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Cristian Găzdac, Franz Hummer, Eduard Pollhammer. *In The Shadow of the Heathens' Gate. The Black Book of the Gold Coins from Carnuntum*, Cluj-Napoca: Mega Publishing House, 2014, 136 pp, ISBN 978-606-543-482-0

Written by three authors: Cristian Găzdac, Franz Hummer and Eduard Pollhammer the book *'In the Shadow of the Heathens' Gate – The Black Book of the Gold Coins from Carnuntum'* provides a spectacular presentation of the gold coins from the Carnuntum area. The title of this book is sophisticated and intriguing. Having a title such like that will rise interest not only from scholars. Pointing out the 'Heathens' Gate' (in German 'Heidentor') which is probably the most well-known Roman monument from Austria, creating a mystery around it, will definitely rise interest among all categories of readers. The 'black book' term is physically covered by the fact that the book is actually printed on black paper.

With a total of 135 pages, the book is composed into 8 chapters: 1. *Carnuntum. The Metropolis and Its Gold Coins* (pp. 7 – 10); 2. *The Celts in the Carnuntum Region* (pp. 10-15); 3. *The Roman Carnuntum – Topography and History* (pp. 15-24); 4. *Carnuntum during the Migration Period and in the Middle Ages* (pp. 24-27); 5. *Abbreviations and Explanations of the Inscriptions on Coins* (pp. 27- 29); 6. *Bibliography* (pp. 29-31); 7. *Photos' credits* (pp. 31-33) 8. *Catalogue* (pp. 33-135).

The book offers the readers a large number of illustrations of an amazing high quality. These are apart from all the amazing coins displayed in the Catalogue, a topic that I will come back later. The first 33 illustrations include maps, artefacts, monuments, inscriptions, reconstructions, landscapes, and geophysical data. These are joined together by information that is relevant to the spirit of the text and displayed in a manner not often found in many books. Using very accessible language, the authors make sure that the reader, whether expert or layperson, will not encounter problems of understanding the topic.

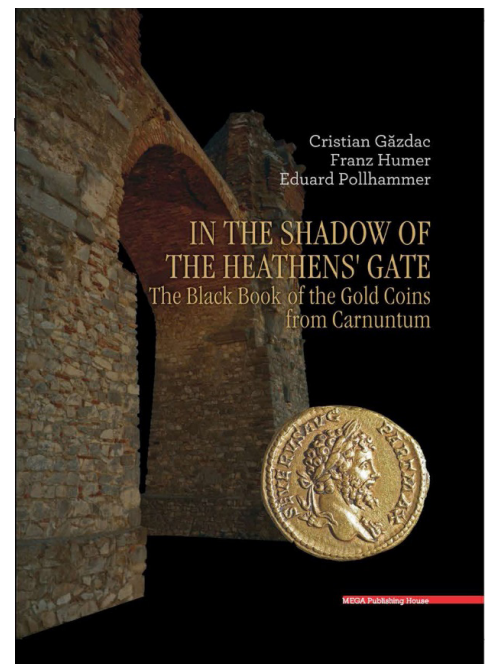
Prior to the catalogue, the authors acquaint the readers with an introduction to the history of Carnuntum and its surrounding area.

The first chapter, "*Carnuntum. The Metropolis and Its Gold Coins*", presents the numismatic spectrum reflected by the gold coins discussed in this book. The most important aspect is revealed by the fact that the 202 gold coins found at Carnuntum are all single finds and not coming from hoards. In this case, the 148 Roman gold coins place Carnuntum, probably, second after Rome concerning the single gold coin finds.

In the beginning of the second chapter "*The Celts in the Carnuntum region*", the authors state that the Celtic Boii inhabited the region in the last two centuries BC, pointing out the key elements: the oppida from Bratislava, the Devín Castle Hill from Slovakia and the Austrian site of Braunsberg. These formed a triangle of major Celtic centers within the Carnuntum region during the La Tène period. Along with the presentation of some archaeological material of Celtic origin (figs. 7, 9vc), offers us a brief history of the Celtic population in the area of Carnuntum. The authors also use ancient writing sources to relate historical facts together with archaeological analysis.

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The third chapter “*The Roman Carnuntum – Topography and History*” includes information about the founding of the legionary fortress at Carnuntum. Like the second part, the authors relate a brief history of Roman occupation in the area of Carnuntum. Together with historical facts, this chapter of the book revealed many illustrations of both military and civilian buildings, and the results of geophysical surveys in the forum of the civilian town of Carnuntum (fig. 23) and of the site of gladiator school (fig.27) in the civil settlement. The complex of the buildings of the gladiator school covers 2,800 m². According to the author, the preservation of this Gladiator school is unique in the Roman world due to its completeness and its dimensions. This chapter also includes information about the legal status of the city in the first four centuries AD, as well as stated the emperors that visited the city. Perhaps the most important event from Late Antiquity at Carnuntum was the imperial conference on the 11th of November 308 attended by the emperors Diocletian, Maximianus and Galerius. According to the authors, Carnuntum begins to go into decline during the second half of the 4th century AD.

The fourth chapter “*Carnuntum during the Migration Period and in the Middle Age*” gives a short history from 5th century until 18th century, when Carnuntum was abandoned, and the civilization around the city decline.

The following chapter includes abbreviations and explanations of the inscriptions on coins, which is very useful for any category of reader when they read the catalogue.

A particular aspect among many other interesting facts of this book is the *Catalogue* starting with the page 35. As is mentioned in the first chapter, the book presents the gold coins discovered in the site of Roman Carnuntum and in its vicinity. Between the assemblage of Archaeological Park Carnuntum and private collections, 202 gold coins were available for publication. The authors present in detail

the coins of this metal coming from Carnuntum hosted in the museum collections (from the site and its vicinity) and private collections.

All of the coins are displayed in a high definition resolution illustration, with both obverse and reverse shown. Every gold coin is displayed in two types of illustrations: the first two ones illustrate the coin’s obverse and reverse at 1:1 scale while the next two are enlarge to 5cm height in order to facilitate a better analyze of the coin’s design. The methodology used by the authors is very clear and composed from a very rigorous set of rules. For each coin, a description is given, telling its denomination, axis, mint, dating, obverse and reverse, inventory number (if applicable), reference, and bibliography. A particular aspect on this catalogue is representing by the completion of the numismatic abbreviated inscription, a method preferred by the author to make much easier the understanding of numismatic epigraphy for those less familiar with the abbreviations on coins.

Using this catalogue, we can observe both the periods of rising and decreasing of Carnuntum. Five gold coins belong to the Celtic period. The most important Roman period for Carnuntum are the first four centuries AD. According to the catalogue, there are 148 gold coins from this period. The next chronological segment – the Byzantine period – the number of gold coins decreases dramatically. The decreasing importance of Carnuntum after the 8th century AD is demonstrated by the absence of gold coins. A small number of four medieval gold coins close the chronology of the catalogue for Carnuntum.

In conclusion, it can be affirmed that this book contains a detailed, educational and attractive presentation of gold coinage from Carnuntum, together with a brief historical overview. In my opinion, both the nonprofessional and the expert can understand the purpose of this book. Personally, I enjoyed reading it, and I am happy to write this review.