

FIND OF GALLIENUS ANTONINIANUS CONTEMPORARY FORGERY FROM THE PUSTÝ HRAD CASTLE IN ZVOLEN, SLOVAKIA¹

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The paper discusses a single find of a Roman coin – a subaerat Gallienus antoninianus – a random find from the Pustý hrad (Deserted) Castle in Zvolen. The find corroborates the view that the site was settled in the Early or Late Roman Period. The coin is a Roman currency commonly used in trade with the Quadi. A thorough analysis of the coin allowed us to determine its age, method of production and interpret its historical context. So far, no similar contemporary finds of young subaerat antoninianus coins are known from the Danubian *Barbaricum*.

Keywords: Central Slovakia, castle, antoninianus forgery, Late Roman Period.

We have known imitations or counterfeit coins since the times of antiquity (*Kolníková 1978*). The introduction of coins as a currency and a generic equivalent of a value was extremely important for the development of the economy and mainly trade – local as well as long-distance. Coins were considerable concentrations of precious metals and their values. Thus, they allowed faster cumulation of property and fortune. Counterfeiters of coins or coiners were primarily greedy and although their activity was illegal, the attractiveness of economic prosperity was stronger than their fear of punishment. In the Late Roman Period, a large number of coins of various quality, including counterfeit exemplars, was in circulation. Money in general was losing its value in the 3rd–4th c. AD. The proportion of precious metal was reduced on purpose, which led to the devaluation of coins and a disproportionate increase in their number. Circulating counterfeit money or fake coins were successful mainly in politically or socially unstable times. For counterfeiters, imitation of coins' value by imitating the design but using a lower proportion of precious metal was important (*Hunka 2013, 131*). Expansion of imitating was thus an inseparable part of the use of coins.

The presented article aims to present the unique find of a contemporary imitation of a subaerat antoninianus of the emperor Gallienus (Fig. 1: 1). The coin was accidentally discovered in the mixed cultural layer of trench 1A studied in the

summer season of 2018 at the courtyard near the entrance gate of the National Cultural Monument of Pustý hrad (Deserted) Castle in Zvolen (Fig. 2; 3). Excavations at this site have been carried out systematically since 1992 every summer, until now. It was started by archaeologist V. Hanuliak, with whom the monument's renovation is associated. Since 2009, the research and renovation have been coordinated by the Institute of Archaeology of SAS in Nitra and led by J. Beljak. The long-term goal is not only the renovation of the castle as a monument but also protecting the monument and its presentation for the generations now and in the future (*Beljak Pažinová/Beljak 2020*).

The perennial modern systematic research of the Pustý hrad Castle in Zvolen has brought numerous movable as well as immovable finds which elucidate the extent and the character of the settlement from prehistory to the High Middle Ages and gradually explain the construction in the area and its catchment area (*Beljak/Beljak Pažinová/Šimkovic 2018, 3–63; Beljak et al. 2014; Pažinová et al. 2013*). As late as season 2018, no finds from the Roman Period were known from the site of Pustý hrad Castle in Zvolen, which the discovery of the counterfeit antoninianus of emperor Gallienus definitely changed. We aim to present the find context, analyse the coin itself and its possible role in the historical context of Germanic settlement in the territory of the central Pohronie region in the Late to Final Roman Period.

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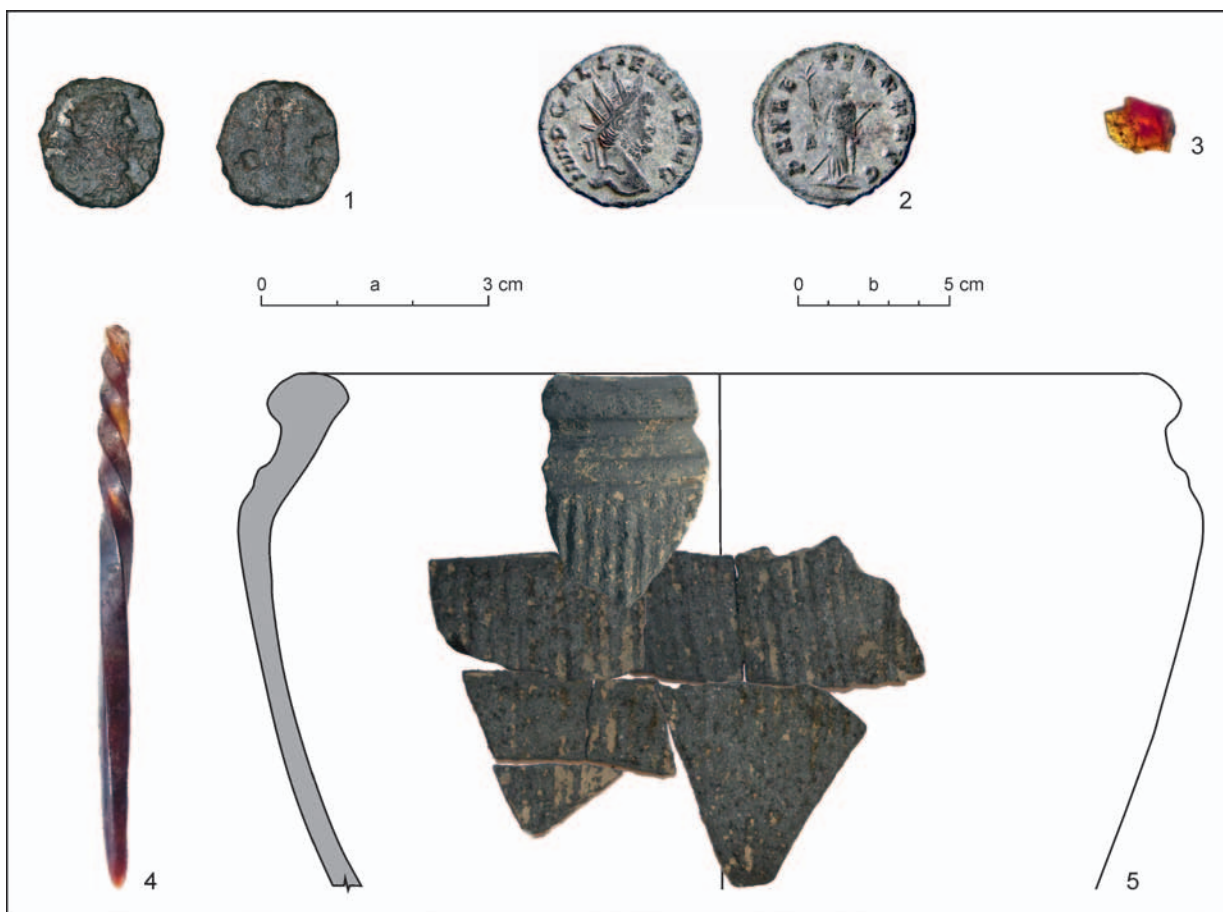


Fig. 1. Pustý hrad Castle in Zvolen, Upper castle. The southern line of the medieval fortification. Trench 1A/2018. Selected protohistoric finds. 1 – subaerat antoninianus of Emperor Gallienus; 2 – an illustrative image of Emperor Gallienus Antoninianus (RIC 252) with a similar image on the obverse and reverse as on the coin from the Pustý hrad Castle (https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/gallienus/RIC_0252.jpg); 3 – fragment of a raw piece of amber; 4 – amber needle; 5 – Middle La Tène vessel (photo M. Čierny, J. Beljak, drawing N. Beljak Pažinová). Scale: a – 1, 3, 4; b – 5; without scale – 2.

THE SETTLEMENT AT THE SITE OF PUSTÝ HRAD CASTLE IN ZVOLEN

The monument spreads over two tops of the hill with the same name, which is located at the southwestern edge of the town of Zvolen, in the Javorie hills, above the confluence of the Hron river and the Slatina stream. The site is known mainly thanks to medieval builders, as Hungarian kings from the Árpád family had a massive stone castle built there in the Middle Ages; its catchment area used the natural properties of the site (Fig. 3). On the hilltop plateau (571 m a.s.l.), the Upper castle with an area of 3.5 ha was built by the end of the 12th c. and lower (476 m a.s.l.), the Lower castle of 0.7 ha was built in the first half of the 13th c. The massive seat lost its fortifying function gradually, in the 14th c. At the beginning of the 15th c., it was not renewed (Beljak/Beljak Pažinová/Šimkovic 2018, 19–28, 50–52).

The Pustý hrad Castle hill still has an excellent strategic location with a good view of the Zvolenská kotlina basin and its wider surroundings. Therefore, it is no surprise that this area was popular with settlers since prehistory. The oldest recorded settlement comes from the Late Stone Age, when – mainly at the site of the Lower castle – an upland settlement from the end of the Baden culture was located (Beljak *et al.* 2014; Beljak Pažinová/Niklová/Beljak 2015). The settlement from the Late Bronze Age, when a hillfort of the Lusatian, later Kyjatice, cultures was built, is dominant in the framework of prehistoric periods. Its collapse is dated to the turn of stages HB and HC, when a crisis (depopulation) affected also other territories settled by the Kyjatice culture in the Carpathian territory (Beljak/Putško/Beljak Pažinová, *in press*).

The Pustý hrad Castle hill was not ignored in Protohistory either. On the hilltop plateau, La Tène sherds of the Púchov culture are sporadically discov-



Fig. 2. Pustý hrad Castle in Zvolen. Aerial image of the medieval castle. In the foreground the Upper castle, in the background the Lower castle and the town of Zvolen. Purple colour and red arrow mark the trench 1A/2018 (photo J. Beljak).

ered and two iron brooches from the end of the Late La Tène (LTC2 and LTD1) period were also found (Beljak *et al.* 2014, 125) as well as fragments of glass bracelets. Torsos of graphited vessels, including fragments of a pot with reinforced rim, short neck with a plastic ring and the body roughened by vertical grooves (Fig. 1: 5) from the 2nd c. BC (LTC2) were identified also in trench 1A/2018, from which the find of the presented Roman coin comes as well. The nearest settlement of the Púchov culture was located at the site of Haputka, just below the Pustý hrad Castle (the castle's entrance area), another settlement is known from the site of Zvolen-Balkán on the opposite side of the Slatina river running below the Pustý hrad Castle hill (more details in Beljak 2018, 35, 36). The Púchov culture's population was the last for long centuries to have permanently occupied the hilltop plateau of the Pustý hrad Castle. Finds of decorated sherds dated to the 10th–11th c. discovered near the eastern line of fortification on the hilltop plateau of the Upper castle were considered to be the last traces of settlement before the construction of the royal castle (Beljak/Beljak Pažinová 2018, fig. 21; Beljak/Beljak Pažinová/Šimkovic 2018, fig. 24; Šimkovic/Beljak/Maliniak 2011, 6, 27, 29). A new chapter of the previously unknown history of the site has been opened by the find of the subaerat, which suggests certain movement at the site in the Late or Final Roman Period.

Description of the coin

The Roman Empire, Gallienus (253–268 AD), subaerat antoninianus, 'from years 260–268 AD' (Fig. 1: 1).

Obverse: Emperor's head on the right with a radial crown, legend: GALLI...

Reverse: A figure standing on the left, illegible legend.

Note: The coin has a bronze core plated with silver.

Weight: 2.28 g

Diam.: 16.76 × 18.05 mm

Location Ob./Rv.: 6 h

Identification: *RIC V 2001*, 129–190.

Year of discovery: 2018

Location of find: Pustý hrad Castle in Zvolen, the site of Upper castle, trench 1A/2018 (approx. 560 m a.s.l.)

The coin discovered at the Pustý hrad Castle in Zvolen is a historical counterfeit, a so-called subaerat, which was very carefully produced. Their cores were made of non-ferrous metals or alloys. The coin from the Pustý hrad Castle had a copper core which was either plated with silver foil attached to the copper core by heating or a piece of alloy of silver and copper and a melting additive was placed on a disc. Surface tension made the alloy flow evenly and cover the whole disc (Stoklas 2017, 23). After being slightly heated, the disc was joined to the foil by a strike of a hammer, i.e. impact of a die. Although the silver foil has fallen off most of the surface and the legends on the obverse and reverse are almost impossible to

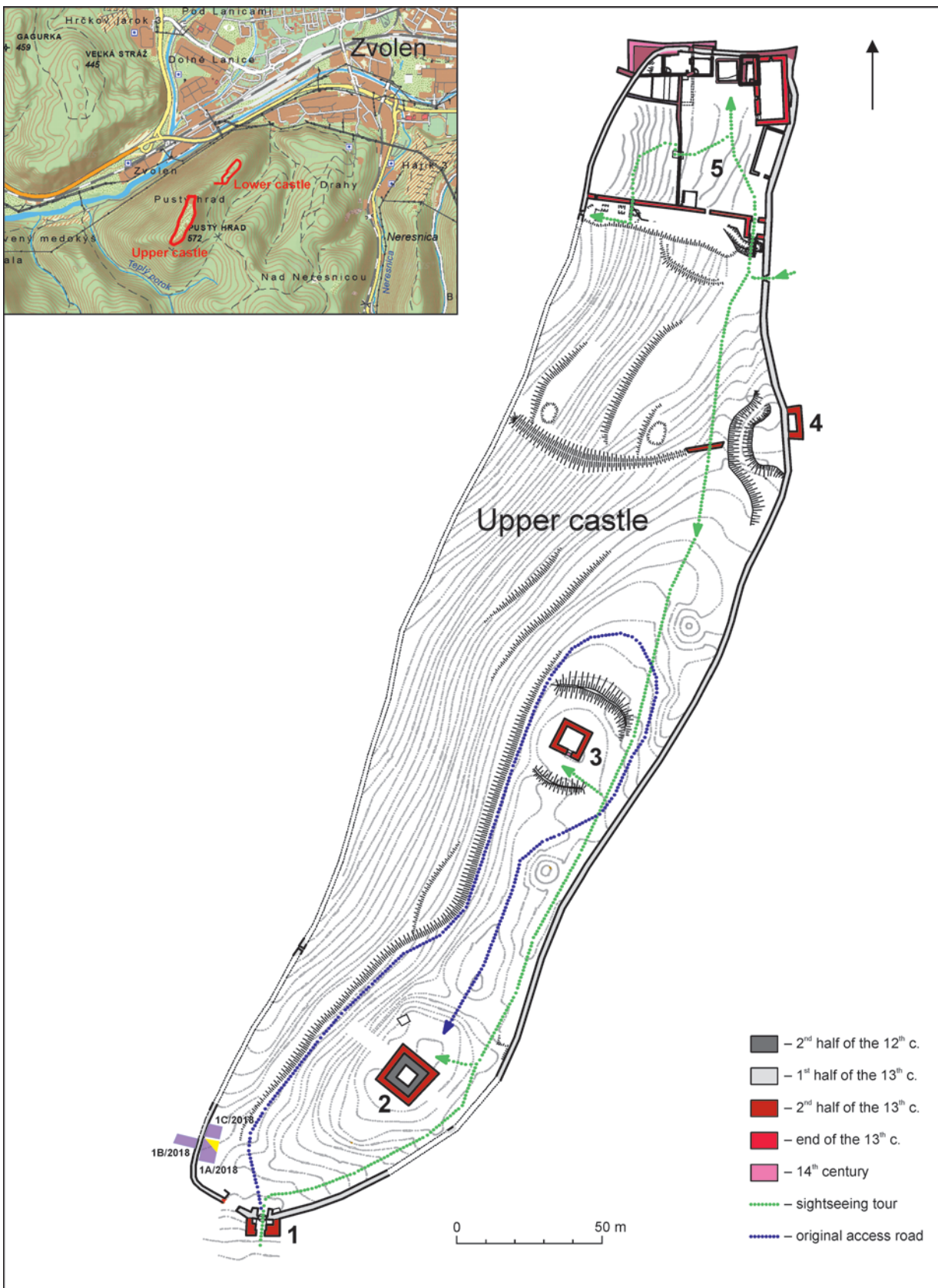


Fig. 3. Pustý hrad Castle in Zvolen. Ground plan of the Upper castle with construction phases. 1 – entrance gate; 2 – tower I. (oldest castle); 3 – tower II; 4 – flanking tower in the eastern line of fortification; 5 – the area of the so-called Donč Castle. Purple painted trench 1/2018 and with yellow marked the layer with the subaerat antoninianus (author N. Beljak Pažinová).



Fig. 4. Pustý hrad Castle in Zvolen, Upper castle. The southern line of the medieval fortification. Trench 1A/2018 (right) and 1C/2018 (left). 1 – a remnant of a medieval log cabin with a mortar floor; b – a younger medieval log building with sustaining wall (photo J. Beljak).

read, a well visible part of the legend on the obverse has been preserved. By this, we can identify the emperor depicted on the coin. The inscription GALLI... can be associated with legends saying GALLIENVS AVG or GALLIENUS P AVG. These legends together with the portrait design are typical of coins from Gallienus's absolutism in 260–268 AD.

IMPORTANT FACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DISCOVERY OF THE HISTORICAL COUNTERFEIT OF AN ANTONINIANUS AT THE PUSTÝ HRAD CASTLE IN ZVOLEN

The coin discovered at the Pustý hrad Castle in Zvolen is an interesting and from the aspect of numismatics, also important find. To prove its uniqueness and exceptionality, we will focus on four crucial facts.

1. Find context and location

The artefact was discovered when the course of the southern line of the medieval fortification of the Upper Pustý hrad Castle west of the main entrance gate was being uncovered. Trench 1/2018

situated there was divided into three sectors. Sector 1B (7 × 3 m) was located in the exterior part of the castle, near the external face of the southern line of the medieval fortification. In this part, presence of a prehistoric stone-earthen rampart under the medieval curtain wall was verified and the trench confirmed that the fortification of the medieval Upper castle covering an area of 3.5 ha was built as early as the end of the 12th or the beginning of the 13th c. at the latest.

Near the interior face of the fortification (Fig. 4), sectors 1A (5 × 7 m) and 1C (4 × 4.5 m) were located. Stone foundation wall was confirmed there, documenting a medieval log building added to the interior face of the fortification in the 13th c. An older log cabin with a mortar floor from the 13th c. was also added to the southern curtain wall.

As many as 13 stratigraphic units altogether were detected in the area of trench 1A/2018 (Fig. 5). When the first top layer of forest hummus was removed, a stone-loam layer was recognizable in the south-eastern part of the trench. It was composed mostly of smaller stones with the occurrence of finds from the High Middle Ages. A compact stone-earthen structure (construction?) was running in the middle of the trench. In this layer, the Roman coin of emperor Gallienus was found. It was not discovered in the

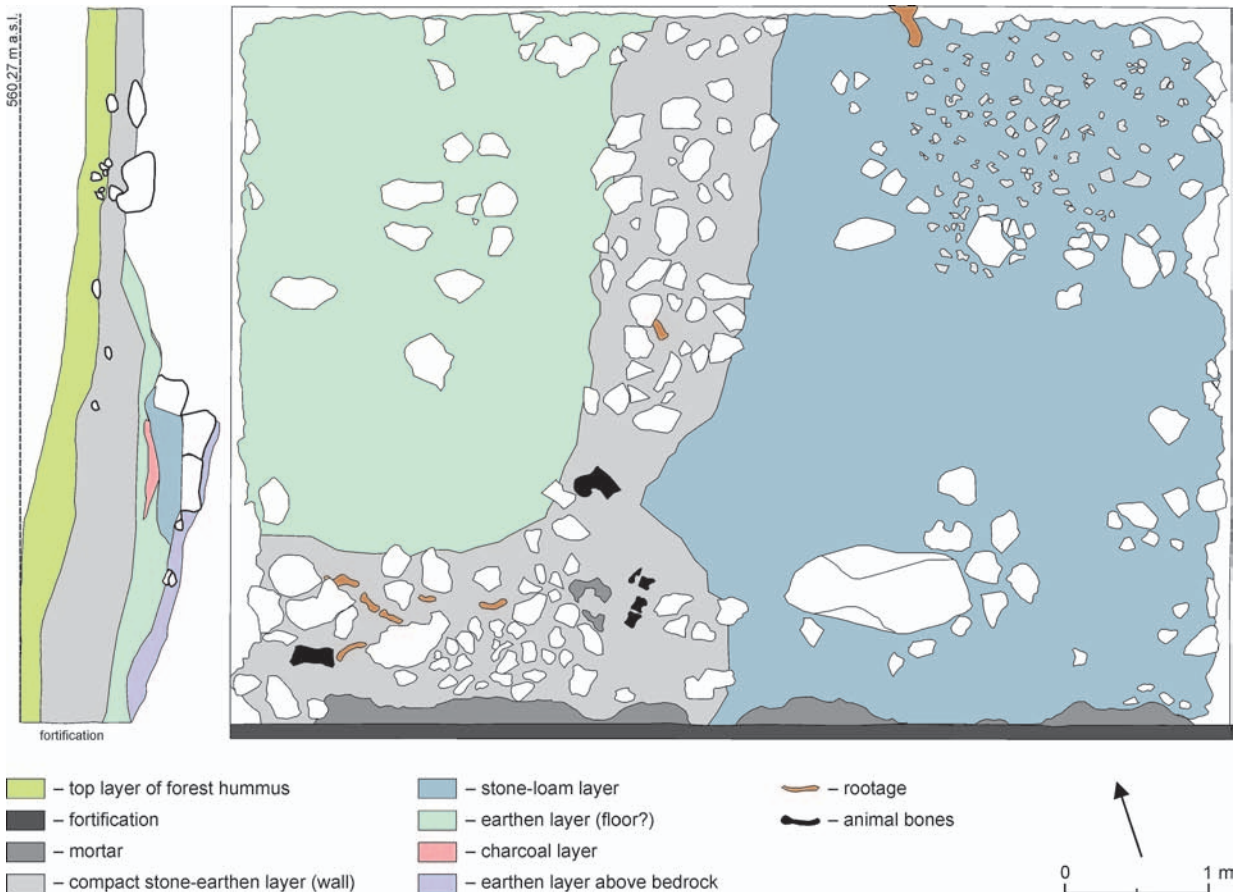


Fig. 5. Pustý hrad Castle in Zvolen, Upper castle. The southern line of the medieval fortification. Trench 1A/2018. Drawing of the floor plan and profile of the trench with cultural layers and finding situations (drawing A. Loydl).

trench itself; it was withdrawn from the layer during sifting and use of metal detector.² Identification of the artefact as a coin was possible after it had been cleaned and conserved. Other unique finds from protohistory also come from the same layer. They are a torso of a modified pin(?) made of amber (Fig. 1: 4) and another small unprocessed piece of amber (Fig. 1: 3). Such finds made of organic material are not unknown in the Roman environment thanks to the flourishing trade relations along the Amber Route (*Pliny the Elder*, XXXVII: 35, 36; *Tacitus*, 45). In the north-western corner of trench 1A/2018, several sherds of graphited vessels from the end of the Middle La Tène Period (Fig. 1: 5) and fragments of glass bracelets were also discovered. Finds from the La Tène Period were previously detected only in the northern part of the castle area and are thus a very important clue for possible detection of La Tène settlement in other parts of the large bailey of the medieval castle. An important fact following from the stratigraphic situation in trench 1A is that the protohistoric finds were found in secondary

locations in the mixed layer from the High Middle Ages in max. depth of 0.3–0.4 m below the current terrain surface.

2. Age of the coin, its identification and dating

Although the coin is badly preserved, some features can be recognized and thus, the coin can be identified and roughly dated. Some features of the preserved part of the portrait, such as its longer neck and end of the portrait in the lower part, are not common on antoninianus from the 3rd c. They are rare only on coins of Antoninus IV Elagabalus and Gallienus. Such portrait edge is more typical of older coins from the 1st and 2nd c. AD, on denarii.

Models for historical fake coins were usually older coins minted with often longer time-lapse, since the time of subaerat coins production. The discovered coin is a model of an antoninianus, which was the leading face value of the Roman monetary system of the 3rd c. AD. Its name is derived from

² For the discovery, we wish to thank our colleague Ivan Trnka for his precise work at searching for finds.

the name of an emperor from the Severan dynasty, Antoninus III, so-called Caracalla (211–217 AD), who ordered its minting in 214 AD.

Antoninianus is characterized mainly by the portrait of the emperor with a radial crown or by the location of an emperor's or empress's bust on a crescent. The radial crown on the emperor's head is a symbol of the double face value as well as two other lower or higher face values of the monetary system, such as dupondius or double aureus (binio; *Vondrovec 2007*, 310) from the reign of emperor Gordianus III (238–244 AD) to the monetary reform of emperor Diocletianus (284–305 AD) in 294 AD, which cancelled their production. The model was, thus, the coin of emperor Gallienus minted between 260 and 294 AD. However, the fake coin cannot be dated. We can only estimate its occurrence sometime between 260 and 276 AD, since the last silver, or billon, coins in the central European *Barbaricum* come from the beginning of the emperor Probus's reign (276–282 AD), although a little later occurrence before the year of Diocletianus' reform cannot be excluded either.

3. Technology of production of the coin and its possible use

The find of the subaerat deserves our attention from the technological as well as a material point of view. Around the middle 3rd c. AD, antoninians become more frequent. They came from official mints, however, the silver they contained was only found on their surface. They were produced by a different technology than subaerat coins. Mercury was used for silvering and when it evaporated, silver precipitated on the surface of the coin (*Stoklas 2017*, 23). Coins silvered using this technology have been known from older periods, too. Such antoninians are accompanied – for some time – with silver or billon mints and, thus, we cannot be certain if these are official coins or counterfeits or if such coins with the silvered surface are contemporary with their silver counterparts. After 260 AD, there are fewer coins with silvered surface and in the final third of the 3rd c. AD, they are considered official mints. The coin from the Pustý hrad Castle in Zvolen was subject to a metallographic analysis,³ which showed the following proportions of metals: Cu 74,9%; Ag 10,88%; Pb 6,53%; Fe 5,29%; Sn 2,03%; Zn, 0,25%; Ti 0,23%; Au 0,20%. The higher proportions of lead, iron and tin are not surprising, since their presence

in such amounts is typical for subaerat coins. Except for tin, these elements with low proportions are traces of a coin disc's modification (*Peter 1990*, 85, 87). From the aspect of material as well as technology, we can state that the find represents a silver-plated subaerat coin.

The historical counterfeit coin is probably associated with the settlement of the region in the Late Roman Period. The latest numismatic research has shown that antoninians as well as some of their contemporary counterfeits were used in the territory settled by the Suebi as late as the Late Roman Period. They are present in considerable numbers in currently known hoards of coins from late antiquity (*Stoklas/Hrabkovský 2019*). Finds of other, denarius subaerat, coins sometimes even occur at Suebi settlements from the Late Roman Period and the beginning of the Great Migration Period. The best example is the find of a subaerat denarius of emperor Hadrianus in the fill of feature 107/65 from the late Suebi settlement in Zlechov (Uherské Hradiště distr.), which was archaeologically dated through other finds from the fill to the course of the 4th c. AD (*Militký/Zeman 2007*, 184, 185). Historical counterfeits of this kind had the same function in the Germanic environment as in the territories of provinces. For certain, the goal was to deceive and cause financial harm to the coin's receiver. The function of such coins in the territory of *Barbaricum*, however, remains a question. We suppose that due to frequent damages to such coins revealing their core and leaving very little silver material on the surface, they could still have been used as money, however, having a value of some of the late antique bronze coins. Nevertheless, this is just a hypothesis, since the archaeological situations from the Late Roman barbarian settlements do not allow confirmation of such statements.

4. Historical context, or where other subaerat antoninians were discovered

The much more frequent occurrence of subaerat antoninians in the territory of the Roman provinces at the Middle Danube than in the territory of the central European *Barbaricum* leads us to the statement that these historical counterfeits originated in coiners' workshops in the territory of the Roman Empire. The subaerat antoninians with their models dated after 260 AD are very rare in the provincial environment. In the territory of

³ AGLÉ III μ Probe – energy-dispersive X-ray fluorescence spectrometer; anode: Rh (Rodium), high voltage: 40kV, Current: 20 μ A. X-ray diam.: 300 μ m (monocapillary), length of measurement: 100s, detector: semiconductive Si (Li) with active surface of 30 mm², resolution for 5,9 eV Mn Ka line (source Fe55): 142.7 eV F.W.H.M. by 1 kCPS, amplifier resolution: 17 μ s.

Slovakia, i.e. former barbarian territory, we have not recorded such young subaerats at all. This fact makes the new find from central Slovakia even more interesting.

The nearest analogy can be found in the find of Roman coins from the area of Brigetium (Komárom-Szóny), which was an important military point and a distribution centre of the Roman goods heading for the *Barbaricum* in the Roman Period (Hečková 1982, 26). A subaerat coin with the model of the emperor Gallienus's antoninianus from 266–267 AD with the emperor's head on the obverse bearing a radial crown and turned right was also discovered there. The coin's reverse depicts goddess Pax standing on the left, holding an olive branch and a transversely oriented long sceptre (Fig. 1: 2; after the numismatic catalogue *RIC V 2001*, 153, no. 253). The reverse of this coin is significantly similar to the find from the Pustý hrad Castle, although the depicted goddess cannot be identified with certainty. One more subaerat antoninianus made after the model from 265 AD was found among the finds from this site (Lányi/Redő/Torbágyi 1999, 236). There were also other finds of subaerat antoninians corresponding with the models by emperor Aurelianus (270–275 AD) and emperor Probus (276–282 AD). There were three exemplars of the first and two of the second (Lányi/Redő/Torbágyi 1999, 242, 243). Another such find of a subaerat coin minted after 260 AD comes from Esztergom (Komárom-Esztergom Comitatus), which was also a trade and production centre on the Roman-Quadi border zone called Solva by the Romans. There, a historical counterfeit of the emperor Aurelianus's antoninianus (270–275 AD) was found. It had no find context either and was only accidentally found in the catchment area of the former Roman camp (Lányi/Redő/Torbágyi 1999, 135, 242). Interestingly, no other analogies of such historical subaerat counterfeits of antoninianus were discovered in the border area of today's Hungary and Austria and all the above-mentioned finds are concentrated in the northern border area of the former province of Pannonia Inferior adjacent to the territory of the Quadi. A trade route started there along which Roman goods travelled northwards, to the barbarian territory (Beljak 2014, 298).

Several finds of subaerat Roman coins and other historical counterfeits come from the territory of western Slovakia. However, they only make up a small fragment of all finds of Roman coins in this territory. A subaerat denarius of Iulia Domna comes from Bohdanovce nad Trnavou, Trnava distr., a subaerat denarius of Septimus Severus was found in Borský Sv. Jur-Húšky, Senica distr., subae-

rat denarii of Traianus and Septimus Severus come from the Germanic settlement in Chotín-Horné Konopište, Komárno distr. (Stoklas 2017, 23). The most recent addition to this special collection of coins is a perforated subaerat denarius of emperor Hadrianus from Želiezovce, Levice distr. (Bazovský/Budaj 2020, 44).

Counterfeit Roman coins also come from the area of the Roman military camp in Iža- Leányvár (Nemeškalová-Jiroudková 1972). They were coins of the crew's soldiers or coins from their pay or the circulation on the opposite side of the Danube. They are represented by a silvered denarius of emperor Hadrianus, an unidentifiable subaerat denarius from the 1st–2nd c. AD and an unidentifiable subaerat antoninianus from the 3rd c. AD.

As far as the find of the antoninianus with the portrait of probably Philipp I (244–249 AD) from the Germanic settlement in Bohdanovce nad Trnavou, Trnava distr. and the antoninianus of Gordianus III (238–244 AD) from the settlement in Hurbanovo-Hurbanovský potok stream, Komárno distr. (Stoklas 2017, 23) are concerned, we cannot be positively sure if they are counterfeits. This could be suggested by their rare occurrence among the mints dated between 238 and 253 AD as well as much more frequent silver-plated subaerat coins.

DISCUSSION

Processing of the unique find of the subaerat from the Pustý hrad Castle in Zvolen has brought some new historical evidence. The most essential ones include the fact that it is an artefact that arrived at the site probably in the Late to Final Roman Period and is associated with the movement of the Germanic population in the territory of the Zvolenská kotlina basin in central Slovakia. According to the previously known archaeological sources, the Quadi settled this region more intensely as late as the beginning of the Late Roman Period (last decades of the 2nd c. AD), i.e. shortly after they had arrived at the lower Pohronie region (Beljak 2009, 215). The reasons behind the shift of the Germanic settlement to the mountain basins of central Slovakia could include the increase of population, development of the Germanic society in the favourable Severan period as well as interest in the exploitation of ore sources in this space. The furnace discovered at the site of Zvolen-Haputka (Beljak 2009; Hanuliak/Malček/Pieta 2000, 47, 48) located on the north-eastern foothill of the Pustý hrad Castle hill is evidence of metallurgic activity of the first Quadi generation in the central Pohronie region.

The presence of the Quadi population in the Late and Final Roman Period (3rd–4th c. AD) is documented mainly in form of pottery finds from the Zvolenská, Žiarska and Pliešovská basins (more information in *Beljak 2006; 2018, 36–40; Beljak/Kučeráková 2015; Beljak/Malček 2009; Pieta/Mosný 1990*). The region of Horehronie located further to the north, which remained unsettled after the extinction of the Púchov culture at the beginning of the 1st c., is occupied by the Germanic people/Quadi as late as the Final Roman Period. Traces of their material culture are documented mainly in the Lupčianska kotlina basin (*Mosný 1998*).

As for finds of Roman coins in this region, two bronze coins of Roman emperors Constantius I and Constantius Gallus discovered in the northern part of the Zvolenská kotlina basin, in the allotment's colony under Suchý vrch hill in Banská Bystrica (*Mácelová 1992*) were detected as stray finds.

The settlement at upland sites in the mountainous areas in the central and upper Pohronie region is a phenomenon of the Late Roman Period and the beginning of the Great Migration Period. It is not a permanent settlement; it is often only sporadic use of elevated protective sites. Finds occur at new upland sites (Nemce-Hrádok, Jastrabá-Jastrabá skala, etc.) as well as former hillforts of the Púchov culture (Detva-Kalamárka, Horné Pršany-Velký hrádok, Hrochoť-Chochulka, Hrochoť-Jánošíkova skala, Selce-Hrádok, Šášovské Podhradie-Šášov Castle, etc.), which might be the case of the Pustý hrad Castle hill. It is an expression of the unsteady situation at the turn of the 4th and 5th c. AD (*Fusek/Zábojník 2003, 324*). It is also important, that trade contacts with Pannonia were not interrupted in that period. The pottery production of Roman provinces is represented at the sites by the Pannonian coarse grey pottery in form of storage vessels and bowls (*Beljak 2014*). The fragment of a glass cup with a fused fibre from Detva-Kalamárka (*Šalkovský 2002, fig. 61: 5*) which can be dated from the last third of the 4th c. to the first decades of the 5th c. AD is also considered an import. The coin found at the Pustý hrad Castle was a Roman coin commonly used in the payment system in the barbarian environment.

Finally, one more interesting fact should be mentioned in the end of the discussion. The find of a historical counterfeit of a Roman coin discovered at the Pustý hrad Castle in Zvolen is not the only find of Roman money in the territory of a medieval castle in Slovakia. A historical counterfeit denarius of Septimus Severus with tinned surface was discovered during the archaeological excavation at the Devín Castle in 1973, in one of the medieval economic buildings located in the central part of the castle (*Stoklas 2017, 23, 24; 2018, 47*).

CONCLUSION

This article aimed to draw attention to and analyse a unique find of a Roman coin – a historical counterfeit of an antoninianus of emperor Gallienus, which was most probably minted in the last decades of the 3rd c. AD. It was a rather unexpected find discovered with a metal detector in the mixed cultural layer of the bailey near the main entrance gate to the Pustý hrad Castle in Zvolen. When trench 1A/2018 located near the interior face of the southern line of the medieval curtain wall at the Upper castle was being excavated, a badly preserved corroded round plate was found. After it had been cleaned and conserved, it was identified as a Roman coin.

The thorough analysis of the artefact points to the fact that it is a historical counterfeit that arrived at the site in the Late or Final Roman Period. Although historical counterfeits are rather frequent in the territories of former Roman provinces, their numbers among finds from the Middle Danube *Barbaricum* are significantly lower. The artefact was probably associated with the settlement of the Germanic tribe of Quadi in the territory of the Zvolenská kotlina basin. We consider it a Roman coin and also evidence of the activity of contemporary counterfeiters who joined the copper core with silver foil by striking a hammer against a punch after putting the foil on the disc. The find which could have been used in common trade cannot be associated with any specific activity at the site so far, as the protohistoric settlement is very scarce there. On the other hand, we have pointed to the intense settlement activity of the Quadi/Suebi in the Zvolenská kotlina basin and the surrounding areas of central Slovakia. Therefore, it was just a question of time when traces of this historical period would be identified at the upland site of the Pustý hrad Castle in Zvolen. The find of the historical counterfeit of an antoninianus helped us fill this period.

The fact that counterfeit coins are not unknown at the Pustý hrad Castle in Zvolen is also interesting. The seat has a long counterfeiting tradition since fake coins were minted right at the royal castle at the turn of the 13th and 14th c. (*Hanuliak/Hunka 2000*). A postmedieval clay mould for counterfeit coins – 15 Kreuzer of emperor Leopold I from the second half of the 17th c. – comes from the castle as well (*Hunka/Beljak Pažinová/Beljak 2021*).

The find of the historical counterfeit of an antoninianus of emperor Gallienus from the Pustý hrad Castle in Zvolen is a unique numismatic find not only from a medieval castle in central Slovakia but also from the whole territory of Slovakia since we do not know any similar artefact of a young subaerat antoninianus from the environment of the Transdanubian *Barbaricum*.

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