

Dubravka Ujes Morgan (Newark, USA)
e-mail: dudaujes@hotmail.com

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Original scientific paper

ANCIENT GREEK COIN FINDS FROM RISAN, ANCIENT RHIZON, FROM THE FORMER CENTER FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH OF MONTENEGRO

This article presents 35 specimens of the Hellenistic coins discovered at modern Risan in Montenegro, from the Coin Collection of the former Center for Archaeological Research of Montenegro. These coins mostly match the pattern of the contents of published lots of Hellenistic coins from Risan, in which the locally minted coins predominate, followed by the coins of the major Greek cities of the region. There are two uncommon finds, which appear for the first time among the coins from Risan: a hemidrachm of Dyrrhachion and a bronze coin of Boeotia, minted during the period of Macedonian supremacy.

This article presents 35 specimens of the Hellenistic coins discovered at modern Risan in Montenegro, which is located on the site of the ancient town of Rhizon, in the Gulf of Kotor, the ancient Sinus Rhizonicus (Fig. 1).¹



*Ancient Greek cities and regions mentioned in the text:
Rhizon, Dyrrhachion, Boeotia, and other major Greek cities.*

¹ For general background information on Rhizon, see Oberhummer 1914, p. 937-939, Alföldy 1968, p. 1214-1217 and Cabanes 2001, col. 1023-1024. For the geographical position of the town and gulf see Pseudo-Scylax, Periplus 24-25, Strabo, Geographia VII, 5, 3 and 7, Apollonius, Argonautica IV, 516, Pliny, Historia Naturalis III, 144, Stephanus Byzantius, Ethnica s.v. Ρίζων and also s.v. Βουθόνη, Claudius Ptolemaeus, Geographia II, 16 (17), 5 and II, 16 (17), 12, Tabula Peutingeriana VI, .1, Anonymus Ravennas, Cosmographia 4. 16 (and perhaps also 5. 14), Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, De thematibus 2. 9 and De administrando imperio 34. For Rhizon as a regional center at the crossroad of the sea and land routes, see Ujes 1999, p. 212-213.

There are a couple of valuable pieces of historical information about Rhizon from the Hellenistic period. Polybius reports that in 229 B.C. Teuta, the widow of the Illyrian king Agron, took refuge in Rhizon, which he described as a small but strongly fortified town (Polybius II, 11, 16). In 167 B.C. the Romans introduced their garrison into Rhizon (Livy XLV, 26, 2). The upper town of Rhizon was situated on the nearby hill Gradina, where there is an ancient fortress. The lower town of Rhizon, secured by large city walls, was situated on the shore, on the fields called Carine. From the 19th century, the site of Carine has been known for its abundance of archaeological finds, especially coins.²

The specimens presented in the Catalog belong to the three lots of coins acquired by the former Center for Archaeological Research of Montenegro (CARM).³ The Coin Collection Inventory Numbers of two lots are 694 and 695, and the third lot has no number. There was no record regarding when, where and from whom these lots were acquired. The lots consist of a variety of almost exclusively bronze coins issued from the 3rd century B.C. to the 4th century after Christ. The degree of wear and corrosion of the coins varies remarkably, which is most visible among the comparable specimens of the same issuing authority and type, such as the bronze coins of Dyrhachion of Zeus / tripod type, and the coins of King Ballaios. Such differences in the chronology of issuance and the degree of damage by wear or corrosion among the specimens within the same lot indicate that the coins were gathered as stray site finds of single coins on the surface of the site of Carine, and mixed together in lots. Hence the three lots from the CARM may best be understood as cumulative site finds.⁴

The three lots

Inv. No. 694: AR, 1 and AE 91

- Dyrhachion, 8:
 - AR, hemidrachm.
 - AE, 7: Zeus/tripod 7.
- Autonomous Rhizonian coinage, AE, 49:
 - Apollo / Artemis, 14.
 - Post-Ballaios, 5.
 - Illegible, 30.

² The abundance of coin finds at the site of Carine was first reported by *Evans* 1880, 290-291 and *Evans* 1885, 43, who also defined the Rhizonian type of King Ballaios' coins. For the recorded coin hoards, cumulative site finds and single coin finds from Risan, see *Ujes Morgan* 2012, throughout.

³ I remain grateful to late Mr. Milan Pravić, archaeologist curator at the CARM in charge for the Collection of Ancient Coins, for having permitted me to examine these coins and publish them. The CARM was established in 1998 in Podgorica, and in 2011 merged with parts of a couple of other Montenegrin institutions for protection of historical heritage, thus forming the present Center for Conservation and Archaeology of Montenegro, situated in Cetinje.

⁴ For types of coin finds and coin lots from Risan, see *Ujes Morgan* 2012, p. 119-122; see also *Ujes* 1993, p. 6, and *Ujes* 2001, p. 341, and *Ujes* 2004, p. 150.

- King Ballaios, Rhizonian type, AE, 6.
- Possibly King Ballaios, Rhizonian type, AE, 5.
- Beotia, Persephone / Zeus, AE, 1.
- Roman, AE, 22.

Inv. No. 695: AE, 23

- Dyrhachion, Heracles / bow, club and spear, AE, 1.
- Autonomous Rhizonian coinage, AE, 16:
 - Type Apollo / Artemis, 10.
 - Post-Ballaios type, 1.
 - Illegible, 5.
- King Ballaios, AE, 5.
- Possibly King Ballaios, AE, 1.

Lot without inventory number: AE, 17

- Autonomous Rhizonian coinage, type Apollo / Artemis, AE, 2.
- King Ballaios, AE, 14.
- 4th century after Christ, AE, 1.

Comments about the lots

These three lots share some significant characteristics with other published cumulative site finds from Risan, such as: a high degree of corrosion, an apparently odd mixture of coins spanning from the 3rd or even 4th century before Christ to Late Antiquity, and the predominance of small bronze denominations regardless of the time of their issuance.

The salty soil of Carine magnified the effects of corrosion on almost all the coins from the three lots.⁵ The corrosion especially damaged many of King Ballaios' coins, which had been struck on poorly made flans of a low quality bronze alloy. Many of the coins were treated for removal of the corrosive layers by using the electrolysis-based method, and some bear a thick layer of transparent varnish. The residual coin weights as recorded in the catalog reflect these circumstances.

Roman bronze coins, especially those issued in the late 3rd and in the 4th centuries after Christ, are the second most frequent surface coin finds on the site of Carine, after the bronzes of King Ballaios.⁶ All the published Hellenistic coin lots from Risan and a part of a genuine hoard, datable to the Late Classical period, contained some Late Roman bronze coins, certainly because of the overall abundance and easy availability of coins

⁵ *Already Evans* 1880, 292, accentuated the poor condition of the coins he discovered; *Ujes* 2004, 155.

⁶ *Rihly* 1898, p. 150-151 first reported numerous finds of the Roman coins on the site of Carine, especially those from the 4th century after Christ. See also *Ujes Morgan* 2012, p. 126.

of various epochs on the surface of the site of Carine.⁷ The Roman coins are not listed in the catalog (22 in the lot Inv. No. 694 and one in the lot with no inventory number).

The most noteworthy types of coins present in the three lots are the autonomous coinages of Rhizon, which bear the inscription PIZONITAN and are datable to the end of the 3rd and the 2nd century B.C.⁸ The 67 specimens from these lots play a part in the basis for definition of the two types of these rare coinages: the Post-Ballaaios type and the Apollo / Artemis type, both certainly struck in Rhizon and almost exclusively discovered in Risan.⁹ These coins have already been published and are not listed in the catalog.

Catalog of the Hellenistic coins from the three lots in former CARM

Illyria

Dyrrhachion

Hemidrachm, 2nd - 1st century B. C.

Obv: Forepart of cow standing right, ΑΛ above, the letter alpha with an angular hasta, two pellets at hoofs, illegible symbol below head, all in circle.

Rv: ΔΥΡ, a magistrate's name around double floral or stellar pattern.

Ref. BMC Thessaly to Aetolia, p. 75, probably no. 151 (Λυσιππου).

1. 1.60 g. 15.32 mm. Inv. No. 694. ΔΥ[P], ΔΥ- [? σιπ-πιου].



Bronze coins

Obv: Head of Dodonaean Zeus, r., crowned with oak-wreath.

⁷ The contamination with Late Roman coins was present in the part of the genuine hoard IGCH 391, composed of large silver coins of Damastion and Corinth and her colonies, issued in the 4th century before Christ, as well as in the lots of predominantly King Ballaaios' bronzes. See the above footnote no. 4, especially *Ujes Morgan* 2012, p. 120-125.

⁸ *Ujes* 2004, p. 163-166: 67 specimens from the CARM, as listed above in the description of the lots.

⁹ The only specimen most probably discovered at some other location is a specimen of the Post-Ballaaios type in the Archaeological Museum in Split, which comes from an unknown find spot probably in Dalmatia, *Marović* 1988, p. 96, pl. 22/ 1 a-b.

Rv: ΔΥΡ, magistrate's name around a tripod lebes, all in oak wreath.

Ref. Type: BMC Thessaly to Aetolia, p. 76, no. 158-169. SNG Deutschland, Heft 12, no. 446-456. Gjongecaj 2007, type Zeus/tripod, p. 124-140.

2. 4.73 g. 17.77 mm. Inv. No. 694. Rv. ΔΥΡ. ΠΟΛΛΙ – ΩΝΟΣ. Ref. BMC p. 76, no. 165. Gjongecaj 2007, p. 136, emission XXXII.



3. 3.73 g. 17.16 mm. Inv. No. 694.

4. 3.31 g. 18.10 mm. Inv. No. 694.

5. 3.24 g. 18.59 mm. Inv. No. 694. Rv. ΔΥΡ. [...]ΩΤΑ- [?]ΚΟ[...].



6. 2.48 g. 17.86 mm. Inv. No. 694.

7. 2.47 g. 17.01 mm. Inv. No. 694.

8. 2.32 g. 16.72 mm. Inv. No. 694.

Obv: Head of Heracles in lion's skin, r.

Rv: Bow, club and spear.

Ref. Type: BMC Thessaly to Aetolia, p. 77, no. 176-179. SNG Deutschland, Heft 12, no. 458-460.

9. 2.06 g. 11.31 mm. Inv. No. 695.



King Ballaios' bronze coins of Rhizonian type

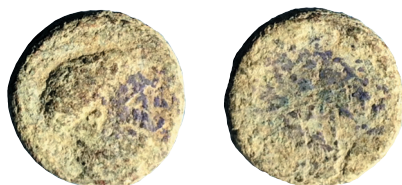
Obv: Head of King Ballaios, l.

Rv: Artemis running to l., in short chiton, holding a torch in r. hand and two spears in l. hand; ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΛΛΑΙΟΥ.

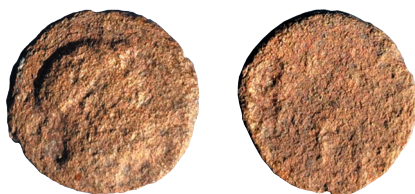
Ref. Type: BMC Thessaly to Aetolia, p. 81, no. 6-10.

Note: The coins are listed according to their residual weight because the details of their iconography are mostly hard to read.

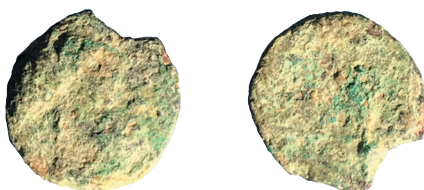
10. 3.13 g. 17.11 mm. Inv. No. 694.



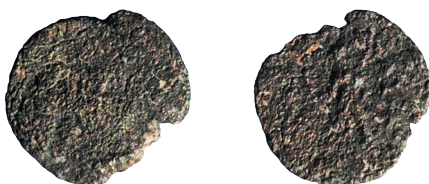
11. 2.34 g. 17.62 mm. No inv. number.



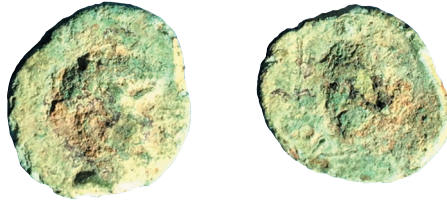
12. 2.33 g. 16.33 mm. Inv. No. 695.



13. 2.25 g. 16.81 mm. Inv. No. 694.

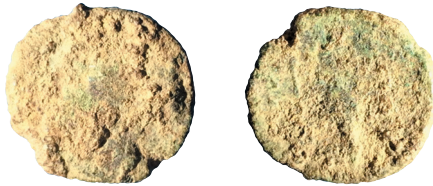


14. 2.13 g. 15.81 mm. No inv. number.



15. 2.05 g. 16.69 mm. No inv. number.

16. 2.01 g. 14.82 mm. Inv. No. 694.



17. 1.96 g. 14.30 mm. Inv. No. 694.



18. 1.94 g. 15.24 mm. No inv. number.



19. 1.89 g. 15.79 mm. No inv. number.

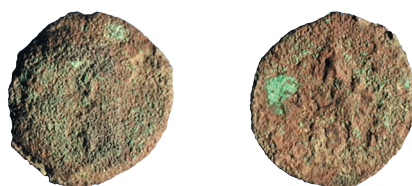
20. 1.89 g. 15.39 mm. No inv. number.



21. 1.88 g. 15.66 mm. No inv. number.

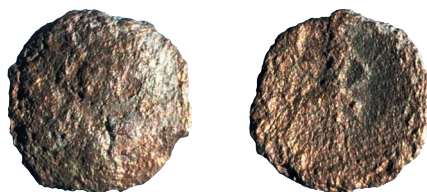


22. 1.79 g. 15.81 mm. No inv. number.



23. 1.59 g. 13.49 mm. Inv. No. 695.

24. 1.54 g. 16.46 mm. No inv. number.



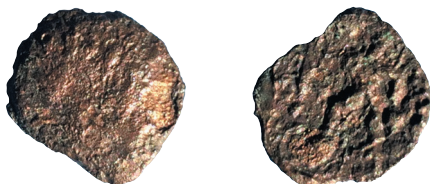
25. 1.53 g. 14.34 mm. Inv. No. 694.



26. 1.30 g. 15.16 mm. Inv. No. 695.



27. 1.13 g. 13.87 mm. No inv. number.



28. 0.67 g. 14.00 mm. No inv. number.



Same types, but head to right.

Ref. Type: BMC Thessaly to Aetolia, p. 81, no. 11.

29. 3.09 g. 14.44 mm. Inv. No. 695.

30. 2.07 g. 15.26 mm. No inv. number.



31. 1.60 g. 14.69 mm. Inv. No. 694.

32. 1.59 g. 15.64 mm. No inv. number.

33. 1.46 g. 14.81 mm. Inv. No. 695.

34. 1.29 g. 15.98 mm. No inv. number.

Note: There are six corroded specimens, five in the lot Inv. No. 694 and one in Inv. No. 695, that probably belong to the Rhizonian type of King Ballaios' coinage, based on their module and technical characteristics of their execution. The poor state of their preservation requires caution, so they are not included in the catalog.

Boeotia, ca. 244/220 – 197 B.C.

AE. Obv: Head of Demeter or Persephone wearing corn-wreath, three-quarter facing r.

Rv: ΒΟΙΩΤΩΝ. Naked Poseidon standing l., resting his r. foot on rock, holding a trident.

Ref. Type: BMC Central Greece, p. 41, 81-89, with a note that all such coins were restruck on the bronzes of Antigonus (Doson?) of Macedon; however, the corrosion on our specimen prevents us from discerning the details. For the chronology of this type of coins, see Head 1881, p. 84-87.

35. 3.28 g. 17.23 mm. Inv. No. 694.



Concluding remarks

The coins most frequently found on the surface of the site of Carine have been single finds of the bronzes of King Ballaios of the Rhizonian type, most probably issued by the local mint.¹⁰ Coins of this type are numerous in the three lots from the CARM, with a total of 25 specimens. Even more numerous (67) are the specimens of the otherwise rare autonomous coinages of Rhizon. Thus the content of the three lots generally corresponds to the already established pattern of coin finds from Risan, in which the coins issued by the local Rhizonian mint dominate.¹¹

The coinages of the major Greek cities in the region, which are present in other cumulative site finds from Risan, are represented by nine coins of Dyrrhachion. They include an outstanding specimen of a hemidrachm (Cat. no. 1), which is only rarely found so far outside its area of issuance and use.¹² There are eight specimens of two types of bronze coins of Dyrrhachion (Cat. no. 2-9). Of those, seven are of the long-lasting Zeus / Tripod type,¹³ which is also present in two of the published cumulative site finds from Risan (6 specimens)¹⁴ and among the coins from Risan in Sir A. J. Evans' collection in the Ashmolean Museum (2).¹⁵ This type of Dyrrhachian bronzes is documented even farther north along the eastern Adriatic coast.¹⁶

¹⁰ Cf. footnote no. 2 above for Evans. See *Ujes* 2004, throughout and especially p. 156, for the Rhizonian mint and the relative and absolute chronologies of its coinages.

¹¹ *Ujes Morgan* 2012, p. 128-129.

¹² A Dyrrhachian drachm datable to ca. 250-229 B.C. (BMC Corinth and colonies, Dyrrhachium 27-31) belongs to the cumulative site find no. 1, no. 55, *Ujes* 1993, p. 28.

¹³ For the Zeus / tripod type see *Gjongecaj* 2007, p. 124-140.

¹⁴ *Ujes* 1993, cumulative site find 1, no. 56-58, p. 29, c.s. find 2, no. 32-34, p. 31.

¹⁵ *Ujes Morgan* 2017, p. 283, no. 1-2.

¹⁶ For the finds of this and other types of Dyrrhachian coins on the eastern Adriatic coast, see *Ilkić, Šešelj* 2017, p. 300, no. 51-52 (this type), and *Šeparović* 2012, p. 527, 533, no 23-26 without specification of types.

The occurrence in Rhizon of the coins of Dyrrhachion issued under the Roman rule reflects the steady presence of the Romans and their army on the eastern Adriatic shores from the 3rd century B.C. onwards. On the other hand, the Boeotian bronze coin, issued during the Macedonian domination between the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 2nd century B.C., points to the influence of the other major regional power of the Hellenistic period, the Macedonian Kingdom. Thus the evidence of coins from the three lots fits the already formed picture of the pool of Hellenistic coins discovered so far in Rhizon, offering several new pieces of information about dynamics of life in Rhizon, which, at least periodically, generated the need for issuance of local coinages, besides remaining receptive for the exchanges with the major powers of the epoch.

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Addendum - After the present paper was accepted for publishing, the following publication became accessible to the author: *A. Meta*, Le monnayage en argent de Dyrhachion 375 - 60/55 av. J.-C., Athens 2015. According to Meta's classification, the drachms with the magistrate's name ΑΛΚΑΙΟΣ and the hemidrachms with ΑΛ on the obverse, belong to the 20th issue ("émission") of the Phase III of the series of drachms and hemidrachms and are datable to 168 - 120 B.C. (pp 74-79). Three magistrates' names are known on the reverse of these hemidrachms (ΑΡΙΣΤΟΜΕΝΕΟΣ, ΑΥΣΙΠΠΙΟΥ and TIMEA, p. 75, 76 and 78), but the state of preservation of our specimen impedes reading of the reverse inscription.