

TWO EDIFICIES OF THE CITY OF MARCIANOPOLIS ILLUSTRATED BY THE FABULOUS CARACALLA–JULIA DOMNA MONETARY SERIES

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Abstract: In the years 213–216 AD, in Marcianopolis (Moesia Inferior), a monetary series consisting of more than 30 different issues was issued in the name of Emperor Caracalla and his mother Julia Domna.

The coin series illustrates, for the first time, two important edifices of Marcianopolis: the city sanctuary, an imperial honorary monument and various works of art (statues or bas-reliefs) associated with the two buildings. All these wonderful monuments have so far remained unknown from an archaeological point of view.

Rezumat: În anii 213–216 p.Chr., la Marcianopolis (Moesia Inferior), a fost emisă, în numele împăratului Caracalla și a mamei sale Julia Domna, o serie monetară formată din peste 30 de emisiuni diferite.

Seria monetară ilustrează, pentru prima dată, două edificii de primă importanță ale Marcianopolisului: sanctuarul orașului, un monument onorific imperial și diverse lucrări de artă (statui sau basoreliefuluri) aflate în legătură cu cele două construcții. Toate aceste minunate monumente au rămas până acum necunoscute din punct de vedere arheologic.

Before talking about the monetary issues and the monuments that are the subject of this study, we must outline in a few words the large historical context of the period when, at Marcianopolis, there was issued the monetary series for Caracalla and Julia Domna (213–216 AD).¹

On February 4, 211, Emperor Septimius Severus dies, leaving the leadership of the Roman Empire in the hands of his two sons: Caracalla (Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, born Lucius Septimius Bassianus) and Geta (Publius Septimius Geta), “moderated” (if we can say so) by their mother, Empress Julia Domna.

Julia Domna had been honoured, until that moment, with the most important titles and epithets that could have been attributed to an empress: “mother of the emperor” (*Mater Augustus*), “mother of the military camps” (*Mater castrorum*), “mother of the Senate” (*Mater senatus*) and even of the homeland (*Mater patriae*), etc. All the titles of Julia Domna show a *dignitas*, but especially an *auctoritas*,² that were unprecedented, and reflect her great political and social influence.

Ten months later, on December 26, 211, Caracalla assassinates his younger brother, Geta.

In the year 213 AD Caracalla conducts a campaign against the Alamanni. Following this campaign, he receives the title of *Germanicus maximus* (October 213) and *Magnus*³ – similar to that of Alexander III of Macedon, also known as Alexander the Great.

Also, during that period, the physical and mental health of Emperor Caracalla deteriorates. To heal himself, the emperor calls on the help of the divinities: Apollo Grannus, Aesculapius, and Serapis. Cassius Dio provides numerous details in this regard.⁴

In the spring of 214, Caracalla, accompanied by his mother Julia Domna, went on a tour of the Danube and Asian provinces, reaching as far as Egypt.

Julia Domna’s involvement in state management was increasing. Cassius Dio shows, succinctly but clearly, the role of the empress at that time: “(Caracalla) had appointed her to receive petitions and to have charge of his correspondence in both languages, except in very important cases, and used to include her name, in terms of high

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¹ For the historical context of the period there were mainly consulted the works: Birley 1989 and Langford 2013.

² For the meaning of the concepts expressed by these words see Cizek 1998, pp. 38–39 for *dignitas* (dignity, behaviour, appearance, rank, social status etc.) and pp. 232–233 for *auctoritas* (authority, power, influence etc.).

³ For all the titles and epithets with which Caracalla was honoured during his lifetime see: Mastino 1981.

⁴ Cassius Dio, LXXVIII, 15.