

*To Joachim Werner (1909-1994)
on the 110th anniversary of his birth
and 25th anniversary of his death*

COINAGE OF THE “SIRMIUM” GROUP FROM THE EARLY MEDIEVAL CEMETERY OF MENGAN-HOHLN/ MERZENGRABEN (GRAVE 12)

More than 85 years ago, the German archaeologist Joachim Werner, a renowned expert for the archaeological Great Migration period, published one of his first scientific works, devoting it to the coin finds discovered in one of only fifty-some graves from the Merovingian period excavated until then at Mengen (Kr. Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald) in the southwestern part of the German state of Baden-Württemberg. In an early Merovingian grave (gr. 12), in addition to numerous other finds, in 1933 seven silver coins were discovered with a then rarely known provenience, today on the contrary well-known as the “Sirmium” group. Both then and today, this represented the only multiple find of coins of the “Sirmium” group from the period of Ostrogothic rule discovered during systematic archaeological excavations, and not in the original area of the minting and distribution of this coinage (Pannonia Sirmiensis) but rather in the considerably distant Frankish-Alammanic region. In his publication, Werner supplemented his analysis and comparisons with excellent descriptions and photo-documentation, because of which even today numismatic science is thankful to him. This all enabled that the creation and minting of the silver coins discovered in grave 12 can be dated today to the period from AD 512, perhaps somewhat later when the earliest had been created and minted, to AD 520, when the latest coin from the Mengen find had been minted.

Archaeological excavations began in Mengen at the site of “Hohlen/Merzengraben” in the late summer of 1932. With time, this proved to be one of the largest early medieval cemeteries of the Merovingian period. In that first year, the first 54 graves were excavated from a total of 749 graves (+ “Grab B”), in fact 750 graves that were to be excavated during several excavation campaigns that were carried out in the period from 1931 to 1934, and again in 1936. Additional excavations were performed again on two occasions in 1973 and 1974, when a further 186 graves were excavated, and in the end 935 (+ “Grab B”), i.e. 936 graves were documented there dated from the late 5th to the earlier 8th centuries.¹ Particular attention was attracted among the graves excavated in the first campaign by female grave 12, not merely because of its diverse grave goods, but also because of its datable numismatic finds – seven perforated silver coins intended to be used as pendants that were found together with numerous and varied beads between the thighs of the deceased as part of a central element suspended from a

¹ Walter 2008, 13, 16.

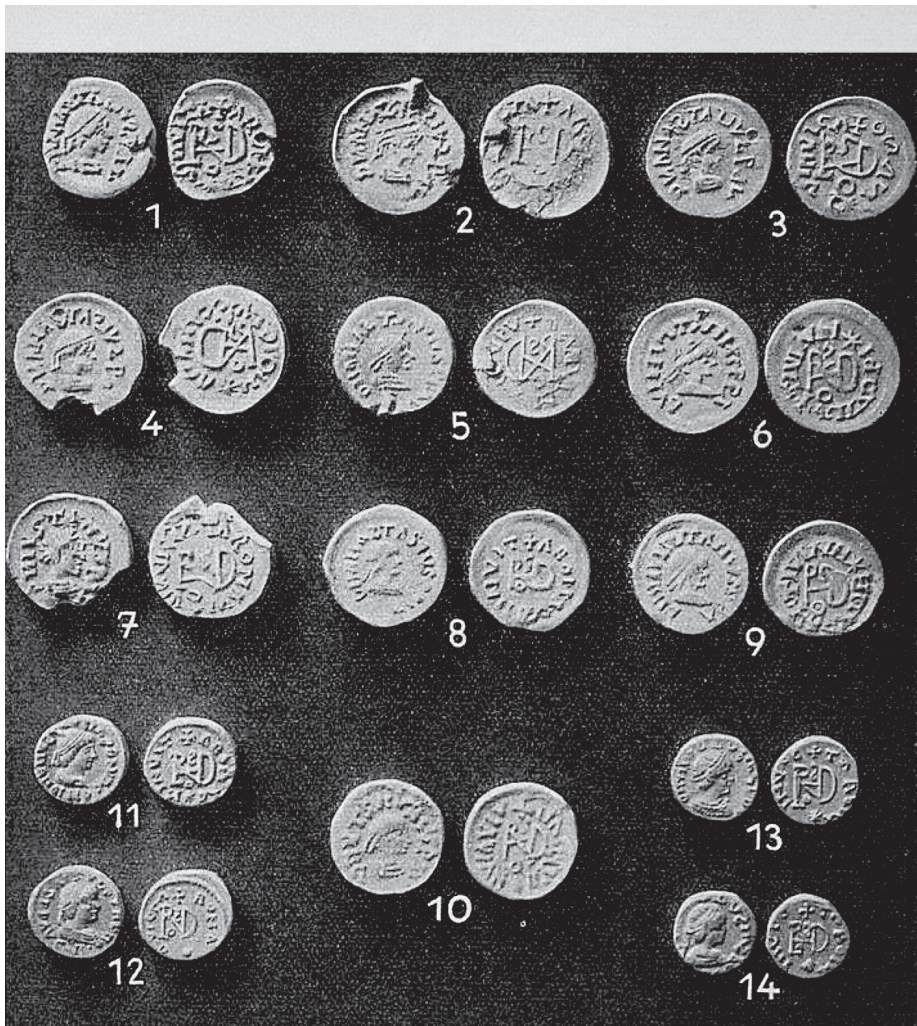


Abb. 39

Silbermünzen Theoderichs (493–526). 1.–7. Mengen, Amt Freiburg, Oberbaden, Augustinermuseum Freiburg. 8. Sijsek, Kroatien, Museum Agram. 9. Neu-Banovci, Slavonien, Mus. Agram. 10. Strbinci, Slavonien, Mus. Agram. 11.–14. Berliner Münzkabinett.

Pl. 1

1.-7. Mengen-Hohlen/Merzengraben, gr. 12., silver coins of the "Sirmium" group from the Ostrogothic period: 1-6. examples minted in the name of Anastasius; 7. An example minted in the name of Justin I. 8-10. The Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, silver coins of the "Sirmium" group from the Ostrogothic period: 8. Sisak/Siscia, an example minted in the name of Anastasius; 9. Novi Banovci/Burgenae, an example minted in the name of Anastasius; 10. Budrovci-Štrbinci/Certissa, an example minted in the name of Justin I (imitative minting). 11.-14. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ostrogothic silver coins from northern Italic mints (from Werner 1939, 90 Abb. 39).

belt.² The silver coins were promptly analyzed and the numismatic and archaeological public was informed in detail about the find in 1933 by Joachim Werner,³ then merely one of the archaeologist participants in the above excavations, who only a year earlier, when he was 23, had defended his doctoral dissertation at the University of Marburg under the mentorship of Gero von Merhart on "*Die münzdatierten merowingischen Grabfunde in Süd- und Westdeutschland*", printed in 1935 as "*Münzdatierte austrasische Grabfunde*".⁴ Work on archaeological material related to numismatics and the experience that he gained in this manner were probably the elements most responsible for the rapid and scientifically founded reaction of the young Werner, all the more significant as the numismatic material discovered in grave 12 at the time of his first publication were numismatic novelties, and because of this and their evident rarity the gathered coins were known only to a truly small group of specialists.

As an introduction, Werner did not fail to point out that up to the find from Mengen, at Frankish and Alammanic cemeteries north of the Alps, 33 coins of Ostrogothic rulers had been registered (Theoderic, Athalaric, Witigis (Vitiges), Totila (Baduila), and Teia (Thela)) and that all of those coins were regular and reliably Ostrogothic minting.⁵ This observation was also necessary for a reason, as in the Frankish-Alammanic region the silver coins from the Mengen find were then and still today can be considered a numismatic sensation. In his analysis of the Mengen find, he started from the general to the specific, and first noted that all seven Mengen coins bear the monogram of the Ostrogothic king Theoderic on the reverse, and that the obverses of six examples bear the name of the Byzantine emperor Anastasius (493-518) and only one has the name of the emperor Justin I (618-527).⁶ He noted that all examples were close in weight to the Ostrogothic quarter siliquae characteristic because of the reverse legend INVICTA ROMA, but he immediately warned that the thickness of the metal plate used to mint (etalon) and its diameter were different in comparison to the regular Ostrogothic series minted in the main Italic mints. He also noted deviation from the Ostrogothic norms

² *Werner* 1933, 89. Two years later, some other items from this grave were published, which *Werner* on that occasion placed in his group III, dated to the period around 550-600 (1935, 38-39, 145). In fact, he placed the date of the two large fibulae with identically widened feet (type Mengen) in the period prior to the middle of the 6th century (op. cit., Taf. 4B). For the belt pendant element from Mengen, in the sense of a belt chain with pendant-amulets, such as arrived in the Danube River basin in the Western German region during the second half of the 5th century, see *Martin* 1994, 358, 362. A broader description with numerous details was published by *Walter* 2009, 120-125 (pendants) 138-139 (coins). The author also published a reconstruction of one part, unfortunately without any signs where the pendant silver coins of the "Sirmium" group would have been located (op. cit., Taf. 293).

³ *Werner* 1933, 674-9, 723-5, Taf. 399.

⁴ *Fehr* 2001, 331.

⁵ *Werner* 1933, 90-91. For the latter corrections and supplementation of these data, see *Werner* 1935, 79 (Beilage 7); *Werner* 1962, 335-337 (Verzeichnis 4); *Fischer* 2002, 309-310 (Liste II: Nr. 22-62); *Brendle* 2014, 1105-1107.

⁶ The data are not accurate about the existence of "fünf Prägungen des Anastasius (491-518), zwei Justinus I (518-526)", as is written in the description of the inventory of gr. 12 under number 20.1, *Walter* 2008, 247. This most probably followed what had previously been published by *Garsch* 1970, 217. It can be supposed that both authors were led to this claim by the illegible obverse legend of coin 6A (*Garsch* 1970, Taf. 17:7f; *Walter* 2008, Taf. 6:20.1/6 = *Werner* 1933, 90 Abb. 39:6), which belongs to imitative minting created according to the model of the similar regular issues of the "Sirmium" group with the legible name of the emperor Anastasius.



Fig. 1 - 1. Werner 1939, 90 Abb. 39:1 - 2. Savoca 8/2016, no. 629.

in the workmanship of the obverse image, which he attributed to barbarization, for which he found analogies among three silver coins in the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb (from Sisak, N. Banovci, and Štrbinci). They had been published only seven years earlier and were attributed to a coin mint active in Sirmium, the main city of the province of *Pannonia Sirmiensis* and the period of Ostrogothic rule from 504 to 536.⁷ It seems that he was not particularly satisfied with the attribution of this coinage to the Sirmium mint, despite the approval that such an attribution had received in the meantime (A. Alföldi, F.F. Kraus). In fact, he accepted it only partially (for two coins), as because of the great similarities, he hypothesized that one of the examples from Zagreb (Novi Banovci) and one of the examples from Mengen (6A) were the work of the same minter, active not in *Pannonia Sirmiensis* but instead in some other part of Theoderic's kingdom. For all similar Ostrogothic silver coins, he believed that they could have been occasionally minted according to a similar monetary model anywhere in southern France, northern Italy, or in the Balkans, but for the coins from Mengen in the end he nonetheless concluded, but leaving it a little vague, only that they came from the northern provinces of Theoderic's kingdom (*"aus den nördlichen Provinzen des Reiches Theoderichs stammen"*).⁸

⁷ Stefan 1925, 2-12, Taf. 298:1-3.

⁸ Werner 1933, 95.



Fig. 2 - 1. Werner 1939, 90 Abb. 39:2 - 2. Jacquier 43/2017, no. 497.

The problems of the minting and mint attributes that interested Joachim Werner eighty-five years ago are equally topical today, even without considering that in the 1930s only ten coins, all with information about the site of discover, were available for numismatic analysis. Today, more than five hundred examples are known, but among them examples with data about provenience do not compose even 10% of the known examples.⁹ Hence it is necessary to emphasize that the find from Mengen discovered in 1932 was and has remained to the present the only multiple or group find of coins of the "Sirmium" group from the Ostrogothic period discovered during systematic archaeological excavation, and this not in the actual region of the minting and distribution of this coinage but rather in the considerably distant Frankish-Alammanic region of present-day southwestern Germany. Additionally, as a closed find most probably gathered in its entirety, its composition is unquestionable in terms of content and credible numismatically. In terms of the textual content, the components and forms represented on the coins from the Mengen find are of original value and significance, so the meaningfulness and legibility and any changes or deviations require that they be pointed out, interpreted, and eventually explained. The legibility of the legends of the obverse and reverse on the quarter-siliquae from Mengen can be divided into three combinations: a) *obverse and reverse legible* (3 ex.), **1-2A**; **7Ju I**; b) *obverse legible, reverse illegible* (3 ex.), **3-5A,-i**; c) *obverse and reverse illegible* (1 ex.), **6A,i/i** — note: numbers **1-7** from Werner 1933, Abb. 39; **A** - Anastasius; **Ju I** - Justin I; **i** - illegible).

⁹ Demo 2017, 88, 104.



Fig. 3 - 1. Werner 1939, 90 Abb. 39:3 - 2. G&M 108/2001, no. 2179.

1A - The obverse of this perforated, damaged by drilling and hence somewhat lighter coin (0.72 g) bears a legible legend, with the letters И and 2 engraved in reverse, which in the usual *in continuo* form reads ДИИИΛ2ΤΛ2ΙV2ΡΛV (Fig. 1:1).¹⁰ The obverse legend with the short ending ΡΛV like this one is borne by five of seven examples (71.43%) of the “Sirmium” group quarter-siliquae from gr. 12 at Mengen, six of them (85.71%) minted in the name of the emperor Anastasius (1-6A) and one (14.29%) in the name of the emperor Justin I (7A). The reverse legend VIIVITΛ † ΛROMΛИ * (8 points), despite dropping the letter C, belongs among legible legends, while its reverse sign И * V - reverse sign is what I call the letters separated by a star at the beginning

¹⁰ Werner 1933, 90 Abb. 39:1 = Garscha 1970, Taf. 17:7d. The author presented only the obverse of the Mengen Ostrogothic silver coins of the “Sirmium” group, adding to them the reverse of the Late Roman bronze coin of Constans I also found in grave 12 (op. cit., 217, Taf. 17:7h).



Fig. 4 - 1. *Werner 1939, 90 Abb. 39:4* - 2. *Gennari 2017, 122 no. 47.* - 3. *G&M 225/2014, no. 2821.*

(one or two) and at the end (one) of the legible reverse legend *Invicta Roma* - in addition to coin **1A** is also present only on the Mengen silver coin **2A**. The utilization of the reverse die of coin **1A** in combination with related or even different obverse dies has so far been confirmed only on a single silver coin of the "Sirmium" group (**Fig. 1:2**).¹¹

2A - In contrast to the previous coin, this one was poorly struck, damaged, perforated, and with a cirlet for suspension, because of which it was the heaviest example from the Mengen find (1.12g). Despite everything, the portrait depiction is quite visible, as well as the legible obverse legend *ΔΙΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΒΣΡΑΥ* with a first reversed *И* and three reversed letters *Σ* (**Fig. 2:1**).¹² The poor striking and the wear on the plate

¹¹ *Savoca 8/2016, no. 629.*

¹² *Werner 1933, 90 Abb. 39:2 = Garscha 1970, Taf. 17:7b.*



Fig. 5 - 1. Werner 1939, 90 Abb. 39:5 - 2. NAC 75/2013, no. 427.

are more evident on the reverse of the coin, which Werner found unclear in 1933,¹³ but today thanks to numerous examples of the same die it can easily be recognized as the legible reverse legend $\text{VIIIVICTA} \text{✚} \text{AROMAN} \text{✱}$ (7 points) with the reverse sign $\text{II} \text{✱} \text{V}$. (Fig. 2:2).¹⁴

3A,-i - The coin is characterized by a circular, regularly formed minting plate (etalon) with a well stamped obverse and reverse, weighing 0.82 g despite damage from drilling a circular hole for suspension (Fig. 3:1).¹⁵ Its legible obverse legend with a first reversed II and three reversed letters Z is identical to the legend DIIANAZTANZVZPAV and the portrait depictions on coins **2A** and **4A**, and it is clear that all three coins were minted with the same obverse die. At the time when coin **3A** was published for the first time, it was the first known example of the "Sirmium" group, recognizable by the recumbent letters S at the end of the reverse legend $\text{IIVINVICI} \text{✚} \text{OSAS} \text{✱}$ (6 points), illegible primarily in its second part. After the example from Mengen, this obverse-reverse combination was again confirmed only in 2001 at an auction at a well-known auction firm in Munich (Fig. 3:2),¹⁶ while after that another ten examples were offered at various auctions from the same die with similar or better preservation. The use of

¹³ Werner 1933, 95 read the reverse legend as $[\dots] \text{INVICTA} \text{✚} \text{AR} [\dots] \text{✱}$.

¹⁴ Jacquier 43/2017, no. 497.

¹⁵ Werner 1933, 90 Abb. 39:3 = Garscha 1970, Taf. 17:7a, who along with the coin also published the corresponding, well-preserved circllet for suspension.

¹⁶ G&M 108/2001, no. 2179.



Fig. 6 - 1. Werner 1939, 90 Abb. 39:6 - 2. NAC 93/2016, no. 1232.

the $\text{O}\omega\text{S}$ reverse was confirmed for one more obverse die that has the same obverse legend $\text{D}\text{I}\text{A}\text{N}\text{A}\text{Z}\text{T}\text{A}\text{Z}\text{V}\text{Z}\text{P}\text{A}\text{V}$, but with a different, somewhat larger portrait depiction quite similar to that on the obverse die used to mint the Mengen silver coin (Fig. 3:3).¹⁷

4A,-i - The coin is chipped and perforated, because of which the weight is merely 0.65 g. despite the damage, the obverse legend $\text{D}\text{I}\text{A}\text{N}\text{A}\text{Z}\text{T}\text{A}\text{Z}\text{I}\text{V}\text{Z}\text{P}\text{A}\text{V}$ is legible and clearly shows that the coin was minted with the same obverse die as the previous two coins (2A and 3A). The reverse legend, on the other hand, is engraved backwards with individual letters turned inwards (e.g. Λ and T), and is mostly understandable in its first part, $\text{VI}[n]\text{A}\text{I}\text{C}\text{T}\text{A}$ (Fig. 4:1).¹⁸ In the second part, the legend is illegible, and read in the usual manner it would be $\text{L}\text{I}\text{L}\text{I}\text{V}\text{A} \text{+}$, and backwards towards the outside, $\text{V}\text{L}\text{I}\text{V}\text{I}\text{V} \text{*}$ (8 points). Theoderic's monogram in mirror image is not common on the reverses of coins of the “Sirmium” group - in the Mengen find it is represented by the coin 5A - while in combination with the described reverse legend it is known on at least one more example of a coin from the same die (Fig. 4:2).¹⁹ With these, primarily because of a similarly conceived reverse legend and the monogram in mirror image, yet another die of the “Sirmium” group is tied (Fig. 4:3),²⁰ according to which it seems individual imitative series of the “Sirmium” group were formed.²¹

¹⁷ Künker 257/2014, no. 9214.

¹⁸ Werner 1933, 90 Abb. 39:4 = Garscha 1970, Taf. 17:7c.

¹⁹ Gennari 2017, 122 no. 47.

²⁰ G&M 225/2014, no. 2821.

²¹ NAC 78/2014, no. 1290 = RomNum 29e/2016, no. 666 = Gennari 2017, 169 no. 145b.



Fig. 7 - Werner 1939, 90 Abb. 39:7 - 2. *G&M* 216/2013, no. 3567. - 3. Gennari 2017, 136 no. 139.

5A,-/i - The legible and well-engraved obverse legend DNANAZTASIVSPPAV , with the long ending PPAV characteristic for the earlier period of minting coins of the "Sirmium" group is in complete contrast to the illegible, poorly visible, and reverse legend damaged by perforation [...]VPV " $\text{TZVHVAM} \star$ (8 points), which surrounds Theoderic's monogram engraved in mirror image (wt. 0.87 g).²² The described combination of obverse and reverse in the presently very numerous collection of dies of the "Sirmium" group so far is known only on this coin (**Fig. 5:1**).²³ Nonetheless, a similar

²² The letters VHVA in ligature.

²³ Werner 1933, 90 Abb. 39:5 = Garscha 1970, Taf. 17:7e.

portrait depiction and illegible obverse legend and a very similar illegible reverse legend with Theoderic's monogram in mirror image can be recognized on one coin offered at auction in Zurich in 2013 (**Fig. 5:2**).²⁴

6A,i/i - The coin belongs to a group with an illegible obverse and illegible reverse, whose first example was in fact presented at Mengen (perforated; 0.70 g).²⁵ The obverse legend $\text{bVIMV}\overline{\text{TAV}}\text{IIISPPA}$ engraved partially facing outwards (the first 6 letters) suggests minting in the name of Anastasius. The cross and six-pointed star on the reverse are engraved with a deviation 7-1 on a clock, and are part of its illegible reverse legend $\text{† TIV}\overline{\text{AVN}} \star \text{Id}\overline{\text{OVIIA}}$ (**Fig. 6:1**).²⁶ After the example from Mengen, a coin from the same mint was awaited until near the end of 1996, when in New York at a joint auction of the American *CNG* and the Swiss *NAC* an identical specimen appeared and was sold,²⁷ for the exact same coin to again be offered and sold in Zurich twenty years later (**Fig. 6:2**).²⁸ For the Mengen example, Werner on the basis of the appearance of the bust on the obverse suggested a similarity to the coin from Novi Banovci (AMZ D1086),²⁹ hypothesizing that both coins were the work of the same die cutter.³⁰ Whether this was merely the work of the same engraver or something more complex still cannot be claimed with certainty, but along with the already listed characteristics, it is necessary to note the PPA ending of the obverse legend as one of the more striking links with other variants of coinage of the "Sirmium" group.

7Ju I - When this coin was published in 1933, if one ignores the enigmatic specimen with "Sirmium" characteristics" that had been presented almost two centuries earlier by L. Muratori as a product of the mint in Rome,³¹ this was the first well documented legible example of the "Sirmium" group minted in the name of the emperor Justin I (**Fig. 7:1**).³² For this perforated and partly chipped silver coin from Mengen (0.58g), its obverse legend DIIIVSTINVSPAV in combination with the reverse legend $\text{VIIIVICTA} \text{† AROM}\overline{\text{AII}} \star$ (6 points) and its $\text{III} \star \text{V}$ reverse sign are important as they suggest an early period of minting this coin that most probably did not occur later than 520.³³ This is indicated by its reverse die, previously utilized in combination with another two

²⁴ *NAC* 75/2013, no. 427.

²⁵ *Werner* 1933, 90 Abb. 39:6 = *Garscha* 1970, Taf. 17:7f.

²⁶ The letters $\overline{\text{AV}}$ in ligature.

²⁷ *CNG* 40/1996, no. 1843.

²⁸ *NAC* 93/2016, no. 1232.

²⁹ *Werner* 1933, 90 Abb. 39:9. For the other publications of this coin (with illustrations), see *Stefan* 1925, 5-6, Taf. 298:2 = *Kraus* 1928, Nr. 64 = *Werner* 1933, 90 Abb. 39:9, 96 Nr. 9 = *Hahn* 1973 (*MIB* I), Nr. 46 = *Demo* 1981, no. 23/1086 = *Demo* 1994, no. 80/1086 = *Mirnik, Šemrov* 1998, no. 816/D1086 = *Gennari* 2017, 119 Nr. 39.

³⁰ *Werner* 1933, 95.

³¹ *Muratori* 1739, 547, 553-554. For earlier literature about this coin, see *Demo* 2017, 98 n. 3, 99 Fig. 2:1.

³² *Werner* 1933, 90 Abb. 39:7 = *Garscha* 1979, Taf. 17:7g.

³³ For the last Sirmium minting in the name of emperor Anastasius († 9 July 518) and the first minting in the name of the emperor Justin I at some point after 9 July 518, see *Demo* 2017, 83-84 Fig. 3:1-2, 99-100 Fig. 3:1-2.

obverse dies with the name Justin I (**Fig. 7:2-3**).³⁴ Werner strangely enough did not pay particular attention to this coin, nor its comparison with the only then known example of the "Sirmium" group from the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb (Budrovci-Štrbinci) minted in the name of Justin I, whose photograph he published for comparison,³⁵ and which, in contrast to the Mengen example belongs to one of many variants of the imitative coinage of the "Sirmium" group characteristic because of the illegible obverse and reverse legends.³⁶

The primary context of the monetary find from grave 12, which includes the origin and minting and the iconography, metrology, and similar numismatically interesting monetary content, is related to *Sirmium*, the provincial center of *Pannonia Sirmiensis*, which in 504/5 the Gepids took over from Theoderic's Ostrogoths and immediately (or a year or two later) began to mint their own coinage there. From the very beginning of minting, most probably not without a reason, the coinage of the Ostrogothic mint in Sirmium differed from that minted in the Ostrothic mints in Italy. Numismatists first thought that in Sirmium the coinage of the Ostrogoths was first minted (504/5-526) and later the coinage of the Gepids (ca. 546-568),³⁷ then all the coinage was attributed exclusively to minting by the Gepids (after 536-568),³⁸ while recently the participation of the Gepids was entirely excluded, and the minting of this coinage was attributed solely to the Ostrogoths (508/510-527/528).³⁹ The divergency of these attributions and their chronological framework was derived from the even today insufficiently clear organization and minting regulations of the Sirmium mint, because of which the boundary between regular and irregular is often barely recognizable, and the same refers to the varied and fairly numerous contemporary imitative minting. Hence over the years the need became apparent for some more comprehensive and thus practical name, and the term "Sirmium" group, just as it is now, for the time being, and naturally not forever, can be considered the most suitable. Despite the mentioned ambiguities associated with the organization and regulation of the minting of the Mengen find, he presented a series of numismatically useful monetary contents whose typological characteristics are useful for determining the dating of the hoard or the dating of individual components of it:

³⁴ *G&M* 216/2013, no. 3567; *Gennari* 2017, 136 no. 139.

³⁵ *Werner* 1933, 90 Abb. 39:10. For the other publications of this coin (with illustrations), see *Stefan* 1925, 12 Nr. 4, Taf. 298:3 = *Kraus* 1928, Nr. 75 = *Werner* 1933, 90 Abb. 39:10, 96 Nr. 10 = *Hahn* 1973 (*MIB* J), Nr. 50 = *Demo* 1981, no. 29 = *Demo* 1994, no. 124/1088 = *Mirnik, Šemrov* 1998, no. 832/1088.

³⁶ In addition to the coin from the site of Budrovci-Štrbinci, the same variant has been presented with at least another two examples from the same die: *Demo* 1994, 90 No. 125, 116 Tab. 9:125, (Golubinci-Selište, Serbia); *Gennari* 2017, 168 No. 144 (supposedly from a *CNG* auction). Because of the PAV završending of the obverse legen, these silver coins, although representatives of the imitative series of the "Sirmium" group minted during the reign of Justin I (518-526), are not earlier than 520, when on the regular coins of the Sirmium mint, the long obverse ending PPAV had already been replaced by the short version (PAV).

³⁷ For a review of the most important ideas about the possible attribution and period of minting of the coins of the "Sirmium" group, see *Demo* 2018 (in press).

³⁸ *Metlich* 2004, 43-44.

³⁹ *Gennari* 2107, 94.

- Three of seven coins of the "Sirmium" group (42.86%) were the product of the same obverse die and three different reverse dies (2A-4A), of which two reverse legends belong to the illegible category (3A-4A), while one of the monograms of Theodric was engraved in mirror image (4A);

- Only one coin (20%) utilized the long used PAV ending of the obverse legend characteristic for the earlier period of minting of the "Sirmium" group with the name of the emperor Anastasius (5A), while as many as four coins (80%) utilized the PAV ending of the obverse legend with the name of the emperor Anastasius characteristic for the later period of minting of the "Sirmium" group (1A-4A);

- Only one of seven coins (14.29%) belongs to the imitative group of coins characterized as such because of the illegibility of the obverse and reverse legends, where the obverse ending PPA (6A) places it among the coinage of the later phase of the earlier period of minting of the "Sirmium" group;

- After the initial and short lasting PAV obverse ending, the short obverse ending PAV (7Ju I) predominated on all later editions of the "Sirmium" group minted in the name of emperor Justin I.

Because of this strict monetary content it is necessary to emphasize that the coins of the "Sirmium" group from Mengen have the characteristics of a compact monetary group minted for the most part in the name of the emperor Anastasius and to a lesser extent in the name of the emperor Justin in the period from 512 or somewhat later (!) up to and including 520.⁴⁰ Hence its composition, given the lack of anything similar, can be considered a kind of copy of regular and irregular characteristics, possible numerical relations, and the state of representation of individual variants of coins of the "Sirmium" group and their circulation in *Pannonia Sirmiensis* during the second half of the second and very beginning of the third decade of the 6th century. This is even more interesting given that in 523, as had already been hypothesized,⁴¹ or only a year later, there would be a break in the minting of regular coinage of the "Sirmium" group as a possible result of Gepidic "unreliability" in a period of tense relations between king Theodoric and the emperor Justin I, which even threatened to grow into an open Ostrogothic-Byzantine military conflict.⁴²

Indications exist that this might have represented some transfer that did not necessarily have to be primarily focused on exchange or trade, as has already been noted.⁴³ The possible protagonists of such a transfer could be Gepidic warriors, who in great numbers (*multitudinem Gepidarum*) were directed to go to Gaul (*ad Gallias custodiæ causa*) in 523 or 523/524, and their unobstructed passage through Veneto and Liguria to their final destination (*ad Gallias destinatis*) was supported by the Ostrogothic king

⁴⁰ It is not clear why a claim was recently repeated (and seemingly accepted) that "pushed" the date of grave 12 (*t.p.q.* 518 AD), into a considerably earlier period, with the new *t.p.q.* the period after 492. It is probably based on some incomprehensible numismatic interpretation of the coins found in the grave, see Friedrich 2016, 145.

⁴¹ Demo 1981, 459-460, 472.

⁴² Vasiliev 1950, 333-337.

⁴³ Demo 1981, 460, 472; Demo 1994, 148 n. 83; Demo 2018 (in press).

himself.⁴⁴ Whether this was the only event of this type, or if it had been preceded or followed by similar undertakings, of smaller extent, less successful, or less important, can only be speculated about today. The situation could certainly also have been quite different, and the transfer could have been "thanks" to some Alamannic soldier, who after dwelling or serving in *Pannonia Sirmiensis* needed or decided to return to his or her homeland and brought back several "unusual things" with him or her from necessity or as souvenirs. Whether these "unusual items" were still functioning as coins or had something already been carried out to transform them into some kind of decorative pendants is a question that perhaps will never receive an answer.

In all of this, the fact should not be ignored that coinage always and everywhere is capable of indicating its origin, more or less clearly noting the monetary authority responsible for its creation and minting. Thus, even when it is discovered far from the site of its own beginnings, coinage refers to affiliation, which because of its social and symbolic function is also further transmitted to its owner (user), confirming that both, if not the same, are at least in some manner of similar origin. That characteristic is equally present when the coins are able to perform their monetary role and also when they are transformed into jewellery, amulets, or even both at the same time. The latter is a reflection of the wishes and needs of its owner to appropriate the properties and values embodied in the coin-pendants, in order to benefit from them at some point.⁴⁵

In conclusion, it would be worthwhile to recall one important notion of Werner in relation to the find from Mengen, and his firm conviction in relation to this that the numismatic finds from the period of the reign of King Theoderic discovered north of the Alps bore witness to commerce and trade with the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy ("archäologischen Niederschlag von Handels- und Verkehrs-verbindungen zum Ostgotenreiche").⁴⁶ The Mengen find would fit into this claim, although in its own specific manner. Nonetheless, at this point Werner's ideas should be somewhat corrected and his claim should additionally encompass the finds of silver and considerably rarer bronze Ostrogothic coinage minted during the reign of king Athalaric (526-534), and at least to some extent include those minted during the brief reign of Theodahad (534-536). Only for the coinage of the kings Vitigis (536-540), Baduila/Totila (541-552), and Teia (552-553), and much less for the certainly (during their reigns) already rare coins of the three previous Ostrogothic rulers, would it be possible to attribute both the period and circumstances to the considerable but nonetheless only occasional Frankish military incursions into Italy in 539, 540-541, and 553-554.

⁴⁴ *Cassiod. Var.*, V, 10 & 11. Where was this large group of Gepids deployed, exclusively on the border with Gaul (facing the Burgundians?) or were they arranged in smaller groups (according to need) somewhere? This is something we can only speculate about. — Certain interesting details about these two letters were discussed by *Goffart* 1989, 178-179. For a date that is more focused on 523 or 523/524, and related commentary, see *Gračanin* 2016, 217, 220-221, 264 (with literature). For a hypothesis about the functioning of a three-lined defensive system of protection of the Ostrogothic Alpine borders, see *Wolfram* 1980, 391-393 = 1988, 316-318.

⁴⁵ *Kemmers-Myrberg* 2011, 100.

⁴⁶ *Werner* 1933, 90-91.

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