to add more than one alloying metal to copper to reach approximately the same result. Thus, the supplementary use of what no doubt would have been highly appreciated alloying materials in a lavish manner when a more economical approach would have conducted to the same result does not make a lot of sense.

On the other hand, the possibility that one or other of the metals were added at an ulterior moment to an already existing alloy, be it bronze, brass, or leaded copper, cannot be excluded. In other words, the chance that this composition is the result of a certain amount of recycling should not be ruled out from the start, even when dealing with a theoretically strictly regulated production such as the issuing of weights (and especially coin weights) should have been. In fact, unlike the issuing of gold and silver coins, and even copper-based coins, in the case of weights does not necessarily apply the same scrupulosity in respecting the purity of the metal. As so many finds indicate, and as was also briefly discussed above, a plethora of materials (stone, glass, various metals) were considered appropriate for creating both commercial and coin weights. Thus, as long as the mass of a metal weight, together with its dimensions and shape (so the general aspect) more or less respected the denominational value, it should have been of secondary importance the type of alloy used for creating it. In this specific case – a quaternary alloy based on copper – the most logical succession of steps, from both a technological and an economical perspective, is adding lead to an already existing copper-alloy, which was obtained by recycling older objects. In fact, the combination of metals could even indicate successive recycling. Although an original ternary alloy of copper-zinc-tin cannot be completely overruled, the same technological pragmatism indicates rather the creation of brass by adding zinc to already existing tin-bronze. Thus, in my opinion, the following successive phases in the "life" of the alloy and/or objects made of it are the most probable (but, of course, not certain):

1. Bronze was made by alloying copper and tin, and circulated as finished items for a certain period;

2. The respective object/objects were recycled, zinc was added to the mix for creating a low zinc brass (operation that would have influenced also the hue and luminosity of the alloy, as well as technological characteristics), and the resulting objects circulated as such;
3. A second recycling process (at least) was conducted and the brass was "watered" (so to speak) by adding lead to the composition – at this point, a part of the resulting alloy was finished in the shape of our coin weight.

This situation shows the necessity of conducting compositional analyses on larger batches of metal weights, as their results could reveal technological choices, trends, and challenges that are impossible to determine at present.

Chronology

Mainly based on the evolution of shape, associated with the very limited existing archaeological and epigraphic evidence, it was suggested the following typological chronology. From the beginning of the 3rd century to the end of the 5th century AD, weights in the form of a truncated sphere were the dominant type. These were derived from earlier Roman lead and stone examples, and nearly all bear the *omicron/upsilon* abbreviation for the ounce. Although the use of the *gamma/omicron* as an uncial abbreviation is known as early as the 1st century, it does not become the standard abbreviation until its appearance on square weights during the course of the 4th century. The square type appears to have been the dominant form until the latter half of the 6th century, when the discoid type gradually superseded it, becoming in its turn the predominant type from the 7th to the early 9th century[27].

At this point, dating our discoid coin weight to the second half of the 6th century and the beginning of the 7th century matches extremely well the general dating of the building in which it was found, and strengthens the hypothesis that it was in use during the last habitation phase of the city.

The weight of a weight, or the difference between theory and practice

The metrological system employed throughout most of the Byzantine period was a duodecimal one. The linchpin of this system was the Byzantine pound or *litra*, which was divided in its turn into 12 ounces, the ounce into multiples of the *scripulum*, the smallest unit of the libral system. More to the point from the perspective of the present discussion, the Byzantine pound was also divisible into 72 solidi. The solidus, later known as the *nomisma*, was the standard gold coin introduced by Constantine the

[27] Entwistle 2002, 613.

Great in 309, which was to retain its weight and fineness well into the 10th century. Imperial legislation of the 4th century records that 72 solidi were struck to the pound[28]. Since the *nomisma* weighed a sixth of an ounce (giving the 72 *nomismata* to the pound weight as mentioned above), the majority of the coin weights are divisible by three. It was remarked on the fact that the highest weight in any way common was the one for 18 *nomisma*ta (although higher weights were also found), while the most common were those for the smallest values (three, two, and one *nomismata*). This observation is equally valid in the case of both square and circular coin weights[29].

In my opinion, this situation could reflect a concern towards ensuring a greater flexibility of the coinage weighing in practice, as access to a larger number of small value weights (against fewer of larger denominations) allowed more possible combinations on the scale pan. On the other hand, caution is necessary when discussing the implications of such a disparity. It should not be forgotten that the higher the weight the larger the quantity of metal involved in creating it and as such the greater the chances to be targeted for recycling during periods of economic stress. This would lead to a marked decrease of the chances of recovering weights of high denomination during archaeological excavations in comparison with their much smaller and lighter counterparts of low denomination.

The theoretical weight of the solidus is generally taken by the numismatists to be 4.55 g, thus giving a theoretical weight for the Late Roman/Early Byzantine pound of 327.60 g[30]. As it was already emphasised in the dedicated literature, here the word "theoretical" is the key, as at least two variables were at play. On one hand, it is clear that the weight of the solidus fluctuated in time; on the other hand, doubts were expressed about the chances that an administrative system of sufficient complexity existed to impose a standard weight system throughout the vast expanse of the Late Roman Empire[31]. Alongside all this, we should not forget the human agency, so to speak: the surviving literary sources clearly show that there were instances in which tax collectors used weights heavier than they should, while grocers used weights lighter than they should[32].

A perusal of the published material confirms this variability in the mass of the surviving weights, no matter their denomination. I will mention here only the situation of several two *nomismata* weights, for which the real weight was indicated when published, but the same variation can be noticed for all the values. For example, out of

28 Entwistle 2002, 611.

29 Bendall 1996, 38.

30 Entwistle 2002, 611.

31 Entwistle 2002, 611.

32 Bendall 1996, 7.

the three coin weights taken into consideration in Bendall's catalogue, the two square coin weights weigh 8.56 g and 7.91 g, respectively[33], and the circular coin weight 8.35 g[34]. In all three cases, the weights are complete and are marked with their value on the upper face (NB). The discoid coin weight of two *nomismata* from the Silifke Museum, mentioned above, weighs 8.65 g[35], and a similar two *nomismata* weight from the Bodrum Museum weighs 8.59 g[36]. One of the two *nomismata* weights from Izvoarele, the Roman/Early Byzantine fortification from Scythia, weighs 8.45 g, the other one only 7.09 g[37]. Again, all these weights are marked with the inscription of their value.

Thus, it is quite clear that the mass of 8.79 g of the two *nomismata* weight found on the ACS Sector, instead of the theoretical 9.10 g, is in no way an outlier, as it matches very well this low degree of standardisation of the coin weights in general for the period.

The fact that, during the Early Byzantine period, such variations were not only acceptable, but to be expected is sustained also by the research on coin glass weights. As Entwistle and Meek emphasised, a look at contemporary coin balances suggests the use of simply rule-of-thumb weights for checking the tolerance above or below which a coin would not have been accepted[38].

Inscription/decoration and general appearance

It was emphasised in the literature the fact that of the few thousand Byzantine weights that have survived, although there can be identified certain iconographic types, most fall into the category of "miscellaneous", items which were simply marked with their relevant denomination and perhaps a subsidiary decorative motif such as a cross[39]. Engraving was considered the simplest method of placing the design on square or round weights[40].

It was also noticed the contrast between the general appearance and the quality of the design in the case of circular weights. While the flans for the round weights were generally expertly turned, and thus presented a very tidy appearance, the design was punched or engraved on them in a crude manner[41], creating a contrast. It was also

33 Bendall 1996, 42, cat. nos. 101-102.
34 Bendall 1996, 52, cat. no. 147.
35 Tekin 2016, 859, cat. no. 10.
36 Tekin 2012, 616, cat. no. 18.
37 Culică 1973-1975, 227, Figs. 1/1-2.
38 Entwistle, Meek 2015, 2.
39 Entwistle 2002, 613.
40 Bendall 1996, 14.
41 Bendall 1996, 15.

noticed that the design of the engraving or punching on the circular coin weights was even simpler than that on their square counterparts[42].

Again, as in the case of the shape, also from this perspective the weight discussed here can be considered quite a standard issue, both from the point of view of the elements that were represented and the technological choice for their production. The item presents only the letters indicating its intended use and value, made by punching, with what could be at the limit considered as minimal decoration, consisting of several supplementary punched "dots" above and below the letters, together with an engraved line, as was already detailed above.

Although it can be noticed a certain gap between the quality of the flan and that of the punched inscription, in my opinion in this particular case the intervention for creating the letters was carefully conducted, with a sure hand, leading to an overall tidier general aspect than in the case of many other similar weights.

An interesting observation regarding the treatment of the inscription in connection to the flan in this particular case was already commented upon when the item was described. The detail, which does not seem to be present in other cases and/or discussed in the dedicated literature, concerns the slight differences of the two sides of the flan, and the application of the punched inscription on the side that by its details seems to have been designed from the start as the "face" of the item.

The details noticed in the case of the weight from the ACS Sector represent a good match for numerous similar circular coin and commercial weights from all over the empire. In the same time, it is clear that we cannot talk about serial production in the sense of identical items, or at least is practically impossible to determine it. The finishing of the items in two stages – the lathe-turned flan and the engraved/punched inscription (plus/minus decoration) – allows quite a lot of variability. Still, in this specific case, it is worth mentioning an older find from the same province, which could be, in my opinion, a very good analogy. One of the two coin weights, already mentioned before, published as coming from the Late Roman/Early Byzantine fortification from Izvoarele (Constanţa county), was described as discoid, made of yellow metal, covered with a layer of dark brown patina, with a diameter of 18 mm, thickness of 4.5 mm, weight 8.45 g. Several technological observations were also made, in discussing the centring points created by the pressure exercised on both sides, by special pliers. According to the author, these points, unequal both in diameter and depth, presented in the centre a punch produced by two small teeth found in the "mouth" of the tool used for preparing the metal piece. On one of the two sides could be distinguished the NB sign made of rows of punches, placed close to

[42] Bendall 1996, 46.

each other and very shallow. The rest of the field was covered with irregularly placed dots, some of them deeper than those used to form the sign of the weight value. The opposite side lacked any kind of ornament, but, on the edge, there were still visible two parallel fine-drawn lines, surrounding the metal disc[43]. The item was identified by the author as a coin weight with the denominational value of 2 *nomismata*, although it is emphasised the fact that the item should have had 9.10 g, in order to correspond to the divisions of the 328 g pound (12 ounces)[44].

The coin weight from the ACS Sector in archaeological context

Although the present-day Dobruja produced during time a relatively large number of Greek, Roman and Early Byzantine weights, unfortunately in most cases these suffer from the lack of context.

They are frequently parts of old private collections, in most cases entered later in the collections of museums or other institutions; items acquisitioned by museums from the antiquities market; old finds from museums' collections remained unpublished; chance finds; or the result of archaeological surveys[45].

As an example, out of 21 Roman/Byzantine weights published in 1984 as belonging to the collections of four Romanian institutions, only four items could be connected to an ancient city, but without further details regarding a specific find context[46]. In the case of Early Byzantine coin weights, the cases in which they are associated with clear archaeological contexts, offering also a close dating, are extremely rare in this area. I will mention here relatively recent finds from two well-known Roman/Early Byzantine sites. Two square weights presented as being made of bronze, one without marked denomination (but with a mass corresponding to 2 ounces or 12 *nomismata*), and the other with a value of one *nomisma*, were recovered during archaeological excavations at (L)Ibida (Constanța county). The first of them was recovered from an *extra-muros*

[43] Culică 1973-1975, 227, Fig. 1/1. It should be mentioned here that, by no fault of the author, the quality of the illustration is very low, so a comparison between description and photo proves to be useless. In addition, although the rest of the field is described as decorated with dots produced by punching, the drawing does not take them into consideration, only the letters NB being reproduced. Given this situation, for the moment it is impossible to ascertain the possible finer similarities in decoration between this item and the weight from the ACS Sector.

[44] Culică 1973-1975, 229.

[45] See, for example, Severeanu 1929; Cantacuzino 1933; Ocheșeanu 1984; Paraschiv 1998; Meyer 2001; Custurea 2002-2003; 2009; 2020; Iconomu, Chiriac 2008; Mototolea 2009; Dabîca, Angelescu 2018.

[46] Ocheșeanu 1984, 89.

building, dated based on numismatic finds after the middle of the 4th c. AD[47]. Another very interesting find, as it not only comes from a clear archaeological context, but was found inside one of the storage rooms of the local *horreum*, is the recently published glass *exagium solidi* from Capidava, which was discussed against the background of similar finds from the Lower Danube and the Balkans[48].

Thus, the importance of the circular coin weight from the ACS Sector is enhanced by the fact that it was retrieved from a clear archaeological context, associated with other categories of finds which, together with the features of the NNSp06 space, indicate a function of the room as both food storage and cooking area, possibly as a *caupona*[49]. The research of the other small finds found inside this space is a work in progress. It is to be hoped that its completion will bring more light both on the function of this specific room and on the role played in this context by the coin weight discussed in the present paper.

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49 Bottez 2022, 265.

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