

## A SILVER COIN OF KING BALLAIOS FROM RISAN (MONTENEGRO)

*The paper presents a specimen of the rare silver coinage of King Ballaios, with a goal of enlarging the numismatic database for the study of this still enigmatic ruler who remains unrecorded by the extant literary sources, yet nonetheless issued large amounts of bronze coins that spread over a considerable area of the eastern Adriatic coast and beyond, and also his silver coins with a royal title.*



*Illustration no. 1*

This coin displays (Illustration no. 1) the standard type of King Ballaios' silver coinage. Present on both his bronze and silver coinages, it is usually succinctly termed the *Rhizonian* type, as proposed by Evans, who first distinguished two types of King Ballaios' coins and named them based on their prevalence among local finds in Risan and on the island of Hvar (*Pharian type*).<sup>1</sup> Some authors prefer a descriptive labelling as *the type with the royal title in inscription*, or similar.<sup>2</sup>

*Obverse:* Beardless male head, presumably of King Ballaios, to the left, with short wavy hair and prominent face features suggestive of a mature man.

*Reverse:* Artemis advancing vigorously to the left, dressed in short draped chiton and boots, holding in her right hand a flaming torch in front of herself; a couple of long spears in her left hand, which normally appear behind her head and in front of her left leg, are just barely visible.

To the left, in front of Artemis, unintelligible traces of an inscription.

The inscription on both the silver and bronze coins of the *Rhizonian* type normally has two parts that run vertically on each side of Artemis' figure: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΛΛΑΙΟΥ. Already Brunšmid described two types of the inscription on the silver coins, with each word on either one or the other side of Artemis.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Evans 1880, 296. Brunšmid 1898, 76-77 endorsed this classification and it has thereafter been widely accepted.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Marović 1988, p. 86.

<sup>3</sup> Brunšmid 1898, 80, no. 11 and 12.

As the photo of its obverse shows, its diameter is ca. 17 mm. Its weight remains unknown.

The brightness of this coin suggests a relatively high silver content of the minted alloy. The quality of metal used for King Ballaios' silver coinage varies considerably. Some specimens are made of a relatively high quality alloy, as for instance the one in the British Museum, see Illustration no. 2<sup>4</sup>, or the largest of four specimens in the Archaeological Museum in Split, see Illustration no. 3.<sup>5</sup> The metal of some other specimens is a debased alloy giving these coins the appearance of bronze, as for instance the specimens in the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb and the National Museum of Belgrade.<sup>6</sup>



*Illustration no. 2*



*Illustration no. 3*

A part of the coin was cut off, reducing its surface and weight by almost 20 %. The appearance of the cut surface in the photo of the obverse suggests that the cutting was performed in one stroke of a sharp tool. Looking at the position of the incision, it seems that attention was paid to spare the image of the king's head. It is not possible to determine whether the cutting was performed close to the time of its issuance when the coin had still been in use so that its one-fifth and four-fifths "fractions" could have had a meaningful value and function, or at some later point. It is the only preserved silver coin of Ballaios that shows this kind of impairment.

<sup>4</sup> BMC Thessaly to Aetolia, 81, no. 5, Pl.XIV/13.

<sup>5</sup> Marović 1976, 231, no. 1, Tab. IV/4, and also Marović 1988, no. 276.

<sup>6</sup> Rendić-Miočević 1973, King Ballaios no. 2, from Stari Grad (Pharos), Hvar; Ujes 1993, 1<sup>st</sup> cumulative find, no. 6, from Risan.

Both the king's head and the figure of Artemis seem to be too tightly fit into the frame of the coin plate. It remains unknown whether the border of this coin might have been scraped resulting in a reduction of the coin plate surface, or the plate was originally cast a bit smaller than the dies required for a full imprint. For comparison with a well-preserved full-stamp imprint see Illustration no. 3 and the best overall preserved specimen in Imhoof-Blumer (1885).<sup>7</sup>

The details on both sides of the coin are less than perfectly sharp. It does not seem to be the consequence of surface obliteration due to the use of the coin, but is more likely attributable to its minting with already overused dies.

The king's head on the obverse shows the same prominent aquiline nose and characteristic hair style featured on other known specimens. However, the details are blurred making it difficult to verify whether this coin was struck with the same obverse die as some of the other known specimens. The reverse die is noticeably different from the dies of the coins illustrated or mentioned here as *comparanda*.

It is unknown when this specimen was discovered, yet in the 1980s it had been in possession of an inhabitant of Risan, who showed it to my father, Prof. Alojz Ujes, and allowed him to make the photos that illustrate this paper. The fate of this specimen is unknown.

It seems that this specimen is the third silver coin of King Ballaios found in Risan.<sup>8</sup> The owner stated that the coin was found in the coastal fields called Carine, which is the site of the lower town of ancient Rhizon. This site has long been known for the abundance of coin finds, having yielded several coin hoards and cumulative site finds and numerous single coin finds, mostly of King Ballaios' bronzes.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Illustration no. 3: *Marović* 1976, 231, no. 1, Tab. IV/4; the best preserved specimen: *Imhoof-Blumer* 1885, 20, Taf. II/19, with the link to this table at the bibliographical entry.

<sup>8</sup> The other two specimens: *Rendić-Miočević* 1967, no. 1; *Ujes* 1993, 1<sup>st</sup> cumulative find, no. 6.

<sup>9</sup> For literature and details on the coin finds from Carine see *Ujes Morgan* 2012, throughout, esp. 115-116, 125-128.

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