

THE LARGEST COLLECTIVE COIN FINDS IN BULGARIA.

PART II

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The first part of this article (Teodosiev 2019, 181-230) described 69 of the largest coin hoards ever discovered, which were also included in the first volume of „Inventory of Coin Hoards Discovered in Bulgaria“ („Опис на колективните монетни находки в България“ (Teodosiev 2017)). Below we will take a look at 46 of the largest coin hoards included in Volume II of the Inventory. These are believed to have been buried between the start of the 6th century and the middle of the 20th century.

In contrast to Part I, in Part II we will focus not only on the size of the hoards in terms of number of coins or in terms of their perceived value, but also on coin finds that have significant impact on what we know about the historical past of Bulgarian lands. The description of the hoards will also be a little different. While in Part I it was organized geographically, here, we will present the hoards in chronological order based on the time they were hidden.

This article also includes various notes and clarifications regarding several important hoards. The three Nikopol hoards dated to the beginning of the 15th century and the gold coin hoard found in Lovech in 1973 are the subjects of the most comprehensive notes and clarifications.

DESCRIPTION OF THE FINDS

6th-8th Century

Benkovski, 1914 (formerly known as Hadzhi Sinanlar), Avren Municipality, Varna Province

In September 1914, in the area known as Gorchivata Cheshma, a hoard of approximately 200 gold coins from the time of emperors Justin I and Justinian I was found. Most of the coins were divvied up and sold to goldsmiths. Three coins (one from Justin I and two from Justinian I) were submitted to the Museum of the Varna Archaeological Society whereas another 8 pieces (2 from Justin and 6 from Justinian) were purchased by the People's Museum in Sofia. In other words, the whereabouts of a total of 11 coins from this hoard are known – three from the time of Justin I and eight from the reign of Justinian I. All of them were minted in

Constantinople. The earliest coin is a Justin I, minted between September 522 and 527. The latest coin was from the reign of Justinian I and has been dated back to sometime after 542. Most likely, the coins were hidden around 558 at the time of the campaign south of the Danube by the Kan of the Kutrigurs (old Bulgarians) Zaberkan.

Number of coins: About 200 Au

Place of safekeeping: 3 in Varna, 8 at AIM-Sofia, inventory number 734-741

Latest coin: Justinian I (542-558)

Hidden: around 558, (Hristova)

Mushmov (1915), **IV-275**;

Hristova (1993), **HC-1/4-8**

Sadovets 1936, Dolni Dabnik Municipality, Pleven Province

In 1936, during archaeological excavations of the medieval fortified settlement in the area (Golemanovo Kale), a ceramic pot was discovered, containing 125 (according to the first reference by Gerasimov, the number of coins discovered was 128) Byzantine gold coins. All minted in Constantinople, the coins are dated back to the reign of the following emperors:

Anastasius I (1): 1 solidus;

Justinian I (81): 22 solidi and 59 tremisses;

Justin II (20): 4 solidi and 16

tremisses; **Tiberius II** (20): 6 solidi

and 14 tremisses; **Maurice**

Tiberius (3): 2 solidi and 1 tremissis.

The latest of the coins are the solidus and the tremissis of Maurice Tiberius of the large bust type, which is dated to 585 (Morrisson et al.). The entire find is kept at The Archaeological Museum of Sofia.

Number of coins: 125 Au

Place of safekeeping: NAIM-Sofia, inventory number CXIV/1937

Latest coin: Maurice Tiberius (585)

Hidden: 585-596 (Paris)

Gerasimov (1938), **11-321**;

Morrisson et al. (2006, 324)

Akalan 1913, near the town of Chataldzha, Turkey

Two soldiers from the 4th Infantry Regiment, while digging trenches in March 1913 at Chataldzha (Chatal Tepe) near the village of Akalan stumble across a large hoard of 420 Byzantine gold coins, several gold belt decorations and two silver coins from Heraclius. The earliest coins date back to the time of Maurice Tiberius (584-602). The rest are from the start of the 7th century

(Filov). The object from the find, along with 18 coins were submitted to the People's Museum of Sofia. However, the coins were registered as individual finds and for this reason remained unresearched for a long time.

In a detailed publication dedicated to these coins, Yurukova (1992) describes them as follows: Maurice Tiberius – 1 tremissis, Phocas – 4 solidi, Heraclius – 12 solidi and 1 silver hexagram coin (6,27 g, 21 mm). According to the presentation, no coin in this sample is from a time period after the reign of Heraclius and all pieces are very well preserved. The latest solidi from Heraclius in the sample are class 2B, minted in 616-625. The hexagram, however, cannot be dated more precisely than to just say it was minted somewhere between 615 and 638. It has been assumed that the hoard was hidden in 626 when the Avar Hagan and his Bulgarian allies laid an unsuccessful siege on Constantinople.

Number of coins: 422 (420 Au, 2 Ag) and jewelry

Place of safekeeping: 18 pieces are kept at NAIM-Sofia, inventory number 709-721 and 724-728

Latest coin: Heraclius (616-625)

Hidden: 626 (Yurukova)

Filov

(1913), III-324;

Yurukova

(1992), HC-1/2-10

Nesebar 1947, Nesebar Municipality, Burgas Province

In September 1947 an unknown number of Byzantine gold coins were found on the beach (in the yard of the Sveti Georgy Church). The local administration managed to secure and send to the People's Museum of Sofia nine pieces. Six of them were minted by the Byzantine emperor

Constans II (641-668) in the 661-663 period. Three were dated to the reign of Constantine IV Pogonatus, minted 668-673 (Gerasimov). More information about this find came later. Evidently, the hoard comprised 46 solidi, of which 43 were minted by Constans II and 3. by Constantine IV. The larger portion of the hoard, 37 pieces, remained in private hands while 9 pieces were sent to NAIM (Tenchova 2011). All of the nine pieces at NAIM-Sofia were minted in Constantinople.

According to Tenchova (2011), the 37 solidi that remain unaccounted for were from Constans II. In other words, this researcher put the coin hoard at a total of 43 pieces. The coins were most likely hidden during Byzantium's war with the Bulgarians led by Kan Asparuh between 670 and 680 (Morrisson et al.). It is more likely that the actual hiding of the coins took place closer to the end of the period, 680. and the Constantine IV against the Bulgarians in the delta of the Danube.

Number of coins: 46 Au

Place of safekeeping: 9 в NAIM-Sofia, inventory number 928-936

Latest coin: Constantine IV Pogonatus (668-673)

Hidden: 670-680 (Paris); circa 680 (HT)

Gerasimov

(1950), 17-321;

Morrisson et al. (2006, 142); Tenchova (2011)

Varna 1967

An unknown number of Byzantine gold solidi was discovered around 967 near Varna. The find was taken out of the country and sold in London in 1967. It has been alleged that the entire find or at least a portion of it ended up in the collection of the Barber Institute in Birmingham and was published in 1968. All of the coins were minted in Constantinople. They are dated as follows (Morrisson et al.):

Phocas (1): (607-610) – 1;

Constans II (7): (642-646) – 1, (651-654) – 2, (662(?)-667) – 4;
Constantine IV (61): (669-674) – 9, (674-680) – 50; (680-685) – 2; **Justinian II** (1): (687-692) – 1.

The largest part of the coins from Constantine IV were minted immediately before the establishment of Danubian Bulgaria (50 pcs). It has been suggested that the hoard came from a tribute Byzantium was required to pay to Bulgaria. The exact amount of the tribute from 681 is unknown but some years later, in 716 during the reign of Kan Tervel, the tribute was fixed at 2.160 solidi per year. It cannot be ruled out that the coins belonged to a high-ranking Bulgarian general who received the money as a reward by the Kan.

Number of coins: 70+ Au

Place of safekeeping: 70 at the Barber Institute, United Kingdom ?

Latest coin: Justinian II (687-692)

Hidden: circa 690 (Paris)

Georgiev (2011), **HCE-7-64**;
Morrisson et al. (2006, 158)

9th-11th century

Pliska 1982, Kaspichan Municipality, Shumen Province

In 1982. during scheduled archaeological digs, a hoard of 15 Byzantine solidi was discovered next to the walls of a large complex of buildings in the southwestern corner of an earth embankment near Pliska. The coins date back to the first half of the 10th century and were most likely buried in a bag made from sort of organic matter. The coins are very well preserved. Their average weight comes to about 4.35 g. The hoard includes:

Constantine VII with Roman I (920-921) – 1; **Roman I with Christopher** (921-931) – 13;

Constantine VII with Roman I (X class under the Grierson classification system) – 1.

The latest coin, which is the most worn-out, also dates back to the reign of Roman I (920-921). There are graffiti on 6 of the coins, most likely authentication marks by goldsmiths, which indicates that the solidi were actively used as currency in Byzantium before they made their way to Bulgaria, where they were either buried or lost.

Number of coins: 15 Au

Place of safekeeping: Historical Museum of Shumen

Latest coin: Roman I with Christopher (921-931)

Hidden: circa 922-927 (Aladzhov)

Yurukova (1985), **A-2-61**;

Aladzhov (1985), **H-1-31**

Veliki Preslav 1978, Veliki Preslav Municipality

On 11 April 1978, while preparing the ground to plant vines in an area known as „Kastana“, a group of workers from the local collective farm in Veliki Preslav came across a hoard of women's jewelry and silver coins scattered on the ground. Many of the objects had been brought to the surface as early as the autumn of 1977 when the field was ploughed but were not noticed although they sat in the open almost the entire winter. The 15 silver miliarenses were minted in Constantinople during the joint reign of the Byzantine emperors Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus and Roman II (945-959). On the face of the coins was a cross on the Golgotha along with an inscription Jesus Christ Victor. On the reverse side, there is a five-line inscription reading „Constantine and Roman by the Good Lord Christ Basileus of the Byzantine People“. All pieces but one are well preserved. The find was dubbed „Gold Treasure of Preslav“ and based on the coins was determined to have been buried somewhere between 969 and 971 when Bulgaria's old capital, Preslav, was attacked by Russ invaders led by Kniaz Svetoslav of Kiev before it was sacked by the armies of the Byzantine Emperor John I Tzimiskes. It has been alleged that the treasure belonged to a princess from the circle of Queen Maria. Maria herself was not alive at the time the treasure was hidden.

Number of coins: 15 Ag along with jewelry

Place of safekeeping: Historical Museum of Veliki Preslav

Latest coin: Constantine VII and Roman II (945-959)

Hidden: 969-971 (Yordanov)

Yordanov (1983)

Krivina 1975, Tsenovo Municipality, Ruse Province

In May 1975, during archaeological digs at Yatrus Castle near the village of Krivina, a small ceramic vessel was discovered containing 45 Byzantine gold solidi. Chronologically, they can be divided into two groups: Roman I with Christopher

(921-931) – 28 pcs. and Constantine VII with Roman II (945-959) – 17 pcs. According to Schonert-Geiss, the coins of the first group have on their obverse side a depiction of Jesus Christ facing forward, sitting on a throne. On the reverse side, they have waist height busts of Roman I and his son, Christopher. These solidi can be dated to between 20 May 921 and August 931, when Christopher was pronounced co-emperor. On the obverse side, the coins of the second group have a waist height bust of Christ Pantocrator and on the reverse side, busts of Constantine VII and his son, Roman II. These coins have been dated back to between 6 April 945 and 9 November 959, i.e. from the time of pronouncing Roman II coemperor to the death of his father, Constantine VII.

Number of coins: 45 Au

Place of safekeeping: Regional Museum of History of Ruse?

Latest coin: Constantine VII with Roman II (945-959)

Hidden: 968-971 (Zhekova)

Schonert-Geiss (1978), **H-4-15**;
Haritonov (2003. 441); Zhekova (2006), **HCE-3-195**

Hisarya 1942, Hisarya Municipality, Plovdiv Province

In 1942. during excavation works for the construction of a new building in Hisarya next to the eastern city wall, at a depth of 0.70 m, workers discovered a hoard of anonymous Byzantine bronze follis coins from the John I Tzimiskes period, which were apparently buried right in the ground. The combined weight of the hoard is around 3 kg (Tsonchev 1960). Later, Penchev, made the clarification that the hoard comprised anonymous folli of class A2. which date back to between 976 and 1030/1035, and were likely minted during the reign of Basil II. The average weight of the follis coins is about 12 g, which means that the total number of coins in the hoard was about 250 pieces. The event that most likely caused the coins to be buried was the war between Bulgaria and Byzantium and in particular the battle at the near-by Trayanovi Vrata mountain pass on 17 August 986.

Number of coins: 250 Æ

Place of safekeeping: Archaeological Museum of Plovdiv

Latest coin: anonymous follis coin, class A2 (976-986)

Hidden: 986 (HT)

Tsonchev (1960), **HMII-4-207**;
Penchev (2001), **NIM-12-54**

Zlataritsa 1939, Zlataritsa Municipality, Veliko Tarnovo Province

In 1939, Zlataritsa resident M. Todorov, while digging in his garden, found two sizeable ceramic pots full of copper coins (about 15kg in total), hidden under a large stone slab. Some 30 pieces of this interesting find were sent to the People's Museum for research. All of the coins proved to be old forgeries of anonymous coins by Byzantine Emperor John I Tzimiskes (969-976), which are among the most

common coins in Bulgaria in the 10th and the 11th century. The coins were poured in molds. On their periphery, there are still remnants of metal that escaped the molds. These forged coins are very thin round sheets of copper with a thickness of about 0.5 mm. Their weight varies between 1.4 and 1.8g. On the obverse side, there are several lines of text while the reverse side features a waist-height bust of Jesus Christ with a halo with a cross inside a circle. The visible arms of the cross are decorated with two dots (pearls). There are six distinct groups of coins (based on the seal) in the sample that was sent for research. (Gerasimov 1941; Gerasimov 1950).

In 1990 Penchev announced that 10 more pieces of the find had found their way to the National

Historical Museum „several years ago”. The Coins were published with pictures. Penchev asserts these coins were a typical example of counterfeiting where the forgers copied the images and inscriptions but used inferior alloys and drastically reduced the weight of the coins. The coins from Zlataritsa are copies of Byzantine folles of the A1-2 class. While the genuine articles weighed between 5 and 17g, the counterfeit copies were almost ten times lighter. Penchev (1990), believes the coins of Zlataritsa were manufactured in the end of the 11th century when the northeastern Bulgarian lands, including Paristrion, had already been outside the jurisdiction of Byzantium for a long time. In an article on the find entitled *Silistra-2000* Penchev (2000) suggests that the most likely time window for producing such counterfeit coins was during a short-lived reinstatement of Bulgarian dominion over Northeastern Bulgaria in the period 986/990 – 1000. This conclusion was based on earlier dating of the Zlataritsa find. It is believed that the coins were hidden by a retreating Bulgarian force around the year 1000 who were moving west when Byzantium retook northeastern Bulgaria.

Number of coins: about 15 kg or 10 000 pcs Æ

Place of safekeeping: 30 pieces kept at NAIM-Sofia, 10 at the National Historical Museum in Sofia

Latest coin: counterfeit (986/990 – 1000)

Hidden: circa 1000 (Penchev 2000)

Gerasimov (1941), **13-343**;

Gerasimov (1950), **17-313**; Hristova (1978), **H-2-11**;

Penchev (1990), **H-4-19**; Penchev (2000), **HC-7/1-94**

Dragichevo 1982, Pernik Municipality

In around 1982. in an area outside the village, a hoard of gold histamenon nomisms was discovered from the reign of Basil II and Constantine VIII (976-1025). The circumstances of the discover remain unclear. The coins were scattered among private individuals and only one piece found its way to the National Historical Museum in Sofia. A second coin, in reportedly excellent condition, is alleged to have been seen by I. Prokopov and 8 others are known to have been offered to collectors for sale (Yurukova). In a later publication, Prokopov insists that there were a total of coins including numisms, histamens and tetraterons. Histamens made up the bulk of the hoard. Based on the presence of tetraterons, it

has been proposed that the coins were buried at some point in time between 1018 and 1025, i.e. the last years of the First Bulgarian Kingdom.

Number of coins: 10+ Au

Place of safekeeping: 1 at the National Historical Museum in Sofia?

Latest coin: Basil II with Constantine VIII (976-1025)

Hidden: 1018-1025 (Prokopov)

Yurukova (1985), **A-2-62**;

Prokopov (1985), **H-2-48**

Gigen 1948, Municipality of Guliantsi, Pleven Province

A large hoard (around 3kg) of silver coins (miliarenses) was discovered on 25 August 1948 during excavations of a large hall with apse at the ancient town of Oescus, at a depth of 2m near the western wall. They were minted by the Byzantine emperors Basil II with Constantine VIII (976-1025) – 113. Roman III (1028-1034) – 1 and Constantine IX Monomakh (1042-1055) – 596. The coins were placed inside a knitted fabric purse, which had disintegrated completely at the time of their discovery. All coins were almost welded together in clumps by some sort of insoluble compound (Gerasimov). Restoration revealed that due to corrosion the cores of the coins had become very thin and brittle, losing a considerable portion of their original weight. Parts from the periphery of the coins were broken or sheared off. Some of the coins from Basil II and Constantine VIII were beaten into a shell-like form. Almost all of the coins from Constantine IX Monomakh were more or less typical scyphates. The diameters of the coins from the hoard varies between 25 and 32mm. The find was submitted to the People's Museum in Sofia. V. Penchev, asserts that this is the largest hoard of Byzantine miliarenses from the 11th century known in numismatics.

Number of coins: 710+ Ag

Place of safekeeping: NAIM-Sofia

Latest coin: Constantine IX Monomakh (1047-1048)

Hidden: 1049-1050 (Penchev)

Gerasimov (1950), **17-324**;

Penchev (1998), **HC-5-76**

12th Century

Markeli 2007, Karnobat Municipality, Burgas Province

In 2007, during archaeological digs at the Markeli Fortress near the city of Karnobat, a hoard of 37 Byzantine gold coins was found placed inside a small clay pot with handle (Momchilov and Hristova). The find was published by Aladzhov.

The pot was found inside a yurt-like dwelling near the fortress walls. Besides coins, there were also jewelry in the pot including 5 gilded bands and a ring of gold and silver alloy. The hoard included the following coins:

Nikephoros III Botaneiates (1078-1081)
– 31, **Alexios I Komnenos** (1092-1118) –
4,

John II Komnenos (1118-1143) – 2.

The coins from Nikephoros III were pre-reform, made from low-carat alloy which rates at about

8.5 to 9.5 carats of gold. The coins from Alexios I were from the post-reform period (1092-1118) and have high gold content. The coins were made in two mints, at Constantinople – 35 and at Thessalonica – 2. They were most likely hidden in the wake of the raid of the Pechenegs to the south of Stara Planina in 1122 which culminated in the battle of Vereya.

Number of coins: 37 Au and
jewelry **Place of**
safekeeping: NAIM-Sofia?
Latest coin: John II Komnenos
(1118-1122)

Hidden: 1122 (Aladzhov)

Momchilov and Hristova, **AOP-2007-652**;
Aladzhov (2014), **HCE-10-131**

Zlataritsa 1923, Zlataritsa Municipality, Veliko Tarnovo Province

Zlataritsa resident Vasil Iliev Tsutsurkov went to cut firewood in an area known as „Ivanov Rut“, on the banks of Zlatarishka Reka. There, in October 1923. he unearthed by chance a bronze or copper bowl with lid. In it, he found about 400 silver Byzantine coins. These were divided up among 8 of his fellow villagers who were with him. The Zlataritsa municipal administration got a hold of about 70 pieces, 18 of which were sent to the People's Museum in Sofia (Mushmov).

According to Penchev (1980), the coins were not made of *silver* but of *electrum*. The sample of 18 coins that made their way to NAIM-Sofia includes 2 coins from Manuel I Komnenos and 16 from Isaac II Angelos. The entire collection of 400 coins would have been worth about 130 gold hyperpyron. There are indications to suggest that the coins belonged either to a high-ranking Byzantine commander or were property of a military detachment. Their hiding was likely forced in the wake of the defeat of Isaac II Angelos's army by the Bulgarians in 1190. Penchev notes that this is the largest hoard of Byzantine electrum coins from the 12th century.

According to Yordanov, apart from the 18 coins at the Archaeological Institute and Museum in Sofia, another 5 coins from the hoard are kept at the Archaeological Museum in Varna. These 23 electrum coins are described by Yordanov as follows:

Manuel I Komnenos (3): third minting, type C – 3;

Andronikos I Komnenos (1): variant A – 1;

Isaac II Angelos (18): variant A – 2. variant B – 16.

For some undetermined reason Yordanov places the total number of coins from the hoard at 22.

Number of coins: around 400 El

Place of safekeeping: 18 at NAIM-Sofia, inventory number LXV-23; 5 at AM-Varna?

Latest coin: Isaac II Angelos (1185-1190)

Hidden: 1190 (Penchev)

1185-1190 (Yordanov)

Mushmov (1924), **2-230**; Penchev (1980), **H-4-18**;

Yordanov (1984, 165)

Velichkovo 1903, (formerly known as Zgarlii), Pazardzhik Municipality

As early as 1915 the archaeologist Bogdan Filov noted that although treasures from Antiquity are often found in Bulgaria, cases where they have been preserved in their entirety and displayed at museums are rare. The largest treasure of this type ever discovered as of the start of the 20th century in Bulgaria was the one unearthed by several villagers in May of 1903 in Zgarlii. The then-consul of France to Plovdiv, Alexandre Degrand, a famous enthusiast and collector of antiquities, wrote about this find in one of his reports to the Paris Academy of Science. According to his brief report, the treasure weighed about 18 oki [22.5 kg] and included Byzantine gold coins from the Komnenos royal family, in particular Alexios I, John II and Manuel I. In addition to the coins, there were several silver dishes, three of which were decorated with fine gold ornaments. Degrand managed to take pictures of the find and they were included in the report. According to his account, the villagers managed to sell 40 000 Bulgarian Leva worth of antiquities [about EUR 500 000 as of 2020] in just a few hours. Items purchased by local goldsmiths were unfortunately melted down.

Of all the coins [presumably around 6 200] some 237 pieces were sent to the Ministry of Finance, which kept only 60 pieces, giving the rest to their rightful owner, according to the provisions of the then-applicable *Law on Antiquities*. The administration of the People's Museum, which was asked to comment on the importance of the find and whether the coins discovered could be of any use to the museum, reportedly answered that the museum did not need to acquire the coins (Filov).

[Additional note by Mushmov regarding the find:]

In 1903. while ploughing his field, Trifon Nikolov, resident of the village of Zgarlii, happened upon a large hoard of Byzantine gold coins and several silver-and-gold bowls from the Byzantine period. Several of those bowls were purchased by the then-consul of France to Plovdiv, Degrand, and several more, by the Russian diplomat to Sofia Bakhmetev. The remaining bowls and a large quantity of the coins were melted down in Plovdiv and exported to Turkey via Erdine as ingots. Bulgarian authorities managed to preserve only 260 coins from this one-of-a-kind treasure from the reign of the Komnenos royal family and Isaac II Angelos. Of those

coins, only a few were kept by the museum for its collection and what remained was returned to the Ministry of Finance.

In 1969, Hendy wrote about 240 pieces of this find. Based on a note by D. Tachella from 1903.

The coins were gold hyperpyrons (scyphates) minted by the following rulers:

Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118) – 55 pcs;

John II Komnenos (1118-1143) – 65 pcs;

Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180) – 62 pcs;

Andronikos I Komnenos (1183-1185) –

11 pcs; **Isaac II Angelos** (1185-1195) –

47 pcs.

Nothing further is known about the surviving coins from this find. As of 2018, some 115 years after their discovery, none of the coins were published and it is not certain whether they still exist. The most likely reason for hiding the treasure was the passage of the knights of the Third Crusade in 1189 through the village of Velichkovo, which was very near the path of the crusaders.

Number of coins: 22.5 kg Au and jewelry

Place of safekeeping: several pieces at NAIM-Sofia? **Latest coin:** Isaac II Angelos (1185-1190)?

Hidden: circa 1189 ? (HT)

Filov (1915), **IV-2**;

Mushmov (1915), **IV-272**; Hendy (1969, 401)

Gornoslav 1961, Asenovgrad Municipality, Plovdiv Province

In 1961, while ploughing a field, a copper container with 786 gold scyphates (hyperpyrons) from the Komnenos royal family inside it was discovered by chance. The coins belong to the following periods:

Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118) – 239;

John II Komnenos (1118-1143) – 274,

Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180)

– 264, **Andronikos I Komnenos**

(1183-1185) – 8, **Isaac II Angelos**

(1185-1195) – 1.

All coins are excellently preserved. On many of them there is graffiti scratched on with a sharp point, both on the obverse and the reverse side (Gerasimova-Tomova). The find was purchased by the Museum of Plovdiv. Yordanov has studied 300 coins from the find but the remaining pieces were inaccessible (?!). According to him, the distribution by ruler of the coins was as described above. The treasure was most likely hidden in 1186 in the wake of the campaign of Isaac II Angelos against Bulgaria.

Number of coins: 786 Au

Place of safekeeping: Archaeological Museum of Plovdiv, inventory number 2240
Latest coin: Isaac II Angelos (1185-1186)
Hidden: 1185-1190 (Yordanov); circa 1186 (HT)

Dzhambov (1961), **A-4-1**;
Gerasimov (1963), **26-262**; Gerasimova-Tomova (1981), **H-3-7**;
Yordanov (1984, 155); Haritonov (2003, 437)

13th Century

Tvarditsa 1967, Sliven Province

In 1967, in an area known as „Slavovi Livadi“ near the town of Tvarditsa in the valley of Tvardishka Reka a bronze vessel containing 231 gold coins was discovered by chance. The entire find was acquired by the Historical Museum of Sliven (Gerasimov; Batsova-Kostova). Later, Yordanov (2008) has noted that an undetermined number of coins remained with the persons who had made the discovery. Initially, Yordanov (1984) offered a different breakdown of the coins by ruler, which he later amended considerably in a much later publication (Yordanov 2008). The hoard comprised one histamenon, 229 hyperpyrons and one electrum coin. The breakdown of the hoard by ruler is as follows: Histamenons:

Constantine X Doucas (1): II minting – 1 (Constantinople).

Hyperpyrons:

Alexios I Komnenos, minted in Constantinople (16): variant I – 10. variant II – 6;

Alexios I Komnenos, minted in Thessalonica (9): variant I – 4, variant II – 4, variant III – 1; **Alexios I Komnenos**, minted in Adrianopolis-Philippopolis (2): variant I – 2;

John II Komnenos, minted in Constantinople (30): I minting – 13. II minting – 9, III minting – 8; **John II Komnenos**, minted in Thessalonica (18): I minting – 13. II minting – 4, III minting – 1;

John II Komnenos, unknown mint (51): I minting – 8, II minting – 26, III minting – 17; **Manuel I Komnenos**, minted in Constantinople (58): variant I – 10. variant II – 12. variant III – 4, variant IV – 4, variant V – 28;

Manuel I Komnenos, minted in Thessalonica (5) – 5;

Andronikos I Komnenos, minted in Constantinople (5) – 5;

Isaac II Angelos, minted in Constantinople (29): variant I – 7, variant II – 11, variant III – 11; **Alexios III Angelos**, minted in Constantinople (7): hyperpyron – 6, electrum – 1.

The 51 coins bearing the name of John II Komnenos, minted at a yet-to-be-determined mint are especially intriguing. Yordanov (2008, 129) has referred to them as provincial copies. In an earlier publication, Yordanov (1984, 214) asserted that these were some of the earliest hyperpyron coins minted by John III Doukas Vatatzes. According to a subsequent analysis of the gold content, the 51 coins range between 19 and 20 carats, whereas the early coins of John III Doukas Vatatzes were minted from 16-18 carat gold. Another peculiarity of this find is the relatively small number of coins from the latest of the Byzantine emperors, Alexios III Angelos – only 7 pieces. Some of those coins are definitely minted after 1200. Based on this, Yordanov (2008, 131) has offered the hypothesis that these 51 coins were copies of Thessalonica-minted coins of John II Komnenos which were made in Bulgaria at about 1200 during the reign of King Kaloyan. According to Yordanov (2008, 132), it was coins of this exact type, four livres of them (288 pcs.) that Kaloyan sent as a gift to Pope Innocent III. The treasure was buried after 1203, possibly in due to the war between Bulgaria and the Latin Empire in the spring of 1205 (Yordanov 2008, 133).

Number of coins: 231+ Au

Place of safekeeping: 231 Regional Historical Museum of Sliven

Latest coin: Alexios III Angelos (1200-1203) ?

Hidden: 1203-1205? (Yordanov 2008)

Gerasimov (1969), **31-234**;

Batsova-Kostova (1973), **МНК-2-13**; Yordanov (1984, 214);

Haritonov (2003. 451); Yordanov (2008, 101-136)

Korten 1970, Municipality of Nova Zagora, Sliven Province

In 1970, in an area known as „Osmankioi“, some 2 kilometers to the northeast of the village of Korten, a large hoard of billon Byzantine scyphats was discovered. In a late-published note, Gerasimov speaks of 1 455 coins arriving at the Historical Museum of Nova Zagora. It has been suggested that at the time of discovery, there were more than 2 000 coins. According to the first publication of the find, the hoard comprised 1 586 pieces. (Yordanov 1976). Yordanov classifies the coins into two groups based on the type of their core and the quality of minting. Group one comprises coins with an irregular shape to their core, with cracks on the periphery and an overall imprecise manufacture. These coins also do not have silver plating. In group two, there is a smaller number of coins. Their cores have regular shape, the craftsmanship is precise and they show signs of silver plating. The coins from the find can be broken down by type and ruler as follows (Yordanov 1984):

Manuel I Komnenos, IV minted – 5;

Andronikos I Komnenos – 1;

Isaac II

Angelos – 29;

THEODORE (?) –

1; **Alexios III**

Angelos – 27.

Bulgarian copies (766): type A – 182. type B – 132. type C – 452.

Latin copies, minted in Constantinople (514): type A, large module – 122. small module – 476; type B, large module – 8, small module – 8.

Latin copies, minted in Thessalonica (63): type A, large module – 16, small module – 12; type B, large module – 10. small module – 25.

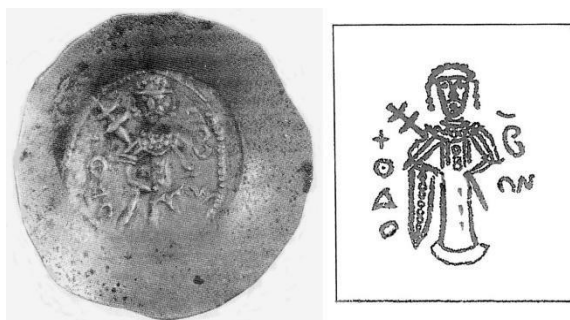
New types (Thessalonica, 2): type I – 1; type VI – 1.

Theodore I Laskaris, minted in Nicaea (41): I minting: large module – 8, small module – 25; II minting: large module – 8.

Re-minted coins: type A (Constantinople, small module) over a Theodore I Laskaris coin (I minting, large module); type A (Thessalonica, large module) over Theodore I Laskaris coin (I minting, large module); type B (Thessaloniki, large and small module) over type A (Thessaloniki); type B (Thessaloniki) over Alexios III Angelos coin.

A total of 1 554 have been described. According to Yordanov (1984), 1 502 coins from the find are kept at the Historical Museum of Nova Zagora, and some 66 coins are kept by private collectors but have been examined (Yordanov, 1976).

As time passed, the most interesting coin of the entire find became the piece inscribed with ΘΔΟ, evidently an abbreviation of the name ΘΕΟΔΩΡ (Theodore). By 1970 there were only a few coins or finds featuring such coins published.



For example, such inscription appears on a copper scyphate of Theodore-Peter (?) from the Pomorie find

Mutafov, Koychev and Azmanov (1997), **HC-4-127** (on the left)

and a graphic representation of it appears on the reverse side (Yordanov (2014, 85) (to the right).

The obverse side of these coins depicts the standing figure of Jesus Christ with a halo and a chiton. He is giving blessings with his right hand and holding a gospel in his left. On either side of him there is an inscription „IC-XC“. The ruler is depicted on the reverse, standing up and facing forward, with a stema on his head. He is wearing divitisson and loros. In his right hand he is holding a scepter topped with a dually intersected patriarchal cross. His left arm is bent at the elbow with hand resting on his body. The end of the loris is hanging down from it and looks like a sword. To the left of the figure there is a vertical inscription that reads ΘΔΟ. On the right, the letter B, sometimes resembling a Cyrillic Б, with an abbreviation sign. Underneath, there is a ligature of two letters, AN, which looks like an M on some coins. The coin is minted from a copper billet with a round shape and diameter of about 30 mm and a weight of about 3 g. The diameter of the seal is around 16 mm.

In 1970, the Czech numismatist Evgeni Pohitonov came up with the hypothesis that the coins bearing the ΘΔΟ inscription were minted by the Bulgarian ruler Peter IV, who was also known by the name Todor (Bulgarian variation of Theodore). He was the older brother of the Bulgarian ruler Ivan Asen I. The two are remembered for reinstating Bulgarian statehood in 1185 and for becoming the first two kings of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. Leading Bulgarian numismatics expert initially believed this type of coins were later copies because, at the time, the convention was that Medieval coin minting in Bulgaria started some 4 to 5 decades later (in 1230). What is more, the style of the images is cruder and some important details are executed in a very basic manner. The interpretation of the inscription on the reverse side is open to argument and is not unequivocal.

The very presence of coins of this type in the *Korten-1970* find rejects any doubt that the piece was a contemporary counterfeited copy. Over time, we have found a significant number of coins of that type, and many of them were part of hoards.

In 1976 Yordanov attributed this type of coins to Theodore Mangaphas, the usurper of Philadelphia, 1189-1190. 1204-1208. This belief persisted into the 80s (Yordanov 1984, 42-43). Later the author revised his opinion regarding the coin type and conceded that it could have been minted by the Bulgarian king Theodore-Peter, a.k.a. Belgun, brother of King Ivan Asen I (Yordanov 1982). In that same article, Yordanov speaks of 21 more coins of this type, 18 of which were accompanied with photos. He suggests that the coins could have been minted somewhere around 1190 after the defeat of the Byzantines at the hands of the brothers Asen and Peter (Theodore) where they captured the Imperial Cross carried by the armies of Emperor Isaac II

Komnenos. The inscription on the reverse side is interpreted as Θ[εο]ΔΟ[ρος] Β[εγγ]ΟΥΝ[ος], i.e. Theodore-Belgun.

The suggestion that the king would inscribe his moniker on the coin does not sound convincing. Dochev (1990) rejects the assertion that the coins even existed during the reign of Asen and Peter. The name Belgun appears in only one historical record and there it is used to refer to King Ivan

Asen I. His brother, Peter IV (Theodore or Todor), was never referred to as Belgun in any of the source materials and is named Theodore in only one place. It is hard to believe that a ruler would inscribe coins with his moniker and not with his royal name. According to Dochev (1990), this type of coins were minted by the Byzantine commander Theodore Vrana who was employed by the Latins and had Bulgarian heritage. He was a semi-autonomous ruler of the region around Erdine and Didymoteicho between 1206 and 1208. He is depicted on the coins carrying a patriarchal cross because he considered himself the leader of the Greeks from Thrace and defender of the orthodox faith. Because Theodore Vrana was a vassal to the Latin Emperor, the title Basileus does not appear anywhere on the coin and his royal status is suggested only through items of regalia such as a royal crown with pendants, divitissos and loros, which were intended to relay the idea of him being a sovereign ruler.

In 1991, Penchev published a find from the *Plovdiv region from 1985*, which contained two coins with the inscription ΘΔΟ. He believes the find was originally hidden between 1195 and 1197, which makes it impossible for the coins to have been minted by Theodore Vrana. Penchev dates the coins to around 1190 and suggests they were minted in connection with Peter's (Theodore) claims to the

Byzantine throne. By choosing the name Peter, as he is mostly referred to in historical records, the ruler demonstrated his ancestral connection to the royals of the First Bulgarian Kingdom (Peter I (927-969) in particular), but when he laid his claim for the Byzantine imperial throne, he spelled his name as Theodore.

In 1994, S. Bendall and C. Morrisson published an article offering an overview of the minting practices employed by the enigmatic Theodore. In it, the authors tentatively suggest that the coins may have been minted by Theodore Mangaphas, but do not venture an interpretation of the inscription on the reverse side. The article mentions two finds made up entirely of this type of coin – one containing six and one, 70 pieces. The coins from the second find had 67 different seals on the reverse side (Penchev, 1999). It has been suggested that this find comes from the territory of Bulgaria. Both troves of coins have been sold off and are lost to science.

The aforementioned idea proposed by Penchev (1991) was further fleshed out and supported by more convincing arguments after the publishing of the *Pomorie-1985* find (Burgas) where one of the 37 coins features the inscription ΘΔΟ (Mutafov, Koychev и Azmanov 1997). The authors offer a new interpretation of the vertical inscription to the right of the figure of the ruler. They believe Theodore-Peter and his brother, Ivan Asen I, were initially pretenders to the imperial throne of Byzantium and considered *Isaac II Angelos a usurper*. Having proclaimed himself Emperor of Byzantium in 1190. Theodore-Peter sought recognition for his title from Frederick Barbarossa as the armies of the Third Crusade were passing through Bulgaria. There are written records by western chroniclers that expressly state that Kalopeter requested of the Roman Emperor (Frederick Barbarossa) to bestow upon him the imperial crown of the Greek Kingdom (*corona imperiale regni Grece*). The claim on the crown of the Basileus is based on *the title of King Simeon I* as formulated on his seals: CYMEΩN ENXPIC [TΩ] BACILE[UC] ROMEΩN. This title of Simeon I was never recognized by the Byzantines. However, his successor, King Peter I, was recognized by Byzantium as Basileuz boulgariaz (Emperor of Bulgarians), which was a lower-ranking title. This detail, according to the authors, makes it unlikely that inscribing the name Peter on the coins would be something a pretender to the Greek throne would do. For this reason, he inscribed his given name, Theodore (or Todor). Thus, according to the authors, the vertical inscription to the right – **Б** and the ligature **qN** underneath, i.e. the mirror image of **P** and **N**, was an abbreviation of the phrase BASILEUS (TON) ROMAION, i.e. „emperor of all Byzantines“. With such an interpretation (Basileus of the Byzantines) the propaganda character, which was initially ascribed to this coin type, becomes even farther reaching. In the absence of other options at the time, coins were the most efficient propaganda tool for an ambitious ruler.

This is a much more convincing explanation of the inscriptions and abbreviations on this type of coins and it dismisses interpretations of the letter Б (or B) as an abbreviation of the name Belgun – the most vulnerable argument of those who insist that these coins were minted by TheodorePeter.

The new theory offers a different interpretation of the double-sided patriarchy cross that appears on the coin. As we know, the patriarchy cross was captured by the armies of Asen and Peter in a battle in the mountains near present-day town of Triavna in the spring of 1190. The cross was not only a symbol of the Byzantine Empire, it was carried at the head of the advancing army by a monk as a powerful tool for religious motivation of Byzantine soldiers before battle. The authors,

however, tentatively concede that each of the pretenders to the Byzantine throne (Isaac Komnenos of Cyprus and Theodore Mangaphas of Philadelphia) could have had the patriarchy cross minted on the coins. Based on this they even suggest that Theodore-Peter could have started minting his coins even earlier than 1190. In fact, of all the pretenders to the throne, Theodore-Peter deserved the most to have the sacred cross of the patriarchy minted on his coins because the cross was in his possession and everybody knew that. Therefore, it makes more sense to assume that Theodore-Peter did not start minting his own coins before the battle near Triavna – most likely *April to September 1190*.

Since it is relatively easier to dismiss the possibility of Theodore Vrana being the one who minted this coin type, the main rival of Theodore-Peter for the credit of being the one who ordered the coins is the usurper, Theodore Mangaphas (1185-1189) from Philadelphia. We know of one of his coins, which was made from *electrum*. The main argument against attributing the copper coin discussed here to Theodore Mangaphas is mostly iconographical: the coin of Mangaphas is of superior craftsmanship; the seal is arched whereas on the copper coin it is flat; the image of the ruler has different features (Theodore-Peter has a moustache and beard, Theodore Mangaphas does not have beard) and clothing; the diameter of the seal is larger, about 20 mm. The main difference, however, is in the inscription – on the Mangaphas coin there is no legible inscription in the right field.

The whole story of this type of coin has been presented by Yordanov (2014) in a work offering a personal and emotional perspective, he describes a total of 46 coins, that have been published so far. Ultimately, he believes that of the two pretenders, Todor-Peter and Theodore Mangaphas, the first is the more likely issuer of the coin.

We believe there is a problem with the title Βασιλευς (emperor), which is typically not featured on Byzantine coins after the 11th century. The rulers of Byzantium, for the entire century preceding the minting of the coins discussed here, used the title ΔΕCΠOΤ (despot). It does not seem likely that a citizen of Medieval Bulgaria or Byzantium would recognize the meaning of Basileus behind a casually inscribed letter B in the right field of the reverse side of the coin, let alone that the remaining letters spell out an abbreviation of the phrase of all Byzantines.

According to Ovcharov (2011, 13), based on an analysis conducted with a portable x-ray fluorescence analyzer, the alloy used for five coins bearing the inscription ΘΔO has the following composition: 99.3% silver, 0.1% zinc, 0.1% lead; 0.1% iron; 0.2% selenium and 0.1% antimony. Based on this, we can offer the following interpretation:

According to modern scientific terminological convention, this alloy is classified as raw (unrefined) copper. The low silver content is indicative of impurity that comes from the output ore rather than a consequence of silver plating. The selenium and antimony content is comparatively high and suggests that the copper could have been mined in the deposits in the southern foothills of Stara Planina Mountain near present-day Town of Pirdop. Because of the sheer number of coins minted – possibly into the tens of thousands – the question of where such a large quantity of coins was manufactured and who and from where supplied the copper becomes quite important. At the time the coins were minted, none of the known mints were either controlled by Asen and Peter or located inside the borders of the restored Bulgarian kingdom. It would make sense to assume that the coins were minted at one of the residences of the rulers – most likely in Tarnovo or Preslav, although

coins had never been minted before at any of these two places. Another possible location is the Medieval city of Drastar, where some time earlier, in the 10th and the 11th century, large quantities of copy coins were manufactured, albeit by casting and not by minting, see *Zlataritsa 1939* (Veliko Tarnovo).

At this stage, we can say that there is still no definitive proof that this coin type was minted at the behest and during the reign of the Bulgarian king Theodore-Peter. At the same time, attributing this type of coins to other rulers from the end of the 12th and the start of the 13th century has not been corroborated convincingly.

Number of coins: 2 000+ Æ/Ag

Place of safekeeping: 1502 at the Historical Museum of Nova Zagora, 66 in private collections

Latest coin: copies (1212-1218)

Hidden: 1212-1218 (Yordanov 1984)

Yordanov (1976), **A-3-61**; Gerasimov (1979), **35-140**; Yordanov (1982), **H-4-17**;

Yordanov (1984, 174); Dochev (1990), **H-1-29**; Penchev (1991), **H-1/2-22**;

Mutafov, Koychev и Azmanov (1997), **HC-4-127**; Penchev (1999), **HC-6/2-79**;

Dochev (2009, 19); Ovcharov (2011, 13); Yordanov (2014, 67-86)

Valandovo 1934, Republic of North Macedonia

In 1934 or slightly earlier, near the town of Valandovo some 20 km to the northwest of Lake Doyran (present-day Republic of North Macedonia), under unclear circumstances, a hoard of coins was discovered which has been alleged to comprise at least 18 electrum „Aspron Trachy“ coins of Theodore Komnenos Doukas (1215-1230) and a gold coin (hyperpyron) of the Bulgarian king Ivan Asen II (1218-1241). The coins from this find are scattered among collectors and museums, including the gold perpera of Ivan Asen II, which was acquired by a Croatian collector (Avdev 2012. 60), presumably the Zagreb banker E. Lesich. Recognizing the importance of the coin to Bulgarian history, the collector decided that the proper place to keep it was Bulgaria. He offered to trade for the coin and sent it to Sofia via a secret courier. The coin was shown to the management of the People's Museum in Sofia (present-day NAIM-Sofia), which corroborated its authenticity and agreed to do whatever it takes to acquire the coin for Bulgaria. The collector did not want payment, he wanted to trade it for a number of rare Roman denarii from a large hoard discovered at *Devna-1929* (Varna). Pursuant to the then-applicable Antiquities Law, a committee was convened by the Ministry of People's Education, which greenlit the trade, offering the Croatian collector the requested Roman coins. These were 14 rare denarii by rulers such as Vespasian with Titus and Domitian, Plotina, Marciana, Didius Julianus, Didia Clara, Manlia Scantilla, etc. Further on, the story of the coin turns almost cloak-and-dagger and for this reason details of the trade and the deal itself were kept secret for a long time. It only recently turned out that the wife of Professor T. Gerasimov, Bisera Gerasimova, had kept written records where she described in detail the acquisition of the gold coin (Avdev 2012. 64-66). Todor Gerasimov, accompanied by his wife, was officially dispatched to Belgrade to examine coins held at the local museum. In a secret

meeting with an intermediary Gerasimov exchanged the rare denarii and acquired the gold coin. To avoid any issues with the border authorities of Yugoslavia, his wife, Bisera Gerasimova, hung the coin, which was punctured, from a gold chain she had taken with her for this exact purpose, and snuck the coin across the border as a piece of jewelry. The coin was entered in the inventory of the museum on the next day.

In her memoirs, Bisera Gerasimova writes that she was not present at the exchange: „...*They exchanged the coins on the next day in Petrovich's office. I wasn't at the exchange. I went window shopping in the two department stores. We stayed in Belgrade for four days.*“ (Avdev 2012, 65).

The Ivan Asen II coin is 30 mm in diameter (33 mm according to other sources) and weighs 4.33 g (Dochev 2009, 41). It was made from 18 karat gold. It has a slightly concave shape and was modified to be worn on a necklace. It was punctured and an attempt was made to flatten it. This intervention created a large radial crack.

The convex side (obverse) features an image of Christ with halo, wearing tunic and mantle, standing on a footstool, upright and facing forward. His right arm, bent at the elbow in front, is delivering a blessing. In his left hand, he is holding a gospel. A vertical inscription on either side of the figure reads as follows: IC XC ЧЪ СЛІАБЕ. The concave side (reverse) features the king (on the left) and Saint Dimitar (on the right) standing upright. Saint Dimitar is placing a crown on the king's head with his right hand and with his left, he is giving him a sheathed long sword. The king has a short, rounded beard and a moustache. His right arm is bent at the elbow in front of his chest as if for prayer. His left arm is extended to take the sword of Saint Dimitar. In the field on the left and on the right there is a vertical inscription in two columns. Arranged horizontally, the inscription reads: ИВАНЪ АСЕНЪ ЦАРЪ (left hand side); Светы Димитъръ (right hand side) (Yurukova and Penchev 1990, 79).



Gold perpera of Ivan Asen II, x 2 (Yurukova and Penchev 1990, 80-81)

Acquired under a very peculiar set of circumstances and thus far one of a kind, the Ivan Asen II gold coin inevitably poses some additional questions. As could be expected, there are those who doubt its authenticity. Since its acquisition, the coin has never been displayed to the public (displayed at the National Historical Museum in Sofia is a copy). Only one high-quality picture of the coin has been taken so far

(a copy of which is presented here) and it has never been subjected to any physical, chemical or metallographic tests. Its purity has most likely been determined using the most unsophisticated, which goldsmiths and jewelers use to this day – rubbing the coin on a stone and processing the residue with a cocktail of acids. The absence of advanced testing does not allow for determining when the coin was punctured and cracked with sufficient clarity so it remains unknown whether this happened in the Middle Ages or in modern times.

According to Penchev (Yurukova and Penchev 1990. 79) and Avdev (2012. 54), the modifications to the coin which included its flattening and puncturing took place in modernity, but no solid arguments for such a conclusion have been offered.

In the first publication of the coin (which took place before it was acquired by NAIM-Sofia), Gerasimov noted that there were remnants of patina on the surface of the gold which was consistent with several centuries of safe keeping. There are several (5-6) marks on the coin, shallow lines (graffiti), which are deemed to be the marks of goldsmiths that examined the coin to ascertain its value (Dochev 2003. 34). Apparently, this coin was unknown to the majority of goldsmiths. Indirectly, this suggests that the coin was used as currency before it was hidden away (Avdev 2012. 59).

This type of coin was produced as part of a one-time, limited edition minting conducted most likely with a propaganda purpose. It has been suggested that the coin was minted in April-May

1230. quite possibly very soon after the death of King Ivan Asen II (1241). The financial authorities in Thessaloniki likely pulled the majority of the gold coins by the Bulgarian king out of circulation and melted them down. This process was completed when John III Doukas Vatatzes sacked Thessaloniki and captured the southwestern territories of Bulgaria in 1246, when most likely the remaining exemplars featuring the image of the Bulgarian king were destroyed. Based on this, it can be argued away in 1241, at the latest.

In a private conversation with Penchev (Yurukova and Penchev 1990. 79), Gerasimov offered the hypothesis that the Ivan Asen II coin was discovered near the town of Prilep. In his book (2012. 61), Avdev insists that according to the owner of one of the electrum coins from this hoard, it was dug up near the town of Valandovo. Prilep is about 100 km to the west of Valandovo. The exact location of the hoard that contained the Ivan Asen II gold coin therefore remains a mystery and a subject of discussion to this day. We believe Valandovo makes more sense as the location of the find because the town lies about a hundred kilometers to the north of Thessaloniki, whereas Prilep is twice as far. Based on the analysis presented above, it can be inferred that this type of coins was in circulation mostly in Thessaloniki and its immediate surroundings. In this sense, hiding the treasure nearby, in Valandovo, is more plausible.

Number of coins: 19+ (1 Au, 18+ El)

Place of safekeeping: 1 Au at NAIM-Sofia, inventory number 168

Latest coin: Ivan Asen II (1230)?

Hidden: 1235-1241? (HT)

Gerasimov (1935), **8-361**;
Yurukova and Penchev (1990); Dochev (2003);
Dochev (2009); Avdev (2012. 59-68)

Nisovo 1981, Ivanovo Municipality, Ruse Province

In 1981, under an undetermined set of circumstances, a large hoard of Byzantine gold coins was discovered in the vicinity of the village. According to accounts by collectors from Ruse, the hoard was found in the castle near the village in a clay pot. Some 300 coins were inside. The National Historical Museum in Sofia purchased all 55 hyperpyrons from John III Doucas Vatatzes that were part of the hoard. All coins have had their periphery cut down. They have not been published.

Number of coins: 300+ Au

Place of safekeeping: 55 at the National Historical Museum in Sofia

Latest coin: John III Doucas Vatatzes (1222-1254)

Hidden: 1222-1254 (HT)

Yurukova (1983), **A-1/2-117**

Nisovo 1998, Ivanovo Municipality, Ruse Province

In 1998, Dr. Ivan Ivanov, director of the Sofia Zoo purchased for the museum collection of the Bulgarian National Bank a hoard of coins believed to have been discovered in the ruins of a medieval fortress in the village of Nisovo. The hoard comprises 42 copper coins from the following rulers: billon coin from Theodore II Laskaris (1254-1258) – 1, copper scyphat from King Mitso (1261-1263) – 22, copper scyphat from King Constantine Asen (1257-1263) – 19.

Sotirov insists that this is the first hoard of coins from King Mitso, but there is one that actually predates it (Veliko Tarnovo – 1992). According to Sotirov, the first name of the king was shortened from Simeon. The average weight of the Mitso coins in the hoard is 2.76 g. The average weight of the 19 Constantine Asen coins is 1.81 g. It has been stated that the Mitso scyphats are older than the Constantine Asen coins, having been minted between 1261 and 1262. The most probable location of the mint which manufactured these coins at the behest of Mitso was the town of Preslav. Regarding the hiding of the treasure, it has been hypothesized that it happened in the autumn of 1263 when one of Mitso's followers buried some of their coins near Nisovo while fleeing north (Sotirov, 2004). Dochev challenges this timeline and believes that the treasure was buried between 1268 and 1269. He also claims that the contents of the find were manipulated and some of the rarer and heavier coins were taken.

Number of coins: 42 Æ

Place of safekeeping: Bulgarian National Bank, inventory number K III/12

Latest coin: Constantine Asen (1262-1263)

Hidden: autumn of 1263 (Sotirov)

1268-1269 (Dochev)

Sotirov (2004), **HCE-1-117**; Dochev (2012), **HCE-8-93**

Ruse 1993

In 1993 near a military base, in the outskirts of the city of Ruse, treasure hunters using metal detectors discovered a hoard of copper scyphat coins from the 13th century. While part of the find was sold off by the metal detectorists, some 31 coins were acquired by the National Historical Museum in Sofia. Of those, 27 pieces are from Despot Jacob Svetoslav and 4, from King Constantine Asen. Of the Jacob Svetoslav coins, four are of the Bust of Saint Dimitar type on the abverse side and the standing figure of the despot depicted on the reverse. The remaining 23 coins are of the type Saint Dimitar standing on the face and the standing figure of the despot on the reverse side, diameter 20-29mm, weight 1.54-4.67 g.

The Constantine Asen coins are of the type bust of Jesus with halo facing forward on the face side and the standing figure of the king facing forward, holding labarum and orb on the reverse side – 2 pcs and bust of Jesus with halo facing forward on the abverse side and the king riding a horse on the reverse – 2 pcs; diameter 21-27 mm, weight 1.53-2.45g. One of the coins is broken. This is the first hoard of coins from Despot Jacob Svetoslav. Penchev believes that the coins of the despot were minted in the medieval town of Cherven near Ruse to commemorate his adoption by Queen Maria in 1275.

In a second publication, Sotirov writes that 51 more coins from the same find were sold to the Bulgarian National Bank. In the second group of coins, there are 2 coins from Despot Jacob Svetoslav and 49 coins from King Constantine Asen. Thus, the total number of known coins from Jacob Svetoslav from this find stands at 29, whereas the Constantine Asen coin total is 53. According to Sotirov, none of the coins from this hoard were minted later than 1265-1266. As for the coins from Jacob Svetoslav, they were minted during the 1261-1266 period at a mint located in the western part of Bulgaria, most likely in Novo Bardo. These coins from the despot were minted before the minting of the 4th type of coins from Constantine Asen. The last type of coins weighs between 0.50-0.75g. In contrast, the coins from this find are considerably heavier, ranging between 1.32 and 3.62 g. The latest coins from the find are the coins of type 3 from Constantine Asen (which depict the king riding a horse). They were minted between 1265 and 1266. According to Sotirov, after 1266 Jacob Svetoslav no longer had the authority to mint his own coins and he had become a Hungarian vassal.

Number of coins: 82+ Æ

Place of safekeeping: 31 at the National Historical Museum in Sofia, inventory number 3016410183. 31531-31541; 51 at the Bulgarian National Bank

Latest coin: Jacob Svetoslav (1275) or Constantine Asen (1265-1266)

Hidden: 1275 (Penchev); 1266 (Sotirov)

Penchev (1999), **HC-6/2-89**; Sotirov (2006), **HCE-3/1-215**

14th Century

Tishevitsa 1978, Vratsa Municipality

In the summer of 1978, while ploughing fields in the outskirts of the village, a clay pot containing medieval silver coins from the 13th – 14th century was discovered. A large part of the find was divided up among private citizens. According to accounts cited by S. Mashov, some 247 coins were purchased for the collection of the Historical Museum of Vratsa. Private collectors from Sofia sold about 400 coins from this hoard to the National Historical Museum in Sofia. All in all, some 652 coins from this find have been accounted for and published by Penchev (1983). This discovery as well as one from *Tishevitsa 1996*, which is very similar to it, have sparked a lively scientific discussion regarding mostly the Bulgarian king Mihail III Shishman Asen, because the name Mihail appears on a considerable number of the coins. According to Penchev (1983), the coins from this find were minted by the following rulers:

BULGARIAN COINS

1. George I Terter (inscription Γεωργιe Dux Γεωργη) – 1 (19-30 mm, 1,37 g);

2. Coins with the name Mihail (?-?):

I type – The king with Saint George, without the family name Asen

Variant **A** – 6 (19-20 mm, 1.42 – 1.88 g)

Variant **B** – 11 (19-20 mm, 1.27-1.75 g)

II type – The king with Saint George with the family name Asen

Variant **A** – 128 (18-20 mm, 1.05-1.97 g)

Variant **B** – 4 (19-21 mm, 1.43-2.00 g)

III type – The king and Queen EPINA holding a banner

Only variant – 2 (19-20 mm, 1.94-2.05 g)

IV type – The king and Queen EPINA holding the cross of the patriarchy Only variant – 29 (20-21 mm, 1.39-1.95 g)

Total Bulgarian coins: 181 pcs.

SERBIAN COINS

1. Stefan Dragutin (1276-1316)

I type – 1 (18 mm, 1.73 g)

II type

Variant **A** – 41 (19-21 mm, 1.18-1.95 g)

Variant **B** – 53 (16-22 mm, 0.96-2.18 g)

2. Uroš II Milutin (1282-1321)

I type

Variant **A** – 49 (17-21 mm, 1.01-2.20 g)

Variant **B** – 33 (18-22 mm, 1.21-2.14 g)

Variant **C** – 8 (19-21 mm, 1.44-2.03 g)

II type

Only variant – 2 (19-20 mm, 1.41-1.94 g)

3. Stefan Dragutin or Uroš II Milutin – 1

Total Serbian coins: 188 pcs.

VENETIAN COINS

1. Ranieri Zeno (1253-1286) – 3 (20-21 mm, 2.01-2.09 g)

2. Jacopo Contarini (1275-1280) – 1 (20-21 mm, 2.14 g)

3. Giovanni Dandolo (1280-1289) – 2 (18-19 mm, 1.79-1.84 g)

Total Venetgian coins: 6 pcs.

COPIES

1. Of Serbian coins – 40 (18-21 mm, 0.80-1.73 g)

2. Of Venetian coins – 235 (18-21 mm, 0.77-1.75 g)

Total copy coins: 275 pcs.

Total coins studied: 650 pcs.

All coins bearing the name Mihail (with or without the family name Asen) that are part of the find, are very well preserved, which indicates they were hidden very soon after they were minted. Penchev places the time of hiding based on the foreign coins – Venetian and Serbian, which are part of the hoard. The latest of the six Venetian grossi are the two pieces from J. Dandolo (1280-1289). According to Penchev, they are heavily worn and recut along the periphery of the core. The remaining four Venetian coins are also very worn, which indicates they were in circulation for at least several decades before they were hidden. According to Galabov (2001. 80), the Venetian grossi, particularly those minted between 1280 and 1289, were not worn but were minted using worn matrices. Furthermore, all of them weigh over 1.8g, and the matapan of Jacopo Contarini (1275-1280) is not at all worn and it weighs 2.14g.

The type 1 coin from Stefan Dragutin was minted prior to 1276 when he was first co-governor with his father. The coin is semi-worn. The rest of the coins are dated back to between 1276 and 1316. The coin from Stefan Uroš II Milutin was minted no later than 1321. The absence of coins from later Serbian kings such as Stefan Dečani (1321-1331) and Stefan Dušan (1331-1355), or coins from the prolific coinage of Ivan Alexander with Mihail Asen, indicates that the hoard was buried, according to Penchev (1983), no later than the mid 1220s, i.e. during the reign of King

Mihail III Shishman Asen.

Mihail III Shishman Asen was crowned king of Bulgaria in the spring of 1323. Prior to that, he was the despot of the economically and militarily important Vidin Province. It is quite possible the coins were minted during the first 2 to 3 years of his reign. The problem comes from the presence of coins of type III and IV type, where the king is depicted next to Queen Irina. Her birth name was Theodora and she was the sister of Emperor Andronikos III Palaiologos and widow to King Todor Svetoslav. She was the second wife of Mihail Shishman, who married her in the summer of 1324 for political reasons. The marriage was imposed on Mihail Shishman by Byzantium as a precondition for a long-term peace treaty between Bulgaria and Byzantium. According to old tradition, the new wife of the king, who was the guarantor of peace, took the name Irina (peace). This, according to Penchev, explains the name of the queen that appears on the Mihail Shishman coins of type III and IV. In fact, this was Theodora Palaiologos.

Stylistically, type I, variant A Mihail III Shishman coins look much like the coins of Stefan Dragutin (type II, Variant B) and the coins of Uroš II Milutin (type I, Variant B). This similarity suggests that ever since the start of his reign, the Bulgarian king had his coins minted at a mint somewhere in Serbia, especially given his close relationship with his father in law, Uroš II Milutin (whose daughter, Ana or Neda, was Mihail Shishman's first wife). Since as of 1323 the father in law had already passed away, Penchev believes this was a case of rigid minting. In other words, the Serbian mint kept on manufacturing coins for Mihail Shishman, which were very similar to the coins of Uroš II Milutin even after his death. At the time, Serbia was torn by civil war and Mihail Shishman chose the wrong side – the competitor of the future Serbian king, Stefan Dečani. This competitor, whose name was Vladislav, was defeated in the spring of 1324. The coins of type III and type IV, which depict Queen Theodora, were minted for the first time in the second half of 1324. Of those, type IV (1325-1326) seem to be more abundant.

The presence of a large number of copies of Venetian grossi, according to Penchev, can be attributed to the vassal status of the despot of Vidin which was imposed in 1292 during the reign of Despot Shishman, Mihail's father. It has been proposed that Serbian dominion made it difficult for the Vidin Tsardom to trade with the Venetians, which explains the sudden decline in the abundance of Venetian coins. This triggered an explosion of counterfeit coins, which were mostly copies of J. Dandolo (1280-1289) matapans. His were the last original Venetian coins to be used in the territory of the Vidin Tsardom and therefore became the main target for counterfeiting. The Serbian replica coins have the name Stefan inscribed on them, i.e. they are copies of coins from Stefan Dragutin. Like the Venetian, Serbian replica coins from the hoard are made from poor-quality alloy, they are lighter and their craftsmanship is unsophisticated. Their manufacture, however, was under the direct control of the despot's administration, therefore in all likelihood he was benefiting from them.

According to Penchev (1983), the silver coins from Mihail III Shishman, where he is depicted riding his horse, were minted in Tarnovo, probably after 1326. This explains the absence of this type of coins in the Tishevitsa hoard. Penchev does not offer any explanation as to what event made the owner of the treasure hide it between 1325 and 1326.

In a series of four articles published between 2000 and 2005, Galabov challenges Penchev's dating of the coins featuring the Bulgarian king and queen. According to Galabov, the king depicted on the coins was the father of Mihail III Shishman, the ruler of the Vidin Tsardom, Mihail

Shishman (1280-1308) and Irina was his first wife, granddaughter of Ivan Asen II and Irina Komnenos. The coins depicting the king and Irina were minted no later than 1292 in Vidin.

Dismissing Galabov's articles, Dochev (2009) includes these coins in what he refers to as „Debatable mintings from the 14th century“. He calls them a mystery and attributes them to Bulgarian rulers from the Byzantine and Serbian branches of the royal house of Asen. According to Dochev, the coins bearing inscriptions of the name Mihail in different variants in Cyrillic and Latin script, are connected with the second or third son of Mihail III Shishman Asen, who was also named Mihail, and who between 1331 and 1337 ruled together with his uncle, Belaur, in Vidin, having retained his royal titles. Yet, as Dochev notes, the title of the younger Mihail (the son) was despot while Mihail Shishman of Vidin has been referred to in written records from the 14th century as king or even emperor.

A fourth theory as to the identity of the Mihail referred to on coins from the two finds has been offered by Avdev (2007, 134), who insists that basilikons (flat silver coins, grossi) were not minted prior to 1304. Avdev (2007, 141) insists that the coins feature the oldest son of Ivan Alexander, Mihail Asen and his wife Irina and that they were minted between 1338 and 1352.

The fact that a sample of 652 coins did not prove sufficient to provide definitive clues that could be used to date the find precisely is interesting on its own.

Number of coins: 1000+ Ag

Place of safekeeping: 247 at the Regional Historical Museum of Vratsa, about 400 at the National Historical Museum in Sofia **Latest coin:** Mihail Asen ?

Hidden: 1295-1300 (Galabov); 1325 (Penchev); 1338-1352 (Avdev)

Yurukova (1979), **A-4-63**;

Avdev (1980), **H-3-18**; Penchev (1983), **H-2-15**, **H-3-27**;

Rakova (1984), **H-3-34**;

Galabov (2000), **HC-7-62**; Galabov (2001), **HC-8-70**;

Galabov (2002-2003), **HC-9-61**;

Galabov (2004-2005), **HC-10-69**; Avdev (2007, 127-144);

Dochev (2009, 248-268)

Tishevitsa 1996, Vratsa Municipality

In 1996, another hoard of silver coins inside a clay pot with a lid was discovered in the outskirts of the village. The coins were scattered and their exact number remains unknown. Based on accounts cited by Galabov (2001), the content of the hoard was approximately identical to that of the earlier find - *Tishevitsa-1978* (Vratsa). Because the two hoards of coins are very similar, it has been suggested that the two finds are part of one and the same treasure (Dochev 2017, 239). Initially, the coins were divvied up and offered for sale. Galabov (2001, 70) claims that he selected for his own personal collection 12 of the best pieces which, according to

him, were representative of the entire spectrum of types and variants of Bulgarian silver coins that made up the hoard. These

12 coins have an average weight of 1.78 g. Among them are two pieces from George I Terter

(1280-1292) and feature an inscription of the type „Георги DUX Георги“.

A certain amount of time after the discovery of the hoard, some 922 coins were submitted for acquisition at the Museum of the Bulgarian National Bank. For reasons that still remain unclear, the Museum purchased only 22 Bulgarian coins. With the assistance of Galabov and with permission from the parties who had discovered the hoard of coins, Sotirov was granted access to the remaining coins from the hoard. He describes them as follows:

- **Bulgarian** (114): 114 grossi featuring Mihail Asen and Mihail Asen with Irina;
- **Serbian** (402): 162 grossi from Stefan Dragutin; 142 grossi from Uroš II Milutin and 98 replicas of Serbian coins;
- **Venetian** (398): replicas of Venetian matapan coins – 274; alphabetic replica Venetian coins – 124;
- **Byzantine** (20): basilikons – 20 of Andronikos II with Mihail IX.

It remains unclear as to why the 12 coins of Galabov, including the ones with the „Георги DUX Георги“ inscription are missing from this list.

Galabov has pointed out that in either of the finds in Tishevitsa, which most likely comprise more than 2 000 pieces, there are no coins from Theodore Svetoslav (1300-1322). Instead, there are two pieces from George I Terter, which are much rarer. In addition, at 1.80 to 1.81 g, these coins are very heavy. It is virtually impossible for such heavy coins to be in circulation during the 1320s when the average weight of silver coins declined to 1.60 g. The basilikons from Andronikos II with Mihail IX are also heavy (1.89 g) and have not been cut down.

These and other arguments have forced Galabov to offer two possible hypotheses: 1) both treasures were buried between 1295 and 1300; 2) the coins largely attributed to Mihail III Shishman Asen and Irina were, in fact, minted by his father, Mihail Shishman of Vidin (1280-1308), who ruled the Vidin Tsardom as an independent ruler (even king).

The name of this ruler's wife is not known but it could have been Irina, since she was the granddaughter of Ivan Asen II and would have made sense for her to be named after her grandmother, Irina Komnenos. The coins of the type Mihail and Irina were minted until 1292 when, after the unsuccessful campaign of Mihail of Vidin in Serbia, he was forced to remarry, taking for his wife the daughter of the Serbian Grand Župan Dragoš. Thus, Galabov explains the presence of four unique coins in the find from Zgorigrad, which bore the Latin inscription CAR MICHAEL (King Mihail) and Saint Stefan. The presence of the saint, who was widely worshipped in Serbia, on the coins is indicative of the fact that they were minted after 1292 and the behest of Mihail of Vidin under Serbian influence.

Sotirov (2001, 318) brings back to life a long abandoned belief that silver coin minting in Bulgaria started in 1253. and assumes that these coins feature Mihail II Asen (son of King Ivan Asen II) and his mother, Irina. According to Sotirov, both treasures from Tishevitsa were buried in the wake of the Serbian-Bulgarian war of

1330, or the dynastic infighting that ensued. The opinions of other authors on this topic have been presented in *Tishevitsa 1978*.

Number of coins: about 1 000 Ag

Place of safekeeping: 12 in the private collection of Galabov; 22 at the Bulgarian National Bank

Latest coin: Andronikos II with Mihail IX (1295-1300)

Hidden: about 1300 (Galabov); 1325 (Penchev); 1330-1331 (Sotirov)

Penchev (1983), **H-3-27**;

Sotirov (2001), **ГАН-1-288**; Galabov (2001), **HC-8-70**;

Galabov (2002-2003), **HC-9-61**; Galabov (2004-2005), **HC-10-69**;

Dochev (2017, 239)

Dabene 1958, Karlovo Municipality; Plovdiv Province

While digging in 1958, a woman from the village found 80 grossi of the Bulgarian king Theodore Svetoslav (1300-1322) and five gold perperi from the Byzantine emperors Andronikos

II and Mihail IX (1295-1320). Along with the coins, there was also a 7-piece set of gold jewelry. A party of the find, namely 59 grossi from Theodore Svetoslav and 4 of the gold coins were acquired by the Karlovo Museum (Tsonchev; Gerasimov; Avdev 1978; Haritonov). The coins kept at the museum were published in detail by Penchev (1982). He separates the silver coins minted by Theodore Svetoslav into three periods depending on weight and the style of the imagery. From period one to period three, the weight of the coins decreases and the style of the imagery becomes less sophisticated (Yurukova and Penchev 1990. 99). The Dabene hoard contains coins from all three periods as follows:

Period one: 4 pieces, including 1 whole coin and 3 fragments with very sophisticated style.

Circular inscription reading СВЯТСЛАВ Ч БЛГАРСКИ. The coins from this period are the most worn out. The intact piece weighs 1.65 g.

Period two: 13 pcs with a cruder style, larger contours of figures and, in some cases, misshaped contours. The inscription is also shortened. Overall, the coins from this group are well preserved. There are ten intact pieces from the second period, whose average weight comes in at 1.55 g. **Period three:** The 42 pieces, which demonstrate a decidedly rougher style and poorer craftsmanship, have an average weight of 1.49 g. They were almost never in circulation. A characteristic feature of the coins from this group is the missing letter in the word БЛГАРСКИ in the inscription on the reverse side.

There are 42 intact pieces in total, weighing 1.50 g on average. The 59 coins feature 49 faceside and 42 reverse-side seals. According to Dochev, the silver coins from Theodore Svetoslav were issued between 1307 and 1320. He divides them into five groups based on chronology and style. All of them were minted in Tarnovo.

Based on statistical analysis of the coins from Theodore Svetoslav from Dabene-1958, as well as of 43 individual coins, Avdev (2005, 110) reached the conclusion that there was only one weight standard for this type of coin minting in Bulgaria, and it was about 1.53 g. It is virtually identical to the weight standard of the Gold

Tatar Horde, introduced by Khan Tokai in 1310/1311, i.e. 1.52g. This was the result of close political ties between Bulgaria and the Golden Horde during the first two decades of the 14th century, which were based on anti-Byzantine sentiment. Avdev (2005, 112) has suggested that the silver asparons from King Theodore Svetoslav were first minted after 1315.

The four Byzantine gold coins have been cut along the periphery and weigh between 2.76 and 3.24 g (Penchev). Penchev does not offer a timeline for the hiding of the coins but insists that it took place prior to 1322. The hiding of the coins can be the result of one of two events: the Tatar invasion of Thrace in 1320 and 1321 and the sacking of Plovdiv by the Bulgarian army in 1322.

Number of coins: 85 (5 Au и 80 Ag) and jewelry

Place of safekeeping: 63 (4 Au and 59 Ag) at the Historical Museum of Karlovo

Latest coin: Theodore Svetoslav (1307-1320)

Hidden: prior to 1322 (Penchev); 1320-1322 (HT)

Tsonchev (1960), **ИМП-4-211**; Gerasimov (1962), **25-226**;

Avdev (1978), **H-1-22**; Penchev (1982), **H-1-3**;

Haritonov (2003, 439); Avdev (2005, 109); Dochev (2009, 101-104)

Byala Cherkva 1934, Pavlikeni Municipality; Veliko Tarnovo Province

In 1934, while deep-ploughing a vine yard owned by Anka Bakalova (daughter in law of the poet Tsanko Bakalov Tserkovski), workers cut into a tall, three-liter metal vessel containing gold hyperpyron from the Byzantine emperors Isaac II Angelos (1185-1195) and Andronikos II with Mihail IX (1294-1320). Amongst the other coins, there was a grossus from the Bulgarian king Theodore Svetoslav (1301-1322). The vine yard was located 1.5 km south of the town of Byala Cherkva in the „Selishte“ area.

In his announcement of the find, Gerasimov (1938, 315) notes that there were a total of 116 coins in the hoard and the police secured from the ploughmen 72 hyperpyrons and the silver grossus.

According to accounts cited by Valentin Yordanov, the gold coins comprised two distinctive groups which differed significantly in weight and gold purity: the coins from the first group (22 pcs) were large, 20-karat hyperpyrons from the reign of Emperor Isaac II Angelos (most likely John II Komnenos), whereas the coins from the second group (50 pcs) comprised cut/lightened

15-karat hyperpyrons from Andronikos II with Mihail IX. The remaining 43 hyperpyrons were sold by the discoverers of the find to private buyers. In 1984, V. Yordanov interviewed the only surviving worker that was part of the group that made the discovery (one of the diggers), Angel Angelov Malchankov. He admitted that the workers had taken a large number of coins for themselves and that the total number of the coins in the hoard was at least 180. Six of the hyperpyrons of Andronikos II with Mihail IX and the silver grossus were purchased by the Regional Museum of History of Veliko Tarnovo. According to Haritonov (2003. 434), who

examined the coins personally at the museum in Tarnovo, they were from the following rulers:

Constantine IX (1042-1055): Histamenon nómisma – 1 pcs.;

Andronikos II with Mihail IX (1294-1320): hyperpyron – 5 pcs., one of which was fragmented and cut;

Theodore Svetoslav (1300-1320): silver grossus – 1 pcs.

The six hyperpyrons in the museum were published in detail by Mihaylov (2011). People interested in the find have been waiting for 77 years for someone at the museum to take the time to publish the remaining coins from this intriguing hoard. What is more, it was revealed that the King Theodore Svetoslav grossus had been stolen from the museum in January 2006. It is quite odd that the burglars chose to steal a fractured silver coin (weighing 1.25 g), but left the gold pieces?! According to Mihaylov, all coins were hyperpyrons from Andronikos II with Mihail IX. Of those, three were minted in Constantinople in 1294-1320, two in Thessalonica between 1303 and 1320, and one at an unidentified mint some time after 1303. It is fractured and weighs 1.86 g, whereas the weight of the other five coins varies between 3.15 and 3.25 g.

Mihaylov does not cite or refer to the details of the find as published in the overview article by Valentin Yordanov. It was based on detailed information on the makeup of the hoard, which was acquired in an interview of one of the diggers who discovered the coins, that V. Yordanov (1991) made the important assumption that the coins had been collected over a time span of more than 150 years as a family treasure handed down from generation to generation.

The discrepancy between the descriptions of Haritonov (2003) and Mihaylov (2011) regarding the presence of a coin from Constantine IX invites suspicion because after the theft at the museum in 2006, coins from this hoard could have been intermixed with others.

Much later, just a hundred meters west of the location of this hoard, a hoard of 40 to 50 gold coins from the same time was discovered, but was unfortunately scattered completely. This find was either a second cache that was part of the first treasure or was hidden by a relative of the original owner.

It has been theorized who the owner of the coins was (Teodosiev). This could have been the property of a boyar from the region near Byala Cherkva who lived here until the 1330s and was summoned by King Mihail Shishman to take part in the battle of Velbazhd in the spring of 1330, where he was likely killed, see *Rositsa 2005*.

Number of coins: 180+ (180+ Au, 1 Ag)

Place of safekeeping: 6 Au at the Regional Historical Museum of Veliko Tarnovo

Latest coin: Theodore Svetoslav (1301-1322)

Hidden: 1322-1330 (HT)

Gerasimov (1938), **11-315**;

Avdev (1978), **H-1-22**; Yordanov, V. (1991); Penchev (1998), **HC-5-104**;

Teodosiev (2009, 7); Mihaylov (2011), **HMT-26-171**

Rositsa 2005, Pavlikeni Municipality; Veliko Tarnovo Province

In around 2005, under circumstances that are not yet clear, a clay vessel was discovered in a wooded area overlooking the „Manastira“ area some 1.5 km to the east of the village of Rositsa and 3 km to the southwest of the town of Byala Cherkva. It contained 498 concave gold coins and 4 silver ingots in the shape of rods. The items from the find were scattered. Tentative accounts suggest it comprised coins from John III Doucas Vatatzes and the earlier members of the Palaiologos family (Andronikos II with Mihail IX?). Some 50 of the pieces had been reminted (cut?). A large number of coins had graffiti in the shape of straight lines carved into them. Exploratory archaeological digs were performed in the area around the original location of the find. A conclusion was made that this was the site of a small Medieval settlement which was abandoned at the end of the 13th or the start of the 14th century. The presence of silver ingots indicates that there is a greater likelihood that the treasure was buried at the start or the middle of the 15th century. Thus, the coins attributed to John III Doucas Vatatzes were likely not his but from much later emissions by the Byzantine emperors John V and John VI. This treasure could be connected to *Byala Cherkva 1934*. I.e. it could have belonged to the same owner or his heirs, which held something like a villa (castle) on the plateau overlooking the site of the find. Because there are remains from a medieval castle, the area is called „Hissar“.

Number of coins: 498 Au +
Ag rods **Place of**
safekeeping: scattered
Latest coin: XIII-XIV century?
Hidden: 1330 - 1350? (HT)

According to local residents.

Veliko Tarnovo 1956. The Royal Palace in the medieval Bulgarian capital Tsarevgrad Tarnov (Today the Archaeological Reserve Tsarevets near the town of Veliko Tarnovo)

In the autumn of 1956, during excavations among the ruins of the Royal Palace on Tsarevets Hill, 950 silver asparons from Ivan Alexander with Mihail Asen were discovered in one of the chambers. The find was acquired by the Veliko Tarnovo Museum (Gerasimov).

In a second publication, Dochev (1983) states that the hoard comprised 791 coins of Ivan Alexander with Mihail Asen, but only 656 pieces were in decent enough condition to be studied. The rest of the coins had been heavily burned. Given the location of the find, it has been suggested that it was found in a chamber that was part of the residence of the royal family. The building had been destroyed in a fire in or around 1355. After the fire, a new palace building was erected on the site. The average weight of the coins from the hoard is 1.52 to 1.53 g and, according to Dochev, was close to the 1.60 g weight standard for silver coins of the „Ivan Alexander alone“ type, which has been dated to 1331-1337. In a 2009 catalogue,

Dochev moved the start of the range to 1332/1333. In other words, the coins from the palace hoard were minted between 1332/1333 and 1355. All but two of the coins feature an inverted abbreviation of the title „ЦРЪ“. Coins featuring a regular abbreviation „ЦРЪ“ start to appear in finds dated after 1350-1355.

The weight distribution of the coins has been described in Avdev's book. It is characterized by two pronounced peaks at 1.61 and at 1.45 - 1.50 g. The second group of coins were taken out of circulation later, based on their declining weight.

Number of coins: 791 Ag

Place of safekeeping: Regional Historical Museum of Veliko Tarnovo

Latest coin: Ivan Alexander with Mihail Asen (1350-1355)

Hidden: 1355-1356 (Dochev 1983)

Gerasimov

(1959), **22-360**;

Dochev (1983), **H-2-3**; Avdev (2005, 172-173); Dochev (2009, 135)

Sedlarevo 1988, Kotel Municipality; Sliven Province

In the end of the 1980s, a group of treasure hunters armed with metal detectors discovered 1 033 gold coins (scyphats) in the outskirts of the village of Sedlarevo. The coins were minted on the behest of the Byzantine emperors from the Palaiologos dynasty (13th – 14th century). After an unsuccessful attempt to sell off the coins, a large part of the hoard was intercepted by the police and submitted to the National Historical Museum in Sofia. Irrespective of their rarity, the coins are yet to be published. They are presented as a pile of metal in the Museum's exhibit. Some additional information on the find has been offered by Dochev (2015, 85, footnote): all coins are from the Palaiologos dynasty and feature emperors from Andronikos II to John V with John VI Kantakouzenos.

Number of coins: 1 033+ Au

Place of safekeeping: 1,033 at the National Historical Museum in Sofia

Latest coin: John V c John VI Kantakouzenos (1347-1352)

Hidden: around 1350-1360 (HT)

Dochev (2015), **HCE-11-85**

Vitinya 1965, Botevgrad Municipality; Sofia Province

In 1965 during ground work in the compound of the hunting grounds near Vitiania Pass, a hoard of 53 silver coins was discovered at a depth of 30 cm. Some 51 pieces from the find were acquired by the Sofia Museum of History and 2 coins are displayed at the Historical Museum of Botevgrad. The coins at the Sofia Museum were published by Rogeva-Grigorova. Of those, 50 arte asparons from Ivan Alexander with Mihail Asen and one is a replica of a Venetian grossus. The weight of the Bulgarian coins varies between 1.12 and 1.68 g and their average weight is 1.42 g. Their diameter varies between 20 and 21 mm. The silver content

in the alloy used to mint the coins has been estimated at 70 % (700). The replica of a Venetian grossus weighs 1.52 g and its diameter is 20 mm.



Ivan Alexander with Mihail Asen, Ag asparon, abverse, x5 (Yurukova and Penchev 1990, 132). Monograms from the Vitinia find 1965: 1) Alexander, 2) Tsar (Rogeva-Grigorova 1966)



Ivan Alexander with Mihail Asen, Ag asparon, reverse, x5 (Yurukova and Penchev 1990. 133). Monograms from the Vitinia find-1965: 1) Faithful, 2) Alexander, 3) Tsar (negative and positive), 4) Mihail Asen (Rogeva-Grigorova 1966)

The face side of the Bulgarian asparon features the following: „IC XC, Jesus standing up and facing forward, giving blessings with his outstretched arms, monograms on either side, 1 and 2.“ (see the illustrations).

Reverse: „The king to the left and his son to the right, standing up, holding standards on long handles splitting into two branches at the lower end, monograms in the left field 1 and 2 in the right field 3 and 4.“

Of the Bulgarian coins, 47 pieces have negative monograms of the title king (ИПЪ) and 4 – positive. According to the classification of Penchev (Yurukova and Penchev 1990. 132), the coins with positive (straight) monogram are from a later

variant (variant D) and were minted between 1355/56 and 1365. The average weight of the Bulgarian coins in the hoard is inside the range for this variant.

Dochev dates the hiding of the coins back to about 1360. It is possible the hiding took place later, in 1365 for example and was related to the events that transpired in the wake of the capture of Vidin and Northeast Bulgaria by Hungary.

Number of coins: 53 Ag

Place of safekeeping: 51 at MI Sofia, inventory number 2105; 2 at the Historical Museum of Botevgrad

Latest coin: Ivan Alexander with Mihail Asen (1356-1360)

Hidden: circa 1360 (Dochev); 1360-1365 (HT)

Rogeva-Grigorova (1966), **МИК-3-2**; Avdev (1980), **H-3-19**;
Dochev (1983), **H-2-3**; Rakova (1984), **H-3-31**; Avdev (2005, 178, 200)

Hrabrovo-1993, Balchik Municipality; Dobrich Province

Based on a publication by Kuzev from 1993, Atanasov has noted that a hoard of 352 coins was discovered near the village. It included 329 grossi from Stefan Dušan, 1 from Uroš, 14 from earlier Serbian kings and 8 from the Bosnian Ban Stefan II Kotromanić. According to Avdev, most of the coins from the find were countermarked with the insignia of Despot Dobrotitsa. The name Uroš probably refers to Stefan Uroš V (1365-1371).

Number of coins: 352 Ag

Place of safekeeping: Historical Museum of Varna

Latest coin: Stefan Dušan (1331-1355)

Hidden: 1367-1370? (HT)

Avdev (2007, 185);
Atanasov (2009), **A-3/4-92**

Ruse Region 1937

In or around 1937, at an unknown location in the region of Ruse, under unknown circumstances, a hoard of asparons from King Ivan Shishman (1371-1393) was discovered. A goldsmith from the town of Ruse is alleged to have purchased 4 000 asparon coins from that hoard. It has been suggested that the hoard was larger than that (Gerasimov 1939). Later (1969), Gerasimov claimed that the hoard comprised 4 560 silver asparons from the Bulgarian kings Ivan Alexander, Ivan Shishman and Ivan Stratsimir. This is the largest trove of Bulgarian coins preserved almost in its entirety for science. Gerasimov, however, does not offer any insight as to where this trove is preserved. According to Dochev, the coins from Ivan Shishman that were part of this hoard, were from the 4th minting performed at the behest of this king (1382/83-1392). The hiding of the treasure probably has to do with the campaign of Ali Pasha in Northern Bulgaria in 1388.

Number of coins: 4 560+ Ag

Place of safekeeping: unknown museum, Ruse?

Latest coin: Ivan Shishman (1382-1388)

Hidden: circa 1388 (HT)

Gerasimov (1939), **12-451**;

Gerasimov (1969), **H-1/2-6**; Dochev (1984), **H-2-30**

Cherven 1973, Ivanovo Municipality, Ruse Province

In 1973, while deep-ploughing a field on the left bank of the Malki Lom River, opposite the large Nisovski Monastery, a clay pot containing 1,830 silver coins was unearthed. The hoard included coins from several rulers as follows: Ivan Alexander – 1 semi grossus, Ivan Alexander with Mihail Asen – 8 grossi, Ivan Shishman – 1804 asparons, Bayezid I – 15 akçe, Mircea the Elder – 1 grossus and one undetermined coin. Apart from the coins, the clay pot contained a silver ingot and several pieces of silver jewelry. The hiding of the treasure can be connected with the campaign of Bayezid I against Wallachia in 1395.

Number of coins: 1830 Ag

Place of safekeeping: Regional Historical Museum of Ruse, inventory number 1775-IV

Latest coin: Bayezid I (1389-1395)

Hidden: 1390-1395 (HT)

Yurukova (1978), **A-2-77**

Vrav 1995, Bregovo Municipality; Vidin Province

In 1995, in the outskirts of the village of Vrav, a hoard of mostly silver coins was discovered, comprising pieces from King Ivan Stratsimir (1355-1396). The initial estimate places the total number of coins from the find in excess of 3,000. Of those, 1,095 pieces were submitted to the Regional Historical Museum of Pleven. Amongst the pieces at the museum is a copper tornese from John II Orsini. This is the largest hoard containing coins from Ivan Stratsimir to ever be acquired by a Bulgarian museum. All of the pieces from the find are of the same type and can be described as follows:

Obverse: bust of Christ facing forward, with halo, tunic and mantle, inscription on either side:

IC XC; Peripheral inscription IW CPAЧHMHP ЧР Б БЛГБР.

Reverse: The king sitting on a throne, facing forward, wearing a semi-spherical crown with a halo around it. In his right hand he is holding a scepter and in his left, an exikakia. The upper end of the scepter is decorated with a shape resembling a shamrock. The shoulders of the throne also end in a shamrock shape. Peripheral inscription: IW CPAЧHMHP ЧР Б БЛГБР („Ivan Stratsimir, Faithful King of the Bulgarians“).

Chronologically, Ivan Stratsimir coins can be separated into three groups based on the figure beneath the king's throne (Yurukova and Penchev 1990. 149-153). On the earliest coins (group 1) there is nothing beneath the throne. The coins of group 2 can be subdivided into three variants based on figures (insignia): II-A – no figure beneath the throne, II-B – human head, III-C – branch. The third group of coins also has three variants: III-A – heraldic line beneath the king's throne, III-B – axe, III-C – multi-pointed star. The weight of the coins changes in a stable trajectory. While the coins minted at the start of his reign weigh about 1.15 g, those minted at the end of it weigh between 0.22 and 0.25 g.

All of the coins from the find belong to group 3. Of them, 844 pieces have a multi-pointed star beneath the throne, which makes them variant C of Ivan Stratsimir's coinage, according to the classification system described above. The weight of the coins from this group varies between 0.22 and 0.75 g and averages out at 0.43 g.

Another 209 coins have a sign „cruciform lily“ and according to Banov are of a variant that had been unknown thus far and that came later than Variant III-C. The weight of the coins from that group varies between 0.26 and 0.42 g, averaging at 0.34 g. The detail beneath the throne is a stylized line resembling a cross with an elongated lower leg. The quality of the images in this group of coins is poorer compared to the coins featuring a multi-pointed star. According to Banov, this was the latest coin type from this Bulgarian king and he has named it variant III-D. It has been assumed that it was minted between 1393 and 1396.

On the remaining 41 pieces, it is impossible to determine the detail beneath the throne. It is fairly certain that this trove of coins was hidden very soon after 26 September 1396 when the allied Christian forces, including King Ivan Stratsimir, suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Bayezid I near the town of Nikopol.

Number of coins: 3000+ Ag

Place of safekeeping: 1095 (1094 Ag, 1 Æ) at the Regional Historical Museum of Pleven, inventory number 34111 – 341176

Latest coin: Ivan Stratsimir (1393-1396)

Hidden: September-October 1396 (Banov)

Banov (1997), **ИМСБ-25-299**;
Avdev (2005, 200); Avdev (2007, 218)

15th-16th Century

Ruse 1955

In January 1955, while deep-ploughing a vine yard in an area known as „Leventa“ in the outskirts of the city, workers found two clay vessels at a depth of 0.5 m. In them, were 1 525 silver coins. The hoard was acquired by the Regional Historical Museum of Ruse (Gerasimov; Dimova).

In his publication (2004), Penchev pointed out that some 36 coins were stolen from a display at the museum, therefore only 1 489 pieces of the find remained. These coins were published again, correcting some material mistakes in the publication of Dimova. The coins held at the museum were minted at the behest of the following rulers:

Bulgaria (801): Ivan Stratsimir, group III – 169; Ivan Shishman – 632 pcs, of which 2 of type

I, 3 of type III and 627 of type IV;

Venice (1): Francesco Dandolo (1329-1339), grossus – 1;

Wallachia (2): Radu I (1377-1383), semi-grossus – 1; Mircea I (1386-1418), semi-grossus –

1;

Turkey (685): Murad I (1362-1389) – 435; Bayezid I (1389-1402) – 250.

The classification of the coins of Ivan Stratsimir and Ivan Shishman (IV type) was made by Avdev (2005, 193. 198). The weight of the coins from the two rulers peaks at 0.55 to 0.60g. Such weight is typical of the relatively late mintings of the two kings – possibly after 1380 to 1385.

Number of coins: 1525 Ag

Place of safekeeping: 1489 at the Regional Historical Museum of Ruse

Latest coin: Bayezid I (1389-1402)

Hidden: 1404 (Penchev)

Gerasimov (1957), **21-325**;

Dimova (1962), **25-71**; Penchev (2004), **NIM-14-119**; Avdev 2005, 193. 198

Nikopol 1915, Nikopol Municipality; Pleven Province

On February 18, 1915, while digging the gardens at the state-run grape vine nursery in Harmanluka, some 500m outside the town to the southeast, workers discovered a large number of silver objects and coins placed in a copper container. This find later became known as the First Treasure of Nikopol. Some of the objects and the coins were put away by the workers who had discovered them and were sought by the authorities for a long time. What was ultimately found and described includes the following:

Bulgaria (6): Ivan Alexander with Mihail Asen (1333-1380), grossus – 2; Ivan Stratsimir (1356-1396), grossus – 4;

Wallachia (68): Mircea I (1386-1418), undetermined, nominal – 68;

Turkey (17): Bayezid I, akçe from 1390 or later – 17.

Total of 91 silver coins. The coins and objects were buried in the ground soon after 1390, most likely in the wake of the battle between Sigismund and Bayezid I in 1396 (Filov). According to Penchev, the coins from the *Nikopol-1915* find and the *Nikopol-1917* find are quite similar, which could indicate they were hidden away at the same time.

As of the time of Filov's publication, the following objects were asserted to have been a part of the find: three low bowls, about 4 cm in height and 16 cm in diameter,

one of which had a coat of arms engraved on the bottom; four silver spoons with decorated handles; fragments of large ear rings with a typical medieval design, as well as fragments from other pieces of jewelry, which are of undetermined nature; about 107 small silver platelets for four or five designs and different decorative patterns on them. The punctures on them suggest that they may have been used for decoration of a belt or leather strip. For more information of the find, see *Nikopol-1971*.

Number of coins: 91 Ag and objects

Place of safekeeping: NAIM-Sofia

Latest coin: Ivan Stratsimir (1371-1396)

Hidden: circa 1396 (Filov); 1406-1416 (Penchev)

Filov (1915), **V-225**; Asparuhov (1995),

ИМСБ-23-87; Penchev (2010),

HCE-6-151; Haritonov (1998, 286)

Nikopol 1917, Nikopol Municipality; Pleven Province

In 1917, a collection of coins arrived at the then-People's Museum in Sofia, which was found at an undetermined time and location near the town of Nikopol. It comprised 261 silver coins from the 14th and 15th century minted by the following rulers:

Bulgaria (30): Ivan Alexander with Mihail Asen – 6; Ivan Stratsimir – 19; Ivan Shishman – 5;

Venice (1): – Antonio Venier (1382-1400), unidentified face denomination – 1;

Wallachia (205): Mircea I (1386-1418) – 1 ban and 204 ducats of type II; **Turkey** (25): Murad I (1362-1389) – 11; Bayezid I (1389-1402) – 14.

The Mircea I ducats, which constitute the majority of the hoard are of the later, type II, but have not been dated precisely. It can be assumed that they were minted in the second half of the reign of Mircea I (Penchev).

In terms of the date of publication, this find could be called „Third Treasure of Nikopol“ because the first is *Nikopol-1915* and the second, *Nikopol-1971*. The first two were discovered in different locations but in the same area near the town of Nikopol known as „Harmanluka“. What connects the two is that they are made up of jewelry and valuable household objects, whereas the number of coins, especially in the Second Treasure, is lower. The exact location where the Third Treasure was discovered remains unknown, and what is particular about it is that it consists mainly of coins. Whilst analyzing these three finds, there are three major questions that need to be answered: 1) were all three treasures property of one and the same person; 2) were they hidden in two or three different places; 3) when were the three treasures buried.

Penchev has suggested that all coins of the three treasures were placed in two purses at the time of their hiding. One purse was placed in each of the copper vessels. Placed in one of the purses were the seven coins from *Nikopol-1971*. Placed

in the other, were the remaining silver coins from *Nikopol-1915* and *Nikopol-1917* ($91 + 261 = 352$).

Number of coins: 261 Ag

Place of safekeeping: NAIM-Sofia, inventory number L-1917

Latest coin: Mircea I (after 1400)

Hidden: 1406-1416 (Penchev)

Krastev (2020), **Rv-1-17**

Penchev (2010), **HCE-6-151**

Nikopol 1971; Pleven Province

In 1971, while doing field work in the area of „Harmanluka“, some 500 m to the southeast of the town, farmers happened upon a trove of valuable objects placed in a copper container (Penchev). This was later called „Second Treasure of Nikopol“. The objects included gold ear guards, silver wine serving sets, silver torcs, spoons, jewelry and ingots. The ingots are of two types depending on their cross section. The treasure included 5 pieces with a cross section of 70 mm weighing 307.3, 307.0, 305.7 and 294.0 g; and two pieces with a smaller cross section and weight of 57.15 and 29.50 g (Avdev). Ingots like those were used to mint coins, but evidently wealthier citizens used them to park their money. The aggregate weight of the silver ingots comes to 1,300.65 g, which would have been enough to mint anywhere between 1 300 and 2 600 coins weighing 1 or 0.5 g each. The trove also contains 7 coins – 4 gold and 3 silver, which were minted by the following rulers (Penchev):

Gold: Isaac I Komnenos (1057-1059) – 1 *nómisma histamenon*, punctured to be worn on a necklace; John III Doukas Vatatzes (1222-1254) – 2 *hyperpyrons* with their peripheries cut down; unattributed ducat minted in Rome in the 14th or 15th century.

Silver: Manuel II Palaiologos (1391-1423), *stavraton* – 1, *semi-stavraton* – 1; Murad I (1362-1389), *akçe* – 1 pc.

The latest coins in the find are those from Manuel II Palaiologos, minted between 1399 and 1423 (Krastev 2020).

Number of coins: 7 (4 Au, 3 Ag) plus objects and jewelry

Place of safekeeping: Historical Museum of Pleven, inventory number A-11941-33

Latest coin: Manuel II Palaiologos (1399-1423)

Hidden: 1406-1416 (Penchev)

Filov (1934); Asparuhov (1995), **ИМСБ-23-87**;

Avdev (2010), **HCE-6-133**; Penchev (2010), **HCE-6-151**;

Krastev (2020), **Rv-1-17**

Further Notes on the Nikopol finds:

In a recently published article on the three finds from Nikopol (*Nikopol 1915*, *Nikopol 1917* and *Nikopol 1971*), Krastev puts an emphasis on the contents of the coin finds (Krastev 2020, 1730). He assumes that the three finds are based on one and the same treasure that was buried in two or three different spots in close proximity to one another. In his article, Krastev refers to our inventory in several places, but asserts that it contains meaningful contradictions. These are mostly related on our assumptions as to the reasons for and the timeline of the treasure's burial. We concede that there are certain contradictions, but we also have to acknowledge one major circumstance, which is not an incongruity but rather a logical pattern. Krastev poses a question that has a virtually unequivocal answer. The question is *Why the owner of the treasure „...did not choose take it with them but buried it instead remains a mystery“* (Krastev, 2020, 23). The answer is more than definitive: in the overwhelming majority of cases, owners of coins or other valuables chose to hide them before embarking on long journeys.

To embark on a long journey carrying kilograms of coins and valuables invited a very high risk of being robbed and even killed. As a rule, before taking long and perilous journeys, people always buried most of their valuables, taking with them the bare minimum needed to survive. This is the main reason we find large numbers of coin hoards and valuable objects – their owners died or were unable to come back and take their buried belongings. If they, instead, took their coins and valuables in their luggage, discoveries of valuable objects and coins would be a rarity these days. Speaking realistically, each treasure discovered buried in the ground indicates the death of its owner.

Krastev's assertion that we dated the hiding of the *Nikopol 1915* trove back to 1396 is misleading (Krastev 2020, 24). The overview of the find with which the body of the presentation ends reads: „Hidden: circa 1396 (Filov); 1406-1416 (Penchev)“.

I.e. we are not offering an opinion as to when the treasure was hidden, we are citing our two major sources and what they have to say about the timeline of the treasure's burial. Regarding the latest coin in the *Nikopol 1915* find, we base our assumption on a definitively dated minting, such as Ivan Stratsimir's, as opposed to the more uncertain chronology of the Mircea I coins. What we cannot explain is something else: Krastev does not use anywhere in his article the overview, which is part of the content of the Inventory, where finds are arranged based on the time of their hiding. This information is featured in two places, first at the end of the inventory and description of each individual find from the respective area, and second in the summary table covering the entire territory of Bulgaria. Looking at both places, it becomes very clear that ultimately we have identified as the most likely window for hiding the *three treasures* the time interval between 1406 and 1416 (Teodosiev 2017, 357, 664).

We find Krastev's suggestion that the Treasure of Nikopol was hidden during the campaign of Vladislav Varnenchik in 1444 to be plausible and acceptable. However, having consulted our inventory overview, it becomes evident that finds whose hiding can definitively be dated after 1444 are typically discovered east of Tarnovo and in general in Northeastern Bulgaria (Teodosiev 2017, 664), and Nikopol lies west of this imaginary line. While this does not mean that the Nikopol Treasure was not hidden in 1444, an earlier hiding of the treasure, say in the early years of the

15th century, is equally likely if the reason for hiding the treasure was something other than a military campaign.

The fact that „*Gorgoni magazine*“ gives platform for research allows us to offer a *hypothesis* not only about the hiding of the treasure but also about an event in Bulgarian history that remains shrouded in mystery.

Recently, Nikolov-Zikov proposed that the so-called „Second Treasure of Nikopol“ was owned by a distant descendent of Ivan Shishman on the side of his son, Fruzhin. This descendant's name was Balin. His grandson, Todor (or Theodore) Balin, who lived in the end of the 16th century, was one of the main organizers of the *First Tarnovo rebellion in 1598*.

On one of the silver cups, there is an inscription *Фръзов пръстен*, which means „Fruzhin's cup“. On two of the silver spoons there are inscriptions reading *Балинова лъжица* („Balin's spoon“) and *Лъжица от Балиновите съдове* („A spoon from Balin's set“). Among the other objects, there is a *Bulgarian medieval crown* made of gold and precious stones, reminiscent in its design of those depicted in the miniatures of the „London Gospel“. Dating the hiding of the treasure to the end of the 16th century is therefore unacceptable. Instead, a different interpretation should be pursued.

The Inscription *Фръзов пръстен*, i.e. „Fruzhin's cup“, can indicate that the object belonged to Fruzhin, the youngest son of King Ivan Shishman. It has been established that between 1388 and 1395 Ivan Shishman and his family resided in Nikopol. In 1393, after the sacking of Tarnovo, the Ottomans captured Alexander, Ivan Shishman's son from his first marriage to Keratsa Maria. Alexander Shishman, who at the time was about 25-27 years old and the heir apparent, saved himself by converting to Islam. After that, Bayezid I appointed him governor of a province in Asia Minor.

Fruzhin Shishman was born no earlier than 1389-1390 from his father's second marriage to the Serbian princess Dragana Hrebelianovich (Nikolov-Zikov 2012. 122). In the early summer of 1395 Sultan Bayezid I returned to Wallachia having prevailed in yet another battle against the Wallachian ruler Mircea I. At that time, Ivan Shishman was no longer a king. He was demoted to the rank of governor of Nikopol Fortress. Upon his arrival in Nikopol, Bayezid I ordered the former Bulgarian king to be beheaded. This took place on 3 June 1395 (or October 1395 according to other sources). Fruzhin's life was spared because he was a 5 or 6-year-old. If he were older, say 15 or 16, as Berliev estimates (see *Reverse magazine*, issue 1, 2020, 31), the best he could have hoped for was a fate like his brother Alexander's.

Following the execution of Ivan Shishman, his widow, Dragana, most likely remained in Nikopol to look after her young children (Fruzhin had a sister). We assume the family was in town at the time of the battle between the Ottomans and the allied European force near the town of Nikopol in 1396.

From this point on, we have little more than hypotheses and assumptions. Our idea was to try and link Fruzhin Shishman on the one hand to the treasure of Nikopol and on the other, to the export out of Bulgaria of parts of the library of his grandfather, Ivan Alexander, and in particular the famous Four Gospels of Ivan Alexander also known as the „London Four Gospels“. It is reasonable to assume that between 1388 and 1393 King Ivan Shishman took out of Tarnovo all of his money and personal belongings along with the most valuable books from the large

library of his father. This was how some of the most valuable books from Ivan Alexander's collection, including the Four Gospels, ended up in Nikopol. The cash value of these inherited books was very high even at that time, although the books were no more than two dozen. We believe it would be impossible to assume that upon leaving Tarnovo, Ivan Shishman would leave behind not only one of the valuable pieces from his father's library but the only book featuring his *portrait* as the heir apparent. This gospel, therefore, was not only a Royal and Christian religious book, but was also a certificate of inheritance issued by his father. We believe this was the way in which Ivan Alexander's Gospels were saved from destruction. In other words, it was saved by the members of the royal family and no one else.

Because the latest coins from the Treasure of Nikopol are dated 1406 and later (Penchev), two theories can be built on the basis of what we know:

1. If the owner of the treasure after 1395 was Fruzhin or his mother, it can be assumed that he remained in Nikopol until about 1406-1407. In 1406 – 1407, already 16-17 years old, Fruzhin emigrated to Wallachia or Moldavia. Prior to that he or persons trusted by him buried the money and valuables in the ground since it was very risky to take them on a long journey.
2. The treasure did not belong to Fruzhin, but to some other wealthy citizen of Nikopol. It is possible that the items bearing Fruzhin's name had been sold by him or by his mother to the person who eventually buried them if for no other reason to fund their journey. If this was the case, it could be assumed that Fruzhin emigrated north of the Danube earlier, probably around 1400 and, because he was very young, he was accompanied by his mother. In such a scenario, the person who hid them could be anybody and the hiding itself could have transpired much later, for example in 1444.

In any case, Fruzhin did leave for Wallachia bringing with him a reasonable amount of money and some of the valuable books of his grandfather, or at least one, the Four Gospels of King Ivan Alexander. Somewhere in Wallachia or Moldavia, Fruzhin, or his mother, then pawned the rare royal book.

If we were to accept the second scenario, the presence of later coins in the hoard, some of which were minted as late as after the second decade of the 15th century, becomes easily explainable.

It should be noted that during the 14th, 15th and even the 17th century principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia were nothing like the present-day states of Romania and Moldavia. They were more like Wallacho-Bulgarian or Bulgaro-Moldavian principalities. The official language of both principalities was Bulgarian (Middle Bulgarian), the documents issued by the royal authorities were in Bulgarian, the local Orthodox churches used Bulgarian language and a large portion of the religious manuscripts and later printings were also in Bulgarian. For this reason, any literate person north of the Danube would recognize the symbolic and cash value of a Bulgarian book that was richly illustrated and apparently belonged to the well-known on both countries former king of Bulgaria, Ivan Alexander. We assume that somewhere between 1400 and 1407 the gospel was pawned for cash with an unknown money lender. According to a note written in red ink on one of the first pages of the gospel, it was bought by the Moldavian nobleman John Alexander (1402-1432) after it had been pawned (Talev 2005, 26; Filov 1934, 8). Evidently, the Moldavian nobleman had the same name as the Bulgarian king. The date of the

purchase is unknown but it could be surmised that a money lender would hardly keep such a valuable item for more than 2-3 years. Hence, the manuscript was acquired by John Alexander of Moldavia probably somewhere between 1402 and 1410.

One of the reasons that likely compelled Fruzhin to pawn the gospel for money was his involvement in the resistance against the Ottomans. Based on the above timeline, we believe that Ivan Shishman's son got involved with the resistance no earlier than 1406-1407.

Filov (1934, 8); Talev (2005); Nikolov-Zikov (2012, 190);
Krastev (2020), **Rv-1-17**

17th-18th Century

Mihaltsi 1929, Pavlikeni Municipality; Veliko Tarnovo Province

Around 1929, Yordan Marinov, while ploughing his field in an area known as „Sadina“, discovered a pot containing silver coins of from the 16th and 17th century. Some of the coins from the hoard, Marinov submitted personally to the people's Museum and sold the rest to goldsmiths from Sofia. However, the police managed to recover the coins and submit them to the museum. There were a total of 3 123 coins minted by 37 European rulers in Austria, Great Britain, Spain, Poland, Turkey, France, Germany and Hungary and various principalities and provinces from the 16th and 17th century. The latest year to appear on any of the coins from the hoard is 1613 (a grossus from the Hungarian king Gabriel Báthory 1608-1613). Naturally, the trove could not have been buried before that year. It has been suggested that the hiding of this treasure was prompted by the wars between the Ottoman Empire and Christian rulers from the 17th century (Mushmov). This find holds the dubious distinctions of having remained in storage and the State Museum for the longest amount of time. Some 92 years after the coins were unearthed, NAIM-Sofia has yet to publish them. Due to this fact, any attempt to date it would be nothing more than guesswork. If the latest coin in the hoard was minted in 1613, it can be assumed that the coins were amassed during the second half of the 16th century.

Number of coins: 3 123 Ag

Place of safekeeping:

NAIM-Sofia **Latest coin:**
Gabriel Báthory (1613)

Hidden: 1613-1620 (Mushmov)

Mushmov (1932), **6-316**

Ahtopol 1977, Tsarevo Municipality; Burgas Province

In 1977, in the outskirts of the town of Ahtopol, a hoard of 452 silver coins from the 16th and the 17th century was discovered. The combined weight of the coins came to 1,944.9 g (Klasnakov 2013). The find is characterized by a great diversity of denominations and issues by various Christian and Muslim rulers. In fact, these coins came from more than 50 different mints on four continents, Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. According to the initial publishing, the coins come from the following countries:

Austria – 13, Belgian Confederacy – 27, the Vatican – 1, Dubrovnik – 8, Spain – 13, the Ottoman

Empire – 341, Poland – 34, Prussia – 2, Russia – 1, The Holy Roman Empire – 6, Tuscany – 5, Duchy of Urbino – 1. The denominations of the coins are as follows: thaler, quarter thaler, 8-real and 4-real coins, 6 grossi, 3 grossi, grosettos, kopecks, akçes and para. Some of the coins were punctured to be worn in necklaces. Some are perfectly preserved such as the Leopold V thaler minted in 1632 (FDC quality).

Some of the coins have been published by Klasnakov (2013) as follows:

Archduchy of Austria (13): Ferdinand II (1564-1595), thaler – 1 (punctured); Maximilian III

(1612-1618) – thaler – 3 (1617 – 2, 1618 – 1, two of which are punctured); Leopold V (1619-

1632), thaler – 9 (1620 – 4, one punctured; 1621 – 2, 1622 – 1, 1632 – 2);

Duchy of Prussia (2): Georg Wilhelm (1619-1640), quarter thaler – 2, punctured (1622 – 1,

1623 – 1), minted in Königsberg;

Holy Roman Empire (6): Rudolph II (1576-1612), thaler – 3 (1609 – 1. 1610 – 1. 1612 – 1);

Ferdinand II (1619-1637), thaler – 3 (1624 – 1. 1625 – 2).

The combined weight of the coins from this group comes to 555.9 g or 28.6 % of the total weight of the entire find. Krastev (2014, 121) has noted that the Duchy of Prussia was part of the domain of Georg Wilhelm (1619-1640) but does not emphasize this fact because, as the Duke of East Prussia, he was a Polish vassal. Georg Wilhelm ruled the Margraviate of Brandenburg and the Duchy of Prussia as two separate states connected only through his personal union. In all of the publications of Krastev, the coins from this ruler are referred to as coins from Margraviate of Brandenburg, which after 1702 became the Kingdom of Prussia. Yet, even before that, as a Polish vassal, the Duchy of Prussia minted coins underwritten by its suzerain, the ruler of the Polish– Lithuanian Commonwealth (Krastev 2014, 128).

In his second publication, Klasnakov (2013 a) describes the following coins:

Belgian Confederacy (27): thaler from **West Friesland** – 7, the earliest of which was minted in 1589 and the latest, in 1640; one of the coins is punctured; thaler from **Utrecht** – 7, the earliest from 1597 and the latest, from 1640; one piece is plated; thaler from **Zeeland** – 1, minted around 1630; thaler from **Holland** – 4, minted between 1576 and 1601; thaler from **Overijssel** – 4, minted between 1608 and 1629; thaler from **Guilders** – 3 minted between 1599 and 1638; thaler from **Zwolle** minted in 1637 weighing 27,20 g.

The combined weight of the coins from this group is 725.95 g or 37.3% of the weight of the entire find.

The third publication describes the Polish coins (Klasnakov 2013 b):

Poland (34): Stefan Báthory, three grossi – 1 (Vilnius, 1583); Sigismund III Vasa, three grossi – 29 (Bydgoszcz – 4, Vilnius – 1, Wschowa – 2, Kraków – 4, Lublin – 2, Poznań – 7, Poznań or Wschowa – 1, Riga – 8), six grossi – 1 (Malbork, 1596), ort – 3 (Gdańsk). All of the coins from this group are punctured.

The combined weight of the Polish coins is 87.55 g or 4.5% of the total weight of the find. The latest coins are from Sigismund III, minted in 1624.

Number of coins: 452 Ag

Place of safekeeping: Regional Historical Museum of Burgas

Latest coin: circa 1640

Hidden: 1650-1660 (HT)

Klasnakov (2013), **ЖИАИ-2-160**;
Klasnakov (2013a), **НСЕ-9-143**; Klasnakov (2013b), **ЖИАИ-3-132**;
Krastev (2014, 119-122)

Varbovka 1922, Pavlikeni Municipality

On 25 March 1922, two workers deep-ploughing a field owned by one Doncho Spasov in the outskirts of the village of Varbovka, unearthed a metallic cauldron containing a hoard of silver coins from the 17th century. The coins were submitted to the regional administration of Sevlievo where they remained in storage until March 1928. While auditing the regional administrative office, an auditor by the name A. Georgiev happened upon the coins and sent them to the People's Museum in Sofia. A study confirmed that all the coins were from the end of the 16th and the start of the 17th century. A large portion of the trove were Turkish akçe coins (asparons). About 2kg of these coins are of small denomination. Among the coins, however, there are larger akçe. Since 93 years (!) after acquiring the hoard NAIM-Sofia has yet to publish them, we will use a description provided by Mushmov:

Austria (2): Ferdinand III (1637-1657), thaler – 2;

Belgian Confederacy (103): thalers minted as follows: 1615, 1616, 1617, 1628, 1632, 1633, 1634, 1637, 1638, 1640, 1641, 1642, 1643, 1647, 1648, 1649, 1650, 1651, 1663, 103 pieces in total;

Dubrovnik (33): grossi from the 17th century, – 33 including pieces minted in 1630, 1640, 1642;

Spain (23): Philip IV, thaler – 1 from 1642; unidentified eponym, thaler from 16th – 17th century, – 22 pcs.

Hungary (1): Matthias I, thaler – 1 from 1618;

Turkey (2 000): a total of 2kg or almost 2 000 akçe from the sultans Suleiman I (1520-1566) – 1, Mehmed III (1594-1603) – 1, Murad IV (1623-1640) – 8, Ibrahim (1640-1649) – 11; other 120 akçe possibly from Murad IV and Ibrahim.

The Spanish thalers are mangled and angular because their periphery and cores were cut and shaved while they were still in circulation because of the high quality of the silver used for them. Mushmov has suggested that these coins were brought in Bulgaria by Jews fleeing the persecutions in Spain in the 17th century.

The dates on the coins suggest that almost all of them were from the time of the Turkish-Venetian war (1645) and the ensuing wars between the Ottomans and European Christian alliances which culminated in the Siege of Vienna in 1683. It is very likely that during those turbulent times a family put its valuables in the cauldron and buried it here before fleeing to the near-by Wallachia (Mushmov).

Mushmov's hypothesis that the treasure belonged to a Bulgarian family that emigrated to Wallachia is not convincing. In the 17th century, the population of the village of Varbovka was mostly Muslim. Furthermore, the likelihood of Bulgarians being able to amass such a fortune in those days is very small. It would make more sense for the owner of the treasure to have been a Turkish Sipahi who was conscripted to fight in one of the unsuccessful Ottoman campaigns and was killed.

Number of coins: 2 162+ Ag

Place of safekeeping: 2 162 at the Archaeological Institute and Museum-Sofia

Latest coin: Belgian Confederacy (1663)

Hidden: circa 1683 (Mushmov); 1675-1690 (HT)

Mushmov (1929), **5-384**;

Haritonov (1992), **ИМТ-7-175**; Haritonov (1998, 262)

Vidin 1977

In the summer of 1977, during ground work in the city, at a depth of 2.2 m workers discovered a large clay jar full of 17th century silver coins from Western Europe and Turkey. At 4 230 pieces and 74 kg in weight, this is one of the largest troves of coins of this type ever discovered in Bulgaria. Adjacent to the first jar was a second jar with the same shape and dimensions but it was empty. It has been suggested that the second jar also contained coins at one point but was discovered during the laying of water mains in 1938 and its content was scattered (Yurukova). There are no accounts to suggest other coins were found in the same location.

Number of coins: 4 230 Ag (74 kg)

Place of safekeeping: Historical Museum of Vidin?

Latest coin: 17th century

Hidden: 17th century ? (HT)

Yurukova (1979), **A-4-65**;

Haritonov (1998, 258)

19th and 20th century

Veliko Tarnovo 1967

In 1967, during ground works in „Trudov Front“ residential district, a hoard of 237 Austrian, Venetian, Dutch and Ottoman gold coins was discovered buried under a clay roof tile. The hoard, which was acquired by the Veliko Tarnovo Museum (Gerasimov), comprised the following coins (Haritonov, 1998):

Austria (2): Maria Theresa, ducat – 1 (1765), Franz I, ducat – 1 (1819);

Belgian Confederacy (11): guilder minted in 1757 – 1, 1776 – 2, 1786 – 1, 1800 – 2, 1801 – 2, 1805 – 3;

Venice (10): ducats, tentatively dated to the 17th century – 10;

Turkey (214): gold coins from sultans Mustafa III, Abdul Hamid I, Selim III and Mahmud II.

Some 136 coins from the hoard have been punctured to be worn as jewelry (Haritonov 1992; 1998). The hiding of the treasure could have been connected to the „Velchova Zavera“ rebellion in Tarnovo in 1835.

Number of coins: 237 Au

Place of safekeeping: Regional Historical Museum of Veliko Tarnovo, inventory number 2355-2375

Latest coin: Mahmud II (1808-1835) or Francis I (1819)

Hidden: circa 1835 (HT); 1810-1820 (Rakova)

Gerasimov (1969), **31-231**; Rakova (1984), **H-3-37**;
Haritonov (1992), **IMT-7-173**; Haritonov (1998, 256)

Lovech 1973

In June 1973, during ground work for the foundations of a new warehouse building in the Varosha District, at a depth of 30 cm, workers discovered three cylindrical metallic containers in which they found 1,364 gold coins from Western European and Ottoman rulers from the 16th and 17th century including three gold Roman solidi from the 4th and the 5th century (two from Theodosius I (370-395) and one from Honorius (395-423)). These were most likely late additions to the trove of later coins. All coins are very well preserved with only a handful of them being punctured to be used as part of jewelry before they were Hidden (Gerasimov; Yurukova; Rakova). Because the circumstances surrounding the discovery of the trove in 1973 have not been described in detail, Ivanov (2014, 78-88) attempted to fill the gaps. He tracked down an employee of the Institute for Monuments and Culture by the name of Tsanka Petrova, who is reported to have observed the location of the find. In an interview from 2013, i.e. 40 years after the fact, she insists that the coins were discovered in one cylindrical capsule. Her account of the circumstances, however is rather incongruous, and the reader is left with the impression that Ms Petrova was not an eye witness to the discovery of the find. On the day on which they were discovered, the coins arrived at the Historical Museum of Lovech, as documented in a protocol of delivery, but the capsule (one or three of them) does not seem to have been preserved. The find is property of the Regional Historical Museum of Lovech, but is kept in the vaults of the Bulgarian National Bank. Ivanov assumes that the capsule was a cylindrical zinc-plated casing designed to contain explosive charge for Russian rifled or smooth-bore cannons.

These casings were widely used by Russian artillery during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878. At that time, the town of Lovech was taken over twice by the Russian army. After the first take-over, the Turks retook the city on July 15 1877 by throwing an overwhelming force at it. The Russians, having to retreat, were forced to leave behind part of their artillery ammunition. Ivanov theorizes that the owner of the treasure was one Father Lukan Lilov whose son, Marin Poplukanov, was the president of the Lovech Revolutionary Committee before his arrest in late 1872.

According to Ivanov, the 75-year-old father Lukan got a hold of a live artillery cartridge, emptied its contents and used the casing to contain the gold coins when he buried them in the ground. However, he did not bury them in his own yard but in someone else's yard. After the second recapture of Lovech on July 15 1877, the Turkish army executed 290 local citizens. According to documents, Father Lukan Lilov was one of them (Dimitrov 1899, 236).

Whether or not the coins belonged to Father Lukan, or the Lovech Revolutionary Committee, or were property of another citizen of Lovech was a subject of discussion for a long time. Until 2019, there was almost no detailed information available on any coins from the hoard.

In 2019, the former director of the Regional Historical Museum of Lovech, Ivan Lalev, published a detailed inventory list of the trove of coins in a book on Vasil Levski (Lalev 2019, 174-181). The inventory, as Lalev writes, was the work of two coin experts from the Regional Historical Museum of Lovech who were well-qualified and renowned on the national stage. These were Lachezar Lazarov and Radoslav Gushterakliev (Lalev 2019, 374). The inventory published by Lalev does not offer detailed catalogue information, but only describes the coins by group in terms of number and core diameter. The Ottoman coins have not been dated precisely. In terms of their origin, the find comprises the following coins:

Austrian: 456 pcs from Maria Theresa (1753) to Francis I (1827). Of them, 428 pcs. are from Francis I. 3 pcs. or 0.6% are punctured.

Belgian Confederacy: 28 pcs dating back from 1656 to 1806; 11 pcs. or 39,2 % are punctured; **Venetian:** 15 pcs. – not dated in the original inventory list and even entered with incorrect names of the respective doges. Most likely these were from Alvise I Mocenigo IV (1763-1778), Paolo Renier (1779-1789) and Ludovico Giovanni Manin (1789-1797); Punctured – 5 pcs. or 33.3%;

Spanish coins: 4 pcs. from Charles (?), dated from 1783 to 1788; A Vatican coin from 1793 was added to this group; punctured – 1 pc or 20%;

Turkish coins: 859 pcs. From Ahmed III (1703-1731) to Mahmud II (1808-1839). Some 804 pcs. of those were minted by Mahmud II; Punctured – 254 pcs. or 29.6%; For unspecified reasons, the authors of the inventory take 1835 as the end of the reign of Mahmud II (instead of 1839);

French coins: 1 pcs. From Napoleon I (1793);

Dutch coins: 1 pcs. from 1809;

Old Roman solidi: 3 pcs. non-punctured, of which: two from Theodosius I (370-395) and one piece from Honorius (395-423).

It has been stated that the hoard comprised 1 364 coins but if all coins included in the inventory are added up the number grows to 1 368. Evidently, some of the pieces in the inventory were double-entered, therefore we accept that the actual number was 1 364. Of those, 274 or 20% were punctured. These are distributed unevenly by issuer, but the lowest share of punctured pieces was registered for the

Austrian coins. This may indicate one or several payments in Austrian coins for goods traded ?

The earliest coin in the hoard was minted in 1656 in the Belgian Confederacy. It is punctured. The latest coin is either from Francis I from 1827 or from Mahmud II, if there is a coin in the hoard that was minted at the behest of this sultan after 1827. There are no coins from Sultan Abdulmejid (1839-1861) in the trove. Of the coins from Francis I, which are the latest of the European pieces, none have been punctured. The inventory indicates that the treasure was buried in 1839, at the latest, possibly even earlier (according to the datings in the inventory – possibly in 1835). In other words, it is possible that the latest coin was added to the others between 1827 and 1839. It should be remembered that of the coins that were dated with certainty, the latest was minted in 1827. Lalev, as did Gerasimov earlier, describes the coins as very well preserved (Lalev 2019, 175). Taking into account all known parameters, a much earlier timeline for the burying of the treasure emerges, especially given the fact that it is impossible to explain a hiatus of 40-50 between the sealing of the treasure and its hiding, if the latter took place in 1877.

The core of the treasure was likely amassed during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II, since 1 231 coins, or more than 90 % of the content of the hoard, were minted during that period of time 1808-1839. Moreover, the latest coin, according to the inventory published by Lalev, is (perhaps?) from 1835 (Lalev 2019, 180).

The account that the treasure was hidden inside a Russian shell casing generates questions. The cash equivalent of the hoard was large, more than 130 000 grossi. In fact, this is the most valuable find from the time of the Ottoman rule to ever be found in Bulgaria. It is hard to believe that a man wealthy enough to own these coins did not have a more suitable metal container at their home and chose to scour the fields in search of shell casings. If, for a moment, we were to accept that the owner of the treasure was indeed Father Lukan Lilov, a similar problem would arise as he, too, was no poor man by any means. This is evident from the fact that for years on end he sent large amounts of money to his son, who was exiled in Diyarbekir. It is difficult to picture the 75-year-old Father Lukan (or anyone else for that matter?) scouring the positions of the Russian artillery for shell casings at a time when Russians and Turks were engaged in a vicious fight for Lovech. It is also quite a leap, and an unsubstantiated one at that, to theorize that such a sum of money would be what remained of the coffers of the *Revolutionary Committee of Lovech* *. To make matters worse, Lalev offers a very unconvincing example to convince the reader that the Revolutionary Committee had access to large amounts of money. In particular, we refer to the letter by Vasil Levski to Lyuben Karavelov, in which the Apostle suggests the establishment of a newspaper to be distributed for across Bulgaria. To get the project moving, Levski suggests sending Father Krustio Nikiforov to Karavelov's printing house in Bucharest with a sum of eight to ten thousand grossi. Paying little attention to the purpose of Father Krustio's trip to Bucharest, many authors, including Lalev, read the sum as 80 000 grossi. At that time, such an amount of money would have been enough to purchase an entire printing house whereas it was Levski's idea for the paper to be printed at Karavelov's printing house, as it is clearly articulated in the letter (Lalev 2019, 176). To print a newspaper in an already established printing house, the mentioned amount of 8 000 to 10 000 grossi would have been enough to comfortably cover all expenses involved including paper, ink, wages, distribution and so on. As a result

of the misreading of this amount, the erroneous conclusion was offered that in the Lovech Committee could spare 80 000 grossi for just propaganda purposes (such as the publishing of a newspaper), then the amount of money the Committee had at its disposal was likely multiple times larger. This is a serious miscalculation. It can be proven as such with a very famous incident, Levski's biggest mistake and one of the reasons that lead to him getting the death penalty. We are referring, of course, to the attempt to steal money from the home of the wealthy citizen of Lovech, Dencho Halacha, in the summer of 1872. The burglary, attempted by Levski personally and one of his helpers, was planned poorly and led to Levski having to kill the servant, who had inadvertently interrupted the burglary. Does it make any sense at all for the leader of the rebellion in Bulgaria to stoop as low as breaking into a house to look for money if the Revolutionary Committee of Lovech had more than 130 000 grossi in its coffers? Does it make any sense for Levski to personally look for money in the home of a man just on the off chance that he would keep a large amount of cash at hand? The answer is obvious. The Committee did not have enough cash, in fact, it was permanently underfunded so funds had to be acquired through exceptionally high-risk operations. Levski's involvement in the burglary was described in a letter to Karavelov. The money was not for the needs of the local committee but to pay off L. Karavelov's debts. If the Lovech Committee was so rich, it could have comfortably extended several thousand grossi to the Chairman of the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee and his publishing house so his creditors could be satisfied?

*** Note by editor.** In our opinion, *Ivan Lalev's thesis is correct* – that the collective find Lovech 1973 is a remnant of the treasury of the Lovech Revolutionary Committee (1869-1873), which Vasil Levski defined as Central to the Internal Revolutionary Organization (IRO), respectively as its base. *The arguments of the author of this article, N. Teodosiev, are unfounded*, namely: that the IRO and the Lovech Committee experienced financial shortage, so for this reason Levski resorted to robberies and blackmail of Bulgarian chorbadji; that the collective find in the Varosha district of the town of Lovech was not found in the yard of priest Lukan Lilov, killed by Circassians, after the retreat of the Russian army on July 15, 1877 and the reconquest of the city by Reuf Pasha; that the treasury was not sought after the Liberation by his son Marin Poplukanov; and mainly – that the Lovech 1973 find was hidden before 1839 (the latest coin is of Mahmud II – from 1835), and not on July 15, 1877.

What is the chronology of the actions of the Bulgarian revolutionaries in the period 1869-1877?

In December 1868, the „Bulgarian Society“ in Bucharest, Romania, authorized the revolutionary Vasil Levski to represent him in enslaved Bulgaria. In January and February 1869, he made his first exploratory tour there, secretly from the Ottoman authorities, in order to establish his local contacts, intelligence and research the political moods among the Bulgarian progressive intelligentsia. In May 1869, he made his second tour, already building up a primordial structure of revolutionary committees.

At the end of 1869, Levski, having the support of the internal committees, came to Bucharest to participate in the establishment of the „Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee“ (BRCC). After more than two years of tireless organizational work in Bulgaria, at a meeting of the leaders of the Bulgarian emigration in April 1872 in Bucharest, he exercised his authority and played a decisive role in improving the Statute and drawing up an effective Program of the organization. Then his status as a representator (apostle) of BRCC in Bulgaria was again confirmed.

Meanwhile, in 1871, Levski declared the Lovech Private Revolutionary Committee, created by him in 1869, to be the „Provisional Government in Bulgaria – First Division of the BRCC“. In addition, he drew up a Circular Letter for the voluntary or compulsory collection of funds for „Our People's Altar“, necessary for the purchase of weapons in order to achieve „freedom and a pure Republic“. Step by step, he managed to ensure a constant fundraising from all over the country, which came to his central base in the town of Lovech.

After several more missionary tours of the country, recruiting many like-minded people and creating a dense committee network of the IRO, Levski came to the conviction that the Bulgarian people could liberate themselves on their own, without risky alliances with neighboring Balkan countries or help from the Great Powers.

From the very beginning, the Apostle acted together with Ivan Drasov, a member of the „Bulgarian Society“, and then, together with Karavelov and Levski, of the BRCC. In Bulgaria as early as 1869, during their illegal activities, Levski was attracted by Drasov to establish his base in Lovech – the latter's hometown. For his part, Levski entrusted him with the responsible task of keeping in his home the funds arriving from the country, i.e. to be a cashier of the IRO. /**Ivan Lalev**. On the issue of cashiering in BRCC (1871-1872). – „Historical Review“ magazine, XVI, 1990, pp. 68-78/.

However, as a result of the violent actions undertaken by the revolutionaries in July 1872 to raise funds, including the murder of Deacon Paisius, vicar of the Bishop Hilarion of Lovech (1852-1872), the local Ottoman authorities received information about the existence of secret committees. plotting a rebellion against the Sultan. As a result, the police began to follow some activists. Ivan Drasov was promptly warned that he was under surveillance by his neighbor, a Turk, an employee of the Lovech Kaimakamin (judge).

On August 11, 1872, the frightened Drasov asked for and was issued a *teskere* (passport) for free passage to Wallachia, under the pretext that he would study abroad. As soon as he got this opportunity, he urgently emigrated, without sharing with his associates the information about their surveillance by the police. He only handed over to the chairman of the Lovech Committee, Marin Poplukanov, the cash register of the IRO so that it would be at the disposal of the head of the IRO Vasil Levski.

This is how the main committee treasury ended up in Poplukanov's possession, stored in his house. Levski was probably not in Lovech at that time, otherwise he would hardly have approved this personnel change. When he learned about it after the fact, he accepted the choice and decision of Drasov, whom he trusted. /**Ivan Drasov** in the Bulgarian National Revolutionary Movement (1871-1877). Documentary collection. – In: The Archives Speak, vol. 44. S., 2007, pp. 31, 167, 168; **Ivan Lalev**. On the issue of cashiering in BRCC (1871-1872). – „Historical Review“ magazine, XVI, 1990, pp. 68-78; **Ivan Lalev**. Vasil Levski – beyond myths, legends and delusions. Sofia, „Perseus“ Publishing house, 2019, pp. 164-168/.

As soon as the committee treasury came to the Lukanov House on August 11, 1872, Levski's control over it ceased to be real, but only formal (in order to continue replenishing it with new funds from the country, including the forced collection of such). The fact that the Apostle did not have the necessary control was evident only three and a half months later, at the very beginning of December 1872, when he asked for it, but Marin Poplukanov did not give it to him. The latter used evasive excuses, postponing their meeting, in the hope that Levski, wanted by the authorities, would be caught. And so it happened (see below).

Meanwhile, on July 2, 1872, the Apostle wrote a circular letter to his wards to send to him as large as possible requests for weapons, so that in the common deal he could reduce the price of one rifle from 10-12 to 8-9 gold Turkish lira. He even specified that he would find „**500 long from the best system** [500 rifles – note and bold by the editor], and first they are tested every ten – one“. /**Rosen Yankov**. How did Obshti rob the Turkish stagecoach? – https://pan.bg/view_article-61-515484-en-kak-obshtiobra-turskiya-dilizhans.html/.

By the way, at a unit price of 8 gold pounds, 500 quality rifles would cost nearly 29 kg. gold coins. According to some data, at the end of 1872, when Levski was captured, 12 kg were collected in the committee treasury gold, which could be used to buy 210 rifles of the highest class or 280 rifles of the lower class.

What were the current offers for the „best system“ of infantry small arms?

Since 1866, the English „Snyder-Enfield“ rifle has been widely used, and since 1870, the American „Springfield-Remington“ has been widespread in Europe. In 1871, the modern „Martini-Henry Mark I“, caliber 11.43 mm., with rear loading, brass cartridges, range of about 1200 m and effective fire up to 550 m, appeared and was immediately adopted by various armies. In November 1872, Levski received a letter from Lyuben Karavelov (the foreign head of the BRCC) with an emotional appeal for an uprising: „Brother Vasil! Before, we invited you to a feat, but somehow we felt it. Now we call you that circumstances call for courage on our part and the raising of a revolution; The reasons that you can know, we will not tell you. And we call you that you have to go to battle without wasting a minute! All the heroes there were written...“ /**D. Strashimirov**. Vasil Levski – Life, Deeds, Sources. I. I. Sources. Sofia, „East-West“ Publishing house, 2014 [First edition 1929], p. 199/.

Obviously, the historical moment became favorable for the conduct of an uprising, which means that the purchase of weapons is already a priority. In connection with this, on the way to the Danube border, passing through Lovech, the Apostle demanded from Marin Poplukanov to hand over to him the funds collected for three years by the entire Internal Organization. Abroad, with this gold, he would organize the purchase of the weapon so coveted. However, he was unpleasantly surprised by the refusal of the chairman of the Lovech Committee...

Why at this important moment did Levski not perform, with the help of loyal people, a daring action, such as he was capable of, in order to take the committee treasury from the Lukanovs' home? Because of the „Arabakonak adventure“ of the adventurerrevolutionary Dimitar Obshti on September 22, 1872 and the subsequent revelations against the local committee network, the Turkish police intensively searched for the Apostle in Lovech and the region. Such a move would cause further damage to the Organization, so he went into hiding, hoping to get the treasury after all.

That is why in his last famous letter, dated December 12, 1872, sent by a special courier, Levski wrote not to Marin Poplukanov, but to the other Lovech activists: „... The chairman [Marin Poplukanov – editor's note] has money brought in from other committees. I used to want them, and he wrote to me that he used them for a day or two in his work. Hasn't he read the statute?! The committee money does not even know the minute when it will be requested!“ /**same source**, p. 209-211/.

Apparently, the chairman of the Lovech Committee, Marin Poplukanov, has postponed and delayed the transfer of the money to the head of the Internal Organization, Vasil Levski. And the latter, while waiting for him, hiding with Yataks in the villages around Lovech, wrote the above letter to the Lovech activists, hoping to convince Poplukanov to fulfill his duty by handing over the collected funds and to use them for their intended purpose. In the days of this waiting, the tension between the co-conspirators was great, the distrust too... Therefore, in the above-cited letter, Levski shares his well-founded concern: „According to these letters [their letters to him – editor's note] I am afraid to come to your city [Lovech – editor's note]. In them I interpret true betrayal or betrayal unwillingly – out of fear...” /same source/.

Miraculously, the preserved committee documents, if read accurately, reveal a shameful motive: *betrayal, for the sake of stealing national committee funds*. In the end, on December 27, 1872, Vasil Levski, who had been patiently waiting for 15 days, at the risk of his life, to receive the funds for arming the Internal Organization, which had been accumulated for three years thanks to his personal selfless efforts, was sneakily captured in the Kakrinsko Inn near Lovech.

Then the Leader of the Bulgarian National Revolution endured His Honorable Golgotha, and the traitors, those little souls, who after the Liberation were given bureaucratic posts and champions' pensions, had to conceal their miserable crime against him for decades with lies and manipulations.

The crime of the Pop Lukanov family – the father Pop Lukan Lilov and the son Marin Pop Lukanov – was documented by revolutionary activists in the months after it was committed. For example, in a letter to Ivan Kasabov dated June 25, 1873, Levski's faithful associate – Danail Popov (Pop Hinov) – told Kassabov what his brother Anastas Pop Hinov, who at that time was also an exile in Diyarbakir, had written to him: „All we have done, brother, now I understand that people did it for their own interest! **I know that you do not know M. P. Lukanov closely, but I told you that the money where it is brought to Lovech will be of no use to it, so it turned out!** [bold by the editor]“

Then Danail Popov ends his letter to Kasabov as follows: „To tell you the truth, I cut off everything, **because no matter how much I know that there was money, something money collected, which can be seen that it remained at the disposal of the Marinov family, who have now absorbed it for their own** [bold by the editor]. That is why I say again that our Bulgarians, since they do not like to sacrifice, but love to appropriate such property, which are collected by steam for a holy purpose, therefore in the future you will be more careful on such matters of ours, and especially when some work to bring benefit, and others to assimilate.” /Ivan Drasov in the Bulgarian National Revolutionary Movement (1871-1877). Documentary collection. – In: The Archives Speak, vol. 44. S., 2007, p. 93; See. and Ivan Lalev. Vasil Levski. Beyond the myths..., pp. 170, 171/.

Regarding the vaulting of the collective find Lovech 1973.

On September 22, 1872, Dimitar Obshti and some of the activists of the Teteven Private Committee, without Levski's permission, carried out a risky robbery of the Ottoman State Treasury in the Arabakonak Pass. On October 24, the Turkish police managed to arrest D. Obshti and his comrades, who too easily and thoughtlessly made full confessions, giving information not only about their actions, but also about the activities of the leadership of the Internal Organization in general. This greatly facilitated the unraveling of the conspiracy secrets of the Bulgarian conspiracy. As early as October 26-28, mass arrests began, and among those arrested were Marin Poplukanov and Dimitar Pashkov. Together with many other activists, the latter were taken to Sofia and sentenced on October 30, 1872 to exile in Diyarbakir, Anatolia.

From the beginning of 1873 to July 1876, Pop (priest) Lukan Lilov, Marin's father, regularly sent him serious sums of money to Diyarbakir in order to start trade, so that his exile would pass more easily. Marin Poplukanov, Dimitar Pashkov and Docho Mravkov (Docho The Crumble), who were assigned a freer regime, even opened their own butcher shop at that time, called „The Crooked Sausage“. At the same time, throughout 1873, priest Lucan supported his other son Elijah, who studied theology at the Theological Seminary in Odessa, southern Russia, through money transfers. /Ivan Lalev. Vasil Levski – beyond myths, legends and delusions. Sofia, „Perseus“ Publishing house, 2019, pp. 169-173/.

In August 1874, Ivan Drasov, one of the leaders of the BRCC, participated in another general meeting of revolutionary activists in Bucharest. There, as a former cashier of the IRO, he was asked about the fate of the Internal Committee Treasury after Levski's death. That is why the worried Drasov was forced to write to Marin Poplukanov in Diyarbakir: „**Marin, in the name of our friendship, please tell me as soon as possible where and to whom you gave the money I gave you in 1872?** [bold by the editor]“ /Ivan Drasov in the Bulgarian National Revolutionary Movement (1871-1877). Documentary collection. – In: The Archives Speak, vol. 44. S., 2007, p. 168/.

Obviously, this refers to the cash register of the IRO, which Ivan Drasov handed over to Marin Poplukanov on August 11, 1872.

How the calculating and speculative Marin justified himself to the idealist Ivan, today it no longer matters. Once in the hands of the cunning old priest Lucan Lilov (Marin's father), the money could not be „wasted“ on some ideal, even if it was the Liberation of the Bulgarian people from Ottoman rule.

However, the cunning man had to endure what the Irrevocable Fate had prepared for him.

At the end of June and the beginning of July 1877, the Russian Active Army of His Majesty Emperor Alexander II quickly and decisively took control of Northern Bulgaria, with the exception of the cities of Plevna and Elena. Of course, there were moments of Turkish offensive and Russian retreat. For example, on July 15, 1877, the Russian units that had liberated and held Lovech unexpectedly withdrew from the city. Lovech was again enslaved, albeit temporarily, by regular units of Reuf Pasha, but there was also a bashi-bazouk (local

militia), who indulged in robberies, outrages and murders. About 2,000 civilians died in a few days. Even when the Russians were leaving the city in panic, priest Lukan Lilov decided to move the committee treasury out of the house. Until then, it was probably hidden in the floor or in a wall. But he was afraid that she would be found there by the ubiquitous marauders, probably Circassians. The priest buried the gold, but was slow to join his neighbors who fled out of the city. This cost him his life and he took the location of the new hiding place to the grave.

Undoubtedly, if the committee treasury had remained in the house of Priest Lukan, then Marin Poplukanov, who returned to Lovech in September 1877, would have used it for some business or spent it wildly at his own discretion. But he did not find it in the old hiding place, which he knew from the time before he was exiled.

The gold of the Apostle, or what was left of him after the aforementioned expenses of the old priest Lukan, was discovered by God's providence almost a century later – on November 10, 1973. Exactly 101 years have passed since the capture of Vasil Levski! The place is in the Lukanov yard, according to some, under the threshold (slab) of the road gate, at 17 „Marin Poplukanov“ Street, in the old Varosha neighborhood of the town of Lovech. Therefore, the collective find of *Lovech 1973* as an artifact and location proves itself to be the committee treasury of the Internal Revolutionary Organization.

The discoverer Radoy Dobrev was at the time of finding a worker in the local leather factory „Suede“. He received a building permit from the city architect at the mentioned address. He demolished the old dilapidated house located there and began to dig the foundations of his designed family house. So his shovel fell on the gold. An honest and selfless man, Radoy immediately handed over to the local authorities all 1364 gold coins, weighing 3,950 kg, without taking a single one. /**Rositza Hristova**. A poor tanner finds Levski's estate and betrays it without stealing a coin. – „168 Hours“ newspaper, 14.07.2020; **Nikolay Ivanov**. Internal theft of committee money led to the capture of Levski. – „Trud“ newspaper, 11.08.2024/.

It's amazing how God directs human affairs! Thanks to an honest man like Radoy Dobrev, the committee treasury of the Apostle has been preserved!

It was kept for 18 years in the cash register of the Regional History Museum (RHM) in the town of Lovech. In 1991 it was handed over for safekeeping in the vault of the Bulgarian National Bank.

Regarding the dating of the collective find *Lovech 1973* according to the last coin or issue of coins contained in it.

The director of RHM-Lovech in the period 1991-2013, Ivan Lalev, points out that the latest issue in the treasure was minted in 1837 under Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839), Ottoman Empire. This is confirmed in the inventory published by him. /**Ivan Lalev**.

Vasil Levski – beyond myths, legends and delusions. Sofia, „Perseus“ Publishing house, 2019, pp. 168, 179, 180/.

However, in this particular case, the latest issue could not serve as a token for vaulting. As we have seen, in the period 1873-1877 the committee treasury was used unrestrictedly by the Pop Lukanov family for personal needs. We must bear in mind that it was more convenient and unsuspecting to spend not the old coins, but those of modern issues, for example, the gold lira of Abdul Mejid I (1839-1861) and Abdul Aziz (1861-1876), which undoubtedly had in the treasury. That is why the latter are missing from the collective find *Lovech 1973*.

And one more interesting argument. There are no silver and copper coins in the find, which are usually used daily for ordinary purchases. The presence of only gold coins in it leads to the idea of its purpose, namely that it is being prepared for a major transaction, the purchase of expensive goods, such as weapons. Above we calculated that 500 rifles of English or American production cost then about 29 kg. gold coins. Should we imagine such a deal with hundreds of kilograms of non-convertible silver or copper Ottoman coins? Of course, no arms company would accept such payment.

Another important argument against the hypothesis that the hoard of coins was what remained of the Committee's coffers is the very location of the find. It was not discovered in the yard of the house of Father Lukan Lilov, who was the father of the Chairman of the Lovech Committee, Marin Poplukanov. The trove of coins was discovered ...in an area where Father Lukan's house had been (Lalev 2019, 174). Hiding such a substantial amount of money in another man's yard is an act that needs explaining. None has been offered.

If Marin Poplukanov left such an amount with his father, then after the liberation of Bulgaria he would have undoubtedly dug up the entire district of Varosha to get it back. After the liberation, Marin Poplukanov became one of the highest-ranking administrators in Lovech. Yet, there are no records whatsoever to suggest that he or his siblings, the heirs of Father Lukan, were ever engaged in efforts to recover any gold.

To sum up, the publication of the contents of the treasure renders obsolete the hypothesis that it had been buried in 1877. We have provided sufficient arguments against the stubbornly repeated opinion that the coins were property of the Revolutionary Committee of Lovech or that this was Levski's gold. These are mind-boggling assertions that have for a long time been carelessly disseminated by none other than professors and doctors of historical sciences. If no one else, people of science should know how to avoid indulging in sensationalist writing and speaking. If the treasure was sealed prior to 1839, then its hiding did not take place too much later than in 1840. Similar to the large find from *Devnia 1929* (see part I of this article), here, too, we can assume that the owner of the money was a rich recluse who never disclosed to anyone the existence or location of the treasure. The person in question likely left this earth far away from Lovech under circumstances that remain unknown, taking with him the secret of the treasure.

Number of coins: 1 364 Au

Place of safekeeping: Bulgarian National Bank – Sofia

Latest coin: Mahmud II (1835)

Hidden: 1835-1845 (HT)

Dimitrov (1899, 232);
Gerasimov (1973), **H-3-31**; Yurukova (1978), **A-2-77**;
Rakova (1984), **H-3-31**; Ivanov (2014, 78-88); Lalev (2019, 174-181)

Kirilovo 1875, Stara Zagora Municipality

In or around 1875, Kirilovo native Georgy Aladzhov, while digging on his property to extend a fence, discovered a large hoard of Turkish and European gold coins. According to accounts described by Apostolov, the coins were from Sultan Abdul Hamid I (1774-1789) and Emperor Napoleon III (1851-1870). Possibly, there were coins from other rulers in the hoard because the time differential between the reign of Abdul Hamid I and Napoleon III would otherwise be difficult to explain. There is a possibility that in the publication the name of the Ottoman sultan was mistaken for that of Abdulmejid (1839-1861). The coins were handed down to the discoverer's daughter, Pena Dimova, as inheritance. Later they were divided into four parts: the first and largest part went to the daughter of Pena Dimova, Slava Decheva, who moved with her husband to the village of Sokolovo, Karnobat Municipality, Burgas Province in 1910 where she purchased several hundred decares of farmland and numerous heads of cattle. The second part of the coins were given to Pena Dimova's son in law, Yovcho Karaivanov. The third part was hidden in the hollow stump of a tree. At an unidentified point in time this third part was found by Zhalio Zheliazkov Kutlozhenetsa. There is no evidence to suggest that there are any pieces from the find that survive to this day.

What is interesting about this find is that likely the coins remained hidden for a relatively short time before they were discovered. No convincing explanation has been suggested as to the reasons why the coins were buried other than them being acquired in a robbery. The person who obtained them likely was in a hurry to hide them but then possibly died without being able to tell anyone where he had hidden his bounty.

Number of coins: about 1 000 Au

Place of safekeeping: scattered

Latest coin: Napoleon III (1851-1870)

Hidden: 1851-1870? (HT)

Apostolov (1983. 25)

Parvomay 2014, Parvomay Municipality; Plovdiv Province

On 1 September 2014, during ground work on the property of Dimitar Dimitrov in the old part of the town of Parvomay, a large clay vessel (jar) full of silver coins was discovered. After an altercation between the person who found them (the digger) and the owner of the property, the coins were submitted to the local police. According to the initial examination of the find, it comprised more than 2 000, all of which were from the 1930s and bore the visage of King Boris III (1918-1943). There was also a gold coin from Sultan Abdulmejid (1839-1861). The silver coins bearing the name and visage of King Boris III were minted between 1930 and 1937. At that time there was an extensive network of bank offices in Bulgaria but evidently the owner of the coins had compelling reasons to bury them in the ground instead. Thus far, this is the most recently buried hoard of coins to ever be discovered in Bulgaria. According to the provisions of the Cultural Heritage Protection Act, these coins do not constitute cultural heritage and are supposed to be returned in their entirety to the owner of the property where they were found. After litigation before the courts of two instances, the coins were returned to the owner of the property in 2015. If they were well preserved, the cumulative value of the entire hoard of coins as of 2021 would have been about BGN 50 000. It is possible the coins were hidden quite late after they were minted, namely during the communist coup d'état of September 9, 1944, and their owner was unable to recover them because they were a victim of the mass repressions and murders that followed.

Number of coins: 2 001 (1 Au, 2 000 Ag)

Place of safekeeping: Parvomay, private property

Latest coin: Boris III (1930-1937)

Hidden: 1937-1944 (HT)

According to accounts published by the media

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

The Avramov Collection, Sofia

Vasil Avramov was a well-known Bulgarian numismatist and collector. He was born in 1862 in Karlovo and died in 1946 in Sofia. A man of the law and long-serving attorney, he started collecting coins in 1894. In accordance with a resolution of the Committee on Antiquities with the People's Museum, in 1912 the Bulgarian state purchased *the coin collection of V. Avramov* for 60 000 leva, the equivalent of EUR 700 000 as of the end of 2017. The collection, which comprised a total of 7 095 coins, was acquired by the People's Museum in Sofia. In it, there are many coins, more than half of the entire collection, that were minted in Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia. According to calculations, some 40% of these coins had no prior equivalent in the collections of the museum and thus the museum received a significant boost thanks to this acquisition. Ultimately, as a result of it, the Museum got to have some of the most comprehensive series of coins from antiquity minted in Moesia and Thrace (Mushmov). Avramov continued to collect coins after 1912 and by 1945 managed to collect 3 000 more coins, among which was a large hoard of 1 500 from the *Devnia-1929 (Varna)* find. From it, Avramov managed to acquire some rare denarii from Marcus Didius Julianus, Publius Helvius Pertinax, Marcus Clodius Pupienus, Didia Clara and so forth. This later part of his collection was exported abroad and sold off by his heirs (Gerasimov).

Number of coins: over 10,000 Au, Ag, Æ

Place of safekeeping: 7,076 at
NAIM-Sofia **Latest coin:** Thrace,
Rome, Byzantium, etc.

Hidden: compilation (collection)

Mushmov (1915), **IV-250**;
Gerasimov (1970), **H-1/2-34**

The Handzhiev Collection, Ruse

Colonel Peter Handzhiev had a passion for collecting antiquities and over his lifetime managed to amass a large collection of medieval coins, archaeological finds and weapons. After his death, his wife, Radka Handzhieva, got in financial difficulties and had to move the collection to a foreign-owned bank in Ruse while negotiating its sale to a British officer by the name of Winzel. This intention of the widow, R. Handzhieva, was brought to the attention of Boris Dyakovich, director of the People's Library and Museum of Plovdiv. On 18 March 1920, he submitted a special report to the Ministry of People's Education to alert authorities of the risk of the collection being exported abroad. However, approximately at the same time, on the 18th or 19th of March 1920, the collection was sold and the British officer had it shipped out of Bulgaria as soon as it was possible. In the meantime, B. Dyakovich, who was dispatched to Ruse to find and document the collection, managed to acquire a list of the coins, statues and other antiquities that were part of the collection, which was compiled by the intermediaries for the transaction. This was only a working copy, hastily written and quite possibly not entirely correctly. Yet, based on the list, Dyakovich managed to build a reasonably comprehensive

inventory of the objects and coins that formed the collection. The distribution of the coins by metal was approximately as follows: Gold – 17 pcs. in total

Silver – 885 pcs. in total

Bronze – 1 435 pcs. in total

Among the coins, there were several pendants made of gold, silver and bronze. Some 40 pieces in total. Most of the coins were described only superficially. Only colonial coins were described in greater detail. Based on the location of minting, the coins were distributed as follows:

Augusta Traiana – 11;

Delutum – 14;

Marcianopolis – 18;

Messambria – 18;

Nikopolis ad Istrum – 5

Odessos – 7;

Pautalia – 9;

Perinthos – 3;

Chersonesus of Thrace – 1;

Philipopolis – 10;

Hadrianopolis – 5.

The collection was sold for 2 000 pounds sterling or BGN 300 000 in today's money. The pendants and coins from the collection alone were worth than much. After the sale of the main part of the collection, Radka Handzhieva and her son, with B. Dyakovich serving as an intermediary, sold to the Museum of Plovdiv 98 silver and 28 bronze coins for a total of 1 400 leva. These coins have not yet been described or published.

The actual worth of the collection can be estimated based on the incomplete list of archaeological artifacts. According to it, the collection comprised: 32 cameyas, 9 gold rings, 9 silver rings, an iron ring with a royal coat of arms and seal, seven pairs of gold ear rings, solid gold bracelet 250 g, wreath of gold rings – 200 g, amber tie (encrusted with gold ornaments), at least 7 bronze statuettes (one of a Roman legionnaire, 28 cm tall), three Roman bracelets awarded for distinction and bravery, one royal scepter, Byzantine ruby necklace, statue of Caesar, icon from the early days of Christianity, coat of arms from the banner of the First Legion of Italy, a Roman bronze spear, sacrificial bronze vessel in the shape of a horse's head, etc. In an interview, Radka Handzhieva reported that in the collection there was another solid gold bracelet from Antiquity which weighed about 500 g, a necklace from gold-encrusted granite beads interspersed with gold pendants and rings and an extensive and quite valuable collection of post stamps. All of these items were sold to the British officer. After selling the aforementioned items to the officer and the museum, the family was left with the following objects from the original collection: a Byzantine gold coin, a gold band from Antiquity (made of twisted strands of gold wire), two engraved gems and one cameya, 6 silver dice, a fossil – mammoth fragment – 10 Roman bricks bearing the seal of the First Italyen Legion, as well as weapons and fire arms.

Number of coins: 2 337+ (17+ Au, 885+ Ag and 1 435+ Æ) and objects

Place of safekeeping: 126 at the Archaeological Museum of Plovdiv

Latest coin: 19th century

Hidden: collection

Petrov (1994), **HC-1/4-115**

The Dr. Haralanov Collection, Shumen

Doctor Vasil Haralanov was the most knowledgeable Bulgarian collector and numismatist. He was born in 1907 in Shumen and died in his home town in 2000. In 1926 he graduated from the men's High School in Shumen and went to France to study medicine in Montpellier at the insistence of his mother. He earned his medical diploma in 1932 and returned to Shumen where he built a reputation as a good doctor and excellent diagnostician. His passion, however, was for coins. Haralanov started collecting them when he was only 9 years old. The first coins in his possession were a gift from his mother. Even at such an early age, he showed the attention to detail of a natural-born collector. He kept detailed accounts on each coin including meticulous descriptions of the coins themselves and the circumstances of their finding, including dates, readings of the inscriptions, details about the persons who brought him the coins, the price he paid to acquire them and so on. He was interested in all kinds of coins: from Antiquity, Roman, Medieval, Arab and Turkish. Haralanov spoke and wrote fluently in Turkish so he was able to read any text in Arabic. He authored a series of articles on various subjects of Bulgarian numismatics that to this day remain under-investigated. He wrote letters to almost all well-known Bulgarian numismatists, especially with Professor Gerasimov. Their correspondence was especially prolific as there are more than 300 letters exchanged by the two of them. Almost all accounts on discoveries of single coins or hoards of coins in Northeastern Bulgaria published in the Bulletin on Coin Finds were written by him, as the inventory below clearly proves. The information provided by him could always be relied upon for veracity and objectivity (Zhekova and Yordanov).

The doctor never built a family of his own and spent all available resources on purchasing coins, old printed and handwritten books, weapons, documents, ethnographical artifacts and so on. He was known to ask some of his poorer patients, which were the majority, to pay him with old outdated currency, if they had any. Unfortunately, Dr. Haralanov lived in a country where collecting old coins minted prior to 1800 was banned. His did not go unnoticed by the repressive authorities during the communist era. In the early 1970s, after conducting a transaction in Razgrad, the doctor was arrested. His residence was unceremoniously searched and his collection was ruined and scattered. The persons involved in the search even took items from his own personal effects and stole jewelry that belonged to his sister. The authorities in Bulgaria, acting through their agents, never missed an opportunity to demonstrate their power not only over distinguished individuals such as the doctor but, over anyone who dared to have in their possession even the most mundane antique objects, which were believed to be the exclusive monopoly of the state. When the state and society at large fail to recognize the sense and value of private collectors, life, for people like Doctor Haralanov, becomes devoid of meaning. The coins confiscated during the search of his home have been listed, but

the gold pieces on that list are suspiciously few, most of them having disappeared down the pockets of anonymous bureaucrats who knew little more than that the color of gold is yellow. The Doctor was forced to donate the confiscated collection to the Historical Museum of Shumen. The Museum and the Doctor signed an agreement which granted some small privileges to the donor regarding his own personal collection. Soon after, the Doctor lost interest and cut ties with the museum. After this incident he became a recluse and died in his home in 2000.

It should be noted that the numismatists at the Historical Museum of Shumen acted with diligence and good faith with regard to what was left of the collection of Doctor Vasil Haralanov. Over the course of 15 years, the collection was inventoried, albeit damaged greatly by the fact that during and after the search virtually all notes by the Doctor regarding the discoveries of the individual coins and the initial descriptions of the troves were lost. In 2007, to celebrate the 100 anniversary of Doctor Haralanov's birth, the Historical Museum of Shumen published an anniversary edition of his collected articles. According to information from these articles, his collection, now in the custody of the Historical Museum of Shumen comprised about 8 000 coins from the following periods:

Antiquity: proto-coins from Persia, Greece, Thrace, Macedonia – 1 976 pieces;

Roman: republican, imperial, provincial – 3 607 pieces;

Medieval: Bulgarian, Byzantine, Ottoman (14th – 15th century),

Serbian – 260 pieces

European and Turkish: European, Asian, Russian, Turkish – 2 098 pieces.

The collection included both coins from individual finds and from trove discoveries. It is worth mentioning several extremely valuable pieces here. These include tetradrachms from Apollonia Pontica, tetradrachms of Patraos of Paeonia, shekels from the Persian ruler Xerxes, stater from Aspendos, stater from the island of Euboea, tetradrachms from the Thracian ruler Cotys. Of the gold coins, only one stater each from Philip II and Lysimachus and one solidus from Zeno remained. Apart from coins, Doctor Haralanov owned a significant collection of Medieval lead seals, which are currently kept at NAIM-Sofia.

Number of coins: 8 000+ Au, Ag, Æ

Place of safekeeping: Historical Museum of Shumen

Latest coin: unknown, possibly from the end of the 19th century.

Hidden: collection dominated by Roman coins

The information used here to describe the life and the collection of Doctor Vasil Haralanov comes from articles by Zh. Zhekova and I. Yordanov published in the anniversary edition Centennial Anniversary of the Birth of Doctor Vasil Haralanov 1907-2007, Shumen, 2008.

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Bibliographic abbreviations

Всички имена, дадени с *курсивен текст*, включително и удебелен, без четирите основни показатели в края на всяко описание, имат характер на **цитати**.

Римска цифра-XXX = ИБАД-том-страница (ИБАД = Известия на Българското археологическо дружество)

Арабска цифра-XXX = ИБАИ или БАИ-том-страница
(ИБАИ = Известия на Българския археологически институт)

A-Y-ZZ = сп. „Археология”-книжка-страница

AOP-XXXX-ZZ = поредица „Археологически открития и разкопки”-година-страница, издание на НАИМ-София

Г-Y-ZZ = Годишник на Народния археологически музей – книга – страница

ГМСБ-X-ZZ = Годишник на музеите от Северна България-том-страница
ЖИАИ-X-ZZ = Журнал за исторически и археологически изследвания-книжка- страница

ИМЛ-X-ZZ = Известия на Историческия музей Ловеч-том-страница

ИМРА-X-ZZ = Известия на Регионалния исторически музей в Разград-том-страница

ИМСЗБ-X-ZZ = Известия на музеите от Северозападна България-том-страница
ИМТ-XZZ = Известия на Историческия музей във Велико Търново-том-страница
МПК-X-ZZ = сп.

„Музеи и паметници на културата”-книжка-страница

Н-X-ZZ = сп. „Нумизматика”-книжка-страница

НЕ-X-ZZ = сп. „Нумизматика и епиграфика”-книжка-страница

НС-X-ZZ = сп. „Нумизматика и сфагистика”-том-страница

НСЕ-X-ZZ = сп. „Нумизматика, сфагистика и епиграфика”-том-страница

AB-X-ZZ = „Archaeologia Bulgarica-книжка-страница

AMV-X-ZZ = Acta Musei Varnaensis-том-страница

NIM-X-ZZ = Известия на Нац. исторически музей-том-страница
Rv-X-ZZ = Списание „Реверс”- брой-страница