

THE SIRMIMUM MINT IN THE MIGRATION PERIOD – ONCE AGAIN FROM THE BEGINNING

The text presents a brief historical survey of research into the problems of the Sirmium mint or the coins of the so-called “Sirmium group”, which is supplemented by forgotten, new, or unpublished examples of this numismatic group from the 6th century. The attribution of the mint to the Ostrogoths and Gepids is still valid, and the increased interest in this issue in the recent period has been additionally highlighted by the very numerous examples that in the past fifteen years have regularly appeared at numismatic auctions throughout the world. Additionally, other than the official series issued by the Sirmium mint, this wealthy market also features examples of “irregular” emissions and copies from that period, joined here and there by more or less successful modern counterfeits. As excellent corrective measures for establishing the authenticity of individual series, old museum acquisitions and finds acquired through archaeological excavations are most suitable. Such examples, although very rare, are of great importance, and several are noted here, particularly one recently documented at Kamenica in Vinkovci, as it has advanced numismatic knowledge about the minting, series, and circulation, and most likely it will also advance archaeological knowledge, for which numismatics is most interesting when it can aid in the attribution and dating of finds and sites.

The existence and operation of the Sirmium mint during the Migration Period was detected and presented to the professional public for the first time by the Croatian numismatist Josip Brunšmid in 1924.¹ He based his theories on examples of silver coinage (5 examples) with similar characteristics gathered in the substantial numismatic collection of the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, these coins having been acquired either as donations or purchases in the period between 1893 and 1910. The arguments for such a claim were multifaceted: all examples of the analyzed coins came from sites in the Slavonian-Syrmian area either as individual finds (Sremska Mitrovica and Novi Banovci) or hoards (Dalj), while on the obverse of these coins other than a human figure in profile to the right, it was possible to more or less clearly decipher the name of two Byzantine emperors, on three coins the name of the emperor Justinian (527-565) and on two coins the name Justin II (565-578). However, the actual reason for the attribution of the coins to the Gepids and their king Cunimund (ca. 560-567) was located on the reverse of the coins where, according to Brunšmid, modelled on the silver coins of the Ostrogothic kings of the first half of the 6th century, in place of the monogram of their king Theodoric, the monogram of the Gepid king Cunimund could be recognized (**Fig. 1:1-5**). Just a year later, Brunšmid's hypothesis was supplemented and advanced by the observations of the Austrian numismatist Friedrich Stefan,² who based his claim that the Sirmium mint had already been active during the reign of the Ostrogothic king Theodoric and that coinage was certainly minted from the period of the Ostrogothic

¹ Brunšmid 1924, 671-673; Brunšmid 1924a, 1-5.

² Stefan 1925, 1-28, Pl. 298.

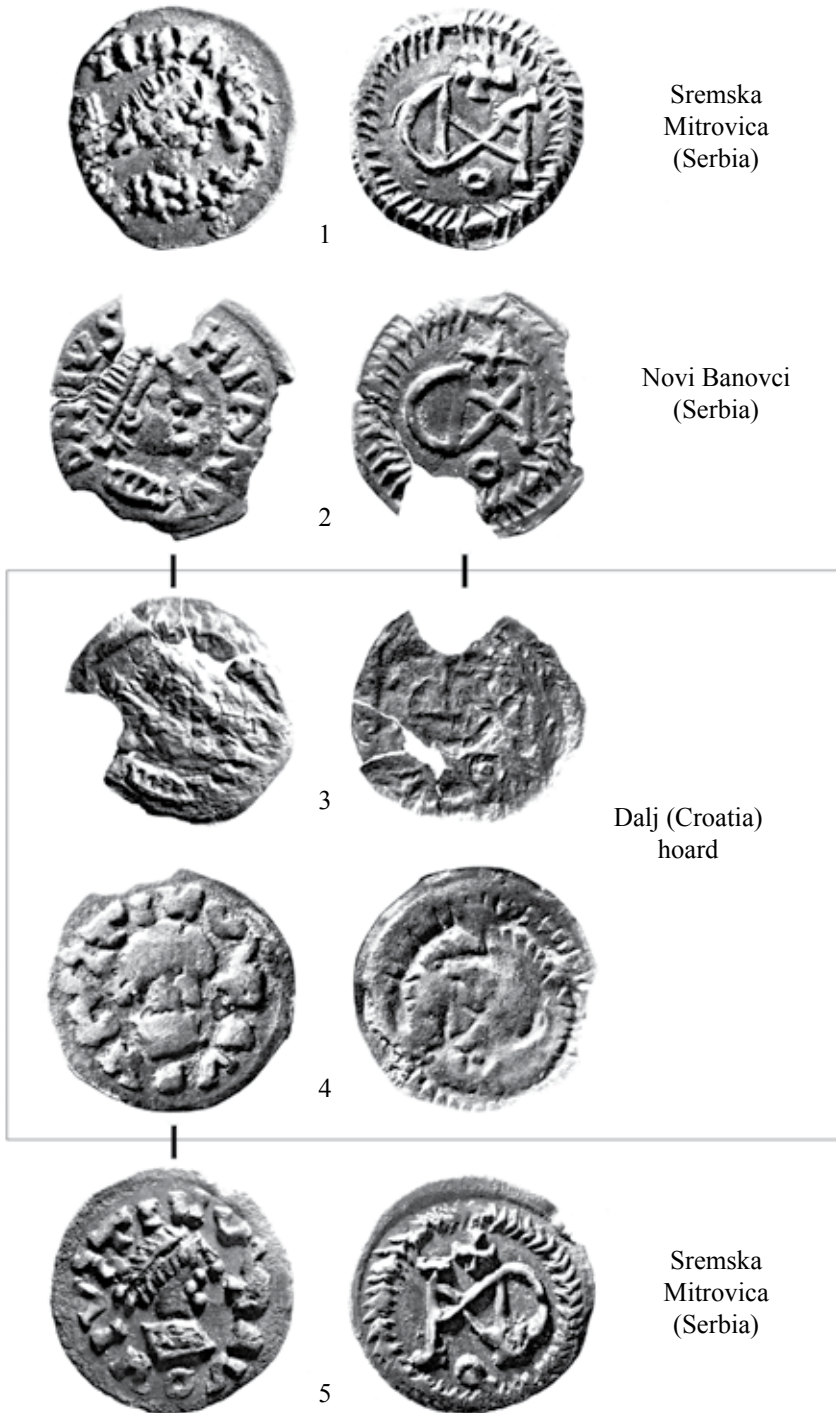


Fig. 1

occupation of Sirmium in 504/5 to Theodoric's death in 526 on other individual coin finds from the Sava River basin and the Slavonia-Syrmia region (Sisak, Štrbinci, Dalj, Novi Banovci). Stefan considered that the mint in Sirmium under Gepidic administration would have been active even before the reign of Cunimund, commencing minting as early as the reign of Cunimund's father, King Thurisund (548 - ca. 560).

After they were presented, the theories of Brunšmid and Stefan were not re-examined for decades, but nonetheless they significantly contributed in the meantime to the recognition of individual earlier published examples of coins from the Sirmium mint (**Fig. 2:1-2**),³ but also to the proper definition and presentation of certain grave finds discovered then (Mengen, gr. 12/f).⁴ Later various examples of coins from the Sirmium mint from a private collection in Zagreb were presented on three separate occasions in the Croatian numismatic literature (5 specimens): one still unique example from Brunšmid's Gepid group "*found... in Bosnia*",⁵ three examples from Stefan's Ostrogothic group "*certainly from Syrmia or from northern Serbia around the Danube*",⁶ and one more example from the same group published without any data about provenience.⁷ At the beginning of the 1960s, another example of a Sirmium quarter-siliqua of Stefan's group was discovered in Sremska Mitrovica,⁸ and twenty years later some other finds were also mentioned, unfortunately lacking numismatic data and adequate documentation.⁹ The list of examples with data about the site of discovery was increased with several more in 1981: one probably Syrmian find of a coin in Brunšmid's Gepid group from the numismatic collection of the National Museum of Slovenia in Ljubljana,¹⁰ one

³ *Sambon* 1912, 6 no. 31, Pl. I:31 (Santangelo Coll., Museo Archeologico di Napoli). In addition to this coin minted in the name of the Emperor Anastasius, the earlier literature also cites a Sirmium quarter-siliqua minted in the name of the Emperor Justina I, which, in contrast to the previous specimen, would still lack adequate analogies among the Sirmium quarter-silique known to the present. This quarter-siliqua was first presented by Lodovico A. Muratori (1739, 553-534), and after him this example, once owned by Dominik de Conradis, was referred to and mentioned by many, e.g. *Eckhel* 1779, 533 no. 2 = *Friedländer* 1844, 28 no. 4, Pl. I: 4 = *Stefan* 1925, 8-9 = *Kraus* 1928, 95 no. 73/74, 103 n. 13 (with a note about the different lettering of the end of the obverse legend) = *Demo* 1994, 140-141 n. 57. No adequate analogies are known in the modern numismatic material from the Sirmium mint for an example from the collection of the Italian numismatist *G. Tanini* (1791, 381), which was noted as early as *Friedländer* 1844, 28. – One silver coin "*d'une fabrique barbare et avec des légendes incorrectes*" was at one point located in the collection of the famous Danish archaeologist and numismatist C. J. Thomsen (1873, 81 no. 988 = *Erslev* 1992, 75 no. 988), which was purchased after his death for the Royal Numismatic Cabinet in Copenhagen. The coin was presented as an example of his "Sirmium group" attributed to the Gepids by *Metlich* 2014, 43 Fig. 22.

⁴ *Werner* 1933/1936, 89-96. For a more recent archaeological publication of this find, see *Walter* 2008, 247 no. 20:1, Pl. 6:20.1/1-10.

⁵ *Meixner* 1956, 4-5.

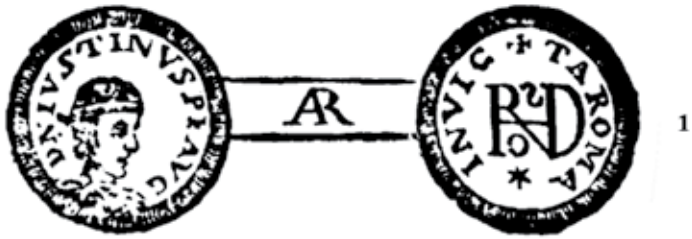
⁶ *Meixner* 1968, 53-55, Pl. 6.

⁷ *Meixner* 1963, 9-10, with a table.

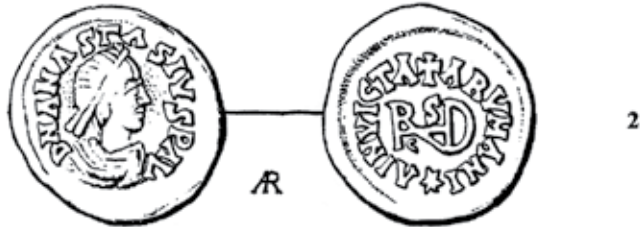
⁸ *Kat. Zemun* 1962, 93, Pl. III:1 (reverse), with the note that the coin was discovered at site no. 21; *Popović* 2003, 326 no. 6.

⁹ *Popović* 1982, 556 Fig. 12 = *Popović* 2003, 248 Fig. 12, ties the finds to site no. 50-53. The data however remains unclear regarding the existence of "*two quarter-siliqueae of Cunimund*" kept in the Museum of Syrmia in Sremska Mitrovica (supposedly discovered in the immediate vicinity of the town), as cited by *Mrkobrad* 1980, 56 n. 370.

¹⁰ *Demo* 1981, 465, 474, Pl. 3:B.



Muratori 1739, pp. 553-554



Sambon 1912, 31

Fig. 2

THEODORIC

ANASTASIUS
(491-518)

JUSTIN I
(518-527)

◀ 9th july 518 ▶



1



2



Demo 76



Rauch 98/2015, 786

Fig. 3

bronze imitation of Stefan's Ostrogothic group from a private numismatic collection in Zagreb found in Sarmia or Slavonia,¹¹ and from the numismatic collection of the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb one until then unpublished example of a coin from the Sirmium mint minted in the name of the emperor Anastasius found in Sisak,¹² which today is more important even than it was at the time of the first publication. Recently it became the only known example of a reverse tied to a coin minted by the Sirmium mint in the name of the emperor Justin I (*Rauch* 98/2015, 786), and hence it can be dated to 517/518 and the period prior to the 9th of July 518 (**Fig. 3:1-2**).

It should be noted up to the 1990s, the Brunšmid-Stefan theories were neither specifically under discussion nor were they brought into question, as was confirmed by the still useful catalogues of Byzantine coins of the Viennese numismatic school published in 1973 and 1975. Their author, W. Hahn, placed the silver emissions of the Sirmium mint in his outline of the Ostrogothic monetary production,¹³ and he supplemented the then known fundus of this mint, which he designated as ephemeral, with two until then unknown examples from two European museum collections (Dresden, Glasgow).¹⁴ Somewhat later, a text from Zagreb warned of unusual features and problems related to the weight system of the Sirmium $\frac{1}{4}$ siliquae that did not correspond to the Ostrogothic or contemporary Byzantine monetary practices, and it was also noted that elements of the minting style and the orthography of individual letters were more characteristic of individual Byzantine mints of the second third of the 6th century, while because of the major disparity in the representation of coins minted in the name of the Emperor Anastasius in comparison to those minted in the name of the Emperor Justin I, the possibility was noted that activity in the Sirmium mint during the Ostrogothic reign need not have begun exactly in 504/505, rather somewhat later, and also that minting need not have continued all the way to Theodoric's death in 526, but could instead have ceased somewhat earlier (e.g. 523).¹⁵ Indications of certain new thinking, a possible redefinition, or some even more radical intervention in the issues of the Sirmium quarter-silique could be sensed as early as 1984, when in a text dedicated to the Ostrogothic mint of Theodoric's period in Milan (Mediolanum). W. Hahn decided to call the most common specimens from the Sirmium mint, i.e. those with the monogram of Theodoric and the legend INVICTA ROMA, barbarian (*barb.*) and defined them as imitative coinage (*imitative Prägung*).¹⁶

Nonetheless, after this interesting announcement, nothing significantly changed for almost an entire decade, and only in 1993 was the Sirmium mint unexpectedly enriched by a new and previously entirely unknown series considered to be from the post-Gepid period (*nachgepidischer Zeit*) represented by three specimens from the same die, and all three with data about the site of discovery: the first discovered in northeastern Au-

¹¹ *Demo* 1981, 459, 471, Pl. 3:A.

¹² *Demo* 1981, 458, 471, 477 no. 22, Pl. 1: 22 (ex coll. Benko Horvat) = *Demo* 1994, 85 no. 76, 113 Pl. 6:76; 269; *Gennari* 2016, 126 no. 110.

¹³ *Hahn* 1973 (*MIB* I), 86-87, 140 no. 46 and 50, Prägertabelle XI; *Hahn* 1975 (*MIB* II), 146 no. 46²⁻⁵ and 50², Pl. 40:46²⁻⁵ and 50².

¹⁴ *Hahn* 1975 (*MIB* II), 146 no. 46²⁻³.

¹⁵ *Demo* 1981, 459-460, 464-465, 472-474.

¹⁶ *Hahn* 1984, 237-238, Pl. III:51.

stria at Petronell (*Carnuntum*) and the only one of three documented with a description and photograph, and the other two supposedly from the Banat region in northeastern Serbia (Vršac and Zrenjanin were mentioned), whose authenticity was very seriously called into doubt ten years later.¹⁷ Just a year after the publication of these three coins, the publication followed of a large number of Sirmium quarter-siliquae from the Ostrogothic and Gepidic periods - individual specimens with data about sites and dates of discovery (Sremska Mitrovica, Salakovac, Golubinci-Selište, Vinkovci) - from museum (and private) collections in Croatia, Slovenia, and Serbia, and thanks to this the number of known series, dies, and also contemporary counterfeits of coinage of the Sirmium mint for the first time increased considerably.¹⁸ On that occasion, the first example was presented and interpreted of the until then unknown Sirmium Ostrogothic series VICTAI+RIAAV from the Museum of Slavonia in Osijek (**Fig. 4.1**),¹⁹ characteristic not merely because of the above reverse legend, but also because it is this series of coins that in the meantime has become so common at numismatic auctions that to date it can be considered the most numerous known Sirmium coin from the same die. Additionally, from January 2017 it has been tied to a new, so far unknown reverse die characterized by the legend IIIVI C+TAROIIA, Theodoric's monogram with a reversed S, a star (eight-pointed) in place of the letter O, and a beaded border on the obverse and reverse of the coins.²⁰ (**Fig. 4.2**) In the meantime, only another few unknown examples have been published from the Museum of Slavonia in Osijek (2 coins),²¹ the Museum of Sirmia in Sremska Mitrovica (1 coin),²² and the National Museum in Belgrade (2

¹⁷ *Alram – Hahn* 1993, 78-79, other than the coins described in the article examples from the same die are mentioned from Zrenjanin ("Zvonjanin / Nagy Beszerek", sic!) and Vršac ("Vrsak / Werschetz", sic!) in Serbian Vojvodina that at one time belonged to the collection of the Austrian numismatist Friedrich Stefan (1886-1962). His numismatic collection of coins from the Migration Period composed of "2.637 Münzen, davon 891 in Gold" was purchased for the Numismatic Cabinet of the Bode-Museum (Staatliche Museen) in Berlin in 1993, *Kluge* 1994, 64-67; *Kluge* 2014, 10. It is interesting that neither of these two quarter-siliquae was exhibited or presented in the publication that was treated as an exhibition catalogue for this world-famous collection (*Kluge* 2004). Nonetheless, the above examples of silver coins can be found on the web pages of this museum (SMB-digital online collections database), where both coins were presented as counterfeit, while Zrenjanin was not even cited as a site of discovery (Vršac/Werschetz, no. 18252140; unknown site, no. 18254929). It should also be noted that the reverse of the coins from Petronell (*Carnuntum*) and those from the Berlin Museum are similar but not identical, as was once claimed.

¹⁸ *Demo* 1994, 84-85 no. 69-81 (113 Pl. 6), 89-90 no. 122-127 (116 Pl. 9), 97 no. 193-195 (119 Pl. 12), 136-138, 140-141, 147-148.

¹⁹ *Demo* 1994, 84 no. 69 (113 Pl. 9:69), 136-138. It should be noted that A. Gennari (2015, 27 n. 48) attributed the publication of this coin to the German historian L. Schmidt (1969, 348), which is quite inaccurate. After the publication of the Osijek example of the Sirmium group VICTAI+RIAAV, another twelve years were to pass before the appearance of another coin from the same die (*Lanz* 128/2006, 998), after which within only two years several other examples became known. This includes the coin published as part of the collection of Charles B. Smith Jr. (Montgomery Village, Md., SAD), see *Smith* 2007, 16-17 no. 64. A new wave of coins from this group appeared at auctions in 2010 and 2011, and after a pause of two years, a third wave followed, that has continued to the present, and was particularly abundant in 2015.

²⁰ N-N 49/2017, 756.

²¹ *Kat. Osijek* 2009, 21 no. 13 (2 specimens).

²² *Milošević* 2001, 101 (Sremska Mitrovica-Glac).

The first Ostrogothic emissions minted in Sirmium after 504/5



Fig. 4



Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (ex coll. J.A. Evans)

Fig. 5

coins),²³ although attention should also be drawn here to one forgotten example of a coin from the Sirmium mint left to the numismatic collection of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford in 1941 as a bequest by Sir Arthur J. Evans (1851-1941), the famous English archaeologist who in his early days travelled, researched, and wrote, and who briefly lived in the southeastern regions of what was then the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, where he most probably acquired this coin (**Fig. 5**).²⁴

From 1995, 1996, and 1997 onwards, the coins of the Sirmium mint were increasingly common and began to appear in ever greater numbers in the sale catalogues of numismatic auction firms, first in München (*Lanz, Aufhäuser*), and later in London and Lancaster, Pennsylvania (*CNG*), and in New York (*Italo Vecchi*). After a short halt, the trend in supply and demand again increased in the period between 2008 and 2010, and with the unceasing growth (demand?) the so far probably greatest offering of coins of the Sirmium mint from the Migration Period at numismatic auctions in Europe and North America was noted in 2014 and 2015, while in 2016 and 2017 it seems that the trend of growth continues.

In scientific terms, the already in the 1980s anticipated rearrangement of Ostrogothic numismatic parameters occurred only a quarter century later. This was carried out by M. A. Metlich, the numismatic successor of W. Hahn, who decided to totally remove all examples then considered coins of the Sirmium mint from the Migration Period from the Ostrogothic numismatic corpus and attribute them exclusively to the Gepids. He called all this coinage (not particularly numerous in 2004) the “*Sirmium*” group, assigned it among half-siliqueae, and decided to place the beginning of minting during the reign of the Emperor Justinian (527-565).²⁵ He placed specimens with the name of the emperor Anastasius on the obverse and Theodoric’s monogram surrounded by the legend INVIC(T)A ROMA on the reverse among the earliest Sirmium coins, followed by the minting of coins with the names of the emperors Justinian and Justin II on the obverse and with a supposedly “distorted” or “simplified” monogram of Theodoric on the reverse, while the last coins would include rare examples with an enigmatic and quite distinctive Gepidic content on the reverse, composed of a cross with the letter C in the field to the left and a star in the field to the right. It was presumed that the letter C would mark the name Cunimund, the last Gepid king killed in battle with the Lombards in 567.

Metlich’s theory was recently opposed by the Italian independent numismatist A. Gennari, with considerably different thoughts and conclusions, who deserves considerable credit as he succeeded in gathering and presenting in one place almost the entire numismatic fundus of the Sirmium mint published to the present (particularly the auction material), which, following his predecessor, he continued to call the the Sirmium group

²³ *Radić—Ivanišević* 2006, 104-105 no. 212-213 (Pl. 13:212-213).

²⁴ This coin was most probably acquired by Sir A. J. Evans in southeastern Europe in the 1870s. I was able to view, analyze, and photograph it during a study visit to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford on the 22nd of May 1985 (wt. 0.75 g; 16 mm; 5h).

²⁵ *Metlich* 2004, 43-44.

/gruppo di Sirmium. The catalogue of his work, so far only published in digital form,²⁶ in addition to examples of the Sirmium mint, also contains numerous recognized and unrecognized forgeries from that period and modern fakes for the most part modelled specifically on the coins of the Sirmium mint, which is a thought-provoking problem that also inspires a search for adequate and probably difficult interpretations. The collected material, where examples preserved in museum collections do not even amount to 10%, was classified into nine typological groups, while he summarized the results of his research into a theory that the mint of Sirmium was active during the Ostrogothic rule encompassing the period from 505/510 to 527/528, i.e. beginning with the occupation of Sirmium and the establishment of an Ostrogothic administration during the reign of King Theodoric (493-526), and ending at the beginning or in the first years of the reign of his successor and son Athalaric (526-534). In line with such a dating, the Sirmium coins marked with the names of the Byzantine emperors Anastasius (491-518) and Justin I (518-527) would belong to the reign of Theodoric, and the coins with the name of the emperor Justinian (527-565) to that of Athalaric.²⁷

It has already been mentioned that the auction catalogues in recent years have offered more than abundant numismatic material of the Sirmium mint from the Migration Period suitable primarily for typological research and related problems. The authenticity of the offered material is sometimes very questionable and also difficult to verify, as the more or less acceptable photographs published in the auction catalogues can hardly help in solving problematic “situations” and offering a correct “diagnosis”. In contrast to this, archaeological finds and material with a reliable provenience or valid data about the circumstances of the find whose authenticity are unquestionable can be considered a true rarity. So I was recently pleasantly surprised and quite stunned by the contents of an e-mail sent from Vinkovci in the early afternoon of the 25th of August 2015. I was contacted, you could say “straight from the field”, by Hrvoje Vulić, curator of the Municipal Museum in Vinkovci, “*in relation to a coin*” discovered by the archaeological team “*3 hours ago at Kamenica in the foundations of a grave vault*”, but, as was noted in the further text, it “*could not be identified*” by “*looking through the relevant literature*”. It was also stated that the coin was silver, “*weighing 0.68, with a diameter of 1.6 cm, and a thickness of somewhat less than 1 mm*”. The e-mail also contained photographs of the obverse and reverse, so that at very first glance it was clear that this was an example of a very rare group of silver coins of the Sirmium mint interpreted in various ways in the professional literature, considered either Ostrogothic or Gepidic or even Ostrogothic-Gepidic, and in the recent period attributed mostly either to the first half or the second third of the 6th century. Additionally, the attached photographs indicated an interesting and very rare variant coin of the Sirmium mint, which is (possibly) linked to various dilemmas and also different interpretations. My thoughts were primar-

²⁶ Gennari 2016. It is thankless to review digital presentations of research and interpret them in some detail because tomorrow they can be erased or replaced with something different, so citing them reduces the value of scientifically *verifiable* data. Nonetheless, out of respect for the enormous task of gathering the cited numismatic material and data, I consider that the effort, investigations, and presented results of Alain Gennari should be noted, questioned, and used as necessary but with caution in any further research work.

²⁷ Gennari 2016, 73-75, 82.

ily centered on the better preserved reverse, as barely anything could be distinguished on the obverse of the coin, and in my response to my colleague Vulić I sent a pdf copy of an essential article on this subject, stating that my intention was for him “*to immerse yourself in the problem*” as “*things are not as clear as they may seem to you at first glance*”. After a polite answer from my colleague Vulić, no further communication on this subject passed between us, and the coin in question was published in two places in the following year, each time with a slightly different explanation: the first time simply and without much text as a “*Lombard coin*”,²⁸ and the second time similarly, but with more caution and deliberation.²⁹

The depiction of three crosses in a wreath in the sense of a schematicized representation of the scene at Golgotha/Calvary on the reverse of the coin from Kamenica (**Fig. 6:1; 7:4**) is rare,³⁰ but not a numismatic novelty, as it is borne on two already well-known silver coins, both from sites in Slovenia: one discovered long ago in 1903 at Kranj-Lajh (**Fig. 6:2**) in one of the graves of the large Migration period cemetery there (gr. 266),³¹ and an identical example (same die) discovered sixty some years later at Rifnik near Celje (**Fig. 6:3**) in one of the graves at a small Migration Period cemetery (gr. 39).³² In the earlier professional literature, the example from Kranj was first attributed to minting by the Lombard king Cleph (572-574), then it was placed among the Gepid siliquae minted after 567,³³ afterwards both above Slovenian finds were attributed to the Lombards but with an origin in a somewhat later period (second half of the 7th cent.),³⁴ while fifteen years ago they were returned to an earlier chronological framework and

²⁸ Vulić 2016/2016a, 91-92.

²⁹ Vulić 2016b, 139 Fig. 7, 141.

³⁰ In the archaeological heritage of the Early Byzantine period, figurative depictions of Golgota are also rare and include artifacts of pilgrimage *eulogiae* from the 6th and 7th centuries, the most outstanding examples including small, minutely decorated lead ampullae kept in several American museums (Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, the Detroit Institute of Arts Museum, the Cleveland Museum of Art), one private collection in Munich, the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul (found during the archaeological excavations of the Byzantine harbor in the Istanbul quarter of Yenikapı), as well as in the treasury of the cathedral of Monza (several examples), while in addition to the lead ampullae, a depiction of the scene at Golgota was engraved on a small leather pendant-ampulle in the Paris Cabinet de Médailles (Ross 1962, 71-72 no. 87, Pl. XLVIII; Vikan 1982, 40-42; Kat. Paderborn 2001, 189-190 no. 1.71; Arad 2007, 62-67; Sever 2016, 35-48). A depiction of the cross of Christ (Cruxificion) at Golgota also appears on the reverses of gold coins minted for the Byzantine emperor Tiberius II Constantine (578-582), and after him, a cross was placed on their gold coins by other Byzantine rulers: during the 7th century Heraclius, Constans II, Constantine IV, Justinian II, and Leontios, and in the first half of the 8th century Tiberius III, Philippikos, Anastasius II, and Theodosius III. A cross appeared somewhat later on the reverse of silver Byzantine coins and was retained for some time further.

³¹ Žmavc 1903, 249-250 Fig. 206 (gr. 50/1903); Šmid 1939, 4 Fig. 14, *Stare* 1980, 70, 116, Pl. 8:10 (gr. 266); *Vinski* 1980, 19 Fig. 11:1.

³² *Bolta* 1969, Y 110:1; *Bolta* 1972, 127 Fig. 4; *Bolta* 1978, 516; *Bolta* 1981, 32 Pl. 6.

³³ *Stefan* 1943, 87.

³⁴ *Kos* 1981, 584-586; *Kos* 1981a, 101; *Kos* 1986, 229, Pl. 10:15-16 = *Kos* 1988 (FMRSI I-II), no. 113 29 (Kranj-Lajh), Nr. 367/2 29 (Rifnik); *Kat. Ljubljana* 1991, 63 no. 38 (Rifnik), 64 no. 39 (Kranj). On this problem and some opinions of archaeologists and their reactions to the theory of Kos, see *Demo* 1994, 260-261.



Fig. 6

were dated to the second half of the 6th century.³⁵ A similarly distinctive depiction as on the reverse is also located on the obverse of these coins, dominated by a frontal image of an angel in a beaded border (aureole?), very similar to depictions on individual early Byzantine decorative objects from Bosnia and Herzegovina (the medallion from Turbet) and Slovenia (the circular fibula-reliquary from Rifnik).³⁶

The discovery of yet another coin with a depiction of Golgotha/Calvary with three crosses on the reverse followed as late as in 2013, when a silver coin appeared at an auction house in Zürich (*NAC* 75/2013, 431) with an image identical to that on the above mentioned examples from Kranj and Rifnik (**Fig. 7:3**). Nonetheless, the obverse of this coin, in contrast to the other two, did not bear an image of an angel, rather the usual imperial bust facing right with the legend *in continuo*, where the orthography of individual letters (e.g. the second letter S), the size of the letters, and evident brevity indicated Sirmium models and the coinage minted there in the name of the emperor Justin II (565-578).³⁷ The same die used to mint this example from Zurich — it should be emphasized that this was characterized by *distorted* orthography on the obverse legend — was also used to mint the coin found in the floor of grave 14 at Kamenica near Vinkovci (**Fig. 7:4**).³⁸ Yet another example with an identical obverse has been known since the spring of 2016 (*MZR* 17/2016, 614), but with a different reverse, where a variant can be recognized of the monogram usually attributed in the earlier literature to

³⁵ Martin 2000, 194-196. For grave 39 and its stratigraphic position (later phase of group II of grave in the northern part of the cemetery), see Vičić 1989, 439, 444, 453.

³⁶ Preložnik 2008, 207, with comparative material and relevant literature about the problem.

³⁷ The official lettering of the obverse legend of the Sirmium mint during the reign of Justin II ran *in continuo* and read ОН ІVΣΤΙΝVΣ ΡΑΥ (**Fig. 1:4-5**).

³⁸ The coin from Kamenica was most probably an overstrike struck in a worn die.

JUSTINIAN (527-565)



Rauch 103/2017, 603

JUSTIN II (565-578)



MZR 176/2016, 614



NAC 75/2013, 431



Vinkovci-Kamenica
gr. 14

Fig. 7.

the Gepid king Cunimund (Fig. 7:2). I consider that this monogram variant, whether it was Cunimund's or not, can be attributed to the coins created in the Sirmium mint somewhat earlier, i.e. in the last years of the reign of the emperor Justinian, encompassing the period from the last third of the year 564 to after 15 November 565 (Fig. 7:1).

In conclusion, it is necessary to emphasize that the term "Sirmium group" today encompasses a broad spectrum of typologically diverse predominantly silver coins with

similar characteristics (metrological content, conception, the style and engraving of the obverse and reverse, and the distribution of chance, grave, and hoard finds), among which a considerable part, but not all, is composed of examples originally attributed to the Sirmium mint of the Ostrogothic and Gepidic period in the sense of the theories of Brunšmid-Stefan from 1924 and 1925. Together with this new term, the production of the Sirmium mint, once dated to the chronological span from ca. 504/5 to 567, has in the recent period been assigned a different period of minting, as a rule more or less reduced: according to one idea, the minting took place in the post-Ostrogothic period of Gepidic rule over Syrmia and continued to AD 567 (Metlich 2004), while according to another idea, it also took place during the Ostrogothic rule, but with an even shorter chronological span, occurring from around 505/510 to around 528 (Gennari 2015). This simplification, most probably motivated by a belief that in this manner it would be possible to completely eliminate the thought of the existence of an interruption in the minting of the Sirmium mint or some possible chronological gap between the minting of the Ostrogothic and Gepidic series, at first seemed to be attractive and easy to accept. In the meantime, however, inconsistencies have become ever more apparent, and most of all, the typological diversity stands out, which is today yet more evident because of the large number of known specimens from the Sirmium mint, making them analytically more significant than they were twenty some years ago. In this sense, interpretations tending to an exclusively Ostrogothic or exclusively Gepidic provenience of the Sirmium group are not and cannot be viable.

Literature

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