

PRE-ROMAN COINS FROM SOTIN

MATO ILKIĆ

This paper deals with the oldest numismatic finds from the Sotin region, i.e. coins dated to the period from Alexander the Great until the final Roman conquest of the Pannonian region during the reign of the emperor Augustus. In other words, these are the coins of the Late Iron Age when the eastern part of the area between the Sava and Drava rivers, together with a part of the central Danube region, was under the rule of the Scordisci.

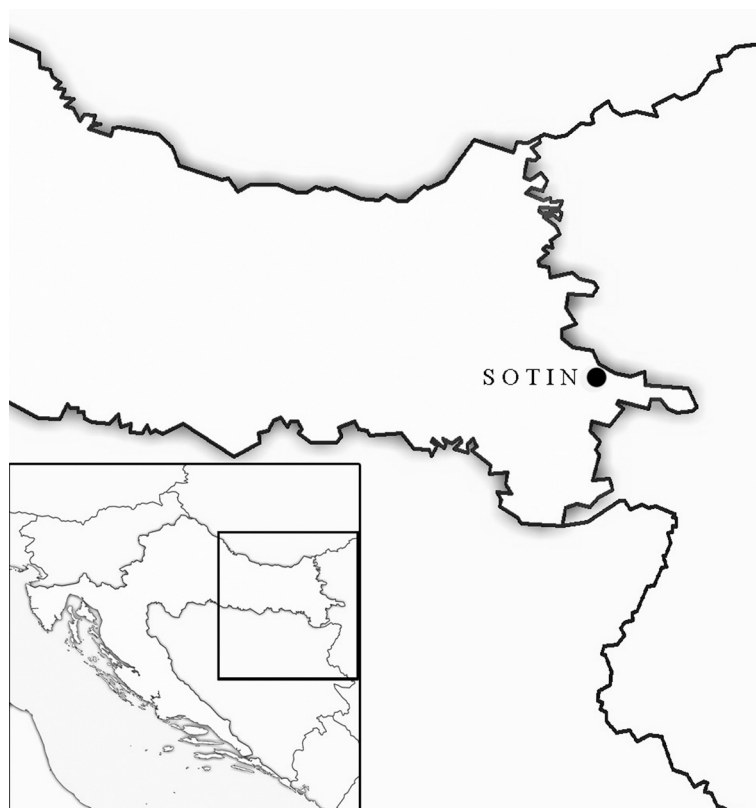


Fig. 1. Geographical position of Sotin

Sotin is a settlement in eastern Croatia (Fig. 1). It is situated ten kilometers to the south-east of Vukovar next to the edge of the high right bank of the Danube. A multi-layered archaeological site, which is poorly known, is situated in this region, that is to say that there were no systematic archaeological excavations at this large prehistoric, Roman and medieval site. However, different agricultural activities, especially deep ploughing, partially devastated the cultural layers, so various numismatic finds, among other things, reached the surface. They were collected during frequent field surveys. Exact findspots are known for the biggest part of such finds. In comparison with other sites in the Croatian Danube region, Sotin takes the leading place in the number of in-

dividual finds of coins from the Late Iron Age. In all, 137 specimens of old coins were discovered, 73% of which belong to the Celts, 17% to the Roman Republic and 10% to the cities of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium. Only a small part of this numismatic material has been published.¹ It has been housed in the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb and in several private collections.²

Numismatic finds from Sotin have multiple scientific values. They improve the knowledge of the monetary system in the region of the Scordisci as new types of coins have been found which were not recorded earlier in the region of this Celtic-Pannonian tribe. These numismatic finds are important, among other things, because they offer information about the position and distribution of an almost completely unknown settlement from the Late Iron Age in the Sotin area.

Some 3.5 km to the south-west of that site, i.e. at the site of Grabovo, a bronze coin of Alexander the Great was discovered (**Pl. I, 1**). Unfortunately, a portrait of young Heracles is poorly preserved on the obverse of this coin. However, the reverse is in somewhat better condition, bearing the depiction of his attributes: the bow and club, between which an abbreviation [B] A is partially recognizable. For now it is the oldest coin from the Croatian Danube region. It represents a solitary find which was discovered in insufficiently known circumstances, diminishing its scientific value.

However, more intensive circulation of coinage started some time later, approximately in the mid-second century BC when the Scordisci started to produce their own money.³ This was the Syrmian type, also known as *Typ Kugelwange*⁴ which is quite frequent in Sotin. Except for the fragmentary tetradrachm made of silver (**Pl. I, 2**), there were also the bronze ones (**Pl. I, 4, 5**). Standard depiction can be found on them. A bearded head with a wreath is on the obverse, and on the reverse is a horse above which is a circle. A specimen from Sotin is very interesting (**Pl. I, 3**). Since it weighs 16.56 grams it is almost twice as heavy as the usual tetradrachms minted from the same alloy. For now it is quite a rare find. This large coin might belong to the denomination worth two bronze tetradrachms. Its peculiarity is further emphasized on the reverse where, as it seems, a stylized horseman was depicted with open arms. The standard depiction, which was taken from the tetradrachm of Philip II, is usually found on the silver drachms (**Pl. I, 6, 7, 9**), and on the ones made of bronze (**Pl. II, 1**). Similar depictions can be found on some minimi (**Pl. II, 3-5**). A motif in the shape of several leaves is recognizable on a small silver coin (**Pl. II, 9**). Close analogies were found in eastern Srijem.⁵ There are also several specimens with more freely executed depictions. Those are minimi on the reverse of which there seems to be a depiction of horse (**Pl. II, 6-8**). On the reverse of a small coin is a motif in the shape of a row of plastic dots (**Pl. II, 10**). Freely executed depictions can also be found on certain drachms of the Scordisci, so sometimes on the obverse is a motif of a round wreath (**Pl. I, 10**). I would also like to mention a specimen from Sotin on the obverse of which is a motif consisting of curved plastic lines and rows of dots, among other elements (**Pl. I, 8**). A corresponding example is housed in the Museum of Slavonia in Osijek.⁶ On the reverse of a bronze drachm there is a depiction of a horse which belongs to the Syrmian type by the shape, but on its obverse is a beardless head which is of the style typical for the coins of the eastern Slavonian type (**Pl. II, 2**). A specimen from Neštin has similar characteristics, but it was ascribed to the Syrmian type.⁷ However, both coins belong to a hybrid type which accepted the ob-

¹ Brunšmid 1912, pp. 265-267, 270, 271; Popović 1987, pp. 161, Pl. 15, 17; Ilkić 1999, pp. 45-50, T. XXVII-XXX; Ilkić 2003, p. 124, fig. 29-30, cat. nos. 487-509; Ilkić 2008, pp. 71-72, Pl. I, 1-10.

² Ivan Mirnik allowed me the insight into numismatic finds from Sotin which are housed in the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb. Peter Kos, director of the National Museum of Slovenia provided me with literature which is not easily accessible and with useful advice. Jiří Militký helped me identifying the very rare Celtic coin presented on the Pl. II, 17. I would

like to express my deepest gratitude to all the aforementioned experts, for their confidence and generosity, as well as to Nikola Margarin who allowed me to publish one Celtic coin from Sotin presented on the Pl. I, 9.

³ Pink 1939, pp. 123-125; Kos 1998, p. 326.

⁴ Pink 1939, pp. 64-66.

⁵ Popović 1987, pp. 162, 163, Pl. 21, 25-27, Pl. 22, 1-31

⁶ Göricke-Lukić 2004, p. 236, cat. no. 678.

⁷ Popović 1987, pp. 50-52, Pl. 20, 16.

verse from the eastern Slavonian type, and the reverse from the Syrmian type. Scordiscan money of the eastern Slavonian type which is also known as *Typ Lierblume*,⁸ is quite rare. Besides some ten tetradrachms,⁹ a minimus from an unknown findspot was also published.¹⁰ Four excellently preserved small silver specimens from Sotin (**Pl. II, 11-14**) belong to the latter type. Their reverse with a fine depiction of a horse makes their attribution to the eastern Slavonian type quite obvious. Above the horse is a motif in the shape of a lyre with a wheel between its legs.

Numismatic finds of other Celts (especially those from the west) are quite rare in the Croatian Danube region. However, a Vindelici stater has been found in Vinkovci.¹¹ Several small Norican silver coins were found in Sotin. Besides a coin of the *Karlstein* type,¹² there are also coins of the *Magdalensberg* type (**Pl. II, 15, 16**).

But that is not all. An exceptionally rare Celtic coin which is also interesting from the artistic point of view was also found in Sotin (**Pl. II, 17**). This well preserved coin was made of silver. Its diameter is 9.5 mm and it weighs 1 gram exactly. A depiction of a large beardless head to the right with hair made of several wavy locks is on the obverse. A plastic dot was used to depict an eye under a pronounced eye-brow. The nose is fair. Other details were not depicted except for the ear. In the central part of the reverse is a human figure to the left. It is depicted in motion with one hand stretched out and the other with bent elbow and resting upon the waist. The figure is wearing a short garment tied down at the waist, probably a chiton. It seems that on his head he has a helmet behind which two bands are streaming in an undulating fashion. Two almost semi-circular lines - one continuous and the other made of densely placed dots - is to the right of the figure, while to the left is a group of several vertical, almost zigzag lines. I have found only one similar example in the accessible literature. It is kept in Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale, inv. no. 9484). Though its findspot remains unknown, it was assigned to Boii.¹³ However, discovery of this type of Celtic coin in Sotin might point to monetary activity of the Scordisci. Anyhow we need to wait for future finds of such coins which should shed light on the question of their attribution.

Besides the Celtic coins, drachms from Apollonia and Dyrrhachium also circulated in the Scordiscan region. Seventeen coins from these rich Illyrian cities from the territory of present-day Albania were found in the Sotin region. Out of that number only two coins belong to Dyrrhachium, one being its regular coin (**Pl. III, 4**) and the other a forgery (**Pl. III, 5**). Thus, drachms from Apollonia are more frequent at this archaeological site in the Croatian Danube region (**Pl. III, 1-3**).

Roman Republican coinage also circulated in southern Pannonia, most probably replacing drachms from Apollonia and Dyrrhachium in the mid-first century BC.¹⁴ Several dozens of these coins were found in the Sotin region, mostly various denarii, usually from the Late Republican period (**Pl. III, 7-10**). Somewhat earlier broken asses were also found (**Pl. III, 6**).

Numismatic material from Sotin testifies to the continuity of life in this region in the last few centuries of prehistory. In addition it offers an opportunity to determine the position of the settlement from that period since there are accurate data about the place of discovery for most of the coins. Topographic analysis of the numismatic finds indicates that the settlement of the Cornacati, a Celtic-Pannonian tribe mentioned by Pliny,¹⁵ was situated in the central part of present-day Sotin, next to the edge of the high bank of the Danube (Fig. 2). Numerous coins from the Julio-Claudian dynasty were also found here, which attests to the continuity of life in this Pannonian settlement in the Danube region under Roman rule.

⁸ Pink 1939, p. 66.

⁹ Popović 1987, pp. 64, 65, 164, Pl. 27, 13-18.

¹⁰ Kostial 1997, p. 97, cat. no. 532.

¹¹ Majnarić-Pandžić 1997, pp. 29-35.

¹² Coin of the *Karlstein* type was found by Luka Ivančić at the site

of Vrućak, i.e. on the bank of the Danube near the central part of Sotin. Unfortunately, this coin was lost in 1991.

¹³ Paulsen 1933, Taf. 8, 182.

¹⁴ Popović 1987, p. 104.

¹⁵ Nat. Hist. III 148.



Fig. 2. Late Iron Age settlement in Sotin

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brunšmid, J. (1912), 'Nekoliko našašća novaca na skupu u Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji XXXIV. Nahodaj srebrnih ilirskih i rimskih novaca II i I stoljeća prije Kr. u Vukovaru', *Vjesnik Hrvatskoga arheološkoga društva* 12, Zagreb, pp. 260-71.

Ceka, H. (1972), *Questions de numismatique illyrienne*, Tirana.

Crawford, M.H. (1974), *Roman Republican Coinage*, Cambridge.

Göricke-Lukić, H. (2004), *Grčki, grčko-kolonijalni i keltski novac iz Muzeja Slavonije Osijek*, Osijek. Summary: *Greek, Greek-colonial and Celtic coins from the Museum of Slavonia in Osijek*.

Ilkić, M. (1999), *Hrvatsko Podunavlje u željeznom razdoblju – posljednje tisućljeće prije Krista* [Croatian part of the Danube region during the Iron Age – the last millenium BC], MA thesis, manuscript, Zadar.

Ilkić, M. (2003), *Cornacum - sotinski prostor i njegovo mjesto u organizaciji južnog dijela provincije Panonije* [Cornacum – the Territory of Sotin and Its Role in the Organisation of the Southern Part of the Province of Pannonia], PhD thesis, manuscript, Zadar.

Ilkić, M. (2008), 'Rimski Cornacum u svjetlu numizmatičkih nalaza / Roman Cornacum in the Light of the Numismatic Evidence', *Proceedings of the 5th International Numismatic Congress in Croatia*, Rijeka, pp. 51-75.

Kos, P. (1998), *Leksikon antičke numizmatike [Lexicon of Ancient Numismatics]*, Zagreb.

Kostial, M. (1997), *Kelten im Osten. Gold und Silber der Kelten in Mittel- und Osteuropa. Sammlung Lanz*, München.

Majnarić-Pandžić, N. (1997), 'Nalaz vindeličkog statera iz Vinkovaca'. Summary: 'A find of a Vindelici stater from Vinkovci', *Opuscula archaeologica* 21, Zagreb, pp. 29-35.

Paulsen, R. (1933), *Die Münzprägungen der Boier*, Leipzig – Wien.

Pink, K. (1939), *Die Münzprägung der Ostkelten und ihrer Nachbarn. Dissertationes Pannonicae*, ser. II, fasc. 15, Budapest.

Popović, P. (1987), *Novac Skordiska / Le monnayage des Scordisques*, Beograd - Novi Sad.

KEY TO PLATES

Plate I

1. Macedonia, Alexander the Great, AE, 16 mm, 5.59 g, Sotin - Grabovo, Archaeological museum in Zagreb, inv. nr. A7331.
2. The Celts, Scordisci, Syrmian type, tetradrachm, AR, fragment, 20 mm, 4.4 g, Sotin, cadastral lot no. 353, private collection.
3. The Celts, Scordisci, Syrmian type, tetradrachm, double (?), AE, 31 mm, 16.56 g, Sotin, cadastral lot no. 338, private collection.
4. The Celts, Scordisci, Syrmian type, tetradrachm, AE, 25 mm, 9.87 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
5. The Celts, Scordisci, Syrmian type, tetradrachm, AE, 23.5 mm, 7.1 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
6. The Celts, Scordisci, Syrmian type, drachm, AR, 15 mm, 2.25 g, Sotin, cadastral lot no. 323, private collection.
7. The Celts, Scordisci, Syrmian type, drachm, AR, 16 mm, 2.00 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
8. The Celts, Scordisci, Syrmian type, drachm, AR, 16 mm, 1.91 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
9. The Celts, Scordisci, Syrmian type, drachm, silver alloy, 14.5 mm, 1.50 g, Sotin, riverbank south-eastern of Vodica, private collection.
10. The Celts, Scordisci, Syrmian type, drachm, silver alloy, 15.5 mm, 2.16 g, Sotin, cadastral lot no. 338, private collection.

Plate II

1. The Celts, Scordisci, Syrmian type, drachm, AE, 13.5 mm, 1.74 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
2. The Celts, Scordisci, drachm, AE, 14 mm, 2.14 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
3. The Celts, Scordisci, Syrmian type, minimus, AR, 8.5 mm, 0.51 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
4. The Celts, Scordisci, Syrmian type, minimus, AR, 9.5 mm, 0.70 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank),

private collection.

5. The Celts, Scordisci, Syrmian type, minimus, AR, 9 mm, 0.54 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
6. The Celts, Scordisci, minimus, AR, 9 mm, 0.81 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
7. The Celts, Scordisci, minimus, AR, 8.8 mm, 0.81 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
8. The Celts, Scordisci, minimus, AR, 8 mm, 0.47 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
9. The Celts, Scordisci, minimus, AR, 6.3 mm, 0.29 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
10. The Celts, minimus, AR, 8.5 mm, 0.41 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
11. The Celts, Scordisci, eastern Slavonian type, minimus, AR, 9 mm, 0.76 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
12. The Celts, Scordisci, eastern Slavonian type, minimus, AR, 9.2 mm, 0.81 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
13. The Celts, Scordisci, eastern Slavonian type, minimus, AR, 9.5 mm, 0.59 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
14. The Celts, Scordisci, eastern Slavonian type, minimus, AR, 9.7 mm, 0.81 g, Sotin - Kamenac (riverbank), private collection.
15. The Celts, Noricans, Magdalensberg type, minimus, AR, 9.1 mm, 0.59 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
16. The Celts, Noricans, Magdalensberg type, minimus, AR, 9.2 mm, 0.45 g, Sotin, cadastral lot no. 323, private collection.
17. The Celts, minimus, AR, 9.5 mm, 1.00 g, Sotin - Kamenac (riverbank), private collection.

Plate III

1. Apollonia, drachm, Ceka 91, 17.7 mm, 3.23 g, Sotin, cadastral lot no. 386, private collection.
2. Apollonia, drachm, Ceka 24, 15 mm, 2.57 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
3. Apollonia, drachm, Ceka 3, 17.5 mm, 3.06 g, Sotin, cadastral lot no. 323, private collection.
4. Dyrrhachium, drachm, perforated, Ceka 390, 18 mm, 3.22 g, Sotin, Archaeological museum in Zagreb, inv. nr. A2221.
5. Dyrrhachium, drachm, irregular, 18.7 mm, 2.60 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
6. Roman Republic, as, one half, 28.2 mm, 10.08 g, Sotin, cadastral lot no. 357, private collection.
7. Roman Republic, denarius, 110-109 BC, RRC 300/1, 18 mm, 3.72 g, Sotin, cadastral lot no. 323, private collection.
8. Roman Republic, denarius, 62 BC, RRC 416, 19.5 mm, 3.54 g, Sotin - Vručak (riverbank), private collection.
9. Roman Republic, Marc Antony, denarius, mobile mint, 32-31 BC, RRC 544/21, 16.5 mm, 3.06 g, Sotin, cadastral lot no. 323, private collection.
10. Roman Republic, Octavian, denarius, mobile mint, 37 BC, RRC 538/1, 18.7 mm, 3.75 g, Sotin, cadastral lot no. 336, private collection.

PLATE I



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



PLATE II



1



2



3



4



5



6



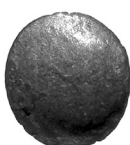
7



8



9



10



11



12



13



14



15



16



17



PLATE III



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10

